

OCTOBER
20c

South Sea STORIES

**WILLIAM O'SULLIVAN'S
POWERFUL STORY
OF AN ISLAND
ENCHANTRESS**

**MORLIA
FIGHTS FOR
LOVE**

**EXOTIC
ROMANCE**

by

**E. HOFFMANN
PRICE**

**GEORGE
ARMIN
SHAFTTEL**

**ALFRED
BESTER**



“Boys, in 1 minute through that door will come our new star salesman—”

JUST when we had got to thinking our sales were doing extra all right, J.P., the sales manager, whammed home the old body punch at the first-of-the-month meeting.

“Boys,” he said, “in just one minute, through that door will come our new star salesman . . . and I expect every man to cooperate with him to the fullest.”

No kiddin', a pin dropping would have sounded like an exploding bombshell. Jim Smith looked at me, I stared at Ed Johnson. What was going on? Who was this newcomer? What kind of a bird would he be? Who was going to be “fired”? J. P. sure had us in a dither—and I mean dither!

And then, through the door staggered the office boy carrying a tray as big as a cart wheel. On top of it stood twelve big, gleaming bottles of Listerine Antiseptic.

J. P. grabbed the nearest one off the tray and slammed it down on the desk.

“Here he is,” he bellowed, “and none of you guys had better laugh, either. For a long time I’ve noticed that some of you men—and I’m not mentioning any names, all too frequently have a breath that would knock a cow down. It all adds up to this: *If I’ve noticed it, customers must have noticed it, too.* And that’s bound to be bad for business. After coming up against a case of halitosis a couple of times, a customer is entitled to close the door on you—for keeps.”

We all stirred uneasily.

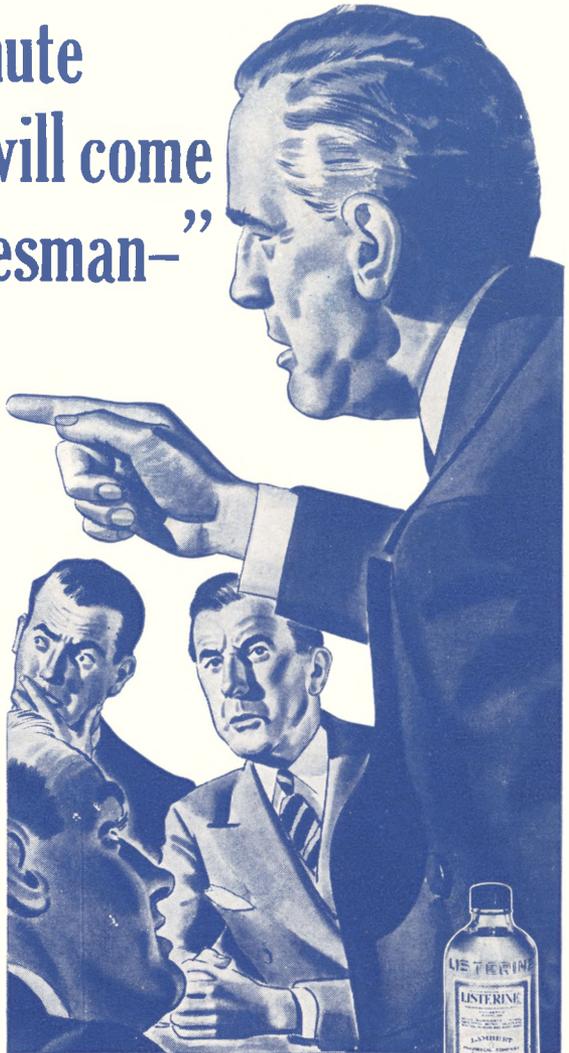
“From now on,” J. P. continued, “this is an order; take a swig of Listerine Antiseptic every morning before you hit the street. Get that? Not now and then after a big night . . . but every morning. Step up, gentlemen, and get your bottle.”

Maybe J. P. was right, and maybe it’s only coincidence, but I’m dogged if the sales for the next six months weren’t better, in spite of a lot of tricky stuff from our competitors.

How’s Your Breath?

In business, it’s just common sense to take precautions that your breath doesn’t offend. Odor seldom gets an order . . . often loses one.

More and more smart salesmen recognize this and



start the business day with Listerine. Notable for its antiseptic and deodorant power, Listerine renders the breath sweeter, fresher, purer.

Why not get in the habit of using Listerine Antiseptic yourself? It makes your mouth feel so wonderfully fresh and clean. The moment Listerine enters the oral cavity, it begins to halt the fermentation of tiny food particles which, some authorities say, is the principal cause of bad breath, then overcomes the odors that fermentation causes.

Keep Listerine Antiseptic handy at home and in the office, and tuck a bottle in your bag when you travel. Rinse the mouth with it before every business and social engagement. It really pays! Lambert Pharmacal Co., St. Louis, Mo.

LISTERINE CHECKS HALITOSIS (*Bad Breath*)



I Jumped My Pay from \$18 to \$50 a Week!

Here's how I did it

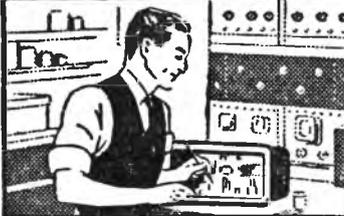
by S. J. E.
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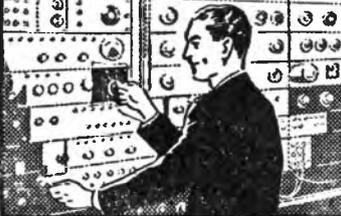
"I had an \$18 a week job in a shoe factory. I'd probably be at it today if I hadn't read about the opportunities in Radio and started training at home for them."



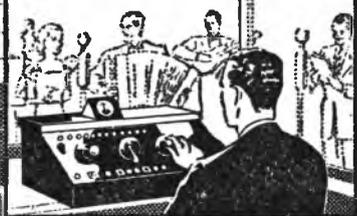
"The training National Radio Institute gave me was so practical I was soon ready to make \$5 to \$10 a week in spare time servicing Radio sets."



"When I finished training I accepted a job as serviceman with a Radio store. In three weeks I was made service manager at more than twice what I earned in the shoe factory."



"Eight months later N. R. I. Graduate Service Department sent me to Station KWCR as a Radio operator. Now I am Radio Engineer at Station WSUL. I am also connected with Television Station W9XK."



"N. R. I. Training took me out of a low-pay shoe factory job and put me into Radio at good pay. Radio is growing fast."



Find out today how I Train You at Home to BE A RADIO TECHNICIAN

J. E. SMITH,
President
National Radio
Institute Estab-
lished 25 Years

NOW to investigate Radio. Trained Radio Technicians make good money, and you don't have to give up your present job or leave home to learn Radio. I train you at home nights in your spare time.

Why Many Radio Technicians Make \$30, \$40, \$50 a Week

Radio broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, technicians. Radio manufacturers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, servicemen in good-pay jobs. Radio jobbers, dealers, employ installation and servicemen. Many Radio Technicians open their own Radio sales and repair businesses and make \$30, \$40, \$50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make \$5 to \$10 a week fixing Radios in spare time. Automobile, Police, Aviation, Commercial Radio; Loudspeaker Systems, Electronic Devices are other fields offering opportunities

for which N. R. I. gives the required knowledge of Radio. Television promises to open many good jobs soon.

Many Make \$5 to \$10 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll, I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets which start showing you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your Course I send plans and directions which have helped many make \$5 to \$10 a week extra in spare time while learning. I send special Radio equipment to conduct experiments and build circuits. This 50-50 training method makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. I ALSO GIVE YOU A MODERN, PROFESSIONAL ALL-WAYE, ALL-PURPOSE SET SERVICING

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J. E. SMITH, President,
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MAIL ORDER DIVISION OF FINLAY STRAUS, Inc.

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Step Up Where You Belong

What Is Your Present Level of Preparation?

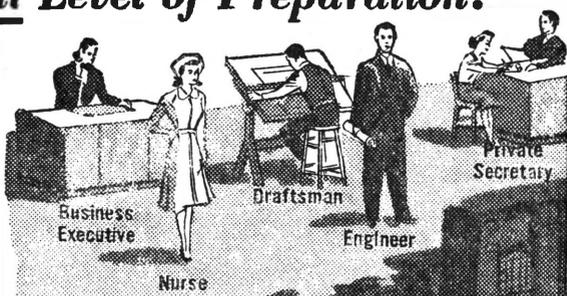
The **FIRST** proof of personal ability is your capacity to see the *need* for training and to **GET IT**. The man or woman who doesn't *realize* that education is **VITAL** to success—or who says he or she "doesn't have time," "hasn't the money" or that study is "too hard"—simply lacks one of the **fundamentals** of the **ABILITY** to make good. *American School (Chicago) graduates* by the thousands have **PROVED** that anyone who **WANTS** an essential education **CAN HAVE** it. *You can, too!*

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With only grade school education, you are virtually **CONDEMNED** to the low pay, menial jobs that others **DON'T WANT** . . . because **THEY** are trained for better things. Home study can fit **YOU** too for more desirable, better paid positions.

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Spare Time Training Can Help You in Your Work—and Socially

South Sea STORIES

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1940

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Front cover painting by Stockton Mulford, depicting a scene from *Morua Fights For Love*

Illustrations by Julian S. Krupa, Leo Morey, Robert Fuqua, Medill Loebner, Ebert, Jay Jackson, Rod Ruth, Dick Shaw

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OCTOBER
1940

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VOLUME 1
NUMBER 5



The CROW'S NEST

By The Editor

EVER since we revealed the fact that the world's biggest city is Honolulu, we've had a lot of argument about it. So here are the facts, as relayed to us by 'S. M. Ritter of New York.

"As a result of a legal incongruity attaching a number of distinctly outlying islands to the Hawaiian group, the limits of the municipality and county of Honolulu range 1500 miles northwestward to the Midway Islands and southwestward all the way to Palmyra, which is more than a thousand miles from the city proper.

"Accordingly, the mayor of Honolulu is chief executive of the largest municipality in the world, though her population, in the 1930 (latest available) census, didn't quite make 138,000."

Which should settle the question for good.

THE other day we learned about something that was interesting, but which rather dampened the atmosphere of island glamour which surrounds your editor's chair.

It seems that sea cucumbers, low animals which somewhat resemble the table vegetable, have a rather remarkable, if not revolting method of protecting themselves from enemies. When frightened, a cucumber may "spit out" its breathing apparatus. (Ugh!)

This equipment then immediately takes the form of a mass of stringy white threads. And the enemy often becomes hopelessly entangled in them.

As for the sea cucumber, it is generally none the worse, for it grows a new set of lungs!

WHILE we are on the subject, for your information, the sea cucumber was named for its physical resemblance to the well-known vege-

table, rather than for any similarity in taste. Having a skin quite tough and leathery, the sea cucumber appears to be anything but appetizing. Yet many of them are exported to China, where they are hailed as a delicacy and where they are used in making soup. Maybe that's why the Chinese armies have been holding out against the Japs!

WE'VE been giving you stories by some of the most well-known authors in the field, including such names as Robert Leslie Bellem, William O'Sullivan, E. Hoffmann Price, George Armin Shaftel, S. Gordon Gurtwit, etc. And we have several more on tap. But what we'd like to know is this: Have you readers, yourselves, any particular preference for any author? Why not drop us a line and tell us who your favorite writer is? We'll get him for you, pronto.



"Don't be alarmed, my dear. They're just curious."

COMING up next month is a new author to *South Sea Stories*. He is Craig Ellis, and he's done a complete novel that should fascinate you. Ellis has packed more dynamite into one yarn than you've seen in ages!

BY the way, what do you think of the cover this month? It's painted by Stockton Mulford, and the original was done in oils.

We feel sure you'll like it as much as we do.

THANKS, you readers, for the many letters about our last issue. We are so tickled that we are going to reciprocate. This magazine will pay \$10.00 to the best letter received in comment on this issue and published in our Reader's Page. That'll give you something to shoot at, and you have a chance to "recover" for the time you so graciously spend on the letter.

(Continued on page 87)

AMERICA *must*

IT HAS BECOME increasingly clear to those who have eyes with which to see, that America is facing the gravest emergency in her history. It is also clear that the steps now being taken to prepare our country against this emergency are shockingly inadequate.

WE FACE A combination of powerful enemies in both Europe and Asia, who control between them military establishments of the most fantastic proportions ever contemplated in this world. Hungry and predatory, they are ruled by an acknowledged dream of world conquest. Their hatred and contempt for us and our system of life is implacable and unbounded. Also, the greatest booty in the world is to be found here in the rich and unprotected United States.

AMERICANS HAVE only one course to pursue; they must organize immediately with every resource in their power to meet the shattering attack soon to be made on them, or, by being strong, avert it. The half-way measures now employed and contemplated are far from sufficient. Unless we are to suffer the fate of France and China, we must immediately organize to take summary action against the traitors within our gates, and must arm to the teeth to discourage attack from abroad. We should demand universal military conscription. We should take over immediately all the islands in the Caribbean which may have a bearing on our national defense. We should do these things now.

LET US NOT be entangled in glib catch-phrases which belong to a dead era, or be lulled into insecurity by the agents of foreign powers in whose interest it is to keep America helpless and weak. Modern war is swift and complete. It can only be fought with trained men and machines, not hoarded dollars or beautifully expressed social definitions. Its onslaught can no more be resisted by antiquated weapons than the bows and arrows of the Indians could stop the coming of the white man. Smug talk of our industrial greatness as indicating a capacity to turn out the sinews of modern war within a matter of weeks or months, so as to be able to repel a determined invader, is so much mischievous nonsense. Read the speech of our American Chief of Staff, General



prepare NOW!

George Marshall, to the Senate on April 30th. He states that "we have not manufactured a big gun for many years," and that it would take two and a half years to manufacture an ordinary 16-inch gun and carriage. To revamp our industrial establishment to turn out anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns, as well as a formidable air and tank corps, will take a period of years, even under the best organization. Neither can an adequate military and naval reserve be established over-night. Modern war demands expert organization and intensive training of men.

ALL OF THIS must be taken out of the hands of the politicians and placed in the custody of competent men who should be given full authority to act swiftly and energetically. If we do not immediately take every step in such a preparation program with vigor and iron will, our rich nation is inviting attack and despoliation.

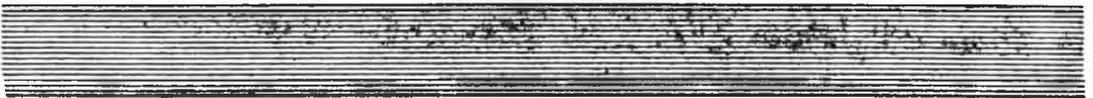
SUCH A COURSE will demand a certain amount of sacrifice from all. It will involve huge expenditures, which will have to be paid for by the American people in the form of extra taxes; it may involve a violation of our present wage and hour definitions. It represents a profound change in our way of life and in our thinking; but it is urgently required if we are to save our institutions from ruin.

THE WRECKAGE OF France and China and the imminent disaster threatening Britain are living examples of the folly of any other course than that of complete armed preparedness.

LET US NOT wait until we are attacked. We must act fully and competently now, while there is yet time. Impress this on the minds of all public officials as being the will of the nation, and it will be done . . . Write, wire or phone your congressman or senators.

WILLIAM B. ZIFF

William B. Ziff
 Publisher



MORUA FIGHTS FOR

THE *Oceania* sprinted through the moonlit South Pacific with a smooth, contented throb and raced for the outer fringe of the Society Islands.

Soft music pulsed in the ballroom.

"*All-l-l's well-l-l-l!*" came the lookout's mournful call.

In the exotically decorated bar-and-grill below decks, svelte Muriel May's not-so-baby-blue eyes agreed:

"All's well, and how!"

Her table partner, a tall, dark, restless-eyed youngster, was paying his bill from a fat wallet. The girl said, when the steward had gone:

"I just *know* you are a super-super business man, Mr. Archer — but poor little me knows nothing about that sort of thing!" She smiled with her heart-shaped mouth, and her slender hands did things to her,

honey-hair. "Do tell me some more about yourself."

A steward winked at the bartender. "*La May* is working overtime," he said. "Looks like she's got a fish landed this trip, huh?"

The bartender didn't miss a rhythmic beat with the shaker.

"Fish is the right word! The guy has been blotto most of the trip, and hardly left his cabin. When li'l Muriel heard who he was, she dropped the other suckers like they were hot irons."

He set some glasses on the bar. "He is somebody, at that. Paul Archer, of

Muriel kicked the fat man in the face with the heel of her shoe



Archer was a fugitive: from Morua who was in love, and from Muriel who was a gold digger

LOVE

By WILLIAM O'SULLIVAN



the Archers. The furniture people."

"'Furnishings For The World'," the steward grinned. "I know all about it. Haven't I been serving this lush drinks in his cabin? Papa Archer sold out to the bankers and left Baby Paul with only a million or so to cheer him up. He's one of these Efficiency Experts. With all the roundings of a perfect heel. That's what Archer is."

"You stewards do get around," the bartender said dryly. He yawned and reached for another bottle. . . .

Archer finished his drink, and his dark eyes took a steadiness and confidence they hadn't known in many a month . . . not since the bankers his father had sold out to had said:

"Sure, Paul, you're efficient. Too efficient! You're out, Paul!"

After that, it had been a gradual softening-up for the well-built, aggressive youngster. Left to his own devices by a widower father, Paul Archer had sought forgetfulness in drink and travel. Women he had ignored always, had had no time for. They were brainless, and they were inefficient, and they were a waste of time.

Oh, he'd done some light petting in his college days; but football and baseball were more important. Now Muriel May, he felt, was different. Ever since he'd met her at the Captain's table the day before, he'd felt she was different. Romance stirred within him for the first time; at least Muriel wasn't brainless and inefficient, he thought.

As he stood to follow her out of the room and to an upper deck, he didn't know the half of it!

SHE wore an evening creation of white, with a ballooning, flimsy skirt set off by a colorful, tight-fitting bodice that complimented, rather than restrained, her charms. Archer found himself comparing her to some fragile,

delicate bit of decorative furniture.

On A-deck, Muriel took his hand and said:

"This way, Mr. Archer!"

"Call me Paul," he told her.

"Oh, may I? And I'm Muriel!" She led the way to a dark, cushioned corner and was sitting down when an alarmed male voice said:

"Hey!"

They peered at a young couple sitting there and embarrassedly disengaging arms. Muriel giggled when they turned away and said:

"Aren't they silly! Unless, of course, they are truly in love. Don't you agree, Paul?"

"I certainly do," he agreed vehemently. This girl *was* different!

"Let's try the boat-deck," Muriel whispered. "There are some cozy corners there." She added hurriedly, "So I've been told, anyway."

She waited at the bulkhead door while Archer went onto the uncovered boat-deck for a look. An inviting corner divan and the entire starboard side were deserted. A soft wind blew gently from up forward. The moon was a yellow pie-plate against the satiny night. Archer turned to call Muriel; and his tongue riveted suddenly to the roof of his mouth.

The girl stood in the doorway, the salon lights strong behind her. Effectively, they made a blackout of her fluffy skirts and silhouetted her beautiful body before his eyes. In strong profile were slender ankles that mounted excitingly in a figure which was frankly voluptuous. She was a statue from the *atelier* of some master sculptor, somehow come to life a breathing, pulsating mortal like himself.

She came out now, and toward him, slowly. Archer stood unable to move as she came closer. She stopped, and her arms slid up and her hands straightened

his white bow-tie while her eyes looked deeply into his.

"Paul," Muriel said in a low voice, "you—you want to kiss me, don't you? I—I don't take kisses lightly, Paul. I have been saving them for the man I would marry some day. But—but I'm afraid, Paul. You are so big and strong and masterful. . . ."

"Muriel!" he said hoarsely, his arms going around her.

She melted fully against him while he drank eagerly of her lips. He lifted his head to kiss her eyes closed, then kissed the curve of her throat, pressed his hot lips to a bare shoulder, and sought her lips once again. She sighed a sweet-scented breath without taking her mouth from his.

But her hands were listless at her side. . . .

Archer asked ardently, "You love me, don't you, Muriel? You do? You really do!"

The girl moved against him, as if striving to break away.

"But—but Paul, this is so sudden! Besides, someone might see us here!"

Archer swept her in his arms with a little laugh and strode purposefully across the deck to the cushioned lovers' nook. Muriel nestled herself there like a cunning little kitten, her feet drawn up under her.

"Better?" he asked, his eyes aglow in the moonlight.

Her arms opened to him. "Paul! My Paul!"

Archer sat beside her and drew her to him. He kissed her hungrily, and she coiled her arms about his neck and strained his mouth to hers. Her lips parted under his kiss as the petals of a flower compelled by its sun. He let her slight weight draw him down until he was close beside her, but their kiss never broke for an instant. She molded herself to him.

HE wondered if the pulsing were within him, or within her, or if it were part of the rhythmic pound of the luxury liner. When her lips moved slightly under his, he clutched her fearfully to him, afraid she would somehow escape his embrace. His hand knew the curving line of the indentation that was the small of her back. . . .

She pulled her lips from his suddenly to ask:

"You . . . love me, too, Paul? You—want to marry me?" She stirred as if in anxiety.

"Silly Muriel, of course!" he answered, shakenly.

The girl surrendered her lips to him again, and this time she matched his passion in the embrace she gave him; matched it and transcended it. . . .

"*All-l-l-l's well-l-l-l-l!*" came the ululation of the lookout.

It was at this precise moment that the luxurious *Oceania*, Tahiti bound, strode at top speed into a submerged derelict ship!

CHAPTER II

The Awakening

THE liner shuddered like the stricken thing she was as she cut across the floating wreck and laid her keel open from stem to stern. Dishes and glasses crashed, men and women were thrown violently to the decks, and the lights died out in every part of the ship.

The *Oceania* canted hard apart—to the left—in the shocked silence that followed. Then a single, high-pitched scream made a scarlet note of sound, and bedlam broke loose below decks.

Archer and Muriel lay stunned for a moment, locked in a tight embrace, where they had been thrown: on the hard deck just aft the bridge. Then they rolled hard against the bulkhead with the dangerous angle the ship as-

sumed. The girl was the first to move. She pushed roughly at Archer and struggled to her feet, smoothing her skirt around her silk-clad legs.

"We're sinking!" she gasped. "The ship is badly hit!"

"Nonsense," was Archer's sour retort. "The *Oceania* can't sink!"

He climbed unsteadily to his feet and found a moment to be ironically amused at himself. He—Paul Archer, the man who had never had time for a woman—was more concerned over the crash as an interruption than as a possible disaster! But then the *Oceania* had been called sink-proof—

A crew member struggled along the uptilted deck and bellowed hoarsely at the bridge above:

"Lights and communication out of order, Cap'n! Emergency lights only are working! We can't radio an S.O.S. because the radio room is a wreck!"

The captain's head appeared silhouetted against the pale sky.

"Man the lifeboats!" he roared. "Prepare to abandon ship!"

The ship had taken an even steeper cant to the left. From below deck came the panicked screams and shouts of the terrified passengers who had been trapped there. Others raised a drumming thunder with their feet as they raced and stumbled along companionways and up darkened ladders.

Muriel was staring at a struggling lifeboat crew nearby, a twisted grin on her face.

She said slowly, "My God, just when I have a Bingo setup dealt me, *this* has to happen!"

Archer heard the words, but they didn't register any meaning. He tensed. His eyes were wide with understanding on the lifeboat crew. The sailors had manned the davits and lowered away; but the longboat was lying there, far from the water.

"Muriel!" he gasped. "Look! The ship is so uptilted on this side, they can't get the boats lowered!"

One of the sailors twisted his head.

"Right you are, matey. And on the port side, they're stowed clear underwater. Still hanging in their davits!"

Archer came alive with a bang.

"Come on," he snapped, dragging the girl with him. He fought his way up the steep tilt of the deck, slipping and falling twice; but he reached the rail. The two clung to it, their eyes wide on what they saw.

The starboard side of the great ship lay flat and straight in the moonlight, like a wide, modern boulevard. Not a lifeboat would be launched from the *Oceania* this night!

"It's sure to roll over!" Archer said, his face ghastly in the moonlight with its drawn lips and the dark liquor pouches under the eyes. "We've got to slide down the side and into the ocean!"

"No!" Muriel screamed, hanging back. "No, no, no, I can't swim well!"

Archer grunted and reached to lift her over the rail when a new sound pushed its way into the uproar below decks, an ominous, hissing sound that grew louder with each passing second.

"Water is getting to the boilers!" one of the sailors shouted. "If it gets to them and to the oil stores—"

ARCHER never heard the finish of it. All the noise in creation seemed to roll together in one deafening, stunning roar. He felt himself lifted by a giant, invisible hand and torn from Muriel. He was being hurled up . . . up . . . up! Vaguely, he was aware of a tremendous flash of orange-colored fire somewhere below him. Then he was falling. . . .

He struck water flat out and with a smash that stunned his senses. Water swirled into his gasping mouth and choked him, but he fought for his life.

After a moment, his head cleared and strength flowed back into his body. His water-logged evening clothes and his patent-leather oxfords dragged at him, but he worked desperately to keep afloat.

He had to turn a half-circle to find the *Oceania*, and when he saw the ghastly scene he sobbed aloud.

The blast had blown away the superstructure of the great liner, but it had also hurled the ship almost to even keel again. Dense black smoke poured from the wrecked decks, and the lurid flames inside the saloons lit the waters for miles around and filled the air with an ugly, crackling sound.

Heads bobbed near the great liner; and interspersed among those heads were scores of bodies, floating face down. A gradual change seemed to be taking place in the picture, but it was a few seconds before Archer could make out what it was.

The nose of the doomed luxury liner was slowly raising into the pale sky and the waters were closing in on the stern with a rush!

"Muriel!" Archer sobbed. "Muriel is somewhere in that hell!"

WRECKAGE bobbed and drifted all about him, wreckage that only a few moments before had been the slick and polished appointments of the liner. Archer grabbed frantically for something to help him stay afloat. A deck divan that floated past wouldn't hold his weight. A fragment of a bar stool was too light. Something heavy struck him in the side.

Archer grabbed frantically, slipped off the flat, broad thing once, then gripped it securely and tried his weight on it. It was buoyant and sturdy! He scrambled aboard it, knelt a moment studying it. A gasp of relief escaped him.

It was the broad ballroom door of the

Oceania, a great square of light, tough wood with thick edges and thinner strips of painted, decorative paneling. Recklessly, he smashed out a strip of paneling with his bare fists. The groundswell would carry him away from the sinking ship safely.

But Archer didn't want safety. Not now. He wanted a paddle. He was going back into that hell of drowning people and crackling fire and the whirling vortex that the sinking ship was throwing wider and wider. Muriel was there.

"Very stupid, and very inefficient," he muttered to himself as he dug at the water with the strip of wood. "Here goes nothing!"

Hands clutched at his raft as he came into the fringe of swimmers . . . hands that clutched and slipped off again to disappear under the water. Archer paddled on, pausing only to shout, "Muriel! *Muriel!*" and paddle on again.

He was giving it up when an answering scream knifed through those other sounds. An ivory-pale arm went aloft in the glare of fire, and the scream came again. Archer set the paddle carefully in the center of the raft and came to his feet, his eyes straining.

It was Muriel . . . clinging to a piece of deck-rail!

HE calculated the distance, eyed the rising nose of the liner, and considered the weight of his wet clothes. His swankly-cut evening "tails" were stripped off and discarded. He tore his pearl-studded vest and shirt off. He tore his wet shoes loose and slid his suspenders from his shoulders to kick out of his trousers. Then he went overboard for Muriel.

He was at her side in a score of frantic strokes. Futilely, he sought for a grip on the back of her bodice, then fumbled for a handful of the material at her waist. Smooth wet skin met his touch.

"Cut it!" the girl panted, her eyes panicked in the moonlight. "Are you taking an inventory—or trying to save me?"

"Your dress," he snapped. "I thought it would be easier to drag you by that!"

"I can swim, but I wanted to save the dress," the girl told him. "It set me back more than a hundred dollars, and I didn't want to shed it. But finally I had to."

"My God!" Archer gasped. "You count costs at a time like this?"

"All my life," she told him harshly, "I've had to count costs. All my life I've sort of had times like this. Until tonight! And now, look!" She shoved off from the rail. "Where's that raft?"

The two of them cut through the swelling waves with professional crawl strokes. For a panicked moment, Archer thought his raft was gone. Then he saw it cresting a near wave. He shoved Muriel up and onto it. He was climbing after her when a man, struggling desperately, caught at his undershirt, clung to it with a grip that was bearing them both down.

Muriel, a wraith of pale flesh and scanty step-ins and the merest of lace brassieres, appeared directly above the two. A dainty foot reached carefully over Archer's shoulder and kicked down hard at that other face. Again and again, Muriel kicked. Archer's silk undershirt sundered, and then that desperate grip was relaxed, was gone. With a gasp of relief, he slid up onto the raft.

"Thanks!" he panted. Then he looked at the inky waters nearby. "That man you kicked off me must have drowned!"

"Better him than you," the girl answered calmly. "Maybe we can be saved yet—me *and* you!" She slanted her eyes at the ship. "Go into your act with that oar, Paul!"

A growing roar filled the air and Archer looked around. The *Oceania's* stern was pointed straight up and the great liner was sliding down into the waters, faster and faster. Archer stared transfixed as he saw the bobbing heads and floating bodies and wreckage being pulled back to the ship and into that terrific suction at the stern. Screams and prayers and curses mounted to a crescendo.

For a moment, the raft pulled back; but Archer's paddle dug hard and fast and the raft held its distance. Then a *whooshing* roar arose, followed by a loud slap of water as waves met where once there had been a giant luxury liner. The raft eased forward again and a grave silence came over the troubled waters. Archer stood and looked back where it all had been. Muriel pushed to her feet and came to stand beside him.

The moon looked down on the sole survivors of the *Oceania* disaster—a broad-shouldered youngster in soaking, tailored-silk shorts; and beside him a petite, beautifully molded blonde in a strip of black silk and lace that clung wetly to her hips and body. The groundswell increased and rocked the raft perceptibly harder.

"Paddle, Boy Scout," Muriel said. "This swell means trouble. I *know*. God knows I've sailed this line enough!"

ARCHER rubbed his wet chin doubtfully.

"Which way are the islands?"

"Paddle!"

"But—"

"Paddle!"

Archer paddled. Muriel dropped down near him and drew her knees up under her chin. She looked at Archer quizzically and said:

"You'd be a very presentable gent

with that roll of fat off your stomach.”

He twisted his head and paused involuntarily at the stark beauty of her there in the moonlight.

“Darling!” he said, his voice husky.

“*Keep paddling,*” she said dryly, moving a bit away.

The storm struck only shortly after that.

FOR Archer, the ensuing hours were nightmarish.

He paddled in the rising swell and with the moon blotted from the sky by low-scudding, angry clouds. The wind rose higher and higher, and Muriel’s panic kept pace with it. When a wave crested their raft and lashed at their backs, she pummeled Archer’s head and shrieked:

“Tell the waves who you are, goon! Maybe they don’t know you’re Paul Archer! *Tell* them, go on!”

He laid it to her fright and shock, and struggled on until a wave struck the paddle from his hands.

Muriel screamed, “You pot-bellied dope, where is your strength! My God, why didn’t I kick *you* loose instead of that other man? Oh, you boasting, drunken fool!”

Archer was thinking as he hadn’t been forced to think in years. And acting. But the months of booze-swiggling were telling on him, were tugging at his strength. Grimly, he ignored the raging girl and knelt at an intact panel that was exactly in the center of the raft. He smashed his fist hard—but carefully—and broke a slender slot in the thing.

He moved, studying his distances, and smashed another one parallel to it. Then he struck two more some four feet removed from the first, but in a line with them. His knuckles were raw and bleeding and smarting from the briny water, but he didn’t notice.

“Left hand and right foot,” he told the girl. “Jam your left hand in that upper one—your right foot in this lower one. Face down!”

“Why?” the girl asked.

With an expressionless calm, Archer seized the girl and wrestled her over on her face. He forced her hand and foot into their slots.

“Got to anchor us down,” he explained. “Now for my hand and foot.”

He shoved his right hand and left foot into the remaining slots, then threw his body close to the girl’s. When Muriel saw his plan, she held her arm up. Archer came closer, his own arm raised and going about the girl’s waist as she secured a grip on his neck.

They clung together, clung hard until their senses left them under the battering of the waves. Then the slots Archer had fashioned did their clinging for them. Through the remainder of the night, the raft bobbed and leaped under the impact of the waves; but steadily it scudded down the wet green valleys from each crest and pushed on.

When consciousness returned to them, it was to find the storm abated and the brazen sun high in the skies. Blear-eyed and mad with thirst, Archer smashed out another paddle from the door and struck out with aching muscles and bursting head. Muriel watched sullenly and then lay back.

THE sun was sinking in the sky when Archer saw that hint of green close by to his right. He shaded his eyes and peered long before he was sure.

“Land!” he croaked. “Muriel, it’s land!” But Muriel had dropped into a heavy sleep. Doggedly, Archer changed direction and paddled on.

He sagged when he saw the coral reef that cut him off from the island; but one foggy look at the thrilling beauty of the girl who lay sleeping so near him

spurred on his lagging strength.

"She's mine!" he told himself. "Mine! We've got to make it through that murderous coral!"

After what seemed an eternity, he made out a narrow opening in the sharp jagged reef, an opening too narrow for the raft. He threw himself into the water, heedless of the menace of sharks, when a wave picked the raft up and took it for the coral in a long run. He clung to its side, and at the last moment seized the girl's arm and jerked her from the float and into the water.

The raft smashed on the reef with an impact that shattered it.

Muriel came awake then, tried a few feeble strokes toward the opening, and collapsed again. Archer caught her to him wearily and threw himself for the opening with the next wave, shielding her body with his own. A jagged growth of coral gashed him high on his thigh; and then they were through!

Then sand was under his feet, and he was erect in hip-deep water, the girl cradled in his arms. He slogged forward heavily, came to shallower water. He staggered, stumbled, broke into a half-trot for that shining white strip of sandy beach just ahead. His ankles were still under water when he buckled at the knees and fell with his precious burden.

IT was in the cool of the next morning that he opened his eyes.

He blinked at the thatched roof over him. His hands scratched at the pandanus-leaf mat he was stretched out on. His head was somewhat raised, and he was aware of a warm, pleasant sensation about his neck. A hand with delicate, brown fingers materialized in his vision, and the fingers were shiny with scented oils. Gently, they stroked his hair.

Archer tilted his head back and a

face came into his view; but it was not Muriel's face. Instead, it was a brown, oval face framed by shiny blue-black hair. Tender dark eyes looked down at him from above soft ripe lips.

"I," the mouth said in tinkling, almost perfect English, "am Morua, daughter of Tuomi, who is chief of this far island of O-ke-lo-a." Her lips did pretty things to each individual vowel. "Welcome to Okeloa, *Popaa* Paul Archer! Welcome to Tuomi's humble home!"

"*Po-pay-ah?*" he echoed her pronunciation weakly.

"*Popaa* means 'white man' in our language," she smiled. "Now we have two *popaas!*" She wriggled her delight. "Morua is so glad you are awake!"

CHAPTER III

Outcast

RECOLLECTION flooded back over Paul Archer. The wreck . . . the nightmare of the raft . . . and his last efforts to bring Muriel to safety. He wouldn't let himself dwell on Muriel's ragings at him. Instead, he looked around the simple hut for the girl.

"The *vahine* Mu-ree-el rests at another *fare*," Morua said simply, before he could speak. "Rest yourself, *Popaa* Paul."

Archer became aware that the warmly pleasant sensation about his neck was due to his "pillow": the island girl's lap. She shifted position suddenly to come into fuller view of him and sat at right angles to her former position. She beamed down at him.

Archer's eyes touched indifferently on the beauty of her in a fine green *pareu*—a short, clinging garment that was deftly secured so that it passed exactly midway across her breasts. His

eyes casually ignored her ripening promise of womanhood. He sat up abruptly when he caught a glimpse of his own frame stretched there.

"Good Lord, look at me!"

Morua did, and seemed to like what she saw. She smiled. Archer was attired in a blue *pareu* with white flowers. Color rose to his face when the implication of the thing came home to him.

"W-who found us?" he asked the girl.

Morua said calmly, "I!" She reached her hand behind her and passed him the remnants of his clothes: all that remained of the erstwhile tailored-silk shorts was a waistband and a button.

"The old women of Okeloa dressed you," she added, a gleam of mercy in her eyes.

Archer grunted. "When will Muriel be here?"

Morua avoided his eyes deftly. She shrugged her sloping shoulders and came to her feet in a swaying motion that brought her shapely legs and tanned-ivory thighs into prominence. But Archer's eyes were absorbed with his own thoughts.

She moved rhythmically before him, her curving hips undulating gracefully. She had the wild, natural beauty that is matchless, this island girl, and her eyes challenged Archer innocently but assuredly. The petite native was like a wild thing proud of her natural endowments and inviting him to acknowledge those endowments, too.

The effect of all this on Archer was to have him snap:

"Stand still a minute and tell me where Muriel is, will you!"

Morua stood still, and her voice was brittle; but a suspicion of tears sooted her eyes.

"She is at the *fare* of *Popaa* Tim McGarrah, the island trader."

Archer's eyes narrowed and his teeth

worried at his lip. The fiery love that Muriel May had kindled in him wasn't without its share of jealousy.

"McGarrah, eh? What's she doing at his house? He's the other white man here, eh?"

"And a very fine man," the girl said stoutly. "Fifteen years, now, *Popaa* Tim McGarrah has been buying and trading our copra and pearls and shell." She lowered her head when she added: "But—sometimes he drinks heavily."

"Oh, yeah?" Archer was on his feet in a bound. "Where is this man's place? Lead me to it!"

Morua beckoned him to follow. She went out onto the veranda of the *fare* with Archer in her wake. A tight cluster of natives—tall, well-built men and petite, cheerful-faced and shapely women in *pareus*—gave him soft, welcoming greetings; but Archer ignored them. A venerable, white-haired old man with dignity in his eyes and in his bearing, came forward and gave him an easy smile.

"Welcome to Okeloa, my son," he said gently.

MORUA said quickly, "This is my father—Chief Tuomi. My father asked that you should stay at our *fare*."

"I want Muriel!" Archer snapped petulantly. "Besides, I have no intention of staying on this dirty little island a second longer than I must. I'm taking the next boat out!" He glowered around at them all. "Now take me to Muriel, and be quick about it!"

Mutely, Morua pointed. There was a lagoon and a bridge across it, and beyond this bridge an imposing native structure nestled in a grove close to a wharf and warehouse. Archer started across it, ignoring the now unfriendly faces of the natives.

He was making for the door of the place when voices came to him through

the open windows. One of those voices he had come to cherish above all others . . . the voice that had whispered such tender things to him on the divan on the *Oceania's* boat-deck. Muriel was cooing:

"Li'l Muriel knows just nothing about business, Tim—but she just *knows* you are the bravest, strongest and richest pearl-trader in the Islands!"

Archer's face darkened and he changed his course to bring him to a window. He choked at what he saw.

Muriel May was superb in a red *pareu*. At her side stood a husky, red-headed man clad in cotton shorts and a shirt open at his muscular throat. A rum bottle and glasses were on a table in front of them, and scattered in magnificent disarray around the bottle and the glasses were hundreds of pearls of assorted sizes—but all of priceless hue.

The man roared drunkenly, "Not a wan of thim is pretty or precious as yer-self, me darlint! Take your pick—and you'll have a pick to take for each day you are the guest of Tim McGarra!"

He put a hairy arm about the girl's petite waist and hugged her to his side.

"Take the word of Irish Tim McGarra for it, colleen—you are the prettiest pearl in the whole of the South Seas!"

"Oh, Tim!" Muriel beamed up at him. "You are so masterful. I—I am almost afraid!"

With a grim face, Paul Archer made for the door and burst in.

The laughter slid from Muriel's face when she saw Archer; but she made no move to free herself from McGarra's arm. Instead, she lifted a filled rum glass in his direction and toasted him with:

"Hi, Boy Scout! Thanks for the ride!" She downed the drink with a careless shrug of her white shoulder.

McGarra glowered at Archer with wild blue eyes and asked Muriel:

"Is this mannerless spalpeen a friend of yours from the ship?"

Muriel met Archer's eyes defiantly.

"Merely an acquaintance," she said flatly. "I hardly even know him."

The whole thing struck Archer with stunning clarity, and he cursed himself that he hadn't known it sooner. Memories came back to him . . .

"*Just when I have me a Bingo set-up, this has to happen.*" And, "*I've counted costs all my life—up to tonight!*" Or, when she kicked the drowning man from his death-grip: "*Me and you might be saved!*"

The pearls gave him his answer . . . but only in part. His pride urged him to fight for this woman he'd loved and had saved.

"Look, Muriel—I know the shock of this thing has you down. As far as this greasy beachcomber's pearls go, I'll buy you all of them you want in Tahiti next week."

The girl smirked and looked up at the Irishman. McGarra blinked.

"Next week, say you, in Tahiti? Well, me bucko, there isn't another ship touching at Okeloa for six months, and maybe not then!"

He freed the girl and shoved the table out of his way.

"Get out, ye snip of a man! How dare you intrude on Tim McGarra when he is entertaining!"

ARCHER said hotly, "You drunken ape, I've fired a hundred men like you! Furniture movers who drank and talked up to their betters!"

"You fired *men*?" McGarra asked with cutting meaning. "*You?*"

"I'm Paul Archer," the younger man snapped. "I can write my check for a million!"

McGarra set his head back and roared. Then he came close and asked:

"And who will cash your check, ye

smooth-faced goat? Will ye eat your check, maybe, during the next six months?"

Archer's morale buckled. He had his answer.

Muriel saw cash on the barrel-head in this Irishman's pearls. And why not? It was obvious now what Muriel was: a female hitch-hiker on the road of life, playing each sucker for all that was in the game, and giving as little as she had to in return.

A pang of regret moved in Archer when he thought of the boat-deck of the *Oceania*, and the beauty Muriel had to give. He blinked when he found himself mentally defending her with:

"Well, it's the way life has treated her. This is her way. But—she is so beautiful; and maybe she could be taught other ways, other ethics. And . . . she was my first love—almost!"

He made a last desperate try for his shattered ideal; and for his tattered pride.

"Don't be afraid of this red-headed Mick, Muriel—I can take care of him. If he puts his filthy paws on you again—"

McGarrah roared his rage. "Git, you shadow of a man!" he bellowed. "Your names I mind not. But the lady prefers my company to yours, and I'm damned if I don't respect her taste!"

Archer sensed, rather than saw, the natives clustered close about the *fare*. He guessed from Morua's words that the Okeloans worshiped the brawny and colorful Irishman, despite his drinking forays. Rage rode him when he realized that he was losing that most precious of native requirements to be a *popaa*: "face" . . . respect . . . pride. He threw caution aside and attacked the Irishman viciously.

A cagey left jab feinted the angry redhead out of position, and Archer whanged a right uppercut to his jaw.

McGarrah stumbled and fell heavily; but Archer's triumph was short-lived. The Irishman got his feet under him with a bellow of passion and charged.

Archer tried to meet the attack, instead of sidestepping and cutting the man to ribbons. Not that he would have been a match for McGarrah if the trader had been sober. Not *this* Paul Archer—

McGarrah hit him with stunning force and smashed him back against the wall of the *fare*, and the thatched roof buckled threateningly. Before Archer could get his guard up, the Irishman clubbed him with a ham of a hand and battered him down along the wall. A straight left snapped Archer's head back into position, and a finishing right dropped him bleeding and half senseless to the floor.

MURIEL was there, then; but not to help. The girl stooped over him and screamed:

"Get out, you pot-bellied has-been! Get out, do you hear? Go back and let that little brown savage nurse you some more!"

McGarrah stooped, picked up Archer as if he were a baby and started for the door. But he halted and turned his bleared eyes on the girl.

"Here, here, colleen! Keep the sharp edge of your tongue off Morua. She is a good girl, I am telling you!"

Muriel converted her error into a double-play.

"Oh, Tim, I am just half *crazy* with fatigue. I don't *realize* what I'm saying. Besides—you are *so* masterful and strong, you've just *swept* me off my feet!"

"Ochone!" McGarrah crooned, his eyes going amazingly tender. "Don't I know it, colleen!"

With a surging heave of his shoulders, he threw Archer headlong into the

dust in front of the *fare*.

WHEN Archer was able to move, he looked up into the unfriendly brown faces around him. He wiped the blood from his mouth with his hand and climbed painfully to his feet. He squinted a blackened eye at the ugly gashes torn in his *pareu*.

Morua burst into the circle then, and was making for Archer with another *pareu* when Chief Tuomi stopped her with an exclamation of disgust.

"No, my daughter, *no!* This man is not fit for our island *pareus*." He looked about him. "Pah! Let him wear sack-cloth!"

A big native laughed and leaped for a pile of bags. He found two to his liking and threw them disdainfully at Archer. Dumbly, the ex-efficiency expert took them and started down the beach without another glance at those around him. But Irish laughter and trilling, musical shrieks of mirth followed in his wake. He turned his puffed and bleeding face toward it.

"I'll be back!" he vowed. "I'll be back and settle this with you, McGarrah. Plenty! Just wait until the first boat gets here, and I'll jump to Tahiti and have French law on you!"

He could see it now—a French gun-boat; or perhaps a French bombing plane or two—winging down to bring justice to Okeloa!*

*Disposition of the French island possessions in the South Seas is now pretty much up in the air. Since the French armistice with Germany and Italy, France's status as a colonial power must wait in abeyance until a peace conference. In the meantime, the Japanese have tentatively put forward a new "Monroe Doctrine for East Asia", which takes in the South Seas as well, and this confuses matters all the more.

Until the end of the European war, we must assume that France continues to police her Pacific island possessions, and this applies as well to the Dutch, whose government continues to run the very valuable Dutch East Indies from London.—Ed.

He walked slowly along the beach and followed the bend that the white sands made to the north and out of sight of the settlement.

He murmured, "I'll be back for you, too . . . Muriel. You'll respect me yet!"

CHAPTER IV

Okeloa's Bum

FOR two days and nights, Paul Archer kept close to the natural hideaway he had found—a cave that was high in the mountainous northern section of Okeloa. He slept the sleep of the exhausted and beaten, leaving his cool den only to drink from a nearby spring and to munch on raw plantains and eat wild berries.

Once, he considered going back to the settlement and seeking out Tim McGarrah to arrange some sort of truce. He could convince the man, he thought, that he could be trusted for advances of matches, food, clothes and other necessities. *And gin!*

But as four days passed and his stubble of dark beard grew longer and his usually sleek hair more matted, he gave it up. The sacking he had been provided with was now fashioned into rude shorts; and that was the finisher.

"A bum!" Archer summed up his appearance. "A bum. But I'll be a dead bum, by God, before I give McGarrah and the rest of them another chance to sneer at me!"

The third day he spent in clearing a place for himself in front of the cave, and then he went to his secluded strip of beach and dug for clams in the sand. He ripped these open after shattering the shells with stones, and drank deep of the tangy juices and gulped down the succulent meat hungrily. Then he stripped off his sack-trunks and

plunged into the surf for a swim.

The unaccustomed physical work had weighted his arms and legs as if with lead; but now unused muscles, neglected and fat-layered muscles, were coming back into play—and liking it. The raw red burn of the sun on his skin had given way to a steadily deepening brown . . . and his hair grew longer and more matted, and his beard thicker. He frisked in the surf with a zest he hadn't known since his college days.

He took a long, running wave expertly up onto the beach and stretched out on his back to dry in the sun. When he arose after a sleep, he picked up his sacking and walked slowly up the path toward the cave, the pangs of hunger gnawing at his stomach. He was lost in reverie as he thought of olden times . . . of money to buy what he wanted when he wanted it . . . of men and women who respected him.

"At least, they acted as if they did!" he recalled. "I wonder!"

He was entering his clearing when something shot up from the ground in front of him. Archer roared his dismay and jumped for a tree. Once behind it, he struggled into his shorts. He came out then, his eyes hard and his lips a straight line in his face.

"Well, what do *you* want?"

It was Morua.

The girl hung her head and stammered:

"I—I have b-brought you some things to eat, *Popaa* Paul; and many things which you will need so you can live here until the boat comes."

Archer opened his mouth to tell her off, but his eyes swept to the ground in front of the cave. Slabs of pork, luscious fruits, plantains ready for roasting, and a dozen other victuals that abounded on the island, were neatly stacked alongside a Maori oven the girl was digging.

Matches, wood, leaves and stones were neatly regimented nearby.

Archer felt the girl's eyes on him and he met them.

"I look fine, don't I?" he asked ironically.

Morua expertly marked the muscles that were working back to condition through the melting layers of fat. She approved the washboard of muscle that showed at his midriff. His sturdy, strong legs were spread to hold his frame in a natural but poised-for-action stance.

"Um, fine!" the island girl agreed.

ARCHER said, "Don't get fresh, I know how I look!"

He licked his lips and turned his head away, but he was lost when he looked back again.

"When do we eat?" he asked with boyish enthusiasm.

"I was waiting," Morua said simply, "for you to come. I shall show you how to make an oven—a Maori oven . . . how to cook plantains. Also, I have a knife for you. There are wild pigs in the hills that you can catch and kill and eat. Nice?"

"Not nice," Archer said, his eyes hungry on the girl's preparations. "But it will do."

He wolfed the food under her delighted eyes, and when the meal was over, she produced a small package with a cry of triumph. Cigarettes!

"I, myself, made two painted baskets in trade for these," she said proudly. "Smoke, *Popaa* Paul. Smoke, and blow rings for Morua, as *Popaa* Tim can do!"

Archer puffed slowly until the giddiness of his first smoke in days had worn off. Then he asked:

"You like McGarrah, eh? Why?"

"He is good," she said simply. "He helps the sick people and gives of food

to those who are old, and he has great barrels of candy for the children."

"Just a red-headed Santa Claus," Archer sneered. He looked at the girl. "I'll send you back some cash, when I get to Tahiti, in payment for this."

Her eyes were hurt, but she didn't let him see it. Archer got to his feet and stretched, twisting his head slowly as he did. He turned to an immobile statue suddenly, his eyes growing larger and larger as he stared down at the harbor far below.

"A ship!" he screamed. "A ship! McGarrah lied when he said there wouldn't be one for six months. There's a ship!"

He started down the path at a run, then halted and came back. But not to Morua. He plucked the spare sacking he had been given from where it hung on a tree branch. It had a neck-hole, and two arm-holes. He slipped the thing on so that he looked like a caricature of Robinson Crusoe.

"I'll just let the authorities see how Tim McGarrah fixes up shipwrecked people on this island. A nice, comfy little tropical overcoat, what?"

He raced down the path toward the beach.

THE sailing ship *Southern Cross* knifed through the narrow slot in the reef with all the cocky assurance of a man-o'-war blazing through a mine field that its spies have charted out for it.

On his veranda, Tim McGarrah took a long drag of his rum punch and narrowed his eyes on the rakish, speedy lines of the black-painted ship.

"I smell trouble," he said, climbing to his feet. "Even the French patrol boats stop outside the reef and launch a longboat! Who is this that knows my nest so well?"

He grinned, then. "Oh, well, a ship of that size carries a crew of only six

. . . and damned if I couldn't handle them meself, should the occasion arise!" He started for the wharf.

Muriel, looking coolly exotic in a playsuit of shorts-and-jacket that McGarrah's native helpers had made from bolts of cloth to her order, walked along at the big man's side. Her only jewelry was two sapphire eyes *and* three beautiful pearls from McGarrah's collection that she had strung on a strip of shark-gut. The shark-gut left plenty of space for additions . . .

"Poor little me!" Muriel was mourning prettily. "Now that the boat has come, I'll have to go away from my Tim!"

McGarrah and his pretty companion had reached the wharf. The Irishman slowed his pace to a halt, his eyes keen under bushy brows, and growled,

"Not with *that* crew you don't sail, colleen! Not with any wan of the *twelve* of thim!"

NATIVES were *hallooing* to one another and coming on the run, because boat-day at Okeloa was always an event. Now, however, they slowed and gathered in a silent, watchful group behind the trader.

The boat was hiking around scant inches from the wharf in as neat a tacking move as McGarrah had ever seen. There was scarcely a bump as the side of the sailing ship kissed the wharf.

There on deck, their evil faces somehow matching their black boat, were an even dozen of as tough-looking a gang as you could find in the South Pacific. Lolling in a deck chair in the stern-sheets was a husky, blond, flat-faced man whose pale blue eyes never once left Muriel May's shapely figure.

McGarrah licked his lips, but his eyes were cool when the motley crew swarmed ashore and turned to stare at him. He asked, a whiplash in his voice,

"Who is your master?"

Several of the sailors growled. Another cracked,

"Hey, Pete, he thinks we're slaves! He wants to know who our master is! Tell him!"

The man Pete stepped forward, a bandy-legged, heavily muscled figure in hacked-off dungarees and with the wind stirring the hair on his bare chest.

"We're free men. We ain't got a master."

McGarrah's eyes were comically grave.

"Ah, so, now," he mused aloud. "A peculiar ship indeed . . . that it has no master!"

The man known as Pete colored darkly, and the rest of the crew shifted uncomfortably. The man in the stern-sheets arose, his eyes ugly on his crew. But he was smiling affably when he climbed to the wharf and whisked his pith helmet from his stubble-covered, blond, flat-headed skull and bowed.

"Please," he murmured gutturally, "you trick my poor, simple men with words! You mean, who iss captain and owner? It iss I, Hermann Schultz, at your service . . . *Mister* McGarrah."

The Irishman's eyes stood still on the other's face.

"Ye know my name, ye know my harbor—but divil a bit can I place ye!"

Hermann Schultz managed to insult Muriel with a glance.

"Please, it vass desperate sailing."

"By a desperate crew," McGarrah said audibly. "Well—Schultz—what can I do for you?"

"I trade in copra* and pearls," the

*Copra continues as one of the main commercial products of the South Seas, with its coconut oil extract indispensable in many soap, margarine and candle industries. Copra—the dried, broken kernel of the coconut, from which the oil is extracted by boiling and pressing—has afforded many small independent traders like Tim McGarrah a livelihood for many generations in the South Seas.—Ed.

other related with a smile. "I know that you have much of each to trade." His eyes rested significantly on the three matched pearls Muriel wore.

"I don't doubt ye know it," McGarrah said dryly.

The hurried slap of bare feet along the wharf interrupted the talk. All eyes swung; and the natives grimaced and made a wide path for the man who came running up. It was Paul Archer, ludicrous in his beard and matted hair, and the sacking covering his rapidly developing muscles. He paused near Schultz, his breath coming so hard he couldn't speak for a moment. In the interval, Schultz turned puzzled eyes on McGarrah.

"*Who* is this man?"

McGarrah's eyes were hard over his wry grin.

"Ye hadn't been told of him, eh—where ye got the rest of your information?" he shrugged. "A shipwrecked drunk turned beachcomber."

Schultz was turning to speak to his crew when Archer, his breath now controlled, broke in.

"I—want to go to—Tahiti!" he gasped. "I am a survivor of the *Oceania* disaster"—he looked around at Muriel—"as this lady is, also. I will pay you plenty!"

Schultz frowned, his eyes darting swiftly around the group.

Then he asked, "*You* will pay me plenty? What have you to pay me?"

"In Tahiti, I can cash a check. I am—"

McGARRAH laughed aloud. "Doubtless genuine rubber, and guaranteed to bounce back from the bank in record time!"

Schultz lost interest. "Go away, you smelly lout! Go!"

Archer's hand went out to grip Schultz's arm to be heard, believed.

"But I tell you—"

Smack!

Schultz moved speedily for a clumsy-looking man. His right hand came up with a sparkle of jeweled fingers in the sunlight, and he backhanded Archer viciously across the mouth. The beachcomber staggered, blood coursing from split lips, and he gathered his muscles under his sack covering for a rush at the other.

"No, Paul!" a scream rang out, and Morua was there beside him, her eyes on the crew. Archer looked.

The evil-looking sailors were closing in, waiting for some move from Archer. After a moment, the beachcomber shrugged resignedly and turned to go. McGarrah gave him a contemptuous look, but Archer didn't appear to notice.

Pete came forward from the crew, his eyes ravishing Morua's exquisite beauty.

"Hi, Toots!" he croaked at her. "How's for a date?"

McGarrah broke forward, a growl surging up from his chest.

"I'm a trader, Schultz — and not a very particular one, either! But your men will stay aboard ship. I don't want them ashore!"

Schultz said smoothly, "I carry much cash money, of course. I cannot risk it to a storm. I shall stay here at the wharf, with only a guard to be ashore." He smiled. "Do not worry, I have my men under control."

McGarrah shrugged. "So long as you leave room for the French patrol boat, which is due tomorrow or so, you can dock."

His eyes hadn't missed the significant positions the crew had taken up, nor the suspicious bulges at their hip pockets. But talk of money was music to McGarrah.

Schultz smiled broadly. "There shall

be plenty of room for the patrol boat, my friend. We shall not be in the way when it arrives!"

McGarrah turned away with a grunt. The patrol boat had made its semi-annual visit to Okeloa only the week before.

"Take your time," he said carelessly, over his shoulder. "Tim McGarrah has always met a man on his own terms, and he isn't changing now!"

There was a veiled threat in the words, but Schultz only smiled.

"How nize, how *very* nize—McGarrah."

Archer, with Morua close behind him, was a dim figure far down the beach when Tim McGarrah stood on his veranda again and poured himself a drink. The Irishman's eyes were more than slightly disturbed.

CHAPTER V

A Storm Gathers

FOR a full week the *Southern Cross* lay at the dock.

One morning Hermann Schultz strode up to McGarrah's veranda. The Irishman was sprawled at his ease, fanning himself in the hot still air.

"It is time that we get down to business, yes?" Schultz suggested.

McGarrah sighed in disgust. "Well, that's what I'm here for." He took out the little bag of pearls from under his belt and spread them on a table next to his chair.

The owner of the *Southern Cross* proved a tough customer. McGarrah, not liking the man, made his feelings increasingly plain. Schultz took the insults with a shrug of his meaty shoulders.

"But my dear McGarrah, your pearls aren't really good. So I shall buy but one."

He smiled unctuously at Muriel May,

who was listening avidly. He pointed with a stubby finger in her direction.

"Unless you wish to dispose of this one, also?"

McGarrah came to his feet on the veranda with a roar.

"You insulting swine! You heel and cheapskate! You and your jail-bait of a crew, the likes of which no decent man would sail with! For two shreds of copra I would—"

Schultz cut in harshly. "It is you who insult the lady, not I, McGarrah. I was pointing at the middle pearl she wears."

"Be gone with the likes of ye," McGarrah bellowed, his muscles bulging as he neared the ship owner. "You damned, double-talking flathead! I'm minded to flatten that big belly of yours to match your neck and face."

Pete and some of his crew appeared at either corner of the veranda, their hands resting comfortably near the hip pockets of their dungarees.

"Any trouble, Chief?" Pete asked.

"No, no, no," Schultz said hurriedly. He scuttled down and stood with his men. "Pack the copra aboard, men. We will sail with the tide."

It was then that Morua came near and motioned to McGarrah that she wanted something. Muriel stared suspiciously as the girl came closer. When Morua was parallel with Pete, something happened. Pete's arm got careless and swung around the girl's waist. Before the enraged—and bored with being sober!—McGarrah could interpose, Pete's arm bore an imprint of small, even teeth, and then a dainty brown hand flashed in the air and landed accurately on Pete's right eye. The man fell back, cursing.

McGarrah roared and motioned the girl up on the veranda.

"A fine crew ye have, Schultz! Bring 'em back sometime when all the girls

are home and we'll have a nice pillow fight! Ta-ta, ye scum!"

Muriel's eyes followed the men and she said:

"I don't like it, Tim. It somehow doesn't ring true . . . their leaving like this."

"How could scum ever ring true?" the trader dismissed her fears. "In a matter of hours, they'll be gone." He sighed. "I'm glad I got rid of that copra, what little of it they bought." He turned to Morua.

When he heard what she wanted, he eyed her shrewdly.

"You can make him pretty, but you can't make him a man," he said roughly. "Take what you want, colleen—on the house! That was a nice poke you dealt that filthy swab, Pete!"

Morua got the things and left. McGarrah jumped for his booze supply and dragged out an assortment of bottles.

"I haven't dared to drink since those polecats tied up to the wharf," he admitted. "Watch me now!"

Muriel didn't watch. Instead, she joined him and helped knock off two bottles.

WHEN the tide started out later that morning, Tim McGarrah lurched to a window and watched the *Southern Cross* suspiciously. He saw a man casting off, saw the speedy sloop nose out toward the reef.

"That's that," he said, smacking his lips. "Now for another drink, colleen—and then you'll select your daily pearl. McGarrah is a man of his word."

A quiet, ominous voice cut in from the doorway.

"So iss Hermann Schultz, my friend! And I give you my word that if you move so much as an eyelash, it will be my exquisite pleasure to kill you."

McGarrah groaned; but he raised his

arms slowly. Schultz, flanked by Pete and two other cutthroats of the crew, had them covered from the doorway of the *fare*. From nearby in the settlement came a sound of running feet, a rapid fusillade of shots, and the screams of terrified natives.

"Your pearls, first," Schultz said. "Of course, your copra goes also." He bowed in Muriel's direction. "The lady will accompany me to my sloop, where we shall discuss her pearls," he chuckled throatily.

"No, by God!" McGarrah roared, and sprang into action.

A single shot from Schultz's gun raised roaring echoes in the room. When the acrid fumes had cleared, the Irish trader lay face down in a growing pool of blood that flowed from his head. Schultz stooped over him, arose with a sigh.

"I am aging, Pete," he murmured. "It is only a bad scalp wound. Tie him to his bed, and gag him."

"Kill him," Pete suggested grimly. "Finish him now!"

"I remember his insults," Schultz said calmly. "A man like McGarrah will suffer tortures, remembering how our little act on his veranda outwitted him. *And* that his lady was my guest aboard the sloop."

He spat contemptuously in the fallen trader's direction.

"Fool! Deluding himself that I would not beat him!"

Assured steps sounded on the veranda and another of the villainous crew stood there, grinning.

"Got 'em all, Chief! Every last one of them! Had to kill two, though."

"The chief?" Schultz asked.

"Tied up tight."

Screams sounded from the grove of trees nearby: terrified screams that hushed, or ended in long-drawn moans. Schultz inquired with his eyes.

"The *vahines*," Pete said, with a leer. "Maybe some more of them tried to slap the boys! Well—" He winked meaningly.

Schultz said, "Understand, I want everything stowed away under the hatches by tomorrow morning! We run with the next out-tide." He faced Muriel, making a mockery of offering his arm. "You are ready?"

Muriel's eyes were unadulterated disgust as she raked the man with unspoken epithets.

"I must be slipping," she murmured. "I've seen a crummy package of manhood before this—but you beat 'em all, Mister!"

She shook Schultz's arm off and walked slowly toward the wharf.

Pete grunted at his mates. "Where'd that dame of mine go, huh?"

Nobody answered. Pete faced them threateningly.

"Lissen, you swabs, get this—if one of you guys chisels on me, I'll cut your heart out! I seen that little armful first, and by God, she's mine!"

"Cool off," one of the gang said. "She's around, ain't she? Ain't we got every man in the island trussed up and under guard?"

From far away, a rumble of thunder stirred the clouds piled high in the blue skies. A freshening wind touched into the room.

"Let's get started with our work," someone suggested. "There's a storm coming."

"Yeah," Pete leered. "And we got a long day ahead of us!"

CHAPTER VI

The Storm Hits

PAUL ARCHER had swung into the routine of the invigorating life he was leading. He was up with the dawn

and fishing in the surf with a spear—as Morua had taught him to do. Then, clad in the wispiest of breechclouts that he had fashioned from the skin of a pig he had killed, he would race down the private strip of beach he used, the blood jumping in his refreshed veins and his muscles begging for more.

After a hunt for clams, he would don his sacking and take to the woods for plantains and fruits. Then an agile climb up a tall coconut tree for some choice nuts to grate up with his pork, and milk to drink.

Generally, he made places for two in front of his Maori oven; and generally with a wry grimace and a,

“Hell, I guess Little Pesky will show up again for a meal, as usual. Not that I need her help. Any more.”

But twice, when she was slightly later than usual, he couldn't seem to make things go right . . .

NOW, with the food ready, he stood and stared down the vine-clad path.

“If she doesn't show up in five minutes, she doesn't eat! What does she think this is—the Ritz Grill? I'm no short-order cook for anybody!”

Two hours later he was pacing the clearing nervously, the food still untouched, when the girl came running eagerly up the path. Archer whipped around and faced her accusingly.

“Where have you been?”

Her eyes widened, and then she stood very still and looked at the untouched food. She smiled then and unwrapped with great care a package she had brought.

“See!” she exclaimed, holding up the object. Then another: “See!—and . . . see! Scissors to cut the long hair—razor and oil-soap for the tangled beard—and a mirror to look in!”

Archer stared at her. “What did you have to make to get those? A steam-

ship, complete with furniture?”

“*Popaa* Tim gave them,” she told him frankly. “He liked what I did to that foul, horrible Pete, of the boat.” She averted her eyes. “He—he tried to hug me. I gave him what *Popaa* Tim calls a shiner!”

Archer set his head back and roared.

“I'll bet you did, you little spitfire!” He sobered suddenly. “I'd like to see that guy Pete myself!”

He noticed—not altogether casually—her new flesh-tint *pareu*.

Morua shrugged. “They go now, all of them, away. *Popaa* Tim say the other *popaa* is cheapskate and heel. That is bad, yes?”

“Very,” Archer assured her gravely. “I should know. Go on, Morua.”

“Well,” the girl gestured prettily as she explained things, “well, after *Popaa* Tim show all the pearls and all the copra, the *popaa* with the flat head and neck buys—*one!* One pearl, he buys. And now they prepare to sail away. And *Popaa* Tim prepares to—” She broke off, flustered, and bit her lip.

“—to get drunk,” Archer finished it for her. “Lucky guy!”

He blinked his eyes at the harbor far below and picked out McGarrah's *fare*.

“Muriel is still there, of course?”

The girl pretended not to hear. Instead, she clapped her hands with delight and grabbed up the scissors.

“Sit down . . . Paul . . . and we cut the hair.”

“No hot towel with the shave?” Archer asked her airily, as he dropped down on the ground. The hill rang with their laughter for many minutes.

With his hair trimmed in a passable bowl-cut, Morua made a foamy lather of the oil-soap. Archer, after trimming the long beard down, drenched his face in the stuff. He howled mock anguish when the soap got to his eyes; and real anguish when the razor sliced his rough

beard. But when he was through, he looked into the mirror and grunted,

"Who is that 'smooth-faced goat' staring over my shoulder?"

MORUA rolled over and over on the ground, convulsed with laughter, and her supple grace drew his eyes. When she looked up at him, standing there staring at her so gravely, she went into another paroxysm.

"You look *so* funny in the clean face and the short hair and *that*." She pointed at his sacking-shorts.

"Can't be helped," he said. "I have no *pareu*."

She came to her feet in an amazing bound and before he could understand what she was up to, she had run to a tree down the path and came back with a *pareu* in the same natural color as her own.

"Here is one, Paul!"

He blinked. "I'll be damned. You certainly are trapping me into looking respectable, aren't you?"

He grinned and ducked into the cave. When he reappeared he asked indifferently,

"Satisfied? Me, I'll just never get used to wearing one of these Scotch nightshirts."

The girl's eyes weren't so much surprised as they were satisfied — in a measure. She couldn't seem to get enough of looking at him as he stood there, browned and with the sloping line-of-power ramping down his neck to broad shoulders and muscular arms. The washboard of muscle on his belly was pronounced even under the loose-fitting but light material. His thighs bulged with newly reclaimed muscles, too.

"Now we celebrate with a swim," Morua said, after a long moment. Her eyes were anxious on him. "No?"

"Yes. Where?"

"There is a pool around on the other side of the hill," she said excitedly. "It is *oh*, so nice a pool, and it is all mine! My father gave the order no other should use it, since I was a little girl. Cool, the water is, and it lies high above the sea on the very north. I used to say 'It lives in the clouds,' when I was a very little girl!"

"Sold!" Archer crowed, reaching a hand down to help her to her feet.

They made their way slowly through the tangle of vines that matted the way to the island girl's hidden pool, the white man hacking expertly at the *lianas* with his sharp-bladed knife. Morua watched the muscles ripple in his arm and shoulder, and delighted in the liquid power that flowed over his torso with each stroke at the vines.

Archer knew, without actually concentrating on it, that they were circling the mountain. Once, in a clearing, he paused to look back. The harbor was hidden from view, and the wharf and the huts along Okeloa's white beach were now out of sight. Again, he paused, his eyes startled.

Sharp reports and rolling reverberations bounced along the valley below.

The girl frowned her wonder; but Archer's firm, browned chin went up. Thunderheads were making up into a war party of white-plumed clouds. A tang of sulphur smirched the air.

"Thunder," Archer figured the rocking echoes along the valley. "A storm is building up!"

Morua, after another fifteen minutes of silent plodding, gave a glad cry and raced ahead of him to a veritable fence of vines that stood in an oval. It was an amphitheater formed by nature. There was a slight break in the *lianas* to the west, overlooking the boundless blue of the Pacific. Clouds hung in wispy tendrils over the pool, like a mystic halo.

ARCHER gazed down at the ocean, then followed the girl into the enclosure. A gem of a pool of impossibly blue water was there, with a natural walk around it and several feet higher than the level of the water. Mirrored in the surface, the thunderheads seemed below them now. Around them towered the tall *lianas*, shutting the two into a little world of their own.

"Beautiful!" Archer breathed.

Morua threw herself down on the mossy-soft bank and watched Archer's face closely.

"If only that other *vahine*—Muree-el—were with you here . . ."

The memories swept back over Archer and darkened his face.

Morua said, "It is not as if she were the only *vahine* in the world . . . or the most beautiful one!"

She stirred on her back, as if to make room for him next to her.

"Sit here and tell me of her . . . and of how long you have loved your Muree-el."

Archer dropped down and stared at the pool, the girl's eyes anxious on his face.

"I liked her, of course, the first day I saw her. That was the day before the wreck."

Morua's breath all but stopped.

"Ah! Just one day before the wreck!"

He gestured with his hands.

"The night of the wreck, we went up on deck in the moonlight. I . . . kissed her, for the first time; and she said she loved me, and we vowed to marry. Then—then we found a comfy, cushioned divan on that deserted deck, and—" He paused.

"—and she put her arms around you!" Morua said in mock tragedy. "And you kissed, and you hugged, and she was so small and loving in your arms, and—" The question was plain

in her voice, demanding an answer.

"—and we hit the derelict ship," Archer said. "Cross my heart!"

Morua's eyes flew wide and her mouth was an O of astonishment.

"It was then that the *Oceania* struck?" she gasped. Then she squealed uncontrollably and rolled over and over on the ground, her legs kicking with delight. "Oh, what a lovely, lovely ship-wreck!"

Archer stared down at her.

"Why, you damned little heathen!" he breathed.

She lay still a moment, her legs a triangle-pattern with knees raised. Her arms remained stretched behind her head and her breast rose and fell with the maturity of ripened womanhood.

"I am sorry for those others," she murmured contritely, "those others who drowned. But—"

She pushed up on an elbow and said, her face flustered:

"You see, I too have never really known love, given and taken kisses . . . Oh, yes; I did rub noses with a native boy, once; but that was as nothing. I have always hoped, Paul, that maybe the right man would come along to Okeloa—"

"This is where I came in!" he said, tartly, moving to the bank. "I heard another girl say that, on the boat-deck of the *Oceania*. Why don't you gals try a new line?"

He dived in, disturbed more than he admitted to himself. The water tingled his blood with its pleasant shock.

The cause of his inner disturbance, Morua, crinkled her nose in a pretty little smile and followed him into the pool in a graceful, back-arched dive. . .

Archer horsed around in the water, diving and turning cartwheels and racing from bank to bank. He climbed out and turned his eyes on Morua. The girl took up where he had left off, all

the natural talent of the South Sea islander in her water antics.

PAUL ARCHER watched with amazed eyes. She porpoised at knife speed; she went under water for what must have been close to record time; she broke surface with a zooming surge and flipped neatly, so that her body hung in the air like that of some exotically beautiful flying fish.

A snap of her head and she was under again in a back dive. When she came up, it was with her hands soaring to the side of the pool to pull herself out of the water, all in one graceful, easy motion.

Archer couldn't take his eyes from her. . .

Morua raised her arms to fix her hair back. She smiled at him innocently, unaffectedly, when she felt his eyes on her . . . but her eyes had more than a touch of assured pride. Her young bosom rose and fell with her breathing, and her supple torso was a poem of motion as she moved to shake the water from her hair.

Suddenly she quieted, her hands motionless at her hair, her eyes on Archer's regenerated physique. She too colored now, her eyes wide. For this white man was handsome . . . handsome as a young god. Her lips parted as if to speak, but they didn't. Her breathing came shallow and irregular through them. For a full minute they stood thus, their eyes trying impossibly to drink their fill of one another. . .

Thunder rumbled again, nearer this time, with its warning urge. The two awoke as if from a trance and slowly came to one another.

The girl's arms raised naturally, and her eyes were a tender glow of love. Archer enfolded her pliant waist with an arm and tilted her chin up with his hand. Her lips were ripe and soft and

opened like the petals of a precious rose. Her breath fluttered through them like the flutterings of a timid bird. She acceded to the urge of his arm and came close against him; but rigidly, reservedly. Deliberately, he bent his head and covered her lips.

For a moment, the girl stiffened involuntarily and flight was plain in her. All creation seemed to hang in the balance, to stand still. A *mynah* bird broke the spell with a trilling, seductively sweet note. Archer whispered through the kiss:

"Morua!"

She drew her lips from him then, but with a gentleness and a reluctance that promised their immediate and cooperative return. Her eyes were languorously huge of pupil as she caressed his hair, his eyes, his mouth, his virile physique with them.

He said huskily, "I . . . thought I knew what love could be like. What a fool I was!"

She whispered, "It is I whom you hold; but Mu-ree-el you are thinking of!"

When his eyes didn't waver from her own, Morua stroked his hair with a gentle hand, slid it down to fondle the nape of his neck.

"Why do I stop kissing you—when I want never to stop kissing you?"

He tried to put her abruptly from him.

"Because you have sense!"

She shook her head. Her voice was faint and perplexed when she said,

"The heart is strong, but the knees are weak! They—they tremble so."

Archer tried not to look at her.

"You're a mind-reader! My knees *are* weak!" He fixed his eyes over her shoulder.

The girl twisted her head, and he didn't realize how aware he had been of her warmth against him until she

moved away. She sank down onto a tangle of *lianas* with heady scent rising from soft, scarlet, trumpet flowers beneath her naturally arching back. Her head and neck were supported to a full view of the ocean by the curve of the vines up a near tree.

ARCHER came and stood over her, his eyes on the girl. A pulse beat heavily in his throat at her innocent, unashamed display of her lush beauty. He felt the blood surge to his brain. Her eyes turned then, ranged slowly and lovingly up his powerful frame. They were troubled when they met his eyes.

"What?" he asked.

"I am testing myself," she smiled softly, "to see how long it is I can keep my lips from you! It—it is dangerous to want anything so as I want your kisses!"

His eyes capitulated. "That's no test," he whispered. "You were out of reach of them!" He sank down beside her and she came inside his arm.

He tilted her head back into the crook of his arm and turned on his side to study her eyes, her nose, her mouth, her chin. The rosiest of rosy-tan ear lobes peeked out of her blue-black hair at him. He bent her head and kissed it, then looked at her.

"Am I thinking of *Mu-ree-el* now?"

"I — don't know!" she murmured through her slightly parted lips, without opening her eyes.

He cradled her head in his hands then, and looked down at her. He dropped his lips suddenly to hers and for a brief moment her mouth went rigid again. Then it softened, became full and ripe under his own, and moistly sweet as some incomparable, never-before-tasted fruit. He asked through the kiss,

"Am I thinking of Muriel *now*?"

She managed a shrugged, "I don't

know" against his chest. He had his answer when he made as if to draw his lips away. Morua's hands reached up and held him, and her full lips awoke with a compulsion of their own.

Archer clutched her fiercely to him and she smiled at him through half-closed eyes. His ardor soared to a new peak and her arms tightened about him as she met his embrace with innocent abandon.

The halo of clouds dropped lower and encircled the lovers. . .

DUSK had lowered when they came hand in hand along the beach toward the settlement.

Morua asked troubledly, "You are *sure* you want to come here, to the settlement?"

Archer's laugh was reassuring.

"My getting out of this fix I'm in is a man's business, Morua. Leave it to me!"

She took his arm as they rounded the bend in the beach. Archer was staring out into the harbor. The *Southern Cross* was beyond the reef, riding her anchors, and from the set of her in the water she was partially loaded. The man frowned.

"I thought they didn't buy any *co-pra*?"

"Maybe a little, they bought," Morua offered.

They came to the quiet settlement, absorbed in one another. It was not until the girl clutched fiercely at his arm and started a scream that Archer saw those men closing in on them . . . part of the crew of the sloop, and armed to the teeth. Pete led them.

"I'd forgotten you," he snarled, his eyes on Archer. He turned to Morua. "But not you, babe! Schultz stopped us loading because he is afraid of the storm. He pulled beyond the reef, where he'd be safer. So we got nothing

to do until morning, honey! Ain't that nice?"

Archer pushed Morua behind him.

"Where is McGarrah?" he asked.

"What is this all about?"

Pete's eyes widened on the erstwhile beachcomber.

"My, my, but we got a nice build, ain't we?" He said through the side of his mouth, "The crusher, boys! Let him have it!"

Archer moved to put up a fight, but one of the crew had slid behind him. A clubbed automatic rose and fell almost unseen against the gunmetal sky, and Archer went down on his face. Morua screamed when he didn't move.

"Paul! Oh, my Paul!"

PETE eyed her evilly. "The boy friend, hah? Okay, we fix it." He snarled, "Row this lug out to the reef and tie him there! Let the waves get him! I got an idea this gal likes that big swab too much. Also, I got an idea I'd be happier if he died slow! Get going!"

"But the seas are coming up!" a sailor protested.

"Get going!"

When they started, Pete called after them,

"Me and the babe will be at McGarrah's, having a drink. You guys stay clear until I send for you. Get it?"

Roughly, Pete dragged the fighting, sobbing girl along with him. . .

THE sloop pitched and rolled and Muriel fell off the chair in Schultz's cabin. The now thoroughly drunken pirate had just been reaching his hand out for her.

"Too bad, my dear," he said. He hiccuped loudly. "Come sit on papa's lap!" He leered at her. "Papa Schultz won't drop you!"

"I'll drop you, if you lay a paw on

me again!" the girl snarled.

"There iss yet time," Schultz grinned. "Always, I take my time!"

CHAPTER VII

Thunder Over Okeloa

ARCHER'S consciousness had been returning as the longboat put out from the wharf; but he lay very still in the bottom of the boat and figured his chances. He'd been unconscious when Pete had ordered his death.

"If I make a move now, they'll finish me," he reasoned. "I'm probably being taken to the sloop . . . so I'll wait my chance."

But when the longboat pitched and tossed close to the reef, and two men slipped overside and started shouting noisily over the best place to tie him, Archer's heart tunked over with despair. He was moving to get up, to meet his death fighting, when a man overside yelled:

"I got the foot and hand irons sunk into two chunks of coral. Pass him over!"

It was too late, then. Grimly as he fought, Archer's captors only laughed and punched him dizzy. Then he was in the surging waters, his wrists and ankles tight with a cruel and fast knot of the lines. The longboat turned its prow to shore and scudded away on a long comber.

Dark was falling rapidly with the storm, and in another moment a screen of rain blotted out view of the shore. The sloop was lost in the curtain of black that crept in from the sea.

Archer struggled in a mounting panic for a few moments, but finally he knew he must keep calm.

"If the waves don't cut me to ribbons on the coral, I'll have a nice death by drowning after all," he mused ironically.

"That's fate! I miss the *Oceania* drowning to get it this way!"

But something else was fighting for recognition in his brain — something that went like this: "*Nuts, you are fated to live! If you could outwit the Pacific in the wreck, why can't you again?*"

He took deep breaths as each succeeding wave hammered at him and sought to batter him under, and his lung-buoyed body managed to keep a slight space between its flesh and the razor-sharp edges of coral that waited for him scant inches away.

"That stuff would cut anything," Archer knew. "It would cut—"

He broke the thought short with a yell of inspiration. It cost him a mouthful of water as another wave lashed at him; but an idea had been born in him. Dangerous, yes; fatal for him if he missed, maybe; but there was a chance!

"That stuff will cut anything!" he grunted. "Well, maybe it will cut these lines—if I can work the thing right!"

He couldn't pull up on the lines either way, to force them hard against the coral they were bent on. Not the way they were tied. Unless old rope had been used. New rope would shrink somewhat with the first wetting; but old rope would stretch, under pressure. Archer put on the pressure, first at his ankles.

He wound his wrists around as far as he could, taking up a bit of the slack. Then, with the next wave, he arched his body to make a natural scoop for the water, and he surged his weight with the wave.

He screamed out with the pain of it when the lines jerked, and when his head came above water he had to fight hard for his breath. His arm and ankle sockets felt as if they had been riven in two. But he steeled himself for the

next wave, and tried again. A merciful numbness settled on him after the fifth wave. And then he sank his teeth into his lips to keep from shouting his triumph!

The lines were noticeably lengthened; and now came the dangerous part. The lines, formerly taut, held him off the coral. Slack now, they would let the waves run him over and over the jagged coral growth like a piece of meat in a delicatessen's slicer. But he had to risk it.

With the next wave, he let himself go limp. His feet and hands and back touched the jagged stuff and with grim determination he forced his ankles—and the rope that bound them—up and down the sharp spikes. Then the water receded as another wave made up, and he gathered himself for a repetition.

HE could feel the edges making gashes in his ankles and on his toes, but he couldn't see the red that must be staining the water nor could he feel any more pain. Again and again he worked it, and then suddenly a wave threw him feet foremost toward the beach. His feet were free!

Archer resisted; then when the ebb came, he threw himself under water and pulled on his wrists, lashing out with his feet at the same time. Working frantically as the next wave rolled hard and fast for him, he rubbed raw patches in his wrists and arms. A strand gave, and then another, and then the wave was on him.

Archer tried to cling for another try, since his wrists were still bound. But it was no go. The wave hurled him back and above the reef and the line broke; but his wrists were still tied fast, and his arms useless against the battering of the wave. He went under, struck the sandy bottom hard, and then cart-wheeled over and over. When he came

up, he was gasping for air.

He was shoulder deep, and another comber was curling high over him. Archer's days spent in the surf came to his aid now. He timed the cresting wave, then threw himself forward with it, let it pick him up as in a giant scraper. Tied wrists extended before him, he thrashed in the charging waters for the beach.

The wharf loomed up suddenly, and Archer had to throw himself hard to the right to keep from dashing his brains out on the pilings. He ended up on the beach, high up where the wave had cast him. For a long moment he lay utterly still under the rain, his eyes squinted into the gloom. Some of the crew from the *Southern Cross* might be on watch nearby!

He was about to struggle to his feet when a loud wailing broke from the nearby warehouse—a wail of natives, followed by savage curses and the sounds of a scuffle. A voice shouted, so close to Archer's head that he all but yelled his surprise:

"Give it to the lousy brownies, Slim! Belt 'em all quiet, an' then we can have our fun!"

Archer twisted his head when he dared. There, not twenty feet from him, was the wharf. And looming darkly under the wharf—as a protection against the rain—was one of the sailors, obviously a lookout.

Archer figured, "The warehouse is the place the natives are being kept prisoner in! If only I can get this cut-throat on guard here—"

Grimly, Archer worked his wrists, but his eyes never left that slouched figure that stood by the pilings on the sand under the wharf. At long last his wrists were free. He rubbed feeling back into them, then rolled onto his stomach and slithered closer and closer to the wharf. A light flared suddenly,

sending him flat and tense. It was the guard, lighting a smoke. In the flame of it, Archer caught a glint of metal on the man's left hip.

"A southpaw! Armed! Well, if I come up on his left side, and he sees me first, he'll have to half-turn to take a shot. Maybe—"

He slithered on until he was all but under the man's feet. A sharp flash of lightning laid the surrounding area clear as daylight. The guard, a husky Lascar, had his eyes shut against the glare of the flash. Archer came to his feet with what was almost a laugh of joy and struck with all his power. . . .

Five minutes later, Archer shuffled along the wharf, his eyes keened and his frame clad in the tied-and-trussed Lascar's clothes.

A SHADOWY figure loomed along the warehouse door.

"That you, Mikko?" a gruff voice challenged him.

"Yeah," Archer said in a hoarse croak. "Say, is old Tuomi—the chief—in here with the rest of them?"

"Sure, you dope," was the astonished answer. "All the natives." A chuckle sounded. "The *men* natives! The others are—"

There was a choked silence, and then the guard caught on fast, his voice nasty.

"Hey, you ain't Mikko! Who are you, you blasted swab?"

"You'll never know," Archer said gently, as he fired from the hip.

The guard went down with a slug in his heart.

Archer sprang for the locked doors of the warehouse. He found the lock and calmly shot it away, then pushed the doors wide into the black, silent void within.

"Come, Tuomi," he called, in the language that Morua had taught him. "The

hour of revenge is at hand!"

The natives came out with a roar that lost itself in the roll of thunder.

CHAPTER VIII

Hell to Pay

SCHULTZ, being drunk, walked fairly straight on the pitching boat beyond the reef. His stumblings were equalized by the roll and pitch of the sloop. Muriel May eyed him intently and tried to knot her sundered skirt about her waist.

"What a mauling!" the girl breathed viciously. "You shoulda been a wrestler, Schultz!" She evaded his hands and ducked around the table. "But you haven't got me yet!"

Schultz belched magnificently.

"I drink," he announced. He sat down.

He was picking up the bottle when a new, sharper sound pushed itself over the thunder. Muriel's eyes widened.

"Shooting?" she asked.

"Maybe," Schultz agreed with unconcern. "Pete is killing them all off. And maybe—"

He paused, his eyes narrowed on the girl. Despite his drunkenness, he was concerned suddenly. His eyes squinted in a frown.

"I t'ink I sober up," he said. "That beachcomber! I forgot him!"

"Keep forgetting him," Muriel said disdainfully. "He doesn't count."

"Nevertheless, I get sober," Schultz declared.

He raised his voice in a bellow for his two crew members aboard the sloop.

"Charlie! Jake! Bring some coffee!"

He lunged again, viciously, and Muriel skittered inches beyond his reach.

PETE finally corked the bottle and roared,

"Come to papa, babe, come to papa! Siddown. Here." He patted a knee. "Aw, come on before I make you come on!" He reached a hand in Morua's direction.

In his bedroom, where he was lashed to the door, Tim McGarrah had heard the start of it with impotent rage. He surged at his bonds, but they held. Then, through the hours, he listened to Pete's rustling as the man went through McGarrah's closets and drawers, helping himself to anything that struck his fancy. Pete's attack on his liquor made him even madder.

But when the evil-faced man turned his attention at last to Morua, McGarrah bellowed his fury.

Pete laughed. "The big goon sorta likes you himself, huh? Well, well, well!"

He grabbed for Morua and caught the girl to his arms. Morua, with memories of Archer's kisses still burning in her heart and mind, fought him savagely.

Pete paused suddenly, his eyes narrowed to slits. Shots—a single one, at first, then a rapid fusillade—lay on the air.

"What the hell—" he swore, turning slowly for the door.

Morua's eyes widened with a wild hope, and her hand flew to her mouth to stifle the outcry she almost made.

Pete looked at her. "What's the matter with you?" His eyes were suspicious. "You know what them shots mean?"

Morua giggled coyly and said,

"Some silly prisoners getting themselves killed, perhaps. *How* could they escape you big, strong men?"

Pete eyed her, interest rekindling in his ratty eyes.

(Continued on page 128)

TREACHERY ON CAMOIA

BY
ALFRED
BESTER

"Come and catch me," Lanie invited. "If you can, the pearls are yours."



Three years Johnny Maverick slaved to earn enough to marry Marian Bennington only to have his best friend turn traitor

JOHNNY MAVERICK turned away from the chessboard and glanced at the high hot sun, mopping his face. He hitched up his shorts and jammed his shirt down under the belt. Riley Riordan, immaculate in white linens, paused long enough to move a Knight across the board, then glanced at Maverick.

"Three years on Camoia," said Riordan, "and not yet patient. I've a lot to teach you still."

"Thus spake the Sage of the Pacific!" growled Johnny Maverick. Shafts of sunlight through the palm-frond awning cast dapples on his back as he paced the length of the veranda, his gray eyes staring out across the sea. How much longer? When would she arrive?

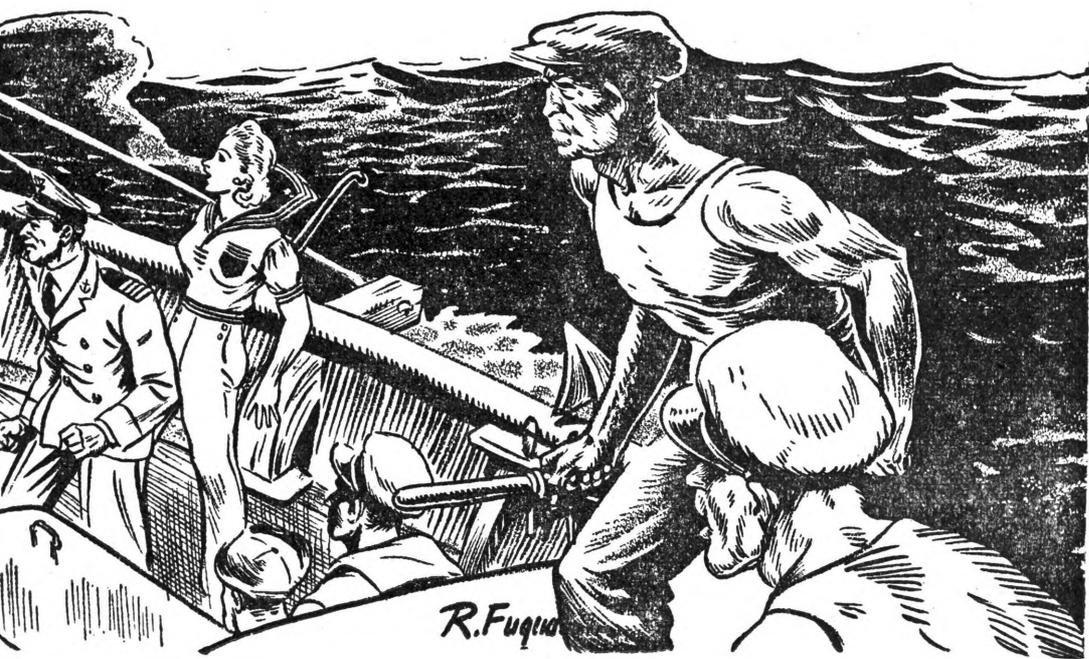
Riordan leaned back in the squeak-

ing cane chair and stretched. He looked like a snowman, all in white, and the touch of silver at his temples stood out sharply against the red-brown weathering of his face.

"Behold this man!" said Riordan to no one in particular. "His wealth amounts to fifty thousand dollars; his fiancée is on the way to marry him; it's a brilliant morning on Camoia Island, cool drinks, and a game of chess with an old friend . . . and he looks as though he'd yelp if I said 'scat.'"

"Behold this aged man," retorted Maverick. "For twenty years King and master of Camoia. Ladling out advice to the young with a bucket. Go to hell, Riley!"

"If you didn't weigh two hundred, I'd spank you," Riordan smiled.



His cigarette case flashed, then snapped. The match flame looked dull. Johnny Maverick re-wiped his face and contemplated his friend. Middle-aged, wise and incredibly, icily sophisticated. No one on Camoia had ever seen Riordan in a sweat, either from temper or temperature.

"I am now," went on Riordan through clouds of cigarette smoke, "going to continue your liberal education. In gratitude for your being second-best chess player on the island."

"I don't want any more education," interrupted Maverick. "I'm a B. A. from Harvard and I'm in love . . . so what the hell?"

"You came down here three years ago and went into business with me." Riordan ticked off his points on slender fingers. "Your fiancée sent you down alone. I don't like that. You've never seen her in all that time. I don't like that either. You're twenty-seven years old and despite all my training, you're still acting like a baby . . . and I don't like that most of all!"

"Are you going to start again?" complained Maverick irritably. His eyes flickered to the veranda table and caressed the silver-mounted photograph.

"Look, son," persisted Riordan. "I'm trying to tell you that people change. That you've changed, adapted yourself to a new life and grown to love it. . . How do you know Marian Bennington is the same girl you wanted once upon a time? How do you know she'll fit in with your life here on Camoia? Maybe you've been mooning over a memory—an ideal. Maybe you never knew what she was really like."

"And that's enough!" snapped Maverick. "We've been through all this before, and I don't want to discuss it any more. Why can't you mind your own blasted business? Just because you've

run Camoia Island since time began, doesn't mean you can arrange *my* affairs! I tell you I love Marian and she loves me. You can take your advice and bury it!"

MAVERICK tried to relax. It wasn't helping his nerves any, to fly off the handle. He stared at the white stucco and smart green shutters of his lovely home and tried to take pride in it. He'd built it with Marian in mind.

He thought of the three tough years he'd put in on Camoia, working with Riordan, and the fortune he had to show for it. He remembered Marian, tall and silver-blond, standing with him at Grand Central Station in New York the day he'd left. Silver hair and electric-black eyes. The imperious curve of her mouth and yet its softness. The way she said:

"Good-by, darling, I'll be waiting . . ."

The very memory of it was an ache.

"Johnny," Maverick told himself, "you don't feel so good!"

Riordan said slowly,

"Sometimes a girl is in love with a man for what he offers her."

"I'm offering Marian nothing but myself," cut in Maverick.

What was Riordan handing him? He'd been nothing but a swell Dutch uncle up to now. The best pal in the world—

"Plus a cash bonus," Riordan added. "Let's call it a pearl bonus, eh?"

"Now wait a minute!"

Riordan held up his hand as Maverick turned furious. There was a moment of silence while the younger man fought for self-control. A light breeze came up and sifted dancing particles of sand over the broad beach before the house. From inside came fragments of native conversation and a soft laugh as Maverick's boys prepared lunch.

"It's common knowledge all over the island," said Riordan at last. "Everybody knows you took your three years' profit out of the plantation and converted it into pearls. Even the natives think you're crazy. Nobody can understand why you did it, but I do, and I'm going to tell you.

"Fruit plantations mean nothing to Marian. She can't appreciate the value of your share in our plantation—and you know it. You had to buy pearls—jewels—pretty expensive things to make Marian understand that you're rich!"

"All right, you're asking for it!" spat Maverick.

He could not control himself any longer. He reached out and yanked the chair that Riordan was seated on. As the cane and wicker went spinning across the beach toward the sea, Riordan slid easily to his feet and waited.

He said: "Take it easy, son."

Little spots danced before Maverick's eyes as he advanced on his best friend. His knee knocked the chess table spinning and a shower of red and white ivory pieces rattled to the floor. One of the native boys stuck his brown face through the door and stared.

"Easy, son," repeated Riordan soothingly. He sucked on his cigarette. Blue wisps of smoke veiled his steady gaze.

"Easy, hell!" snarled Maverick furiously.

He clutched Riordan by the lapels and his sweaty fingers streaked the white linen. Then something swished behind him and Riordan's chair banged against his bare shins. He let go and grabbed at his bruised legs, hopping with pain.

"Thanks, Lanie," said Riordan. "You came in the nick of trouble."

He caught the eye of the staring house-boy and motioned him to clean

up the veranda. Johnny Maverick turned and eyed the savior bitterly.

Lanie Rochambeau stood on the beach before the house. She smiled impudently and sauntered up to the veranda. Long straight brown legs in shorts, an old white shirt with rolled sleeves and carelessly open at the throat, a shirt that accentuated more than concealed her lithe young figure—that was Lanie Rochambeau.

JOHNNY MAVERICK looked at her expressive dark eyes and the masses of gleaming jet hair combed back of her tiny ears. There were times when she looked more French than native. Certainly, as the daughter of Riordan's dead partner, Pierre Rochambeau, and a lovely native girl in her own right, Lanie was an exquisite mixture of western civilization and the southern seas. Just now Maverick felt like murdering that mixture.

"What's all this?" inquired Lanie. She paused to shake sand from her sandals, then glanced at the two men. "The Damon and Pythias of Camoia in a scrap? What's the world coming to? Should I hit 'im again, Pop? There's the other half of the chair still waiting." She called him "Pop" because Riordan was her foster-father.

"Get a load of Miss Education!" growled Maverick, nursing his shins. "Damon and Pythias! She comes home from Vassar full of culture."

Lanie flushed, then smiled mechanically and studiously examined her sandals. Johnny Maverick wanted to kick himself. Why did he persist in razzing the girl when he knew it hurt her so to be chaffed about being half native? Why was Lanie so sensitive where he was concerned? He glanced up and saw Riordan watching him.

"Hell and damnation!" exploded Maverick. "I'm sorry, Lanie. I'm

damned sorry. You folks know I'm not myself. If only I could pull myself together . . ."

"If only *she'd* get here," added Lanie softly.

She plumped down on the veranda steps and gave Maverick an understanding smile. He felt warmly grateful toward her.

There was a moment's silence. A hundred yards off the white beach, the surf swelled against the coral reefs and sun-capped combers rolled through the narrow channel mouth. Gulls swooped and carried on excited conversations. The murmur of voices from Riordan's private dock out of sight around the cove came to their ears.

That same dock, Maverick thought, where cargo after cargo of rich fruit had been shipped for the past thirty-six months. Riordan and Lanie owned almost all of Camoia. They could have snubbed his offer three years ago, instead of letting him buy in, and then working like demons to help him make good. Lanie, fresh from college, throwing everything aside to help him bring Marian down to this island paradise. And he'd been louse enough to tease her!

Johnny, he told himself, you don't feel so good . . .

"What do you say we take a swim, Lanie?"

It was the best peace offering Johnny Maverick could make. He wanted to tell her how grateful he was, how much she meant to him, but he couldn't. He was afraid he might be disloyal to Marian.

The voices from Riordan's dock waxed louder. Maverick could hear the excited tenor of Ralph Sitwell, Riordan's chief clerk, steward and secretary. Riordan glanced up as he heard the high, nasal British tones, and got slowly to his feet.

Then Sitwell came running around the bend, a quarter of a mile down the beach, and headed toward Maverick's house, sending showers of sand flying at every stride. Sitwell in long British shorts, high woolen hose and heavy shoes. Gangling arms, knobby knees, and a sun-blistered face. He came panting up to the house.

"Mr. Riordan," he called, "there's trouble at the dock."

"So it would seem," said Riordan. "It wouldn't be a boat, would it?"

"Yes, sir." Sitwell caught his breath and went on. "I told them to keep off. Private dock, you know, and all that. But the young lady is very difficult—"

"*Young lady?*" gasped Maverick.

HE left the veranda in a leap that carried him to the beach and sprinted toward the dock. He turned the bend and came up to Riordan's dock. It jutted straight out into the water from the warehouse like an enormous brown plank balanced at one end by a square brown stone.

Moored alongside the dock was a small white schooner. Sun reflections from the water rippled on her sides like quick worms of light. Maverick could see a crowd of natives clustered at the side of the ship. Light brown skins blended with the flash of brilliantly colored sarongs. Excited voices composed a wave of music.

Standing on the wharf before the boat, in the center of a throng of natives was a girl in a white slack suit. A girl with silver-blond hair.

"Marian!" yelled Johnny Maverick.

CHAPTER II

Captain Hogleke

IT seemed as though he had almost forgotten her, with her white-cream skin and full mouth, the straight and

curving line of her thigh and calf.

Then Marian said: "Hello, darling."

Just like that, and suddenly Johnny Maverick remembered the half-forgotten caressing voice. The tones that could leave so many things unsaid.

He took her in his arms and kissed her. The natives crowded around, some yelping and staring, others turning their faces away and giggling. Kisses were unusual on the island. The schooner crew, ten of them in greasy dungarees and torn jerseys, lined the rail. A big man with a cap spat into the water and said something in an undertone. The others laughed.

Sitwell "ahemed!" again. "If you don't mind," he said apologetically. He bowed to Marian, who was readjusting her hair. "I'm terribly sorry, Miss Bennington. Mr. Riordan has explained the misunderstanding. You can dock anywhere on the island you please."

"Riordan?" said Marian. She glanced curiously at Maverick. "Changed your name, darling?"

"No," Maverick laughed. "Meet the King of Camoia Island, my business associate and very best friend—Riley Riordan."

Riordan came up and shook hands.

"Welcome to Camoia," he said. He held on to Marian's hand. "You're even more beautiful than all Johnny's pictures led us to believe."

"Thanks." Marian smiled coolly, returning Riordan's steady gaze.

At last she disengaged her fingers. She turned to the crew still at the schooner rail and rapped out crisp orders. Sitwell began hustling the native crowd off the dock, expostulating in his shrill voice.

Johnny Maverick felt the sun bake his back and looked around with unseeing eyes. Everything seemed wrong, somehow. There was Lanie just com-

ing across the beach to the wharf. It seemed as though she dreaded the first meeting with Marian.

No. This wasn't the way he'd planned it at all . . .

Underneath the commanding tones of Marian's voice, he heard fragments of a conversation. Almost whispers.

Riordan was saying: "Beautifully fascinating, almost poisonous."

And then Sitwell: "You'd better be careful, then."

"When you've been around as long as I have, you'll know how to play with cobras—and enjoy it!"

Maverick turned curiously. Why did Riordan say that? What was he talking about, Johnny Maverick wondered . . .

Lanie came down the wharf and Maverick hurried toward her. He felt proud of Lanie, and his voice must have showed it when he introduced her.

Marian looked at Lanie intently, then her glance shifted to Maverick and paired them. It was almost an innuendo, Maverick thought, and the way Marian looked again at Lanie was like a declaration of war.

"Pleased to meet you," said Marian frigidly. She smiled suddenly at Maverick and took his arm possessively. "Hasn't civilization done wonders down here?" she beamed. "I'm sure your little friend and I will get along beautifully."

Maverick hesitated, then laughed. Surely Marian was only joking, and there was no call for Lanie to stiffen and turn white like that, as though she'd been insulted. He tugged Marian along with him.

"Come on, everybody," he called. "We'll go up to my place for lunch."

BY common consent they left the dock and sauntered along the beach. Riordan took Marian's free

arm and Lanie walked between him and Sitwell.

"A splendid schooner." Riordan was making pleasant conversation in his amiable way.

Maverick glanced at Lanie. She was walking with head lowered, kicking at the sand, hardly listening to Sitwell's high-pitched chatter.

"Oh, it's adequate, as schooners go," answered Marian. "Called the *Lilybelle*, quaintly enough. I chartered her for a song at Lukua. Captain Hoglake practically threw her at me."

"So?" Did he, indeed?" Riordan pursed his lips. "I have no doubt you'd have gotten the boat cheaply anyway. You seem to be a very competent young lady."

"When I know what I want," said Marian, "I usually get it."

She tightened her grip on Maverick's arm and he patted her hand absently. As they reached his house, he suddenly realized that something was in the wind—something that was going to happen. He didn't know just what. He shrugged it off, looking at both the girls and comparing them.

Marian, svelte and curved, seemed so cool and detached. Lanie, with her long straight legs and capable hands, looked like a tomboy at times. It occurred to Maverick that he'd never seen Lanie in an honest-to-god dress . . .

Proudly he showed Marian the home he had built for her, with its great cool living room, bedrooms, study and kitchen. He was a little disappointed at her calm appraisal. He remembered the way Lanie used to come down from the plantation with enthusiastic suggestions every day, while the house was in construction.

As they came back to the living room, Johnny Maverick felt the strange tenseness steal over him again, and then, as he was about to slump into a chair, he

saw a figure standing in the door.

"Stay put, folks," said the man pleasantly.

He stepped through the door, a big burly fellow in a spotted, stained blue jacket, an old yellowed yachting cap on his head. His face, pitted by smallpox, had the texture of sandstone, and his eyes were little granite chips.

"Now don't let's have any trouble," he continued in genial tones. "This is a plain everyday stickup. Sit down, all of you."

Without looking around, he bobbed his head forward. The crew of the *Lilybelle* crowded into the house and spread out behind him. Sunlight glinted on blue-steel gun barrels.

"I suppose you realize what you're doing, Captain Hoglake," said Marian icily. "If you think you can get away with an outlandish robbery—"

"Shut up!" said Hoglake. His small eyes raked the captives and fixed on Maverick. "You're Johnny Maverick?" he said.

"What's it to you?" demanded Maverick.

He eyed Hoglake and his men calculatingly, and wondered what chance he had of making a break. Not much.

"Now look, Maverick," said Hoglake. "I don't want any trouble, see? If you play ball with me, no one's going to get hurt." He slid his hand into a bulging jacket pocket.

"Suppose you tell me what the hell's going on!" rasped Maverick.

"Pearls," retorted Hoglake succinctly. "Just pearls. Get the idea?"

THE .45 in his hand had a mouth like a cavern. Here's a break, Maverick thought desperately. Maybe Hoglake was just guessing.

"You're off your conk, Hoglake," Maverick said. "What would I be doing with pearls? I'm in the fruit

business along with Riordan, here. You want some? I'll give you a lemon."

"Very funny. Ve-r-r-y funny." Hoglelake's rough face broke into a crooked smile. He let the revolver droop languidly. "Only I happen to know you've got fifty grand worth of pearls on you. One of your pals sent me the tip-off, see? So what do you say—do you talk or do we squeeze it out of you?"

"Go to hell!" Maverick swore. "If you know so much, you ought to be able to figure out the rest. You won't get anything from me!"

"Okay, okay!" Hoglelake grinned. "But maybe we will from that babe we brought you." He sneered at Marian.

Maverick glanced around desperately. The room looked like a still-life photograph. Lanie, Riordan and the others were frozen in their chairs.

Two of Hoglelake's men yanked Marian out of her chair. She struggled and screamed until a big, dirty hand was clapped across her mouth. Her silvery hair became tangled as she fought, and her eyes grew distended in frantic appeal to Maverick.

Under the nose of Hoglelake's gun, Maverick trembled with self-control. He watched them strip off Marian's shoes and anklets. There was just the chance that he could make a break for his servants' quarters a hundred yards behind the house. All he had to do was run straight back to the kitchen and then out. There were six husky boys there. Maybe they could help him clean this mess up.

"What d'you say?" Hoglelake groped in his dungaree pockets and produced a box of matches. He knelt at Marian's feet and glanced up at Maverick. "I got plenty of matches—and she ain't got but two feet."

"Okay, Skipper, you win."

Johnny Maverick rose guardedly. All the crew were clustered in the front

end of the room. He motioned to Hoglelake to follow him to the rear corner, just alongside the door to the kitchen. From the corner of his eye he saw that Marian had been released and was running over to Lanie and Riordan.

"They're in a compartment set behind these books," Maverick said—and stepped up behind Hoglelake.

The man was no fool. He kept the .45 six inches from Maverick's ribs and said:

"Fine. Let's have a look at them."

Maverick reached up and pulled out a heavy dictionary, with both hands. He flashed a look at Hoglelake and saw the man's eyes drilling into the dark cavity in the shelves. Now was the break! Maverick pivoted and swung the book in both hands.

It cracked like a flat board on water. Hoglelake coughed and seemed to slide down through a trapdoor. Maverick leaped over him, whipped up the man's pistol and crouched behind the shield of the unconscious body. It was bigger than a sand bag and safer.

"Run!" he shouted to the others.

Hoglelake's men had leaped forward at the blow. Maverick felt the weight of the .45 punch his palm. The powder-smoke whiffed away and seared his nostrils. He saw a sailor shuddering on the floor, clawing at his shoulder.

Maverick stared around. The other sailors were diving for cover. Marian and Sitwell were already through the rear door, but Lanie and Riordan were still in the room. Lanie glared around like a hawk waiting to strike.

"Run, dammit!" Maverick shouted again.

HOGLELAKE'S men were wary of shooting at him, afraid of hitting their captain. But they might realize that Lanie and Riordan would make hostages.

"Lanie, run!"

The .45 shook in Maverick's hand with life of its own. The window over the couch shattered and showered glass on the man behind it. Maverick steadied his right hand with his left and fired carefully at an exposed leg. Splinters and bits of cloth flew and a hand clapped down. The man howled.

Hoglake was coming to. He groaned and twitched. Maverick saw Riordan practically drag Lanie through the rear door, and felt easier. His eyes burned and filled with tears from the pungent powder-smoke. He heard the crew shouting to each other from their concealment, talking up courage for a rush.

"Hah!" roared Maverick. He gathered his legs under him, fired the last three bullets slowly, one to each side of the room, the last down the center. While the shots still echoed, he shucked loose from his shield, leaped up and faded back through the door to the kitchen.

As he turned and left the house to plunge into the deep brush behind it, he heard shouts and the clatter of footsteps. Shots barked, sounding thin in the open air, and bullets whipped through the green growths, flicking the branches. All were wide, yards wide of their mark. Maverick grinned. He'd make it.

Then, though he couldn't be certain, it happened so quickly, he seemed to see a white leg appear just under him. A white-clad leg thrust itself from behind a tree bole. He tripped and floundered, half stunned, to the ground. He tried to crawl to his feet, but in another few seconds figures crashed up around him.

An exultant voice sneered: "Rest a while, baby!" And there was a crushing blow on his head.

He went down for the count.

CHAPTER III

Doublecross

SAND gritted Johnny Maverick's face and the taste of blood was stale in his mouth. He groaned softly and felt the waves of blackness sweep out of his brain, to leave a horrible throbbing in the roof of his skull.

Johnny, he told himself, you don't feel so good.

He waited until some of the sick dizziness subsided and then managed to creak over on his back. His legs were tied too. He was lying halfway down the beach before his house. A shadow eclipsed the glare of the noon sun, and he saw a sailor in greasy singlet and ducks standing over him.

"Yuh had quite a nap!"

Maverick said nothing.

There was the sound of ripping, tumbling things coming from the house: the dull plops of books being slammed to the floor and the crash of dumped-out drawers. Presently he heard angry cursing, and Hoglake followed by two men appeared on the veranda.

Hoglake scowled, dropped painfully off the veranda and trudged through the sand to where Maverick lay. His body made the outline of a huge bear against the sky, and the dazzle of the sun formed a kind of halo around his head. That was funny, Maverick thought, a crook with a halo.

"Okay, Maverick," said Hoglake, barely suppressing his fury. "I didn't want trouble, but if it's got to be, I'm going to give you the damndest bellyful you ever had in your life. Now—where are those pearls?"

In the silence, Hoglake kicked him heavily in the ribs.

"Where you got them hid?"

Maverick shook his head. Hoglake kicked him savagely. In the kidneys,

in the belly, chest, arms and legs. The toe of his heavy shoe pounded like a sledgehammer. Blood gushed from Maverick's nose. . . .

As from a great distance a sailor spoke up.

"They got the boat offshore now, Cap'n," he said. "Maybe we ought to work on him there. We kin make him talk, all right."

Hoglake panted, then waved his arm brusquely. Maverick managed to screw his head around. The *Lilybelle* had been worked around the cove from Riordan's wharf, and was dropping anchor just inside the coral reefs.

A dinghy was dropped and rowed in. They picked Maverick up and dumped him to the flooring, then pulled back to the ship where they yanked him up the gangway and slammed him down on the deck. Hoglake stood over him again, and slowly the burly man took off his blue jacket.

"I've been around some," he said, "and learned a few things. I'm going to teach 'em to you."

Maverick's shirt, socks and sandals were stripped off and he was spread-eagled across a hatch cover, naked but for his white trunks. Hoglake snapped commands and a man rushed below, to reappear with a blowtorch and a wooden-handled gaff.

As they kindled the torch and began to heat the gaff, the man Maverick had shot at the house lurched forward, his shoulder a gory mess, and squatted beside Maverick's head. There was a malevolent look of anticipation on his face.

THE ropes that pinioned Maverick's hands were slack. He tugged at them but the hemp was heavy. He could move each hand perhaps ten inches. Enough to let him struggle. The blowtorch roared and the smell of burn-

ing iron came to his nostrils.

"You going to talk?" said Hoglake, his small eyes narrow and vicious.

Maverick shook his head. The man with the bloody shoulder moved aside a bucket of water to get closer and watch the agony on his face.

"Give him a sample," snarled Hoglake.

The sailor came up with the gaff, its hook a dirty red. He stood over Maverick for an indecisive instant; then suddenly, almost carelessly he pressed the glowing iron to Maverick's chest.

It felt cold.

Then searing masses pressed down and ripped Maverick's chest open. He gasped and his muscles shook in a palsy of rigid self-control. He tasted blood in his mouth again, and salt sweat. There was the smell of burning flesh. His eyeballs started from their sockets and he thought he would retch. . . .

Centuries later Hoglake snapped his fingers. The gaff was gone.

"You going to talk?"

Maverick opened his eyes. He saw a sheath knife at the belt of the wounded man grinning over his head. The knife was close to his pinioned hand, but not close enough.

"You going to talk?" They were heating the iron again.

If only he could bring the wounded sailor close enough so that he could get his hand on that knife! There was enough slack on his bonds to twist his wrist and sever the hemp that bound it.

The gaff came forward again. Hoglake stepped back, breathing heavily, but his face was expressionless. Maverick screamed. He tried to make it realistic. He let his head drop back on the hatch heavily and shut his eyes.

"Get the water!" he heard Hoglake say.

The clank of dipper in bucket, then the splash of luke warm water in his

face. Maverick felt a greasy shirt brush his hand. He probed gently until his fingertips brushed a belt. The body concealed his hand from the rest of the crew. Maverick explored with trembling fingers until he found the haft of the knife. Gently, almost tenderly he slipped it from the sheath.

He opened his eyes to a slit and saw that Hogleke and his men were staring away from him, gazing down into the water alongside the schooner. Swiftly he sliced the rope. He would have to work fast!

He almost dropped the knife when he saw Riordan come up the gangway a moment or two later.

"What the hell do you want here?" demanded Hogleke.

"Robbery is one thing, Captain Hogleke," said Riordan suavely, "but inhuman torture is quite another."

"Get the hell off my boat," growled Hogleke. "I don't want to push you around. The boys tell me you've been useful. Okay, and thanks. But you better get the idea that I ain't playing tiddewinks. Not when it comes to fifty grand."

Maverick didn't listen any more. He twisted down and cut the ropes at his feet. His chest burned and tore. He kept hearing:

"The boys tell me you've been useful." *How* had Riordan been useful?

Then suddenly, with a last wrench, Maverick was free.

HE tried to roll softly off the hatch cover, but he was stiff and landed with a dull thump. The man with the shattered shoulder heard the noise and turned, then yelled hoarsely. Hogleke and his men whirled.

Maverick crossed the deck in two steps and leaped to the rail. One wild look around he made to get his bearings. Below him was the outrigger that had

brought Riordan. He'd have to clear that. Halfway across the lagoon was another outrigger, paddled by a solitary native.

Maverick snapped his knees and knifed far out into the water, with gun explosions spitting behind him. He twisted in the blue-green depths, glanced up to see the ship's hull shimmering above him, and swam to the rudder post under the overhang of the schooner's stern. He lifted his head above water.

"Burk! Casey!" Hogleke was shouting. "Get on the seaboard rail and keep watch. He might swim under the ship!"

Maverick steered toward shore. The half-moon brand on his chest burned like fire in the salt water. He couldn't swim a hundred yards underwater to the beach.

"You there—Hey!" Hogleke's bellows sounded just overhead. Maverick hugged the stern. "Hey! Get that damned boat outa here!"

Maverick squinted across the water to where Hogleke had shouted. Fifty yards off, between schooner and shore, was the single outrigger manned by a native in a big straw sunhat. If only Hogleke hadn't scared the boy into paddling away too quickly! Maverick might be able to do fifty yards underwater, swim the rest of the way with the outrigger screening him from the ship.

He breathed quickly to load his lungs with oxygen and slipped beneath the surface.

Deep, he had to swim deep. There was the glitter of sun on the waves that would prevent them from seeing his shadow, but he couldn't take the chance of breaking surface.

The burn on his chest drove knives into Maverick at each stroke. The seconds ticked off, and he thought his lungs would burst. He craned his neck up-

ward until at last he saw a shadow overhead and the sparkling dip of a slow-moving paddle. He came up cautiously, head close to the boat, and took a breath. The outrigger was between him and the schooner.

"Hey," he called softly, "take it easy."

In the next moment he choked and his heart leaped. The native boy was Lanie, smiling down at him from under the big sunhat. Lanie in a sarong, and pretty as a picture.

"Easy," she murmured. "They're watching me like hawks. Just swim alongside and I think we'll make it. There's a gun on the seat behind me."

But Hogleke roared from the *Lily-belle*:

"There he is—behind that damned canoe!"

A volley of ragged shots ripped out from the schooner and slapped the water around the outrigger. Lanie bent and swayed as she dug her paddle into the water. A second burst of shots spat, and Maverick heard a "chunk-chunk" sound as the slugs hit the boat. Lanie snatched up the gun.

"They hit the boat!" she said. "Move over, Johnny, we'll have to swim for it!"

She slid into the water, tearing off the sunhat that made too bright a target. As they swam swiftly toward the beach, Maverick threw a quick look over his shoulder. The dinghy was already in the water, its oars gangling over the surface like spider legs. Hogleke kneeled in the prow. Shots skipped across the water like wild fish.

THEY reached shore barely thirty yards ahead of their pursuit. As they waded up to the beach, Maverick saw Riordan in his own outrigger abreast of the pursuers' dinghy, the native boys paddling strenuously. Then

he and Lanie ran across the sand and plunged deep into the island jungle.

Hogleke and his men came after them a few minutes later. Maverick heard Riordan's clear voice calling, directing the pursuit.

"*The boys tell me you were useful!*"

Hogleke's words echoed again in Maverick's ears, over the crashing sounds of the pursuers, and suddenly he remembered a white-clad leg tripping him up. It just didn't seem possible. Riordan would never double-cross him. It wasn't in the man's makeup. Still . . .

Lanie had halted. They stood and listened tensely. Riordan's voice still called clearly:

"There they go—this way. Follow me!"

But his voice sounded farther and farther to one side!

Lanie smiled and sank down, her breasts trembling under her sarong.

"You hear, Johnny?" she gasped. "He's sending them off on a false trail!"

It was true. And, being true, Maverick was more puzzled than ever. Had Riordan really tripped him? Why? If he wanted to betray him, why did he cover up their escape now? What kind of a game was Riordan playing anyway? To Johnny Maverick, the whole thing just didn't make sense.

He took the gun from Lanie and instructed her to meet him in the brush behind his servants' quarters. She demurred at first, then acquiesced.

He slipped silently through the jungle after Hogleke and Riordan.

CHAPTER IV

Capture

THE jungle was bright green, splashed with the crimson and orange of brilliant tropical blooms.

Shafts of sunlight pierced downward through the towering treetops, doubly distinct in the clouds of dust Hogleke's crew had kicked up.

The sounds of progress ahead suddenly swelled into indistinct shouts. Maverick redoubled his pace. It was impossible to see anything but the maze of green. A high-pitched scream thrilled his spine. He cursed. That was Marian's voice.

The screaming continued over a mass of excited shouts and then was cut off abruptly. As though someone had just snuffed out a candle. The trampling far ahead veered off toward the coast and grew faint. Maverick kept on straight ahead for two hundred yards.

He was about to turn and follow Hogleke when he caught a glimmer of white through the palm boles. Cautiously he slipped up. Riordan and Sitwell were standing in a clearing, talking. Sitwell looked drawn and haggard.

"I thought I told you to take Miss Bennington to my house?" said Riordan icily. Maverick crept to the edge of the clearing.

"I started to, sir," said Sitwell, "but she fainted several times. We were delayed—and then that thug found us."

Sitwell looked shaky. "We couldn't do anything, sir, could we?" he persisted.

"Of course not," answered Riordan. "We were completely outnumbered. It's a lucky thing they didn't take us too."

"You didn't lead them to us, did you, sir?" Sitwell gave Riordan a curiously veiled glance. "I'm a little mixed up, sir. It seemed that you were on their side."

"Of course I'm not! Hogleke's stumbling over you was an accident. The reason I was with him was— Well, you wouldn't understand. I'm playing

Cupid, that's all. Rather new to it."

"Cupid?" echoed Sitwell.

Sunlight caught on his blotchy red face for a flashing instant. He looked blank, then he brightened.

"But I do understand, sir. You mean—you've taken a liking to Miss Bennington?"

Riordan paused, grinned and shrugged.

"I'll do this my own way," he said. "I've got to locate Maverick and give him the bad news. I want you to go to my house for guns and ammunition. Meet me at Maverick's place as quickly as you can."

Johnny Maverick didn't wait for any more. As he eased away, he thought he understood what Riordan's game was now. And he realized what Riordan had implied that morning at the wharf when he talked about playing with cobras. So Riordan *was* after Marian!

He wanted to put a bullet through Riordan's head, but that could wait. He had other plans at the moment. Riordan was in league with Hogleke. The pearls for one man—and Marian for the other. Oh, it was simple to understand now. Riordan was the brains behind the partnership, Hogleke the brawn. Well, both would be in for a little surprise before Johnny Maverick was finished.

Maverick forced himself to shout and come running up through the jungle, as though Riordan were still his best friend.

"Johnny!" exclaimed Riordan. "Thank God you're safe! Where's Lanie?"

"She's all right," Maverick panted, playing his rôle. "I've been looking for you. What's happened?"

"Marian's been captured by Hogleke. I steered him off your trail but he blundered onto her. Said he knew she was your fiancée and that he'd keep her on

the schooner until you bought her off with the pearls."

SURE, thought Maverick, Hogleake wanted him to ransom Marian all right, but he'd never get her back. Not while Riordan was engineering behind his back!

"We've got to hurry," urged Riordan. "God knows what Marian's going through! You'll have to give up the pearls."

"Sure," said Maverick. "Sure."

It was just a case of barter, he thought, as they hurried to his house. He, Johnny Maverick, would use the pearls to buy back Marian, and then he'd use Riordan to buy back the pearls. Hogleake would be helpless without Riordan's brains. Yep, Maverick had it all figured out.

They found Lanie lurking behind the servants' quarters. As she rushed happily to her foster-father and embraced him, Maverick stepped unobtrusively into the servants' place. Two of his best boys were there. He gave them his orders and repeated them sharply until at last they nodded.

When he returned, Lanie was badly upset about Marian.

"It's a tough break, Johnny," she said. "I know how you must feel about it. To work three years for nothing."

"Thanks," answered Maverick bitterly.

It was heartbreaking to see the way Hogleake had torn apart his beloved home. Maverick threaded his way in cold fury through the heaps of broken furniture, torn hangings and smashed drawers. Lanie took his hand sympathetically and he heard Riordan clicking his tongue hypocritically.

Maverick went to an end-table poised crazily under the yawning book shelves. On the floor beside it lay the chessboard and box, the pieces strewn about. Mav-

erick picked up the box and turned to the others, smiling sardonically.

"So close," he said enigmatically, "but not close enough."

He turned the chess box over. The remaining pieces dropped to the floor. The box was of heavy brown mahogany. Maverick fingered it intricately, and at last slid aside the bottom plate, to reveal a shallow concealed tray packed with white cotton.

His fingers probed in, then withdrew. There was a look of dismay on his face. Feverishly he yanked out the tiny drawer and overturned it. Wads of cotton dropped out—but nothing more.

"Empty!" he gasped. "The pearls are gone!"

He was a mass of confusion again as the others examined the empty tray helplessly. Had Hogleake taken the pearls? Then why did he capture Marian and talk about ransom? Was this more of Riordan's maneuvering?

"What the hell are we going to do now?" he groaned.

Lanie snapped her fingers absently, began to pace the floor.

"If we had an excuse to get on the schooner," she said at last, "we might make a fight to free Marian."

"What's the use?" said Maverick hopelessly. "Hogleake won't give her up that easily."

"That's not true," interrupted Riordan sharply. "Hogleake isn't interested in Marian."

"How do you know?" demanded Maverick.

"Never mind how I know," returned Riordan. "I just know, and that's enough."

MAVERICK eyed him for thirty seconds. Riordan returned the gaze steadily. Fellas who look you straight in the eyes, thought Maverick, are apt to be the worst crooks. Good

old double-crossing Riordan!

"Okay," said Maverick suddenly. He got an old leather bag and filled it with small pebbles. "Feels like pearls," he said hefting the bag. "This is our bluff to get on board the *Lilybelle*. Then I'll just have to hope for a break, and if I get it, you'll see the fight of your life. So long, folks!"

He ran down the beach where Riordan's outrigger was drawn up, but as he vaulted in, Lanie jumped in with him. Riordan came down slowly as they were arguing.

"Let her go with you," said Riordan. "You'll need her to help paddle."

It seemed stupid, exposing Lanie that way. But Riordan seemed to feel she was safe—and maybe he knew. Maverick glanced back momentarily and saw his native boys loitering carelessly alongside the veranda. That was okay too. They would take care of Riordan.

Lanie got into the prow. Maverick heaved the stern off the sand and ran the outrigger forward until he was waist deep in the water. Then he scrambled over the side, and together they paddled out to the schooner. Maverick was tense; his nerves kept twitching in the corner of his eye. It was going to be a tough bluff to put across.

Just outside pistol range, Maverick stopped paddling and stood up.

"On board the *Lilybelle*!" he hailed.

Sailors crowded to the rail. Then Hogleke came on deck and shoved them aside to stare out at the boat.

"Here's the pearls!" shouted Maverick. He held them aloft, over the side of the outrigger. "Any sign of a double-cross from you, Hogleke, and I'll drop them into sixty feet of water. Then try and get 'em!"

"Come aboard!" roared the captain. "There won't be any doublecross. I'm no fool."

They were in for it. The bluff was

on and would have to be followed through. Maverick knew Hogleke would not consent to talk unless he came up and showed the pearls. They brought the outrigger alongside the gangway and Maverick clambered up, gun in hand. Lanie tied up the boat to the gangway platform with a loose slip knot and followed.

Hogleke was waiting, his crew drawn up behind him like a corporal's squad. Further down the deck Maverick could see the sailors he had shot respectively in the leg and shoulder, lying limp on a mattress of dirty patched canvas.

"Where's the girl?" Maverick demanded curtly.

"She's okay," growled Hogleke. "Where's the pearls?"

"The girl first," countered Maverick. He exhibited the leather bag he had carried under his belt and clinked it. The pebbles sounded realistic.

Hogleke snapped: "Bring her up, Burk."

A short bearded man detached himself from the squad and ran aft. Presently he returned with Marian in tow. She was crying and looked wilted, but she called to Maverick and tried to run to him. Burk dragged her firmly past Maverick to where Hogleke stood.

"Now then," said Hogleke. "Even exchange. I don't want your damned woman, Maverick. Take her and get to hell out of here. But let me see the pearls first."

THIS was the payoff, thought Maverick, and no sign of a break yet. They were too alert. And he didn't have any excuse for refusing to toss over the leather bag, and yet he couldn't just hand it over and stand like a fool while Hogleke discovered the fraud.

There was a rustle behind him and Lanie whispered:

"Stand by, Johnny. Here comes your

break. Make the most of it!"

The next instant she snatched the leather sack from his hand and was darting forward along the deck of the schooner. She passed Hogleake and his gaping crew like an arrow, and as she ran her free hand tore at the thin sarong she was wearing. There was a gasp from the men as the bit of cloth came loose to hang precariously about her waist.

Then Lanie was standing at the prow of the *Lilybelle*, holding the bag of pebbles high. The orange afternoon sun glinted over her bronzed body. Tall and slender, her jet hair cascading down one shoulder and falling across her panting breast, her eyes flashing wild, she was a picture not soon to be forgotten. Maverick watched her in stunned silence and for the moment forgot where he was, Lanie was so exquisite.

"I like nice white man!" Lanie cried in simulated broken English. "No want to stay here with natives. Brave strong white man catch me and pearls . . . get both!"

Another shout and an excited laugh from the crew. They broke into a run up the deck. Lanie waited until she was almost within their grasp, then showed her white teeth in a wild laugh and dove into the water. The crew began to leap in after her.

Maverick went into action himself. He leaped across the deck to Marian to confront the sailor, Burk, who stood with his big hands clutching Marian's arm. Maverick drove his big fist into Burk's jaw, swept Marian into his arms and half carried her to the gangway.

But he had forgotten Hogleake was no fool.

"Stick around a while, Maverick. I still ain't seen the pearls!"

The gun against Maverick's back felt cold through his light shirt. He whipped around from Marian and

smashed the gun aside. The metal tore his knuckles. He hooked his left to Hogleake's jaw, meanwhile yelling to Marian to get down to the outrigger.

Hogleake clinched, bellowing like a bull, his hands and arms around Maverick, clutching him so close that no movement was possible. It didn't matter—not if Marian had gotten away. Maverick squirmed around to see—and Marian was still there, frozen in terror.

Steps came sprinting down the deck. The yelling in the water around Lanie had stopped.

"Get into the boat, Marian," Maverick cried out. "Don't stand there like an idiot!"

But she stood, bewildered and helpless; stood while Hogleake's men came up and slammed Maverick down to the deck with a pistol rap on his skull. Dazedly he watched them haul Lanie up the gangway, dripping with gleaming sea water. As Hogleake grabbed the leather pouch from her and ripped it open, Maverick struggled to his feet, ripped off his shirt and threw it over Lanie.

"You clever swine!" bellowed Hogleake. "Talking about a doublecross!"

Livid with rage, he swung the bag of pebbles like a blackjack and smashed Maverick across the bridge of the nose.

"All right, tough guy, that's enough!" Maverick ripped away the pouch from Hogleake's grasp and threw it overboard. He grinned at Hogleake through his own anger. "This time I'm going to make terms. I haven't been a fool. I know you and Riordan are working together on this job!"

LANIE cried out. Hogleake stared at him.

"Yeah!" Maverick twisted his mouth caustically. "Hogleake, Riordan and Company. Riordan makes the plans, Hogleake carries them out. We'll see

what you can do without someone to give the orders!"

Hoglake began to sputter like a fire-cracker.

Maverick snapped, "I gave orders at my place that Riordan was to be captured at the first sign of trouble. My boys have got him there now. Maybe we'll have to talk business again, Hoglake. Our freedom for the freedom of your boss! You know you're stuck without him."

"What the hell are you talking about?" demanded Hoglake. "You're crazy with the heat. Riordan's nothing to me. I don't care if your boys roast him over a slow fire. Just give me those pearls!"

That was like another rap on the skull. There was silence unbroken but for the wind on the water and Marian's sobs, while Maverick probed Hoglake's coarse face. There was no doubting the man. He had nothing to do with Riordan.

"Johnny!" cried Lanie. "What are you talking about?" Angry tears glittered in her expressive dark eyes. "Dad was as surprised as you when the pearls were gone. How can you suspect him?"

"Pearls gone!" broke in Hoglake harshly. "You said *gone*?"

Maverick nodded dumbly, at a total loss for what to think or do.

"Well," rasped Hoglake, "maybe our mutual friend Mr. Riordan is playing a little game all his own. Maybe he tossed you all into my hands to grab the swag himself. I think I better have a little talk with him. We'll just borrow him from your boys for a while and bring him out here."

The crew hustled under Hoglake's fierce orders. In an agonized suspense, Maverick watched the dinghy, manned by four armed men, pull quickly to shore. The sailors trotted up the beach, the late afternoon sun throwing enor-

mously long shadows, and cautiously entered the house.

They were gone for almost twenty minutes, but when they ran down to the boat again and started pulling back to the *Lilybelle*, there was no captive with them.

"Like I thought!" swore Hoglake after he heard their report. "No sign of Riordan or your native boys. I think we better catch up with Mr. Riordan before his game goes any further."

He turned to Burk. "Break out the rifles from the hold. Four men to guard the ship, the rest back to the island with me. We got maybe two hours of daylight left, and we'll have to work fast. Tie up Maverick and the dames till I get back."

As Hoglake and his men dropped into the longboat, he leered up at Maverick.

"Take a rest," he snarled. "You'll need it. We're going to have quite a reunion pretty soon."

The davits groaned; the pulley blocks squealed. As the longboat lowered to the water and carried Hoglake's malignant face below the deck, he looked like Satan to Maverick, Satan on his way down to hell!

CHAPTER V

The Final Blow

THEY sat in the gloomy hold, hands and feet bound. The water lapped at the hull sides around them and the heavy hemp chafed their wrists and ankles. Alternately, Lanie and Maverick chewed at the rope that bound their wrists behind them. While Maverick tore at the rough hemp on Lanie's wrists with his teeth, she raged at him.

"That was a foul thing to say about Dad!" she said furiously. "After all he's done for you."

His jaws ached so, he was forced to quit. The two of them squirmed around painfully until Lanie could get at Maverick's hands.

"He's not your father," answered Maverick, "and he's a rat. He maneuvered every damned move. He tripped me in Hoglelake's hands to begin with. He led Hoglelake to Marian when you and I escaped. He wanted Marian for himself, and now I have a hunch he wants the pearls too."

Lanie spat a mouthful of fibre.

"If my hands were free," she blazed, "I'd tear you apart!"

"Keep on chewing, damn it!"

Maverick waited until Lanie had begun again.

"Now," he continued angrily, "Riordan's disappeared mysteriously. I lay you six to five he'll be coming after Marian pretty soon. But he doesn't give a hoot in hell what happens to me. My fine friend, Riley Riordan! I'll 'friend' him!"

As Lanie wriggled around for Maverick to take his turn at her wrists, she struggled to kick him.

"Take it easy," he snapped. "You'll get your chance soon enough."

"That," sniffed Marian, "should be quite in order." Her tone was an odd mixture of superiority and terror.

Lanie stopped chewing. "I'd like to know what you mean by that."

"Oh . . . nothing. Except that the veneer of civilization must be rather thin to break so easily. Running around naked before those men like a brazen savage. Did you enjoy the strip-tease as much as you seemed to?"

"That," blazed Maverick, "is about the nastiest, most ungrateful thing I ever heard in my life!"

He didn't realize he was being savage with Marian. All he knew was that he wanted to whip her for speaking like that to Lanie.

He snapped, "Aside from the fact that you've been a helpless pain in the neck so far—"

"Johnny!" Marian wailed.

"You haven't even the decency to thank Lanie for the sacrifice she made to help free you. You've got some hel-luva nerve passing cracks about a strip-tease when you're so helpless, you can't even chew on a hunk of rope!"

At that moment a face was framed overhead in the open hatch mouth, showing black against the deep blue evening sky. One of the guards was having a look. The three of them froze and only grunted in reply to his suspicious call. At last he vanished.

"Light's going fast," whispered Maverick. "Work fast, Lanie. Hoglelake'll be coming back soon."

Lanie tore and picked at the heavy ropes with her strong teeth. The strands loosened until Maverick was able to flex his powerful wrists slightly. He tensed his muscles, straining to produce enough slack for Lanie to work on. The ropes gave slightly.

"The last time!" he whispered. "Try hard, Lanie!"

SHE did, despite the agony that burned in her jaws. Maverick felt the ropes loosen. He waited patiently until at last Lanie hissed:

"Now!"

He gathered himself for one surge, and wrenched his hands apart. The hemp scorched his skin as he twisted the coils down his palms, tore them over his knuckles, and at last got them off.

"Hah!" grunted Maverick. He untied his feet, then quickly freed Lanie and Marian. They arose and silently worked the stiffness out of their arms and legs. Maverick glanced up at the blue-black star-speckled oblong of sky.

"Let's go!" he whispered.

But Marian was frightened, and her

terror made her stubborn.

At last Maverick gave it up. Arguing in whispers made his throat sore, and wasted time.

"All right, ninny!" he said disgustingly. "Stay down here and don't show yourself until *I* come and tell you it's safe."

He took Lanie's arm, and together they crept up the hatch stairs.

Through the gloom they could see the gleam of cigarettes forward where two guards were talking quietly. A third man was seated on the aft rail, spitting reflectively into the water. But where was the fourth? Maverick craned his head and almost jumped when he saw the man standing just before the hatch, peering intently toward the island.

Maverick eased himself up over the lip of the hatch, knowing he must make no noise. One quick step brought him behind the guard. He whipped his hands around the startled man's windpipe and squeezed. There was a choked grunt, nothing more. Maverick vised his hands until the man hung limp. He grabbed the gun, cracked the man across the head and lowered him softly to the deck. That made one!

Motioning Lanie to wait, Maverick crept forward until he was within ten feet of the conversing guards. They spun around at his step.

"Don't move! Don't make a sound!" hissed Maverick.

He forced them to face away, muttered a silent prayer and brought the gun butt down in two quick chops. He caught them before they could slump. Two and three!

Lanie wasn't at the hatch when he returned. Maverick swore and rammed the extra guns in his belt. As he crept aft, he was startled to see a figure coming toward him.

There was a cough as his hand

caught a slender neck, but the long leap made the other hand miss. Maverick felt it slide down a smooth shoulder and crush against a girl's panting breast. It was Lanie.

"Murder!" she groaned, feeling her neck ruefully. "If that's the way you work, Johnny, I feel sorry for the boys."

He put a finger to his lips and pointed aft.

"It's all right," she smiled, displaying a gun. "I did a little solo work myself with a belaying pin. I left him snoring."

"Swell!" exclaimed Maverick. "Let's heave 'em into the fo'c'sle and lock 'em up. Then we'll wait for Chief Rat."

He gave Lanie an enthusiastic hug and was electrified at the way she melted into his arms. He realized that this was the first time he had ever held Lanie close. The scent of her hair and the soft curve of her cheek . . .

A sound from across the lagoon came to Maverick's ears: the whisper of wood in water.

"Hear that?" said Maverick.

Lanie listened intently. "Hoglake!" she said.

"Right!" Maverick hurried her to the gangway and pulled her down beside it. "We'll prepare a little reception for him."

ONLY Maverick knew it wasn't Hoglake. The captain wouldn't steal back silently to his own ship like a thief. And longboat oars in oarlocks didn't make a sound like paddles quietly dipping into the sea. No . . . it was Riordan, coming to get Marian. He couldn't tell Lanie that. She'd only spoil his plans.

Maverick waited until he heard the grunt of a boat barely nudging the schooner hull. He poised his pistol. Steps moved on the gangway, whisper-

ing up the stairs. Then a voice sounded.

"Johnny! Johnny Maverick!" Riordan called softly.

Lanie brightened and opened her mouth to answer. Maverick grabbed her with his left arm and clamped his hand over her lips. She gurgled and struggled.

"Don't start fighting, Johnny," called Riordan, still only halfway up the gangway. "I know you're loose, but I've got men surrounding you."

That was true. Maverick suddenly was aware of figures clambering over the rails on the other side of the ship. He arose, astonished, and let Lanie go. She cried out and rushed to the gangway as Riordan came up.

Six natives, all armed and scowling—and three of them were Maverick's own men!

"Kahnea! Poona! Hannu!" he rapped out angrily. "You take *my* orders!"

But they advanced and stood around him, shaking their heads sullenly. So Riordan had even bribed his own servants! Maverick almost lost control of himself as he faced Riordan. He was shaking with fury.

"Now take it easy, son," smiled Riordan. "Just now I'm here to get Hogleke."

"To get Marian, you mean!" Maverick gritted. "I got wise to you a long time ago. You thought you could get Marian, get the pearls and get rid of me—and shove the whole crime on Hogleke, eh? Well, I'm no sucker!"

Hannu grunted and motioned toward the island. Lights were flashing on the beach and angry voices echoed across the lagoon. Then a boat ground its keel through sand and slapped into the water. Oars clattered against oarlocks.

"No time now for explanations," said Riordan. "You want to get Hogleke,

don't you, Johnny? Well, do what I tell you."

Dazedly, Maverick permitted himself to be secreted along the deck with the natives. Riordan made the dispositions like an old hand at ambushes, and crouched down alongside him, gun in hand. One of the boys had already paddled Riordan's outrigger away from the gangway and moored it on the sea-board side of the schooner.

"Aboard the *Lilybelle!*" Hogleke hailed. Riordan poked Maverick and nodded in the direction of the longboat.

"All's well!" called Maverick gruffly.

Hogleke seemed satisfied, although he was furious with his failure to locate Riordan. He cursed his crew incessantly as the longboat came up and began swinging around for the landing. Riordan held up a warning finger. Maverick tensed himself for the attack.

And then a figure in white slacks suddenly popped out of the middle of the deck. Marian ran to the rail, calling for Maverick, and looked over the side wildly. The beam of a searchlight caught her full in the face. Hogleke roared excited warnings, and heavy feet began to run up the gangway.

"That ruins the ambush!" groaned Maverick.

He leaped forward as the first men scrambled up the gangway to the deck. Swinging his pistol like a short club, Maverick smashed the motley attackers to either side of him, and reached Marian. She was wild with terror and tried to cling to him. He slapped her face, spun her around and shoved her aft toward the binnacle.

A RIFLE roared just behind Maverick's ear and he felt the sear of the discharge flame across his naked back. He twisted around.

Riordan and his natives had formed

a small semicircle facing the gangway entrance, and were fighting desperately to keep the sailors choked back and deal with them one by one. But the cutthroats were shoving them back by weight of numbers.

Maverick crouched low, grabbed the ankles of the man who had fired the rifle alongside him. He yanked up. The sailor spilled backward with a cry, and his head and neck smashed into the deck. Maverick grabbed up the rifle.

It wasn't safe to fire. In the darkness all he could see was a great tangled knot of struggling men, punching and clawing just before the gangway; the dark, almost invisible figures of the native boys; the dirty white-clad figures of the crew. But Maverick was afraid to shoot at white. Riordan still wore his linen suit.

Using the rifle as a club, Maverick smashed his way through the center of the fight toward Hogleke, who was kneeling on the deck a few yards past the gangway, firing his pistol. The flares of the discharges in the dark lit his savage sweating face like lightning bolts.

A rifle butt smashed at Maverick. He slid the blow aside with the stock of his own gun, but the force dropped him to his knees. Burk, the bearded sailor, who had swung at him, drove down on Maverick, holding his rifle like a vaulting pole.

Maverick rolled frantically, and as the butt of Burk's rifle clanged on the deck, he kicked it aside. Burk lost his balance and fell prone. Maverick was hemmed in by the welter of fighting men around him. He reached out, clutched Burk's beard and dragged the head back with his left hand.

Burk screamed. Maverick drove a savage fist at the man's jaw. He missed in the gloom and felt his knuckles drive into Burk's throat. There was the

crunch of crushed cartilage, a coughing groan . . . and the man lay still.

"So!" Maverick hissed. "You boys like to play rough, eh? Like to beat up on innocent people, don't you? Well, here's your chance, scum, here's your chance!"

It took Maverick a second to get his bearings, then he crawled past the savage struggle toward Hogleke. The renegade saw him. The discharge of Hogleke's pistol blinded Maverick, and the bullet creased his shoulder with the impact of a steel whip.

With unseeing eyes, Maverick leaped forward, arms wide-spread to clutch any part of Hogleke he could reach. His right hand caught Hogleke's shirt. He pulled at it as his leap carried him to the deck. It ripped. Hogleke cursed, and Maverick felt the man's pistol numb his shoulder.

HIS eyes had cleared now. Maverick dug nails into the deck to stop himself. Splinters knifed under the skin. He pivoted just as Hogleke had raised his pistol for another blow and dove in under the upraised arm. The gun punched into his back, but he had his arms around Hogleke's waist, head butting into the man's belly. He dug his feet into the deck and sprinted forward, ramming Hogleke ahead of him. Hogleke stumbled backward and suddenly fell.

He raised his big legs and drove his knees into Maverick's groin as he hit the deck. Maverick cursed with the pain. He slid aside, grabbed Hogleke's big hand and clubbed it against the deck. Hogleke roared, and the pistol flew out of his crushed fingers. Then he kicked again, driving Maverick back.

He was on his feet before Maverick could close in again. Maverick kept thinking of the gaff and the blowtorch

as he set himself and drove his fists into Hogleke's face. Hogleke was weaving and slashing his elbows into Maverick's stomach. Maverick took the punishment and battered the sandstone face into red ruin.

"FUN, isn't it?" Maverick gritted. "Nice to feel your blood on my knuckles. Makes up a little for that little blowtorch party—remember?"

"I'll break you in two!" Hogleke snarled through pulped lips. "Just let me get my hands on you and I'll break your spine!"

"You couldn't break off the handle on a teacup," Maverick laughed wildly. "Not after I get done with you!"

Hogleke's nose was smashed now, his cheeks cut and his lips split to the teeth before he groaned and stepped back. Maverick tensed for the kill. He looked around for a flashing instant. There were still white-clad forms on the deck, six of them.

Two of the native boys were reeling drunkenly at the rail, one with a shattered arm. But the other four were lashing out brutally alongside Riordan, chanting weird battle-cries. The sailors were fighting desperately, but only to escape—

And the deck planks came up and crashed against Maverick's head with a piledriver concussion. Hogleke's weight lay on top of him. Maverick cursed himself for a fool to let the man suck him into a clinch and throw him. He shoved his palms against Hogleke's chin and drove the bloody head back until Hogleke let go. Maverick rolled loose and scrambled to his feet.

A woman's scream shrilled over the fight. Maverick shook his battered head and stared aft at the sudden rose glow that had appeared. Little tendrils of crimson flame licked up through the deck planking and suddenly the aft

hatch turned into a roaring volcano as a geyser of smoke and flame shot up.

Riordan shouted: "Into the boats! Get the wounded boys down first!"

Then he turned and tore down the deck, yelling for Lanie and Marian. The sailors stared, aghast, then struggled toward the gangway.

Maverick shook his head and halted Hogleke's plunge. This time there wasn't going to be any postponement. He slammed his head against the great barrel chest and pumped his fists with piston drives into Hogleke's gut. Hogleke pounded at the back of his neck, giving ground frantically.

They were perilously close to the flaming hatch. The decks were cleared but for them. Maverick could hear Riordan shouting to him. He straightened suddenly and the back of his head smashed Hogleke's lowered face. Hogleke staggered forward and clawed his hands around Maverick's face.

Maverick steadied the reeling hulk with a sharp left jab and then drove two smashing punches under Hogleke's heart. Hogleke teetered, his arms flailing. Then, abruptly, he seemed to dissolve. He slumped to the deck like an empty suit of clothes—and at that moment the deck gave way to an inferno.

Hogleke's body hurtled down, and Maverick would have followed him but for the iron hand that grasped his arm and hauled him back.

Sick and dizzy, he was only partly conscious that Riordan was leading him through the roaring schooner to the outrigger waiting below.

CHAPTER VI

Love at Last

IT took Ralph Sitwell, Riordan's English clerk, waiting on the beach with Riordan's armed men, almost an hour

to round up the survivors of the *Lily-belle* as they came ashore. He sent them off to the warehouse under heavy guard, and then smiled sympathetically at the four exhausted people sprawled on the veranda of Johnny Maverick's home.

The night was quiet at last. A cool breeze whispered across Camoia Island and sifted the dry particles of sand. Out on the lagoon the last embers of the wrecked schooner had at last disappeared, leaving nothing but the intermittent murmur of the surf on the coral reef.

Sitwell tossed his revolver in the air and caught it. Tossed and caught. He was like a schoolboy, Maverick thought, out playing hookey. For Sitwell it had been all jolly adventure. Not for Johnny Maverick, though. He hated to look at the ruins of his home.

He sat on the veranda floor alongside Marian. Lanie and Riordan were seated on the broken chairs, hardly talking.

"I'm sorry, darling." Marian reached out and took his hand.

"What for?" croaked Maverick. The flames had seared his throat.

"For the nasty things I said. We were all under such a horrible strain. I forgive you for that tirade, and I'm sure you'll forgive me. It will never happen again. Lanie and I will be the best friends . . ."

He looked at her: the silver-blond hair, aristocratic face; the curving imperious mouth and electric-black eyes with their long lashes. Dimly he remembered having been in love, a long time ago. But not with this girl. She was a stranger. She didn't belong to his life any more.

"No," said Maverick. "No, you'll never be friends with Lanie . . . or Riordan . . . or myself. It's not you, it's us. We're different people . . .

we're not your kind."

"That's not true!" cried Marian softly.

"But it is." Maverick patted her hand absently. "I've changed, Marian. I'm not John Maverick any more, the Maverick you knew in New York. I'm a different person and I'm just beginning to find out who I am and what I want. I'm not the Johnny Maverick you wanted, and—"

"And I'm not the girl you want?" purred Marian.

She pulled her hand away. In an instant she had lost all her softness. It was, Maverick thought, the way a cat's claws push through the velvet paws.

"Naturally not," she said icily. "I knew that from the first. You and your native mistress. I thought I—"

"Shut your mouth!" Johnny Maverick got to his feet, his face pale and twitching. Marian also rose quickly, her chiseled features now dissolved in a grimace that seared and scalded.

"Don't tell me to shut up!" she whispered venomously. "Not you, you degraded beachcomber! If you think you and your native woman can make a fool out of me—"

"Shut that mouth of yours!" Maverick hissed, grabbing Marian's arm in a grip that hurt. She wrenched herself free, red finger marks on her white flesh, and stood there like a spitting cat.

MAVERICK saw her then for what she really was. Spoiled. Pampered. A poor sport. There had always been an aura of culture about Marian, but Maverick knew now that it was only the thinnest of veneers. Marian was out only for what she could get. She would give—nothing. She would use every trick, every sophisticated wile to achieve her ends. And if she failed—if she failed, she would sneer, and insult people, and spread nasty gossip.

"Marian," Maverick said, fighting to keep his voice level, "I'm glad to see you for what you are. It's not that you're not our kind. You're not anybody's kind! You couldn't be loyal to a maharajah with ten palaces and a fleet of Rolls-Royces.

"You're New York, Marian," he went on, as his erstwhile fiancée faced him with flaming hatred in her eyes. "You're what I came down here to get away from, although I didn't know it at the time. Oh, I can see it all now! God, what a sucker I've been!"

Marian lost all control of herself then.

"You're not going to make a fool out of me!" she hissed. "I'll take care of you when I get back to New York! You and that proud family of yours, too. How they'll all laugh when they hear about you and your half-breed wench! Why, I'll—"

Johnny Maverick acted purely on impulse. His hand lashed out and caught Marian across the face, in a slap that stung and humiliated. Marian recoiled, gasping. She began to snivel. She didn't look very nice doing it, either.

Riley Riordan got to his feet then. He faced the shaking, white-faced Maverick; the sniffing, pride-punctured society girl.

"Miss Bennington," he said quietly, "I think you had better make arrangements to leave at your earliest convenience. Sitwell"—he nodded to the Englishman—"take Miss Bennington to my place and see that she is made comfortable for the night."

"Righto," said Sitwell. He took Marian by the arm and together they moved off. Marian never once turned her head to look back. She was still sniveling as the two of them disappeared in the night's shadows . . .

"Never slap a woman," Riordan told Johnny Maverick softly.

"I know," Maverick nodded sickly. "I—I guess I lost my temper. Maybe I'm just a coward."

"I said never 'slap' that sort of woman," Riordan went on imperturbably. "You should have beat the living hell out of her."

Maverick's eyes widened, and he looked a little shocked. He sat down slowly to pull his confused thoughts together. Lanie, who had kept her emotions under rigid control through all of Marian's tirade, sighed a little happy sigh of relief and took Maverick's hand in her own. His fingers responded with warm reassurance . . .

A leather bag plunked on the floor at Johnny Maverick's feet. He had forgotten it. He glanced down without moving to pick it up and then eyed Riordan.

"Pearls," smiled Riordan. "Don't you want them?"

"You . . ."

"Let's say I took them under protective custody," Riordan smiled. "You see, Johnny, I told you everybody on the island knew you had them. I was afraid some of your boys might have found out where you kept them, just as I had . . . and Hogleake might have forced the secret from them. So I just slipped in and grabbed them after Hogleake carried you out to the schooner. They were safer with me."

JOHNNY MAVERICK tried to digest Riordan's words. It was all a bit confusing, coming so frankly on top of his own ill-founded suspicions. He began to color and feel like a heel.

"Thanks," Johnny Maverick stammered. "I—I should have known better. I could kick myself all over the lot for not trusting you. Look at the trouble it got me in! But," he demanded heatedly, "why didn't you tell me these things out on the ship!"

"Would you have believed me?" countered Riordan. He shook his head. "No, not then. You thought I wanted to steal Marian from you, and the pearls too. You thought I was in league with Hogleke, and that between us we were going to strip you of everything. Didn't you? How could you have believed me then?"

"Don't remind me," Maverick pleaded. "I feel bad enough about it as it is." His brow furrowed. "But how did you get Marian's number so early?"

"I knew she wasn't good for you," Riordan said simply.

"Then why did you trip me up when I was escaping?" Maverick demanded. "Why did you lead Hogleke to Marian? Why did you let Lanie and me walk right into trouble without the pearls? Honest, it just doesn't make sense!"

Riordan held up his hands in a calming gesture.

"I'm older than you, Johnny. I knew Marian was beautiful as a cobra that enchants its victim. I've been around. I could play with that kind of danger if I wanted, and escape unharmed; but not you. She'd have ruined your life. You wouldn't listen to me, so I had to take advantage of all this trouble to throw you two together and show you her real qualities under strain. You see what happened."

"But so much trouble!" said Lanie.

"I had to be sure Johnny had learned his lesson," grinned Riordan. "There wasn't any danger of the trouble jumping out of my hands. I've said before that I'm no youngster. I know my way around. I was pretty certain of what was happening at the moment it happened. It's true you've lost your house, Johnny, but I think the price was cheap considering what you escaped. I'll help you rebuild."

Maverick looked at Lanie and she returned his gaze. Yes, he thought,

the price was dirt cheap. He and Lanie could rebuild together. He wished Riordan would go away now . . .

Riordan saw the implied hint. He got to his feet, grinning.

"Someone," he said with a parting thrust, "had to show you the ropes, Johnny Maverick. I knew you'd never see the light, unless a situation was created where your ideal would have to stand on a pedestal, there for all the world to see. So—

"So, I sent Hogleke the tip-off about your pearls!" Riordan began to ease himself off the veranda. "See you for chess tomorrow, son—"

Maverick bounded to his feet, a second before Riordan disappeared into the night.

"That guy!" he said. "I'll shoot him!" And he dashed off in boisterous pursuit. But he didn't catch Riley Riordan . . .

LANIE was waiting for him on the beach as he returned.

"Shame on you," she said coyly. "Leaving me here all by myself."

Johnny Maverick came up and stood before her, drinking in all her loveliness with eyes that were only just beginning to see. He reached out and touched her glossy jet hair gently. He wanted to take her into his arms, and yet could not shatter the magic of the moment.

Over and over he thought: Johnny, you feel wonderful.

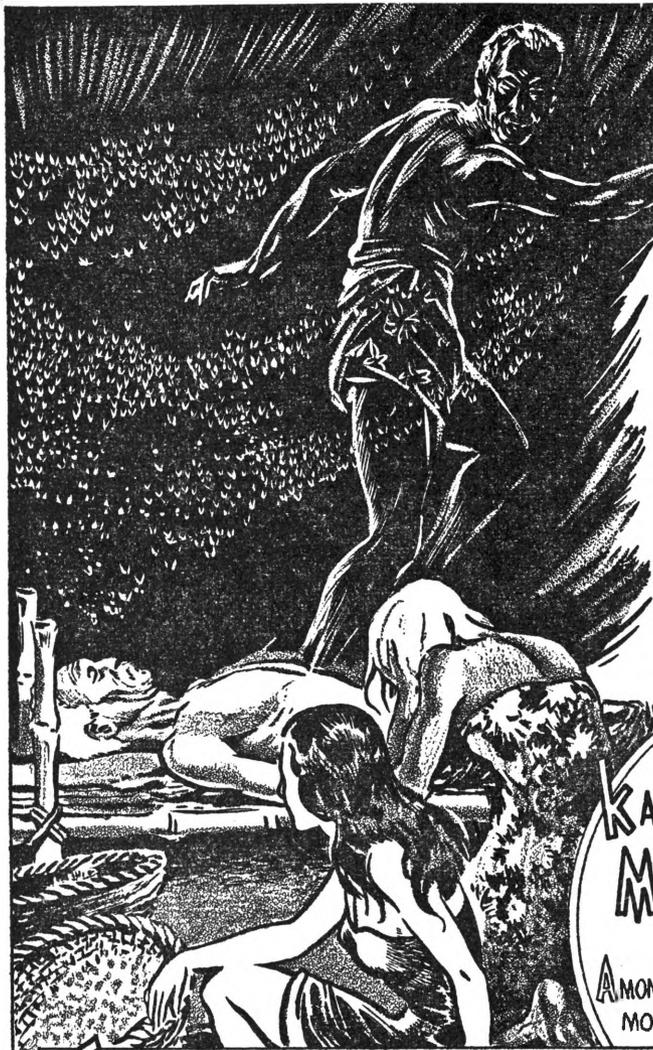
"Johnny," said Lanie at last, "since when were you carved in stone?" But though she grinned impudently, he could see she was tremulous.

He caught her to him with a little gasp. His arms went hard about her, and his lips sought hers and found eager response . . .

"Johnny," she whispered, "you're not all made of stone!"



SOUTH SEA ODDITIES



DEATH PLEDGE

WHEN THE KING OF VAPU LAY DYING SOME 70 YEARS AGO, HE SOLEMNLY PROMISED TO TAKE WITH HIM ALL THE VICIOUS SAND-FLIES THAT FOR YEARS HAD PLAGUED THE ISLANDERS. THAT NIGHT THE KING DIED; NEXT MORNING NATIVES WERE ASTONDED TO FIND THAT ALL SAND-FLIES HAD DISAPPEARED! THE TRUTH OF THIS MODERN MIRACLE WAS ATTESTED TO BY WHITE TRADERS AND FRENCH OFFICIALS.



"KANGAROO" MOUSE!



AMONG NEW ZEALAND ODDITIES IS A MOUSE, SMALL AS A CRICKET, THAT, LIKE THE KANGAROO, CARRIES ITS YOUNG IN A POUCH.

THE EYES HAVE IT—!

HUMAN EYE-BALLS WERE CONSIDERED DELICACIES BY SOUTH SEA CANNIBALS—! THEY SERVED THESE TO THEIR KINGS IN LEAF-LINED BOWLS.



FISH-STUNNING FRUIT.

SO POISONOUS IS THE FRUIT OF THE MARQUESAN HUTU TREE, THAT WHEN CRUSHED AND THROWN INTO THE WATER, IT STUPIDIFIES FISH, MAKES THEM EASY TO CATCH.



KERRIGAN WAGES

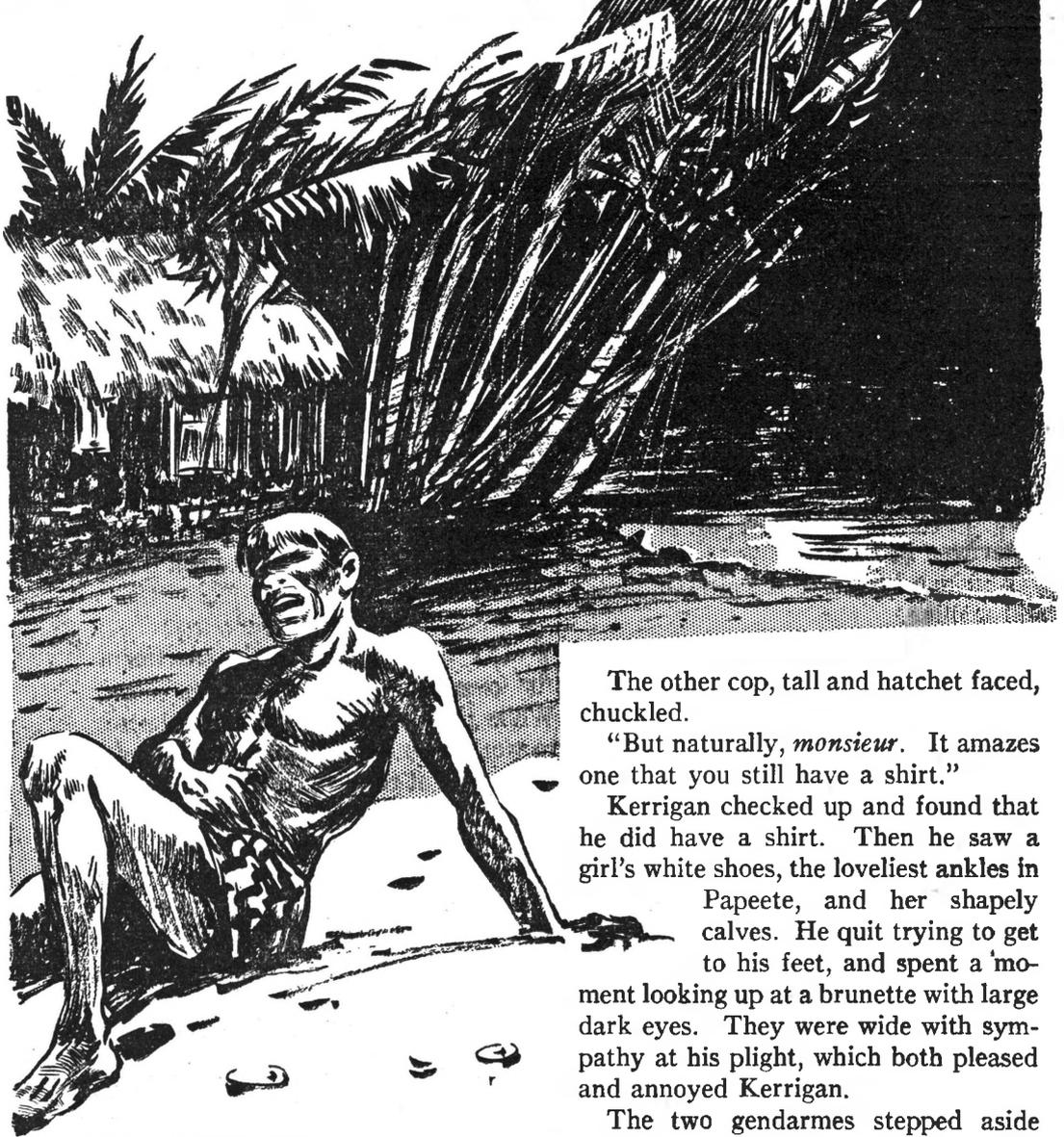
by **E. HOFFMANN PRICE**

Jim Kerrigan needed the job, but when it turned out to be one that would smash his romance with Lili Dupre, he lied to her. The lie smashed up a lot more than his romance!



Kerrigan leaped from the underbrush and brought his gun down with a vicious sweep

A COPRA WAR



MONSIEUR, it is forbidden to sleep in the gutter," the pudgy gendarme said, and prodded Jim Kerrigan with his toe.

Kerrigan groaned; his head was splitting, and he had a dirty taste in his mouth.

"Hell's bells! I've been robbed."

The other cop, tall and hatchet faced, chuckled.

"But naturally, *monsieur*. It amazes one that you still have a shirt."

Kerrigan checked up and found that he did have a shirt. Then he saw a girl's white shoes, the loveliest ankles in Papeete, and her shapely calves. He quit trying to get to his feet, and spent a moment looking up at a brunette with large dark eyes. They were wide with sympathy at his plight, which both pleased and annoyed Kerrigan.

The two gendarmes stepped aside when she knelt beside Kerrigan and took a handkerchief from her bag.

"Are you hurt, *monsieur*?"

Kerrigan ran powerful fingers through his shock of sandy hair. He was square-rigged, square-jawed; and it embarrassed him, having this lovely stranger solicitously dabbling at his bat-

tered forehead. But the touch of her cool slim fingers thrilled him.

"I do not feel any too fine, *mademoiselle*. Has the *Osprey* sailed?"

The pudgy cop was amused. "He asks if the *Osprey* sailed! What humor!"

The hatchet-faced one said, "An hour or two ago."

"Good-by job in Honolulu!" Kerrigan struggled to his feet and managed to stand without help. His hands slowly went to his waist, where he wore his money belt. "I've been cleaned!"

"That is deplorable, *monsieur*. One should not so carelessly sleep in gutters. The health suffers as well as the wealth. *Au revoir, monsieur*."

"Sleep, hell! They doped me."

But the gendarmes, after bowing ceremoniously, had already resumed their beat, heading now toward the waterfront of Papeete.

Kerrigan turned to the girl, who was still smiling.

"What's so funny?"

"I am not amused. Really, I am very sorry."

Kerrigan grinned. "Maybe that's what griped me."

"Don't be so proud," she reproved. "Though I should not waste sympathy—you could be worse off!"

"Huh! Stranded in Papeete! Flat broke." He dug into the side pocket of his mud-splashed tropicals. "Except for a few francs they skipped. I should dance with glee!"

"You spoke of a job, *monsieur*?"

"Yes. In Honolulu. I left the States 'way ahead of time, to come to Papeete first, then loop around in time to report. The company advanced me my expenses, and I added my own bankroll for this side trip. Now imagine me cabling for more money!"

The girl did not reflect Kerrigan's wry smile. She sighed, shook her lovely

head, and her eyes were troubled. He was certain that she had worries of her own, and that his plight reminded her of a problem she had faced. Kerrigan eyed his few soggy francs.

"If my clothes weren't such a mess, I'd say let's get a cup of coffee and talk it over."

She caught his arm. "Better yet, come with me. I live at the end of the block. I'll make the coffee, and you'll feel better."

"I do already. And while it doesn't make much difference, I'm Jim Kerrigan from San Francisco. All set to be a beachcomber, my beautiful lady. Can you tell a greenhorn the rules? One quits shaving, stays soaked with gin—I hate gin, but I'll put up with it until the U. S. consul gives me a lift."

"Me, I am Lili Dupré, and I admire your humor more than I do your chances in Papeete. Your consul is not too amiable."

LILI had an airy little apartment overlooking the broad main street. While the coffee was dripping, she set to work cleaning Kerrigan's white suit. He looked at the striped beach robe she had given him to wear while the breeze and warm sun dried his clothes, and said,

"Beautiful, where did you get this rig? But come to think of it, this is a tropical paradise—for the last half hour, anyway. What's the idea of being so good to me?"

"My father landed here without a *sou*, many years ago." She sighed. "And it looks as if he may leave the same way."

"So that's it? I feel like a fool, yelling the way I did. What's your father's line?"

"He manages a plantation, on a bonus basis. But his health is failing, and though he tries to keep it from me,

I know he is slipping. The plantation is not paying, and Jules Fournet—the owner—he is not a charitable organization."

"Fournet? I've heard of him."

"Who hasn't?" She poured the chicory-flavored coffee. "He owns plantations all over the islands. When a manager slips—*tout fini!*"

"You're a swell person," he said after a moment of silence. "Doing an apprentice beachcomber a good turn when you need one yourself."

"I'm not a missionary as a rule," she answered. "Just a weak moment."

Lili's words were casual enough; it was her eyes that did things to Kerrigan. He followed the impulse that had been growing ever since her kindness had contrasted with the typical French matter of factness of the gendarmes. Before she knew what was happening, he had her in his arms.

"Honey, I'll get some kind of a job, so help me! I'll get the breaks, and then—"

Her eyes widened with amazement, but she did not try to get away. Kerrigan kissed her. When she got her breath, Lili protested,

"Please, *monsieur!*" But there was no pretense of indignation.

Kerrigan turned red and began to stutter.

"Honest to God, I wasn't making a pass at you. I meant every word of it. I'm sorry, acting like a fool, but for a minute I was thinking how swell it'd be if I had a job in Papeete. That's what I was thinking—I'm still thinking it, and now I have your laugh."

"You're terribly impulsive, *monsieur.*" Lili was still comfortably close to him, and there was a contented little gleam in her eye. "But so was I, stopping beside an apprentice beachcomber. Hasty, Jim, but—your idea would be wonderful, if it would only work."

"What do you mean, if it would only work?"

She smiled impishly. "It does have two meanings, *n'est-ce pas?* Then, to tone down your haste, I'll let you think it over."

WHEN Kerrigan left Lili's apartment, he walked on air. Instead of asking the consul for steerage transportation to Honolulu or the States, he had another plan. Certainly he was not leaving Papeete.

The consul was a square-faced person with close-cropped hair and his name was Carson. His mouth indicated that he did not waste pleasantries on the wrong people. He looked up, and apparently through Kerrigan, then spent five minutes scrutinizing the papers on his desk. The act would have been better if he had turned a page.

"Maybe I'd better see you when you've memorized your lesson!" Kerrigan told him.

Carson snorted. "All right, you missed the *Osprey* and you were robbed. They all are."

"Wait a minute! Who says—"

"Don't you think the gendarmes don't keep me posted? Look here, fellow, it's a disease, jumping ship for a vacation and a free ride home."

KERRIGAN took a long step forward.

"I was robbed. I was not drunk, I was doped! I don't want a trip home, I want a white man's chance at some kind of a job. And it's your job listening to me, get it?"

"Get the hell out of here!" Carson pressed a button.

"I'm an American citizen. You've got to listen."

"Oh, I do? Get out before you're thrown out. We don't stake bums."

Kerrigan did not care if an army

answered the bell. He cut loose with a haymaker, just as Carson bounded from behind his desk. Kerrigan was a head taller, but he had not picked easy meat. His head, still shaky from drugged liquor, exploded in a red blaze; and his own swing went wild. He staggered back, and smashed against the wall.

An inner door slammed, and two husky Kanakas came bounding into the room.

"*Qu'est-ce qu'il y a, monsieur?*" they asked needlessly; but they waited for orders, instead of rushing Kerrigan at once.

"Throw that tramp out! *Vite!*"

But for the stalling and conversation, they might have done it. Kerrigan rebounded, and this time he connected. It was a honey. The smack jarred Kerrigan all the way to the shoulder, and the stocky consul froze. The swift move caught the white-clad Kanakas off guard. They lunged for the vacant space Kerrigan had just left, for they were too big and too thick-witted for a quick shift.

Sock! That was Kerrigan's other fist. He caught the consul, who was crumpling up, and straight-armed him toward the street; Carson lurched into the crowd. As he whirled to face the Kanakas, Kerrigan got a glimpse of the natives and whites who milled about the consul. Kerrigan was grinning. These blows were wiping out the score he had against Papeete!

The two servants closed in. Kerrigan's blows thumped like bass drums. His fists sank wrist-deep. The Kanakas grunted, and clawed for a hold. They knew nothing of such fighting, but their bulk and weight kept Kerrigan from clearing the deck.

All three thumped to the floor when a waste basket tangled with shuffling feet. Kerrigan booted one of the Kanakas

over the threshold, after Carson. The remaining man kept his hold; grappling, the two bumped into the crowd.

The spectators were thickening, and they impartially cheered the combatants. Cyclists dismounted, and cars stopped. Chinese in mushroom-shaped hats, and tall brown Tahitian girls in red calico joined the circle about Carson and Kerrigan and the Kanakas.

Gendarmes, coming on the run, tore into the barrier. One of them clubbed Kerrigan, the other slugged the grappling Kanaka. Kerrigan slumped, face down. In spite of the ringing in his ears, he heard a gendarme say,

"Name of a pig! This is the fellow we found this morning. He makes a fast recovery, that one!"

Kerrigan, half out, was hoisted to his feet. If he did not get a long jolt on the chain gang, he'd be lucky. The best he could expect was to be deported, and leaving Papeete was now the one thing he did not want.

The consul was sitting up and muttering. One of his servants was still out, cold; the other was doubled up, clutching his stomach.

It was then that the horn of a car blared, and a man with the voice of authority said,

"*Tenez!* Sergeant! Wait a minute there!"

The gendarme who had Kerrigan by the collar turned his head.

"This fellow has just beaten up the American consul, *monsieur.*"

The man in the back seat of the open car twisted his spiked mustaches and smiled. He had a hard, sharp face, but there was a merry twinkle in his eye.

"That manifests itself, Sergeant," he drawled. "Be pleased to turn him loose at once. Wait for the consul to prefer charges if he wishes!" He raised his cane and tapped the native chauff-

feur's shoulder. "Get out and give the gentleman a hand. *Mais oui!* In the back seat with me, does it seem that I want him for a footman?"

THE gendarmes made no sense of it; but the man in the long red car was not a person to waste words on the police.

"Sit down, my friend," the man said when Kerrigan reached the running board. "After your head is clear, I shall tell you more."

"It still makes no sense. Are beach-combers your hobby?"

"It is merely that I do not like the American consul. Incidentally, I am Jules Fournet."

"I'm Jim Kerrigan. What is the score, *monsieur?*"

Fournet smiled to himself and ignored the question.

"Drive on," he said to the chauffeur. "Yes, *chez-moi.*"

Kerrigan was willing to let it go at that until his head stopped spinning. Just why the biggest planter in the islands had a whimsey for helping a stranded American out of a jam, was far from clear—but one thing at a time.

CHAPTER II

Lili Again

FOURNET'S rambling house was half hidden by palms and bamboo; hibiscus and bougainvillea flared red against the green. The sweetness of jasmine made Kerrigan think of Lili Dupré, and this thought troubled him, though he did not know why. Perhaps he was merely uncomfortable, being whisked along by a man who took everything in his stride.

Fournet seated himself on a wicker chair, rang for a servant, and said,

"*Monsieur*, as you may suspect, there

is more to this than my private ideas on the American consul. Be seated, I shall explain. A bit of brandy would not hurt, *hein?*"

"Not a bit," Kerrigan agreed, and leaned back in his chair.

"I need a man of boldness and vigor." He made an airy gesture. "My business covers the Pacific. Sugar. Coconuts. Pearling. Everything."

"But you have time for hobbies? Such as breaking into the consul's morning sport of being tough with a fellow down on his luck?"

Fournet chuckled. "Now, it is a coconut plantation you will supervise for me. The pay—"

"Look here, *monsieur*. It is only honest to tell you I know nothing about coconuts. It would not be right to impose."

"Possibly I already suspected that." Fournet's irony made Kerrigan's face redden. "But I heard what the gendarmes said, and I know that you can handle men." He looked pointedly at Kerrigan's bruised fists. "Even when you are half stupefied by poisoned liquor. So you will sail on the *Madeleine*, for Taka-Taka—one of my islands. My plantation covers it."

"You want a slave driver? Booting Kanakas around?"

Fournet wiped a drop of brandy from his lip, offered Kerrigan a cigar, and took one himself before he replied,

"I leave that detail to your judgment. An incompetent camel, one Dupré, mismanages the island. He was once a good man, but we are not interested in history. You will relieve him, and set the place in order. Probably he is a sot—we get no reports, and less copra. If there is mutiny, you will handle it."

Kerrigan's heart sank. Just the kind of a job he'd like, but he could not take it. He rose, slowly and painfully, and reached for the remains of his hat.

"*Monsieur*, for personal reasons, I have to back down. This Dupré may be what you say, but I can't crowd him out."

"So? He is your friend, you are a gentleman? Quite out of place in the South Pacific," he mocked. "You know the prospects of a man out of work in Papeete. Particularly an American."

Kerrigan tried to tell himself that Dupré is a common name, and that the hapless superintendent need not necessarily be Lili's father; that many Duprés might be working on Fournet's widespread islands. But he had to be honest with himself.

"I can't take his job. I'll handle any other job you have, but not that one."

Fournet smiled maliciously. "*Monsieur* Dupré does have a charming daughter in Papeete. It is possible that you have met her in this so-very small town. But sentiment, you comprehend, is not for business hours."

Kerrigan put on his hat and stepped to the veranda door.

"Thanks for the refreshments. I don't want the damn job."

Fournet tapped his shoulder. "Wait. This incompetent camel, he is dismissed anyway. You do not save his position, you merely rob yourself. Take the work and keep it in the family, *n'est-ce pas?*"

It was hard for a stranded man to resist that shrewd French logic. Kerrigan protested, not too vigorously,

"What the hell do you know about keeping it in the family? I just met the girl this morning. The first friend, the only one in this hell-hole of a so-called tropical paradise!"

Fournet laughed. "I know. When you decline the work from sentiment, I know that you think already of being one of the family. *Tenez!* You are superintendent. You get results. If you have an incompetent camel on the

payroll as clerk, is it that I will meddle?"

He jabbed Kerrigan's chest with his index finger.

"Take the job, idiot! You have a way of direct action—the girl is as good as yours."

"But—see here—what do you think—"

Fournet ignored him. "Had I known how this is, I would not have told you the name. I would have sent for him before letting you report. Ah, I have it! I shall give you a letter of introduction, but I do not put in your proper name. Then when he comes home, he does not tell his daughter who it is that has relieved him."

"You're awfully anxious, *monsieur.*" Kerrigan frowned. "What's fishy about the deal?"

Fournet chuckled. "Men of action are scarce. Tropical laziness, you comprehend. And most of those who are not loafers, they are thieves. Your old-fashioned attitude convinces me you are honest."

Kerrigan knew that this was his only chance of ever seeing more of Lili, so he said,

"After all, with a job, I can help Lil—uh, *Mademoiselle* Dupré. If I do not take it, then—"

"Good! My servants will take care of you. Rest a little, while they go to town to fit you out for Taka-Taka. You sail tonight. As James—James—but of course, James Kirby. Your proper initials make the new name easy to wear, *n'est-ce pas?*"

That settled it. Much as Kerrigan wanted to tell Lili that he had found work, he was afraid to face her. She would sense the real truth from his strained manner, no matter how he twisted the details. And he could not, not the very day he had met her and

fallen in love with her, announce that he was her father's successor. He would write a plausible note, saying he had filled an unexpected vacancy on a ship. Later, he could return to Papeete to see more of Lili. Before the secret was exposed, she would care enough for him to accept his argument:

"Don't you see, whether I have the job or your father has, it's going to be in the family, isn't it?"

But to go to her apartment now and spring that line would merely arouse her indignation at his insolence in taking so much for granted from a bit of kindness on the part of an attractive young lady.

KERRIGAN had a bad case of it. That evening, when Fournet's chauffeur drove him down to the dock, Kerrigan made him stop across the street from Lili's apartment. He watched her, silhouetted against the drawn shades as she moved restlessly about the room. The poor kid was pacing the floor, worried about her father's failure. Kerrigan mopped his forehead; he told the chauffeur to drive on.

"No go!" he told himself. "Couldn't lie to her and make her believe it, she'd ask too many things."

He took the letter with him, to mail from Ua Huku, a station on the way to Taka-Taka. If he mailed it from Papeete, she'd wonder why he hadn't had time to drop in for just a minute.

As Kerrigan followed a porter up the gangplank, the chauffeur caught his arm and whispered,

"Take this revolver, *monsieur*. You'll need it."

"Huh?" Instinctively, Kerrigan had taken the gun; then he wondered a little more about this business of being ignorant of coconuts and yet being qualified to run a plantation.

"What's the setup?" he asked.

But the chauffeur, though he heard him, hurried ashore without looking back.

Once in his stateroom, Kerrigan smoked four cigarettes, and ground the butts into the deck. Fournet was a sly one, emphasizing brawn and hard fists; and then at the last moment, when it was too late to back down, he'd slipped him a gun.

Presently, a tug towed the *Madeleine* across the bar, and then Tahitian sailors set the canvas. A bull-voiced Frenchman bawled commands; the rigging creaked, and the swell of the Pacific lifted the schooner. Kerrigan did not unpack any of the kit which Fournet had furnished. A glance into the suitcase showed that nothing had been omitted. There was even a bottle of cognac.

JIM KERRIGAN finally went on deck, into the salt spray and the moon's rising. The more he thought of that moment when Lili, surprised, had not resented his impulsive embrace, the more it seemed that he had bungled things.

"Damn fool," he muttered, going forward, "I should have talked her into going to Taka-Taka. Because her old man's sacked, doesn't mean he has to leave the island."

The breeze made his cigarette burn hot, and he flipped it over the side. The ship reeked of copra; her fore and aft sails bellied in the wind, and drummed from its drive. Forward of the main hatch, there was a white figure at the rail. The wind whipped the woman's skirt, and the tropical moon outlined her lovely legs.

Then Kerrigan caught the whiff of perfume as the wind shifted a little. It made him think of that one kiss.

"*Gardez vous!*" a seaman bawled, as the boom came across.

Kerrigan, tall, had to duck. The girl, startled, turned at the warning. Kerrigan's lunge brought him a couple yards closer. It was Lili, and she cried,

"My dear—isn't this wonderful—"

Then she frowned a little, and her extended hands dropped limp in Kerrigan's grasp.

"But how do you come here? When I left, I was so sorry I couldn't get in touch with you. I phoned the consulate—the jail—"

"I had to hurry. Last minute break. Couldn't stop to say good-by," he fumbled, breathless and confused. "I was writing you a letter in my stateroom—I guess that's why I didn't see you come aboard. Here it is."

She snuggled closer, all warm and vibrant again, and Kerrigan's arm drew her nearer.

"I had an impulse, just the last minute, to go to Taka-Taka."

"Huh?" Kerrigan blinked. "Taka-Taka?"

"Of course. Dad needs someone to look after him. He's been so helpless ever since Mother died." Her eyes were dazzling, warm as the pressure of her hand. "As helpless as you are. Anyway, I'd be saving rent."

"Well, I do bungle a lot."

Kerrigan's heart did flipflops. When a girl begins to babble about how helpless a fellow is, she's getting into the right frame of mind.

"He'll be glad to see you," he added lamely.

"I heard all about the consul," Lili went on. "It was nice of *Monsieur Fournet* to keep you out of jail. I got most of the story at the market; you know how news spreads. Just imagine him doing anyone a good turn without looking for profit!"

Kerrigan said, "You look great, honey."

She glanced up, smiling. The wind

played with the wide brim of her hat, and made her black curls ripple. Kerrigan squeezed her tightly, and wondered if their hearts would blend from thumping so close together; she was breathless in his arms. Her lashes drooped over misty eyes. Explaining things would be easy now—

"But you've not told me why you're aboard."

Kerrigan was about to go into his dance when she saw the envelope, all crumpled in his hand; he had been too nervous to pocket it. Lili playfully laid one hand over his mouth and plucked the letter from his fingers.

"No, don't tell me, I want to read your note, see what delightful lies you told me."

"Hey, wait a second. That's cold turkey now. I'm here to tell you in person."

She wriggled clear, nimbly evaded his reach. Laughing, she darted to her stateroom, and said over her shoulder,

"You Americans, always ashamed of sentiment. It's mine, and I will read it!"

"Wait—"

THE door latched behind her, cutting off her delighted laugh. Lord, what a mess! Kerrigan, planning to persuade Dupré to remain on the island, so that Lili would not know of his dismissal, had written Lili all about an entirely fictitious destination, an imaginary job in Ua Huku, halfway to Taka-Taka. Now she had his letter, had his vain and useless story—one which events would falsify before her eyes.

Being established as a thoroughly damned liar, right at the start, would sink him.

When the door opened, Lili came out, patting the letter a little farther down the V of her blouse.

"Now try and get it," she chal-

lenged. "You can't—not for a long time, anyway. *Très cher ami*, who'd ever imagine you could say such lovely things?"

"Inspired, I guess," he stuttered.

"And so Fournet did give you a job in Ua Huku, isn't that wonderful? I'm so happy, I've forgotten all my own worries."

He hated to think of when she'd learn his real destination and his actual work. It was a very tough evening, carrying that thought, and living up to Lili's high spirits.

CHAPTER III

... And Sudden Death

THE following evening, before the *Madeleine* reached Ua Huku, Lili came from her stateroom toward the awning where Kerrigan waited for her. He had put off until the last minute telling her the truth of things. Now he lost that chance. She flew at him, she threw the crumpled letter into his teeth.

"You—you cad! Making sport of me with your lies! I heard—the steward told me—"

"Told?"

"About your false name! About taking Father's place!" she cried, and slapped him in the face with one hand, then the other. "You, Fournet's ruffian, to run my Father off the island, intimidate him! No wonder Fournet liked you after you beat the consul!"

Engaging passage for "James Kirby" had kicked back, giving the final touch. Kerrigan caught Lili's wrists, pulled her clawing hands from his face, and held her at arm's length.

"For God's sweet sake, listen to reason! I can explain—"

"That lying letter! You never suspected I'd be on this boat!"

Lili wrenched her wrists clear and

ran to her stateroom. Kerrigan picked up the crumpled letter and dropped it over the side.

Lili avoided him during the final two days on the schooner. A Kanaka brought her meals to her stateroom. Kerrigan did not see her again until the ship anchored outside the lagoon of Taka-Taka, in the shadow of the rugged peak that rose grimly above the palms.

There were no supplies going ashore; only Lili and Kerrigan, avoiding each other's eyes as the ship's boat made for shore. A few natives in dirty white canvas trousers loafed on the beach. They eyed each other, and sullenly agreed to take the luggage of the newcomers to the plantation house, some distance down the beach and half hidden by foliage.

Head high, Lili followed the Kanaka. Kerrigan said to the man with the luggage,

"Tell *Monsieur Dupré* I will see him after he has welcomed his daughter."

Kerrigan sat down in the shade and watched the boat go back. Presently, the *Madeleine* made sail. If Dupré left, it would be on the regular trading schooner that had so long failed to get enough copra to make the stop worthwhile.

Then Kerrigan followed the path the Kanakas had taken. The plantation was run down. No one was at work. As he came closer to the superintendent's bungalow, he heard drunken laughter, the beating of drums, the shrill voices of women. A pretty mess, everyone drunk at ten in the morning. Skirting the native settlement of palm-thatched huts, he caught the reek of palm gin; deadly stuff, distilled somewhere in the jungle.

Kerrigan loitered at some distance from the big house with the screened veranda. He hated the coming inter-

view, and he was on the point of strolling toward the copra storehouses, some distance away, when he heard a shrill scream, and a man's choking cry. Kerrigan whirled.

"What's wrong?" he shouted as he bounded toward the house.

Glass crashed, and a woman screamed again. A big Kanaka, face bleeding, burst through the screen of a window and dropped to the ground. When he saw Kerrigan, he wheeled, and his hand shot out. A heavy knife, already dripping was thrust at Kerrigan.

Kerrigan swayed, drew his revolver and fired. The hurled knife's haft thumped his ribs, and the second slug went wild; but the Kanaka had doubled up. He lay face down, clawing and kicking the ground. Drunk—crazy drunk; the reek of palm gin made that plain. Kerrigan looked up at Lili, who leaned from the window, white-faced. He took a shaky step and asked,

"What happened?"

SHE did not answer; she sagged, crumpled up. He heard the drop to the bungalow floor as he raced up the veranda steps. When he bounded into the living room, he saw the shattered glass, the overturned table; and the man who lay in a quickly spreading pool of blood. His throat had been slashed, and he made horrible wheezing sounds. Then all that stopped; and with it, the red gush that made the man's shirt a gory rag.

The shock stopped Kerrigan for a moment. When he ran to Lili and knelt beside her, he supported her against the crook of his arm.

"Did he get you—are you hurt?"

But she was not injured. With the return of consciousness, she clung to Kerrigan and buried her face on his shoulder.

"They killed Father. He began to tell me—how things were wrong—who was behind it—"

He offered her brandy from the decanter.

"What'd he say?"

"Just that he had a surprise ready. For him, or them. He'd lost a lot of weight, but he was cheerful. Jim, don't you see? He'd gotten proof of a conspiracy! He could have won!"

"So he was silenced." Kerrigan gently thrust Lili from him. He glanced at the man on the floor, shuddered. "Run along, honey. Things look too damn awful. Take another drink, and let me—do what's to be done."

"Jim," she sobbed, "I was such a fool for quarreling! I see now why Fournet would send you, why you couldn't tell me your orders."

He took her by the arms. "Go—please, honey. There's nothing you can do for him. Nothing at all."

Kerrigan was right. There was no help for the angular Dupré, whose dark eyes now stared so horribly at the ceiling. There was nothing to do but clean up the sickening spread of blood and make death look less terrible. So Kerrigan did this.

Pistol fire had not brought any natives from the village. They were either too frightened or too drunk; so Kerrigan went to sober up a few Kanakas, and set them to digging two graves.

Maku, the tall headman, regarded Kerrigan with bloodshot eyes and said,

"I do not know why that man killed the master. I never saw him before."

"Came from some other island, huh?"

"Sure. That is it," Maku said; but Kerrigan was certain that this was a lie. "We do not know him."

"Funny, you've not taken a look at him yet," was Kerrigan's retort. "Where do you get the gin?"

"I do not know. Maybe trader."

But Maku's glance wavered toward the jungle, and he fidgeted.

"You're a damn two-faced liar, Maku, which is not right for a chief. That's gun-barrel gin, and one of your Kanakas is cooking it out in the brush. Now, get to work digging two graves. Vacation is over. We are drying copra from now on."

He turned his back and headed for the pandanus thicket at the edge of the village. It took some effort to walk as if he had not a care in the world. Almost anyone could run him through with a fish spear.

Kerrigan was sweating before he was halfway to the thicket, but he did not look back. He let his arms swing carelessly. The revolver was in the waistband of his trousers, under his shirt and out of sight. Regardless of risk, he had to impress these fellows with his fearlessness.

Kerrigan's back twitched, and he was dizzy; but he puckered his dry lips and whistled a tune he had heard in Papeete. As he picked up the narrow trail that reached into the thorny pandanus, he heard Kanakas muttering:

"*Aué!* This white man is a chief."

But Kerrigan was not too sure of that.

Presently he came to a small stream, which guided him; a still for gin needs cold water. He went upstream, and soon caught the pungent odor of palm juice mash, and the stinging scent of fresh gin. He smelled smoke.

He took it easy, letting not a leaf rustle nor a rock slide from his passing. After fifty yards, he came to the edge of a little clearing beside the stream, and saw the primitive still.

A KEROSENE can was perched on two coral blocks, and between them a fire crackled. An old gun barrel led from the spout of the can; supported by

forked sticks, it sloped downward to a calabash. A young Kanaka squatted beside the still, ready to wrap freshly soaked rags about the gun barrel when the heat of the vapor dried the rags now in place. This cooling condensed the vapor from the boiler, and the potent liquor dripped into the calabash.*

Kerrigan stepped forward and said: "Get out of here, and get to work!"

The Kanaka rose, apparently not the least surprised. He grinned insolently. Kerrigan advanced, fists doubled; then, without any warning, two men bounded from the thicket. One had a knife, the other a barbed fishing spear. Maku and his men had not been bluffed as easily as Kerrigan had imagined!

Kerrigan could have used his pistol, but he could not pacify the plantation until he had proved *himself*, rather than his weapons. He ducked, snatched the hot gun barrel and swept aside the hatchet that the still tender had picked up from the fuel pile. He plied his weapon like a quarterstaff, parrying the fish spear and then, with an extension of the sweep, cracking the knife wielder alongside the head.

The fellow dropped in a heap. The fish spear no more than raked Kerrigan's ribs; he scarcely felt the bite. He dropped his bludgeon, for in the shoulder to shoulder clash he had no room for

* Regular gin (distillation of juniper berry juice with alcohol) and native palm juice gin have the same thing in common—their high alcoholic content. The races of mankind having their earliest origins in Asia—the Indians of North and South America, the natives of the South Sea islands—are peculiarly unadapted to liquor.

While white men for many generations have kept up their morale in the tropics by steady resort to whiskies and gins, the natives simply go to pieces under the influence of liquor.

One of the greatest accusations leveled against the white man is his bringing of liquor to these island paradises. Hence, responsible French and Dutch authorities are constantly on the lookout for the health of their native charges, and discourage the use of gin and other such potent drinks.—Ed.

it. He made a short jab with his fist. The blow landed like a caulking maul, and the spearman rolled end for end.

The still attendant had lost a few seconds, regarding his empty hand that had held the hatchet; then he scrambled after his weapon. He retrieved it, but not until Kerrigan was ready.

Kerrigan flattened out in a lunge that brought him to the fire. He snatched the cold end of a brand and flipped it square into the Kanaka's face, while the fellow still wondered whether to hurl the hatchet or to charge with it. He did neither; he dropped his weapon, and clawed his eyes.

He was more surprised than hurt, but Kerrigan gave him no time to learn that. He closed in, straightened him with a wallop, clipped him a second, one-two. Then he jerked the dazed fellow to his feet and booted him headlong into the pandanus thorns.

"Get to work! Or I'll hammer you silly!"

He broke the fish spear over his knee, then picked up the hatchet. The other two saw the gesture and scrambled to their feet. Groggy, they lurched and stumbled in their flight, and yelled; they fell over each other, and splashed into the cold stream. But Kerrigan ignored them.

He chopped the kerosene can still, and did the same for the containers of warm gin. Then he laid the gun barrel in the fire; when it was red in the middle, he bent it double.

When Kerrigan returned to the village, all but the grave-diggers were splitting coconuts. They were a bleary-eyed lot, and they were sullen, but they were at work. The most industrious were the two who had sneaked out to the still to settle the new superintendent. Kerrigan eyed them, and grinned.

Maku said, "I did not send them, it was not my fault."

"I don't care who sent them. Just keep busy," Kerrigan ordered.

When he went to the house to put some iodine on his spear-slashed ribs, Lili came to meet him. She had a book in her hand, but her eyes were red. Obviously she had been distraught over her father's murder.

"I've just found— Oh, what happened?" She dropped the journal when she saw his blood-stained shirt. "I didn't hear any shots."

"Didn't need a gun. What's that you found?"

He picked up the journal; the pages were penned in French. Lili answered, "Father's records. See—he mentions reports, and wonders why Fournet never acknowledged them. Never sent any help to stop copra thefts."

KERRIGAN frowned. "You got letters from him?"

"He never told me his troubles, except vaguely."

"Someone," Kerrigan decided off-hand, "destroyed the reports instead of mailing them. Judging from what Fournet told me, he felt that your father was going native, drinking, loafing."

"But that gun he gave you?"

Kerrigan shrugged. "He figured there'd be mutiny when I took hold."

Late that afternoon, they buried Dupré. Kerrigan dropped a handful of earth on the crude coffin made of odds and ends of lumber; then he gestured to the Kanakas, and turned to Lili.

"Sweetheart," he said to the sobbing girl, and slipped an arm about her, "there may be justice, but I don't know whether I'm man enough to deal it out. Someone put that poor drunken Kanaka up to that awful work—and that's the man we have to fight. But how I can prove—"

"Make the plantation pay, *mon ami*,"

she answered through her tears, "and that will be justice, clearing Father's name."

CHAPTER IV

Dirty Work

MAKU, the village headman, kept his people at work. At sunrise, each native was busy splitting his quota of four hundred coconuts; and copra dried in the sun. Bag after bag was heaped in the storehouse. At night, Kerrigan slipped from the house, long after Malia, the Kanaka girl who helped Lili, had gone to her village. He went to the storehouse, where he slept with his revolver under his head. The first copra thieves to raid the place would get a surprise party.

But a week passed, and there was no trouble. The peacefulness of it all made Kerrigan uneasy, but he refused to tell Lili why he frowned. Then he heard the far-off *putt-putt* of a power boat, which was a black speck, halfway between Taka-Taka and the island to the east, a green splash somewhat short of the horizon.

Kerrigan got Dupré's field glasses and watched the boat approach. Three white men were in it. The one at the wheel was square-faced, square-shouldered; his hard mouth bore down on a cigar stump, and the wind ruffled his red hair. Of the other two, one was horse-faced and swarthy and loose-jointed; the other, bullet-headed and stocky. And the nearer they came, the less Kerrigan liked them.

If they were armed, they did not wear their weapons in sight.

"Keep under cover, honey," Kerrigan said, returning to the house. "No telling what this may be."

"I'm not afraid," Lili retorted.

"Keep out of sight! Getting an eye-

ful of a white woman might give these fellows notions. From their faces, I'd say the guillotine has been itching for them for years."

When the boat had tied up on the dock, he met the three on the veranda.

"How do you do? Have a drink?"

The redhead grinned amiably. "I'm Bill Weaver, and I heard from a fisherman about the doings here. Too bad about poor Dupré!"

"Yeah, too bad. You don't happen to be Slug Weaver, do you?"

Weaver looked surprised, then nodded.

"You do well for a stranger, Kerrigan. I'm your neighbor." He gestured. "Run the island across the strait. These are two of my overseers."

The bullet-headed fellow's name was Schwartz, and the horse-faced man was Laporte; at least, those were their most recent names. Kerrigan kept his arms folded. A thrill of hostility made him tingle. He returned their pointed glances, and sensed that they were sizing him up; that they had come for no other purpose than to see what manner of man now ran Taka-Taka.

"Sit down," he said; and having made it plain that the hand of welcome was not being extended, "and have a drink."

He intended to get a bottle himself, but Malia, having nothing else to do, came out with a tray. She was a tall, shapely girl, generously proportioned as most of her race, and her red calico dress displayed almost as much of her figure as the scanty native costume would have.

Malia's smile and sparkling eyes took in the visitors.

Weaver chuckled and said, "If Deagan ever saw that *vahine!*"

"You might have brought Deagan along," Kerrigan said.

"One man's always on duty."

"Against copra thieves, huh?" Kerrigan's suspicions would not subside. True, native gossip, grapevine telegraph, native fishermen—they could all account for Weaver's accurate information, but somehow, that glib explanation rang false.

"Or do they just pick on easy places?" Kerrigan went on. "Like this one. I guess you know how much copra Dupré lost?"

Weaver's face darkened. "Say, we just came over to be sociable. To give you a hand if you needed one."

"Thanks, all of you. By the way, if you do have trouble with thieves, why don't you try a shotgun trap, facing the door? I've not lost a bag since I've been here. The fishermen didn't tell you that, did they?"

WEAVER cursed and upset his drink. "Why, you heel, I'll—"

He reached for the open neck of his shirt, but the gun at his armpit never got into line. Kerrigan dipped a revolver out of the table drawer.

"Back on your heels! Now get out of here!"

Scowling, they left. When Lili Dupré came to the veranda, she asked,

"*Mon dieu!* Why did you do that?"

Kerrigan grinned sourly. "I didn't like their faces. I've heard—even in the short time I was cruising in the island—about a certain Slug Weaver, and none of it was good. So I ribbed him to see if he had brought a gun. Even if he's not the skunk I think he is, I don't want him around. Ten to one, he came here to snoop."

SEVERAL days later, Kerrigan had disastrous confirmation of his suspicions. While there was a shotgun in the bungalow, Kerrigan had not rigged it up as he had described to Weaver. He continued his vigil in the copra house, trust-

ing to the approach of raiders to wake him.

When he came to the bungalow, Lili gestured to the table on the veranda and said,

"You will like this breakfast. I made it all myself. Malia is not here."

"I'm not surprised. I don't think anyone else is, either, except us."

"Oh." Her eyes widened. "What do you mean?"

"There wasn't the usual chatter of the village waking up. I went to look, though I'd already guessed. Every blasted Kanaka is gone! Men, women, children."

"A strike, maybe? Because you broke their still?"

"No, they've migrated. Their canoes are gone. We're tied up until the next trading boat comes in and I can send for more labor. Just to be sure the news gets to Fournet, I'll go—you'll go, too, and you'll stay in Papeete, until this mess is cleaned up."

Then he changed the subject; he did not want to tell her his real plan. The logical thing would be to do just what he had proposed, but to yell for help would be the same as taking a beating. Kerrigan had to prove his suspicions of Weaver before he could face Fournet with a hard-luck story.

That night he pinned a note to Lili's pillow. He was sure that she would not be in any danger, for with the desertion of all the Kanakas, the plantation had been set back beyond any need for further action.

Dupré's motorboat would have been too noisy, so Kerrigan took the canoe in the boathouse, and set out across the straits. Paddling was easy at first, but soon his arms began to stiffen. Sweat stung his eyes, and the night breeze would not keep him cool. His back ached, and streaks of fire raced upward to join the cramp in the back of his

neck. And his palms began to blister. A native could paddle for hours at a time; Kerrigan used strength rather than skill, and soon he had to grit his teeth and drive himself.

Sometimes, misjudging the gentle swell, he let the canoe take it broadside, and it was nearly swamped. And his ordinary mismanagement made her ship water, so that he spent much of his time bailing. But as the moon dipped low, and the long shadow of the island came to meet him, Kerrigan dug in grimly.

When he finally beached the canoe, he dropped face forward on the coral-strewn sand. He had not made good time, and he had burned himself out. After recovering enough to hide his canoe, he had another problem to face: that of concealing himself, for it was only a few hours from dawn, and too late for any snooping.

KERRIGAN sweltered in a clump of shrubbery, high up on a rocky slope, all the following day. Far below, Weaver's Kanakas were splitting coconuts in the widespread groves. Kerrigan could only guess Weaver's ultimate motive in plundering the Taka-Taka plantation. Whether Weaver hoped finally to buy a property that Fournet would end by selling in disgust, or whether he looked only to the immediate loot, there was no way of figuring.

The layout was simple enough. The bungalow, the sheds, the native village, the pier and boathouse: Kerrigan could see them all from his sun-beaten perch. In one clearing, natives were at work building thatched huts; a new settlement was springing up.

The distance was too great for Kerrigan to recognize faces, but he could easily pick out the white overseers. They carried belted guns, and riding crops. Anyone working for Weaver meant trouble!

That night, Kerrigan climbed down from his perch. He opened the canned meat he had brought, and drank from a spring. Then he set out.

Near the new settlement, he paused. By the glow of embers, he recognized some of his own runaway Kanakas. Maku, squatting by the coals, faced a group of muttering men. Kerrigan's heart did a jig; the presence of Maku proved that the hunch had been right. Weaver had induced them to desert. Stealthily, he pressed on, and soon he was picking his way along the beach.

To his left were the lights of the plantation bungalow; along the waterfront, tin-roofed warehouses rose black and bulky; he could smell the copra. A pier reached a short way into the lagoon, and from the canopy at its end came the *thump-thud* of a moored boat wallowing in the gentle swell.

A stirring in the foliage that fringed the beach warned Kerrigan; perhaps it was a whiff of stale tobacco that told him he was no longer alone in that quarter. He crouched, and waited, motionless. There was a lull in the sound of the surf. A girl murmured, close at hand,

"I do not like this place. We were crazy to come here. I'm afraid of Deagan—Nito, I'm going to hide in the jungle!"

"It's your imagination, Malia," Nito answered. "There are many *vahines* on the island, pretty ones, among the other workers. You are safe enough."

"But the way he looked at me—a new face, Nito."

It was easy to slip past the apprehensive lovers. Kerrigan swung inland to circle them. Malia went on,

"We're prisoners. All our boats burned. It's Maku's fault."

The gullible Kanakas were getting wise, but too late. No wonder Maku had muttered by the fire. No wonder

Nito's voice shook as he tried to convince lovely Malia that she was just one girl among many.

Foliage crackled. Malia gasped. The smell of liquor and tobacco was plain now, plain as the voice that rasped, "Hiding, huh? I told you to come to the house!"

One of Weaver's overseers; it must be Deagan, the man Malia feared.

"Let go!" she protested. "I don't like you."

This was none of Kerrigan's party, but he moved a little, so that he could see the three silhouetted against the sky glow.

"Get out!" the white man growled, gesturing at Nito. "Before I knock your damn head off."

The Kanaka hesitated. Force and arms had cowed the natives, but he was ashamed to surrender. And when Malia cried out and slapped Deagan, her lover could not back down.

"Let her alone!" He lunged, empty-handed.

Deagan laughed and flung Malia aside with a sweep of his arm. Kerrigan bounded from cover; he was filled to the brim with Weaver and his ruffians. But things were moving rapidly.

Deagan was big and quick, confident and used to handling men. One blow flattened the Kanaka; for luck, Deagan booted him in the stomach.

"Butt in, huh?" he snarled.

MALIA screamed. She saw Kerrigan, thought he was Deagan's man, and feared the worst for Nito. Another thud, and a second kick thumped Nito's ribs as he lay doubled up in the sand. Then Kerrigan's revolver smacked down; Deagan never knew what struck him.

Blood gushed from his scalp, and from his cheek where the front sight

slashed in passing. He staggered, mumbled, flopped face down in the brush. Malia was too surprised to move or speak. She stood there, her shapely body outlined by the gleam of the palm oil on her skin.

Kerrigan caught her arm. "Not a word! Get Nito away as quickly as you can. No telling what'll happen when Weaver finds out!"

"But we can't! He burned our boats. He'll think we hit Deagan. He'll kill us for this, Weaver will!"

She was all too right. Kerrigan pointed, and told her where his canoe was hidden.

"Wait for me over there. I have some business with these fellows. But don't tell your people. No noise, you understand, or it's the finish for me and you and Nito."

She nodded, caught his hand with both her hands, and kissed it. She choked back a sob, ran to Nito and knelt beside him as Kerrigan headed for the bungalow.

"Never mind tying Deagan," he said to himself. "He'll be out a while, and if he does come to, he'll be hunting Nito in the village, or the brush, not by the water."

There was one risk which Kerrigan had not ignored: that Malia and Nito might run out sooner than necessary, and leave him stranded. If panic caught them, he'd be trapped. But though he had struck in defense of the lovely *vahine*, he had imperiled the two lovers, and he had to give them their chance at his canoe.

CHAPTER V

Weaver's Scheme

ON the veranda three men played poker by the light of a gasoline lantern: Weaver, Laporte and Schwartz,

each engrossed with cards and chips and tumblers of liquor. A white-clad Kanaka kept the glasses filled.

Weaver grumbled, "Three handed poker is a pain."

Laporte's horse face twisted in a grin.

"Deagan's got that *vahine* on the brain. Bet he get's hell scratched out of him."

"Do we play cards?" Schwartz scratched his bullet head. "Or do we stop to find how goes it with Deagan? I never saw a *vahine* that would fight, anyway."

"Not with your handsome mug looking at her," Weaver said sarcastically.

Kerrigan slipped to the back door, which opened into the kitchen. It was not hooked. With his pocket flash he made his way to the front. An occasional floorboard creaked, but the click of chips and the muttered comment of the plays muffled the few sounds he made.

The room where Weaver handled the business end of the plantation was in the left wing. A momentary flicker of the flashlight through each open door as he tiptoed up the hall had eliminated the other rooms.

There was a dusty desk, all littered with paper, cigar stumps, cartridges, a filing cabinet of antiquated pattern. The corners of the room were heaped with broken chairs, old newspapers and magazines, cases of trade goods and assorted rubbish.

Plantation paperwork was sketchy; no records would be kept at all, but for government taxation. And at the best, Kerrigan hoped to find little more than records of the amounts of copra sold to traders who made the rounds of the islands. But this might be the very thing he needed to drive a wedge through Weaver's front.

"If the louse sells a lot more copra

than the trees on this island can produce," Kerrigan had told himself on the way over, "that's something to crack him wide open."

The poker game dawdled along. Weaver and his assistants were more interested in the jug that the servant circulated. Their speech was perceptibly thick, but they were far from drunk.

Kerrigan hastily thumbed the journals and records. He finally found those that corresponded with the years of Dupré's operation of Taka-Taka Island. Among other things, he noted that the transactions of the plantation had not been carried on in the name of Weaver. While he was the chief, the dummy operator was Laporte!

"No wonder Jules Fournet wasn't wise! He didn't know Slug Weaver was kingpin, or he'd have known Dupré wasn't to blame. Not knowing of Weaver's presence nearby, naturally Fournet suspected his plantation manager." This made Kerrigan all the more sure of victory as soon as he could get his facts to Papeete. Then he decided to take Weaver's shipping manifests to clinch it; these supplied the names of traders, dates, all the details.* But these were a dusty tangle, and he lost time in scrutinizing them with the aid of his small flashlight.

A clumping up the steps startled Ker-

* Weaver's subterfuge, then, has been uncovered. A man with a black reputation, Weaver, so Kerrigan strongly suspects, has set up an accomplice—Laporte—as nominal director of his plantation adjoining the plantation property of Jules Fournet, the wealthy French copra operator. Weaver figures that inasmuch as all transactions on his plantation are carried on in Laporte's name, Fournet will not suspect he is being robbed and his interests sabotaged by his next-door neighbor, so to speak.

The use of dummy companies to do business in the South Seas is no new thing. In the South Seas, what with the many adventurers of unsavory reputation who have gone down there to make their fortunes, it may be expected that business practices can be almost as much of a mystery as the lives of these adventurers.—ED.

rigan; the sound was not really like footsteps, though someone was ascending, slowly, clumsily. He seized his armload of plunder and headed for the sill. The window was screened, and knocking out the frame would make too much noise.

The card game had broken up; chairs scraped on the veranda. Something surprising had paid them a visit, for Weaver swore, and Laporte said,

"Ha! What she hit you with, *hein?*?"

Schwartz chuckled. "Vot I told you? You better stick to the old *vahine*."

Deagan had recovered enough to reach the veranda; there was no other conclusion Kerrigan could draw. And his own exit was cut off until the excitement died.

Deagan must be moving in a haze. So Kerrigan judged from the man's voice.

"Damn that Malia! Slugged me. Those crummy Kanakas. By God, I'm shooting the scum! Where's my gun?"

"Take it easy! What happened?"

"Don't know—exactly—cut me with something—thought you locked up—knives—"

SURPRISE had sobered the half surly players. Violence to a white man shocked them. There was a tramping and scuffling into the hall, and scraps of threats.

"Got to teach 'em a lesson . . . get away with this, they'll try something else . . . where the hell's my gat?"

A heavy thump; Deagan had collapsed. Weaver's voice tightened; Kerrigan could easily isolate it by its trick of dominating the confusion.

"Cut bad—*say!* Look here! Gun barrel did that! I've seen 'em before—Deagan—snap out of it! You sure a *vahine* hit you?"

Hell was ready to pop. Now that Weaver suspected some native of hav-

ing a gun, it was entirely different from the reaction to Deagan's supposedly being slugged by a *vahine* armed with a chunk of coral. This new turn of events would surely stampede Malia and Nito. And without a key to Weaver's motorboat, Kerrigan was stranded on the island. He might hide, but the oppressed Kanakas, to save themselves, would betray him at first sight.

Kerrigan jerked back from the hall door. Laporte was fuming and muttering about iodine for Deagan's head.

Weaver shouted, "In the office, you chump! Keep your head. Don't you know where the first-aid kit is?"

Even with surprise in his favor, Kerrigan did not care to shoot it out, three to one. While he had a good chance to cut the trio down before they fairly realized the score, he would put himself in a false position. He had invaded the house on pure suspicion. However well founded those suspicions, he could not smoke out the conspirators. That was for the law, or self-defense.

And a man can't draw first and plead that!

Kerrigan extended his legs in a long bound, landing tiptoe. He ducked behind the litter of broken furniture and rubbish in the corner, just as Weaver came in with the gasoline lantern.

"In that desk drawer," he said, pointing, as Laporte brushed past him. "If those Kanakas have guns— Say, what the hell's going on around here!"

Schwartz, startled by the voice, cried from the hall.

"Now vot?"

"Someone's frisked the place! Look at them books! Look at the dust wiped off fresh!"

The three stood there facing each other. Deagan, on the veranda, mumbled for a drink. Weaver snapped,

"All right, dummies. There's a white man in this. He's run out with the

records! No Kanaka'd do that, I'm absolutely certain!"

"We'll find him—"

"Yeah, if he's waiting," Weaver growled. "He had the books. He ran into Deagan's little party, slugged him and checked out."

"How'd he come here? Did we hear a boat?"

"Ever hear of canoes? Whites can paddle them."

"So he took some account books. What of it?"

Weaver said, "If Jules Fournet is behind this, you'll ask 'what of it!' That damn Kerrigan's more than a superintendent. If it's not him, pulling all this, I'll eat my hat!"

Kerrigan relaxed, sighed in relief when the enemy headed back into the hall, all talking at once. Guilt had cropped up in enough of the cross-fire of speech to prove how right he was. Let them hunt him! Now that they had decided a white man was running the show, they would not go to the village in search of Malia and Nito. There was a decent chance of his reaching the waiting lovers before the search covered too much ground.

Or so Kerrigan thought, for just a moment while the three headed for the front of the place again.

Weaver said, "If it's Kerrigan—and it can't be anyone else—he's back at his island already. He'd have to go back to get Dupré's daughter before he heads for the nearest gendarmerie. It's a cinch he'd not bring her along on this raid."

Their decision though wrong as to detail, was logical.

"Get along to the boat," Weaver commanded. He paused, a screen slammed, and he said to the servant: "Wash Mr. Deagan's cuts and tie them up, and give him a drink. Put him to bed, understand?"

THEN Weaver hastened after his men. Kerrigan, taking advantage of the Kanaka servant's preoccupation, dashed out the back way, with the loot under his arm. In his free hand, he had his gun. If that gang reached the island, looking for him, and found Lili—

"Good Lord," he groaned, suddenly sick and dizzy. Sweat drenched him from head to foot. In the excitement of hiding himself, in the tension of trying to follow the cross-fire of shouting, Kerrigan had not at once gotten the full implication of it all.

"They—they'll—"

He hated to think of what they would do. Deagan's handling of Malia was too good a hint. That Lili was a white woman would not help, particularly when she professed ignorance of Kerrigan's whereabouts.

Then Kerrigan knew the answer. Only one thing to do. Just see that the trio did not leave the island. Simple—if he lived through the attempt.

CHAPTER VI

Love at Last

KERRIGAN needed both hands, so when he reached the landward end of the pier, he thrust his plunder under the decking. Weaver and his two men were in the shadow of the canopy that sheltered the boat.

A starter ground and grumbled. A man cursed when the engine failed to start. They were nervous, afraid Kerrigan might have gotten away from Taka-Taka, and on the road to the gendarmerie at Ua Huku.

"You're flooding it," Weaver growled. "Let me try it."

Kerrigan had neither time nor chance for stealth; the next spin might make her fire. Deliberately he hobbled down the pier. Someone shouted, "What's

that? What the hell?"

Kerrigan had a dozen yards to go. A man was dimly visible in the gloom of the canopy. To fire a shot would warn the others to duck for cover; and they'd blast him down before he could ever begin to pick a second target. But he had to get into that boat; he had to keep it from starting.

Controlling his rage, compelling himself not to fire, Kerrigan stumbled, deliberately.

He croaked, "I want to go—can't leave me—I'm hurt—"

There was a blued gleam of metal. The man at the canopy entrance lowered his gun, fancying, reasonably enough, the rasping voice belonged to Deagan.

"Damn fool's punch drunk—wait, I'll take him back and tell Hivi to tie him to his bunk."

"Head hurts," Kerrigan rasped; he stumbled, and choked.

Two more yards; just two more to lurch and stagger. Weaver was no longer pulling the starter. Regardless of his position as an intruder, Kerrigan had to shoot it out, and consequences be damned!

ANOTHER lurch. In the gloom, the imposture was succeeding.

The man at the entrance yelled, "Look out, he's got a gun!"

A flashlight blazed. Weaver cursed. Kerrigan caught the glare full in the face. He fired blindly. There was answering fire. A bullet *zinged!* from the sheet metal canopy, and a shot from the boat tore through his leg. He lurched again, and this time it was not feigned.

A blow chopped down on his forearm. Blinded, he could not see anything but the dancing blob of light; he could neither strike nor shoot. His pistol skated halfway across the pier, and his three enemies pounced on him. Weaver played the flashlight on his captive.

"Kerrigan, huh? Where's the stuff you stole from the office?"

"What office?" Kerrigan tried to bluff. "I was at the copra shed. Looking for copra you mugs stole."

Weaver spat. "Detective. Marking bags, trying to frame us!"

"Dupré wasn't killed quite quick enough," Kerrigan said, carrying on his desperate bluff. "You crooks didn't catch every report he sent. Whoever you paid off on the trading boat slipped up. But Dupré had marked some bags. You bright boys probably sacked the stuff over again before you sold it, so Fournet sent me to catch you with the goods."

This was more than quick thinking; the quickest wits could hardly have pieced it together under the circumstances. Kerrigan had spent days studying every angle, and what he outlined was at least logical enough to account for his presence. But Weaver was not entirely taken in.

"You know something about our books," he rasped. "You can take your choice of telling us, or we'll go to the island and ask Dupré's daughter. Nice life you two lead. One of us'll have to take your place," he hinted.

Kerrigan's wound was neither deep nor serious, but the shock had weakened him; he had to stall for time. He said, with effort,

"Believe it or not. Wouldn't I tell you, to keep you from the island?"

Lili was on the spot, regardless. Whether he did or did not reveal the hiding place of the books, Weaver would not take any chances on what Lili might have learned, if only in the form of Kerrigan's suspicions. So, Kerrigan thought, let them go after her; they would anyway, and he would win a little more time.

"Dump him in," Weaver ordered, and leaped into the launch's cockpit.

IT reeked from gasoline from the flooded carburetor. As Schwartz and Laporte started to pick him up, Kerrigan saw a slim chance. He groaned, and said,

"Listen, leave her out of it. Gimme a smoke. I'll tell, give me a chance."

"All right, Laporte," Weaver nodded. "He's coming to his senses."

Kerrigan fumbled for his cigarette lighter. He sat up. While his leg hurt, and throbbed fiercely now, the nausea had subsided. He flicked the lighter, blinked stupidly as he held it before his face.

"Huh—where's my smoke—who took my smoke?"

Schwartz thought he was still punch drunk from the leg wound and the booting in the scuffle; and so he thrust a cigarette between Kerrigan's lips.

The lighter rose. Kerrigan wobbled, got to his knees. But for the whip of peril, he could hardly have carried on. He gestured with one hand.

"I put the books back there."

He flipped the lighter into the cockpit, just as the three followed his gesture toward the landward end of the pier. There was a gusty roar. Flames rose to the canopy. Weaver, clothes ablaze, plunged into the water.

Schwartz yelled, "Grab the extinguisher!"

"It's in the cockpit!" Laporte shouted. "There's another in the house!"

In the panic, they ignored Kerrigan, who flopped forward and clawed for his pistol. Now was his chance to cut them down; he had no more scruples. Belly or back, if he could get them, he would.

But he got a handful of slivers instead of the revolver he had dropped. A dark figure popped up from the shadows beside the pier, where the dock touched the land. A native, club in hand, cracked down on Laporte. He pitched forward in a heap.

Malia came out of the shadows and into the firelight. The glow lighted her bare legs, her breast and her shoulders. Schwartz, surprised, jerked his gun, but his shot was wild. Half a dozen natives, led by Maku, bounded from cover. As one man, they pelted Schwartz with rocks and chunks of coral. The missiles silenced the wild shots, and the Kanakas closed in on their oppressors.

Then Kerrigan found his gun, and shouted,

"Here's the one you want!"

Weaver, half choked by the fumes that poured out of the canopy, was scrambling out of the water. When he saw the mob, he tugged at his wet holster. His gun jammed. Kerrigan cut loose a shot.

"Drop it, Weaver! Drop it, and be good, or I'll let these Kanakas tear your guts out by hand!"

Weaver obeyed, then croaked, "Look, they got Laporte down! Stop them!"

They were clubbing, kicking, fighting for a chance at the two half-conscious overseers. As the heat drove Kerrigan from the canopy at the pierhead, some of the Kanakas swamped Weaver; others raced toward the bungalow to club Deagan. The gentle natives, so long cowed by armed men, had run amuck.

Kerrigan did not want a massacre; not but what it would be a simple solution, but it would kick back. He caught Malia's shoulder; he jerked Nito from the edge of the mob and shouted,

"Stop them! You're making it worse! If you finish them, the gendarmes will come from Papeete! Stop it, you fools!"

Maku finally quieted the mob, and in time to give the four oppressors a chance for survival.

Then Kerrigan got in his final lick; that was when the battered captives were back in the bungalow. Laporte lay huddled on his bunk. Kerrigan shook him and said,

"After this native riot, I can do just about what I please with you, and get away with it. Maku told me you put a native up to killing poor old Dupré." He raised his revolver. "You lousy rat! Weaver's bad enough, but you—"

LAPORTE yelled, tried to avoid the expected blow that would brain him.

"I didn't!" he screeched. "It was Weaver—Weaver told him to do it! I only work here!"

Kerrigan sighed and lowered the gun.

"You can save your hide, maybe, by sticking to that story—if Weaver lives long enough to face a judge."

He stepped to the door. "You punks have been beaten and kicked around by Kanakas. No one's afraid of you any more, particularly not the Kanakas who did the slugging. So I'm leaving them here to watch you till I tend to a few bits of business. If you behave, I think they'll resist the temptation to beat your brains out."

He repeated the bluff on Schwartz; Deagan was too groggy to know what was going on. He left Maku guarding Weaver, and his parting word to the Kanaka chief was,

"If this fellow escapes, you'll answer for the tricks you men pulled. You'll answer for being fool enough to let Weaver bribe you into deserting. So watch him, he's harmless. And you'll be all right."

Kerrigan walked to the veranda. The chattering natives quieted at the sight of him. They recognized a chief when they saw one.

He picked Nito from the crowd. "Get that canoe and paddle me to Taka-Taka."

Malia insisted on going along, to take turns with the paddle.

"Nito and I were worried," she said, when they shoved off, "so instead of hid-

ing, we watched. And we told Maku, saying that you had easily knocked Deagan down. That we might do the same to the others. So we were ready, and when we saw what happened to you, we forgot to be afraid."

Kerrigan laughed. He had to pretend that he had not been afraid.

He said, "Nito, that was well done. With no boats, and the putt-putt boat burned to the water line, Weaver will stay where he is until you rig a sail and go to Ua Huku for the gendarmes. Can you do that?"

"My people have sailed further in a boat as small."

And Nito plied his paddle, making the canoe dart like a flying fish; he knew that Kerrigan was in a hurry to tell the white *vahine* that the shooting was over.

IT all ended in Papeete, some weeks later, when the gendarmes had Weaver and his crew safely locked up, and Kerrigan and Lili Dupré were driven up to Jules Fournet's house.

"You see," Fournet said, "I am a shrewd person, I know an aggressive man when I see him. Alas, *mademoiselle*—"

"I think this is about the last time you'll call me that, *monsieur*," Lili smiled.

Fournet nodded. "Neither does that surprise me." He bowed to Kerrigan. "Let me congratulate you, *monsieur*. It is as I predicted, to the final detail. Now, I am grieved that I did not think of this one day sooner—poor *Monsieur Dupré*!

"You see, I did not want to explain too much. I wanted you to go as one new and ignorant. The enemy would take a fresh start—devise the routine to suit the man, *heim*?"

"Huh? You mean you weren't going to sack Lili's dad?"

"You can only take my word for that,

unhappily," Fournet said.

But Lili believed him. "Why—and to think, I thought you were the hardest man in Papeete, *Monsieur Fournet!*"

He bowed ceremoniously. "Not the hardest, *mademoiselle*. Merely the smartest. The hardest, that is Jim Kerrigan, the apprentice beachcomber."

Lili sighed, and took Kerrigan's arm.

"I suppose, *mon cher*, that you'll have to live up to that by beating up the American consul once a day until we go back to the plantation."

"Lili," Kerrigan grinned, "there you go anticipating things again. Until we get back to Taka-Taka, I'm spending all my time with a brunette."

She looked exceedingly hurt. "But—but I thought—" she stammered.

Kerrigan took the girl in his arms. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Fournet. The Frenchman looked intrigued.

"Lili," Kerrigan said as he raised her lips to his own, "don't be a little dope."

THE CROW'S NEST

(Continued from page 7)

WILLIAM O'SULLIVAN, who wrote "Morua Fights For Love," did this story in a rather unusual manner. Your editors got their heads together and plotted out a South Sea story that had all the elements you readers have asked for in your letters to us.

We gave it all we could in the way of unusual characterization, filled it with glamour and action, and created two girls, one sophisticated and hard, the other sweet, native, and innocent.

Then we cast around for a writer who could handle what we had written. We decided on O'Sullivan, who did such a good job on "The Bum Who Reformed" in our June issue.

Whether or not he did a good job, we leave up to you, but we have a sneaking hunch that you'll think as we do—and that's mighty nice thinking!

The strange part of it all is that O'Sullivan turned it out for us as his wife went to the hospital for a serious operation. Many thanks, Bill. We appreciate stuff like that. It was a grand yarn.

And you readers might reciprocate and drop Bill a line telling him we mean it!

Rap



GUNS

Pointing Up!

After too many years as a military step-child anti-aircraft artillery is coming into its own as an important defense weapon! In an authoritative discussion, Lieutenant Robert A. Rankin tells all about modern anti-aircraft guns, height finders, gun directors, searchlights, sound locators, and anti-aircraft ammunition. Read how anti-aircraft artillery, in its present stage of high development, is one of the most important factors in any scheme of the national defense . . . how the United States at last will be able to cope with the possibility of an aerial invasion. Don't miss this intensely interesting article in the big

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Mystery on Dead Man Reef

By GEORGE ARMIN SHAFTEL

DeCoursey could prove John Gregg was innocent, but to prove it meant death

“WHAT is your *real* name, lad?” the trader asked.

“Just what I’ve told you! John Gregg.”

“Oh.” DeCoursey chuckled. “I was wondering if that was as phony as the rest of your story.”

The young man stiffened. “Look here—”

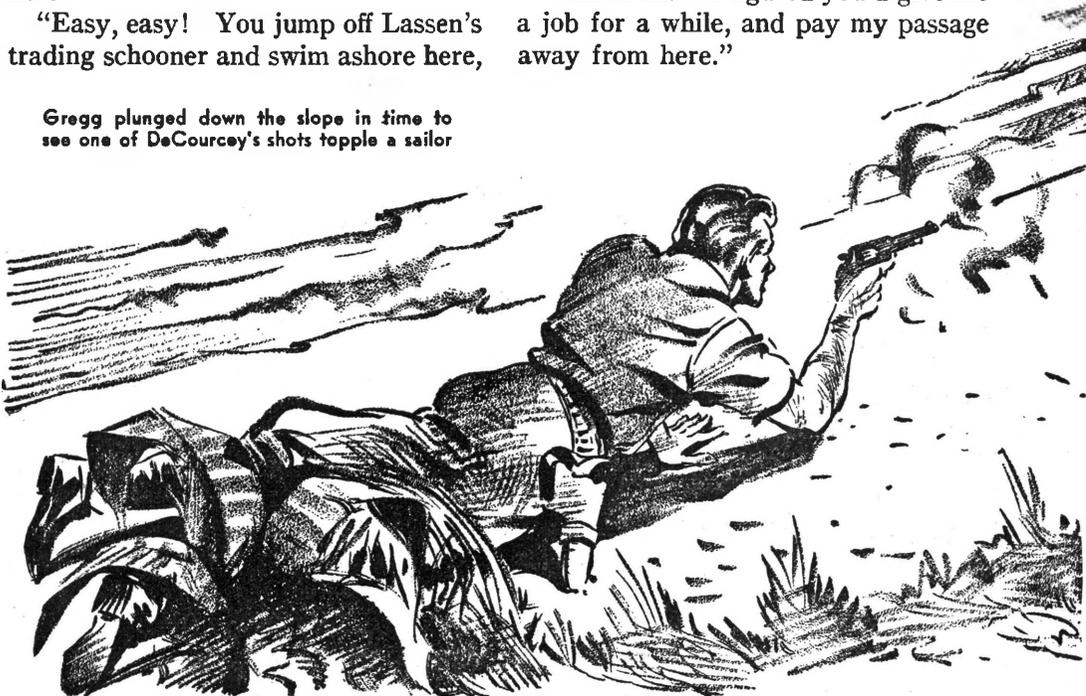
“Easy, easy! You jump off Lassen’s trading schooner and swim ashore here,

and tell me you were a stowaway and had been kicked off. I talk to Lassen by radio and he tells me you *hired* him to bring you to Puna-Puka. So what am I to think?”

Gregg shrugged. He fought back the sudden panic tightening his innards, and kept his voice cool as he answered.

“I’m broke. I figured you’d give me a job for a while, and pay my passage away from here.”

Gregg plunged down the slope in time to see one of DeCoursey’s shots topple a sailor





KRUHA

The trader chuckled. A small, plump, gray-haired man, DeCourcey had a kindly way about him.

"So you're broke. Yet you told Lassen to come by here next week to pick you up, and promised him three hundred dollars."

DeCourcey's tone was amused, not accusing. And he spoke on quickly, as if not liking to embarrass young Gregg.

"I told Lassen not to come back here until his next regular trip. That's six months from now. So I guess you're marooned here, lad."

So guess again, John Gregg thought suddenly, staring out to sea, excitement flaring within him.

Gregg and DeCourcey, who was the one trader and white resident of the island, were sitting on a coral boulder out on the reef a couple hundred yards from the Puna-Puka beach. They were fishing for *malau*, a fat big-eyed red fish of gorgeous flavor. The moon had risen, and the southeasterly trade wind had faded to an amorous sigh.

Along the shore the coconut trees stood stately and mute, gleaming faintly above the white glare of the beach. Behind the palms, a few lights shone in the village beyond the trading station.

Within the reef, the water was smooth. But on the outer edge of the coral barrier, the surf smashed and pounded. Across the reef it swept crabs and lobsters with eyes that shone amazingly in the sun's glare. It followed hollows on the broad expanse of coral—shimmering pools in which spotted sea eels lay coiled.

It was ceaseless as time, that surf, beating up an eerie glow of phosphorescence as it struck, lashing across the barrier with a crackling hiss and choking down them into coral caverns.

Gregg stared out beyond the surf, out to sea. Keener-eyed than the trader, he saw lights out there. A yacht was head-

ing in toward Puna-Puka.

Marooned, was he? Like hell! Tonight, he'd swing into action. Tomorrow, he'd get away. . . .

DeCourcey pulled up a fat red fish. "Enough," he sighed. "Let's turn in."

Gregg waited an hour, lying on his cot on the screened veranda of the trading station. Then he got up. Walked inside.

Moonlight shone on counters and shelves. With poignant homesickness, Gregg was drawn to thoughts of home. For here were those smells of a country general store—of kerosene, of leather goods and dungarees, of tobacco and candy. At the back of the store was DeCourcey's desk, and iron safe. Between them was his shortwave radio set.

GREGG got busy. His lean, rangy figure bent over DeCourcey's roll-top desk, he searched through ledgers and bills of lading and files of correspondence.

In a pigeonhole, he found photographs. And a medal. On the back of this Croix de Guerre medal he found what he sought: the engraved name, Philip DeCourcey Leroux.

Which meant that DeCourcey *was* Leroux!

"Don't move."

Gregg whirled, and recoiled, blinded by the smack of a flashlight beam into his lean face. He heard a gun being cocked.

"I could shoot you as a thief," DeCourcey said. "I'd be absolutely justified."

Unflinchingly Gregg faced him. He was a serious young fellow, Gregg—a high-tempered youngster who turned defiant and reckless when threatened. His lips tightened with panic, but his gray eyes blazed in anger.

"I'm no thief, Leroux!"

"Please keep on calling me DeCour-
cey."

"I came here to find you. To take
you back to Honolulu!"

The trader swore, his pale forehead
knitting in surprise.

"But why?"

"You were the only witness to the
DeGroot robbery. You can identify the
thief."

"Yes, that's so," the trader admit-
ted.

Gregg's voice was taut. "Am I the
man?" he demanded.

"No. He wasn't a tall, good-looking
youngster like you. He was burly, put-
ting on lard, and gray at the temples."

"Just the same, the crime's finally
been fastened on me!" Gregg said, and
the angry resentment of long months of
brooding worry was in his voice. "Look,
DeCourcey. If you'd come back and
testify, you could save me from going
to the penitentiary for fifteen to twenty
years!"

DeCourcey sighed, his pallid face re-
gretful.

"Sorry, my boy. But I'm fifty-six,
and my heart's going back on me. It's
a long way to Honolulu—and I've no as-
surance of getting back here. You
haven't the cash to insure that."

"I'll borrow it!" Gregg exclaimed.

"A man suspected of the DeGroot
robbery *borrow* money?"

"I'll get a job and—"

"Maybe." DeCourcey shrugged.
"Chances are I'd be stranded in Hono-
lulu, with my little business here going
to ruin. No, I won't go."

"But, man alive, you're sentencing
me to the penitentiary!" Gregg pleaded.

"Don't think I've got a brass pump
for a heart, lad! I'm damned sorry.
Look. Suppose I write out my testi-
mony—"

"They'd say I forged it! You've got

to appear in person and be identified
beyond question."

DeCourcey sighed again. "Then I
suggest, Gregg, that you stay here.
Puna-Puka is a paradise. When I die,
you'll have my business."

"God'l'mighty, I'm young! I've got
my whole life ahead of me!"

"And I'm old, with but a year or two
ahead of me. I'm spending them right
here," DeCourcey said, and his voice
was hard. "Go back to bed."

"Go to hell!" Gregg raged.

And he stalked out of the trading sta-
tion, strode blindly down the beach.

CHAPTER II

Dirty Work

NEXT morning, that yacht was an-
chored out in the roadstead off
Puna-Puka. The village buzzed with
excitement. Arrival of a vessel was a
rare event.* Every native, from older
folk in *pareus*, naked children, young
men in dungarees and slim, comely girls
wearing fern leaf girdles, were down at
the beach when a boat put off from the
yacht and headed through the break in
the reef toward the village.

"That party looks like money," De-
Courcey murmured to Gregg as the
yacht's boat reached the beach.

There were four men and two women
in the group coming ashore.

"I'm Henry Scanlon." The leader of
the group introduced himself to De-
Courcey and Gregg. He was short,
thick-set and powerful, this Henry
Scanlon. His hair was utterly white
and his mustache was white, and his
fleshy face was sunburned to a flaming
red, out of which keen eyes of a Nordic
blue stared with a steely directness.

* The French administrators at Raratonga sel-
dom give permission for white men to visit the
outer islands.—Ed.

"We're from Globe Picture Syndicate, and we have permission to land to take pictures. Getting background shots for a South Seas epic, you know. My cameraman, Luke Hawes—"

Hawes was lanky, bald and tough. Obviously he was Scanlon's Man Friday. He stood with both hands in his coat pockets, feet spread apart, just like Scanlon stood. He stared hard and unwinkingly at you, like Scanlon did. He was the director's shadow, if you could think of a stocky man throwing a long, lanky shadow.

Gregg didn't like either of them. The third man, Nigel Rorke, was obviously an actor. His was a professional profile with wavy hair and a petulant mouth and an absorbing interest in his fingernails. The fourth man, Nils Rogg, was the yacht's skipper—a chunky, bronzed man with hair so metallically black it screamed *toupeé*. He shook hands like a decent guy, Gregg thought to himself.

Gregg looked at the two women—and his pulse leaped.

"My wife," Scanlon was saying, "and Susan Lanphier, who doesn't need introduction even here at this tail end of creation. When better stars are found, Susan will still outshine 'em!"

DeCoursey said, "We haven't any movies here, but never before have I regretted missing them as much as I do now, Miss Lanphier."

She grinned at him engagingly; and as Gregg was introduced, she stepped forward and shook hands in a friendly, comradely way. But her hand clung to his; and as she looked at him, suddenly she wasn't smiling. Something very intent and meaningful was in her glance for just a split-wink instant.

She was a tall, shapely girl with reddish brown hair that seemed to burn in the sun, and eyes of so deep a dusky blue they were almost violet, and her

skin was tanned to a buoyant golden hue. She wore a play suit, just linen shorts and a sheer waist.

In the landing through the surf, the party had got doused with spray, and Susan Lanphier's blouse clung revealingly to her body. She moved with grace, lithe loveliness in every line of her slim-hipped figure. Gregg stared at her, his pulse thudding in his ears.

Her hand pressed his meaningfully, and she turned away.

"We'll want pictures of the village, DeCoursey," Scanlon was saying as the party started toward the trading station.

GREGG stood where he was, staring after them; and to himself he reflected that Scanlon hadn't said,

"May we take pictures of your village?" No. Scanlon had *announced* what he wanted! A bossy, demanding, snooty buzzard!

Gregg stood where he was, letting the party get ahead of him. For Susan Lanphier had pressed something into his hand.

He looked at it guardedly. It was a strip of newspaper, folded over. He unfolded it. On it, in lipstick, had been hastily scrawled — *I'm in desperate trouble*— No more. As if there hadn't been time for more.

Frowning, Gregg thrust the note into his pocket. What the hell, he had enough troubles of his own!

Susan Lanphier was glancing back at him. For an instant there was pleading in her lovely eyes. The sun shone with a flaming beauty in her hair. . .

"We're looking," the white-haired director told DeCoursey, "for a scene to be the background for the main sets of our picture. I'll sketch what I want. You can tell me if I'll find it on Puna-Puka."

He scrawled on a sheet of paper.

"See? A narrow river valley, with a plateau halfway up one wall. On it maybe there should be ruins of an old stone house. Back of the plateau is a high cliff, with a waterfall. See?"

DeCourcey looked at him in amazement.

"You ever been on Puna-Puka before?"

"You mean, there *is* such a place on the island?" the cameraman blurted, his deadpan face excited.

"Yes." DeCourcey rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Come along. I'll show it to you."

Funny, Gregg thought as he followed the party. The little trader seemed flabbergasted at Scanlon's precise description of a place he had never seen.

"This movie crowd looks damned eager to find the spot," Gregg told himself. "As if they've been looking for it so much that it's just too good to be true that they've actually located it! Wonder what they expect to find?"

The trader led the party through the village. The Puna-Pukans stared with smiling curiosity at the whites. They were a friendly, courteous people, as hard-working as they were attractive of appearance. Beyond the village, the young men were busy spreading a fertilizer of green *pukatea* leaves on the taro* beds. And on the trail leading inland, the party met young men carrying loads of coconuts, brown ripe drinking nuts; and others bringing in scores upon scores of squawking birds, young boobies, tied together by the feet like bunches of onions.

"Lord, what beauty!" Director Scanlon kept repeating. "Hawes, get that on film!"

And Hawes, his face as expressive as the butt of a log, set to whirring the compact camera he carried.

DeCourcey led the party to the main river of Puna-Puka, and turned inland along its bank.

It was cool on the trail, for overhead arched ancient trees—banyans and mangos and breadfruit. Giant ferns, and clumps of towering bamboo, crowded the path. Tropical flowers, that looked as though they had been carved right out of flaming sunsets, covered the steep walls of the canyon into which DeCourcey led the way.

MILE after mile the party walked. The canyon became a steep-walled gorge. Waterfalls pitched in lacy beauty from the rimrock high overhead, plunging down into wide pools as beautiful as the dreams of sweet repose. And neither snakes nor insects existed here to pester men who passed.

DeCourcey stopped, and pointed ahead.

"There it is, Mr. Scanlon! See, where the river forms a wide, shaded pool? Above there, on the east side, the mountain wall cuts back in a flat space. And at the back of the flat, a waterfall drops from the cliff. Like a bridal veil. Right?"

"Right!" Scanlon snapped, his bushy white brows knitted over his steely eyes as he peered ahead. "Isn't it, Hawes?"

"Sure as hell looks like it," Hawes breathed.

"But are there ruins of an old stone house up there?" Susan Lanphier put in.

"Well," DeCourcey admitted, scratching his chin, "used to be a lot of natives living along the river. Every flat you'll find practic'y has the stone platform for a house on it."

"Then, look," Susan said, pointing farther upstream, "there's another flat above a river pool—and a waterfall pouring over a cliff behind the flat. Maybe *that's* the spot?"

* A South Sea plant whose root-stalks are eaten as food.—Ed.

Scanlon muttered an oath. And Hawes grunted,

"Damnation, Chief, we don't want to make any mistakes."

Scanlon's face mottled with crimson, as if he had a furious, explosive temper that couldn't brook hinderance.

"We'll come back tomorrow," he rapped, "after we've gone over our specifications again."

The party turned back to the village.

By the time they neared the beach, it was dusk. The people of Puna-Puka were strolling down to the lagoon for their evening bathing. Gregg knew what to expect. Though the scene made his pulse quicken, it didn't make his jaw drop and his eyes pop. But it did for the movie people.

Nude bathing in the evening was an ancient custom of the Puna-Pukans. An active people, untouched by want or hardship or disease, they were a handsome and attractive race. The men were muscular, smiling; and the young women, with their smooth, tawny skins and shining hair and great dark eyes and slender, shapely figures, were breathtakingly lovely.

The whole village, grandparents and tiny toddlers as well as young adults, were on their way to the lagoon, laughing and chattering as they walked.*

"Say!" Scanlon gasped. "Hawes, get that! Don't stand there like your camera was a satchelful of cough medicine. Shoot this! Get it all on film. Talk about Bali and Goona-Goona—Lord, what beauty!"

"Got fast film in here, but dunno if

it's fast enough," Hawes murmured, lifting his chunky camera.

"DeCourcey," Scanlon rapped, "would they do some of their dances for us? Ask 'em, man!"

The little trader looked doubtful; and Gregg thought,

"He doesn't like to see the natives exploited that way any more than I do. He's a good egg, DeCourcey."

THE trader talked to an elderly native. A couple of big bonfires were started on the white sand of the beach. And some of the pretty young women started dancing the native dances of love. In silence the movie people watched.

After a while, Susan Lanphier ran out among the dancers.

She started dancing with them, her light skin and vivid red hair in heart-stirring contrast to the tawny, dark-haired beauty of the island girls. In their swaying and supple gestures was a beauty distilled from nature around them—the pliant bending of palm fronds moving in a sea breeze, the rhythm of the surf, the lightness and vivacity of tropic birds and flowers.

They danced with an easy and natural pleasure, the Puna-Puka maidens. In Susan Lanphier's dancing was a difference. In it was schooled artistry. In it was knowledge and sophistication. The girl's good, Gregg reflected. Lord, she's got fire!

Abruptly Susan Lanphier straightened out of her dancing, whirled, flung herself in an arrowing dive into the dark waters of the lagoon, utterly vanishing from sight.

Scanlon yelled, and sprang forward. Hawes flung down his camera, and whipped an automatic from his belt. Flame spurted from its muzzle and the flaring *whack! whack!* of .38 reports thundered across the beach.

* R. D. Frisbie, the South Seas authority, has written: ". . . the native wore clothes before the coming of the whites; they were a part of the ritual of the primitive . . . life. They were given to him when he reached maturity, but were forbidden before that time. The age of maturity was decided by a council of the village fathers. When a youngster became of age . . . clothes were decreed and nakedness forbidden except when bathing in the lagoon or turtle hunting at sea."

Gregg jumped. His fist smacked to the side of Hawes' head and knocked him sprawling on the sand, and Gregg kicked the .38 from his fist. Hawes scrambled up, fists doubled.

"Lay off, you dumb fool!" Scanlon yelled at him, and Hawes subsided. Together, they ran to the lagoon. Nigel Rorke and Skipper Rogg followed close behind.

"Susan!" Scanlon bellowed, hands cupped to his mouth. "Don't be foolish. Come back here!"

But the girl had vanished. Gregg figured that she must have swum under water, and pulled out into some brush, up the beach a way, hidden by the darkness.

"Mr. Scanlon," DeCourcey snapped, "your cameraman shot at the girl. I think you'd better explain that."

"It's none of your business, Mister. I'm fully responsible. Ask your people to find the girl!"

"I will not, since she seems to be in danger of getting shot," the little trader retorted. "I suggest you take your party back aboard ship."

Scanlon crimsoned. His steely gray eyes glinted as he surveyed DeCourcey.

"Forget it, Chief," Nigel Rorke put in hastily. "The girl can't go nowhere. She'll keep."

Scanlon shrugged. Turned, and said mildly,

"Hawes, you damn fool, likely you ruined your film, dropping your camera that way."

Hawes muttered something, and whirled back to pick up the camera. It had come open, and he hastily clicked it shut. But not so hastily that Gregg didn't get a look inside.

Gregg stood rooted in staring surprise. For the glimpse he'd got of the inside of that camera filled his brain with startled suspicions.

There was no film in Hawes' camera!

CHAPTER III

A Meeting of Lips

THE movie people went back aboard their yacht.

"Lend me a flashlight," Gregg said to the trader. "I'll see if I can find the Lanphier girl. She's in trouble."

"I'll go with you, lad."

For two hours they hunted along the beach. Fruitlessly.

"I could send the villagers to hunt her," DeCourcey said, "but maybe she'll be safer if she stays hid. Wonder what it's all about?"

Gregg shrugged. He had enough troubles of his own without taking on somebody else's grief. Only, he would like to take a good swift poke at that fake cameraman, Hawes. Wasn't often he saw a human pan he'd like so much to sink a fist into.

Returning to the trading station, they started inside.

"Funny," DeCourcey said. "Veranda lamp's blown out."

Crossing the porch, the trader walked into the store, flashlight on.

"Who's there?" he called suddenly.

And then the flashlight was dashed to the floor, smashing. Something went *cr-a-ack!* like the sharp impact of a savage hook to the jaw, and the little trader collapsed onto the matting. Gregg lunged forward, and sprang at a shadowy figure—and crashed headlong over a table shoved at him in the darkness. Instantly he was scrambling erect again. But the shadowy figure had fled out of the door, and off the veranda into the darkness.

Gregg followed. He realized he might get a slug triggered into him from ambush, but a reckless, obstinate anger sent him running wildly toward the beach in the hope of tangling with DeCourcey's attacker.

But he found nobody, and no sign of the prowler. Realizing that the trader might have been hurt badly and in need of attention, Gregg finally turned back to the store.

DeCourcey was sitting up and groaning ruefully as Gregg came in. Gregg hastily lit a lamp, and poured a glass of brandy.

"Thanks," DeCourcey said, taking it. "My jaw ain't broken, but it feels like every tooth in my dental plates had a galloping ache!"

"Look around," Gregg said in his earnest, headlong way. "Anything stolen?"

"Why, yes, there is. My shotgun's gone from the wall pegs. So's the pistol I keep on my desk."

"DeCourcey, look! Your radio set. *Smashed!*"

The sending and receiving set, next to the trader's safe, looked as if a typhoon had struck it.

DeCourcey breathed a rueful oath of dismay.

"One of your natives did it, maybe?" Gregg asked.

"No. I don't lock doors. Any time this past year, a native wanting to rob me could've done it."

DeCourcey looked out the window at the yacht anchored beyond the reef, and gestured toward it.

"Looks like friend Scanlon is making sure I won't be able to communicate with the authorities at Raratonga."

"And that you'll have no guns to defend yourself with!" Gregg added harshly. "What're they up to, DeCourcey?"

"Don't know. Have another drink, lad?"

UNABLE to sleep, Gregg lay on his cot on the veranda, staring at the ceiling. His thoughts ached around in worry.

"You're brooding like a scared woman," he railed at himself. "Forget it! Go to sleep."

But he couldn't forget it. Over and over he asked himself:

"Suppose Scanlon's party pulled something raw, and a fight started, and DeCourcey was killed. Where would I be then, with DeCourcey dead? Headed for twenty years in the penitentiary, if I ever returned to Honolulu . . ."

Gregg started violently. Listening hard, straining to see in the dark, he realized he had dozed off and something had wakened him.

A hand grasped his wrist. He reacted like a striking rattler—grappling with the prowler, hooking an elbow about the man's throat and pulling him flat onto the cot as he groped with his other hand for the man's throat.

Fragrant, silky hair pressed against Gregg's cheek; and his arm was clamped about slim shoulders. It was a girl; her breast was soft against his chest. He released her and sat up violently. Snatching the flashlight from under his pillow, he switched it on.

"Please, don't make a light. You nearly ch-choked me—"

It was Susan Lanphier. She was wet; the thin play suit was molded against her slim, lovely figure and she was shivering with chill.

He wrapped a blanket about her, and demanded,

"Where've you been, for Pete's sake!"

"Hiding, up the beach. In the water. Th-thanks," she stammered as Gregg poured her a stiff drink of brandy.

"You mind telling me what a movie actress is doing here in the—'tail end of creation,' your director called it, dodging around—"

"He's *not* my director, and I'm *not* a movie actress!"

"—like a fugitive from a reform school," Gregg finished. He hated being interrupted. "But you *are* a fugitive?"

"Look, Mr. Gregg." She spoke with a fire and firmness to match his own temper. "My brother and I started from Honolulu with a party for a vacation trip. That boat out there is his. It's a small diesel cruiser, and we have four men as crew. Mr. Scanlon and his wife and his so-called cameraman came along as guests.

"But they seized the boat. Captain Rogg and one of the crew were men they had planted on us—and they scared the other two men into joining them. There was a fight, and my brother got hurt. Not badly. They keep Tom locked in a stateroom. They've let me be up and about, but they've warned me that if I didn't do what I was told, they'd kill Tom!"

"So why did you bust off the reservation?" Gregg demanded.

"Because, if they find what they're after here, they'll be sure to kill me and Tom anyhow!" Susan exclaimed.

"What're they after?" Gregg swore at himself, as he asked the question.

Damn it, he mustn't let her involve him in her troubles! As far as he was concerned, Susan might as well be a sourpuss maiden aunt. When his own neck was in a sling, he'd be a sucker to take on her troubles too.

BUT damn it, he had to admit, she *wasn't* an old maid. Moonlight streaming through the vines over the veranda shone on Susan's lovely young face. The blanket had slipped back from her shoulders, and the line of her throat was sweet and innocent. Her bosom lifted shakily as she sighed with concern.

"You see, we headed for Puna-Puka because, a long time ago, my family owned property here. It got around

Honolulu that we were coming here. That's why Scanlon's outfit wished themselves onto us, I guess. We believed what they told us about taking moving pictures. Especially since it looked like we could make a really nice sum of money from them."

"But they're not here to take pictures!" Gregg protested.

"No. They have a map. Oh, I guess it sounds simply insane—"

"Yeah, but go on and tell it," Gregg said grimly.

"You've heard of the German raider, the cruiser *Emden*?"

"Yeah, even if I did fight the First World War in the second grade at grammar school."

"Well, besides the *Emden*, there were several other German battle cruisers raiding the steamship lanes. It seems that one of them realized it never would get back to Germany. The commander had a lot of money, a big part of it in gold, taken off merchant ships.

"According to Mr. Scanlon, this German raider was on its way home from Australian waters. The commander decided to cache the money on some little island that nobody ever visited, where it would be safe until after the war."

"So they buried the coin on Puna-Puka!" Gregg's eyes widened.

"Scanlon says so. And he says that the raider was sunk before it got to Germany, and the money's never been recovered!"

"And Scanlon has come to dig it up," Gregg surmised.

"Yes. He has a map he claims was drawn by one of the officers of the German raider."

"Barnum was wrong," Gregg said disgustedly. "There's *two* suckers born every minute." He looked sharply at Susan. "Or do *you* believe the money's here, too?"

"I don't know and I don't care!" she flared. "Good heavens, all I'm interested in is getting my brother away from Scanlon. Won't you help me? Can't you get in touch with the authorities?"

Gregg shook his head. "No."

Susan leaned closer to him. "You probably think I'm just throwing hysterics, but don't you see—if Scanlon finds that money he'll kill Tom, and he'll kill me if he can, to shut our mouths! That's why I'm so—"

Gregg interrupted her harshly.

"Look. If I can get your yacht away from them, will you make a bargain with me? I want to leave Puna-Puka. I want to take—something with me. Will you agree to help me in whatever I want to do?"

"I have to agree," Susan said shortly. "But how can you take the *Leeward* away from Scanlon's men?"

Yeah, how could he? Alone, with no weapons, and no way of radioing for help, how could he do the job?

"You just leave that chore to me!"

Gregg said, banging it out all the more emphatically because he was so uncertain.

SUSAN looked at him a little strangely.

"You're a pretty skeptical, determined sort of person, aren't you?" she said.

Gregg flushed. "What makes you say that?" he demanded.

Her eyes clashed with his, but hers were the first to lower.

"Oh, I don't know," she stammered. "It's just—well, I guess I've always lived a sort of sheltered life. I've never come in contact with men who—"

"Didn't look too clean, or act that way either," Gregg finished for her brutally. "Well, it's about time you learned what makes the wheels go

'round. Never could stand you pampered society dolls anyway. What good are you? When your type gets in trouble, it has to go whining for help . . ."

That was as far as he got. Not too many generations back in her ancestry, Susan Lamphier's people had been hard-bitten Yankees who sailed the seas and worked and fought, if need be, for what they got. Susan retained their strength of character in her blood.

More, she had their temper. At Gregg's words she lit into the tall, cynical youngster like a little wildcat. Her small feet kicked at his shins. Her nails scratched at his face. And her elbows pounded angrily at his chest.

Startled, Gregg gave way. Then his gray eyes flashed. He wouldn't take it from a man; he wouldn't take it from a girl, either.

He reached out and slapped Susan in the face, a stinging little blow that left the imprint of his fingers on her soft tanned cheek.

Susan stopped fighting. She looked at Gregg, suddenly very much hurt. And then she began to cry. Not loud and harshly, but in soft little sobs, like a small girl who has been punished for something she didn't do.

Gregg got suddenly very red in the face. He began to feel like a heel.

You dope, he thought, taking your anger out on an innocent girl. You ought to be slugged in the jaw and have the stuffing kicked out of you.

The blanket had slipped from Susan's sobbing shoulders. Gregg picked it up and wrapped it around the girl.

"There, there," he soothed. "I—I guess we must have lost our tempers. I should have known better—"

Susan shook the tears out of her eyes.

"You're—you're just a big bully," she said, her spirit coming back. "You

don't care anything about a girl's feelings. You—"

"But I'm not!" Gregg protested heatedly. "You're no lily of the valley yourself!"

He shook her shoulders for emphasis. And suddenly Susan began to smile.

"There you go again," she said. "I suppose you'll be hitting me next."

Gregg glared at her. "Dammit," he swore, "I'm going to teach you a lesson! For once and for all. It's about time somebody taught you a thing or two!"

And he folded her suddenly in his arms, hard. Susan fought him. Gregg laughed recklessly, tilted her firm little chin up to his own. He kissed her then. Kissed her with youthful abandon; then a little less harshly . . . then tenderly. Her soft young body relaxed slowly against his own, and slowly, slowly her lips responded . . .

He thrust her from him then.

"I'm sorry," he said hoarsely. "I should have known better. I—I . . ."

He turned abruptly on his heel and stalked off, motioning with his head for the girl to follow him. She did; and there was an amused light in her eyes. And a little tenderness, too.

CHAPTER IV

Payoff in Blood

GREGG took Susan to a hut back of the trading station, told her to sleep and keep hidden until he came for her. Then he returned to his cot on the veranda. And racked his brain until dawn, groping for some plan of action that would have one chance in ten at least of working . . .

After sunup, a boat put out from the *Leeward*.

Stocky, white-haired Scanlon, Skipper Rogg, the cameraman Hawes, Nigel

Rorke and two members of the crew landed on the beach. A seaman rowed the dinghy back to the yacht. Scanlon's party came on to the trading station, and Gregg saw that they carried shovels and crowbars.

The trader noticed the shovels, and frowned.

"Scanlon, you have to have a French permit to dig up relics."

"Oh, we're just going to do a little clearing away of brush and rock on that flat, for picture taking. Come along, and see for yourself."

Gregg's heart skipped a beat. If Scanlon did find that buried coin, he would shut DeCoursey's mouth with a bullet. Frowning, Gregg watched the party head inland along the river.

He waited a full hour. Through binoculars, he studied the *Leeward*, anchored beyond the reef.

"Two men, stretching out on deck. Each with a pistol in his belt. How," he mused, "should I tackle 'em?"

He walked up the beach, around a headland. Then he walked out into the surf. Swimming low in the water, lifting his face out only for gulps of air, he headed for the yacht, on the side opposite to the men lying on deck.

Reaching the *Leeward's* dinghy, he pulled himself hand over hand up its painter to the yacht rail, and drew himself aboard. Carefully, then, he started forward.

Opening a stateroom door, he looked inside, saw it was empty. He moved to the next stateroom, opened the door—and looked straight into the eyes of a young fellow lying on a bunk, his left arm swathed in bandages.

"Lanphier?" Gregg whispered. "I'm here to help you."

"Susan sent you?" the youngster whispered back eagerly.

"Yeah. Hold still, while I untie those ropes."

Young Lanphier looked like his sister, except that his hair was sandy and his features stronger. He was hog-tied into the bunk.

Gregg asked, "How many people on board?"

"Two seamen. And Mrs. Scanlon, in the cabin behind this."

"When you want something, they told you to sing out for it?"

"Yeah."

"All right, call out," Gregg snapped—and flattened himself against the wall beside the door.

"Hey, Swede!" Lanphier yelled. "Bring me a drink!"

He yelled again, and a third time.

"All right, all right. Pipe down, damn it!"

Lazy footsteps sounded on deck. A tall, husky seaman carrying a tray came to the stateroom door, kicked it open and started inside. Gregg stepped into his way, swinging. Fist met jaw with a hard, sharp *cra-ack!* The seaman staggered back out the doorway and collapsed to the deck, his tray clattering down beside him. Gregg stooped swiftly to snatch the pistol from the man's belt.

BUT even as he lunged, he saw a shadow on the deck. And Gregg flung himself forward as he snatched at the fallen sailor's gun. A hot flash of pain seared along his ribs as a .38 roared flat and heavy in the warm air. Then the gun in Gregg's hand kicked as it spurted fire—and the other seaman, beyond Gregg, doubled up, clutching at his chest, the gun falling from his fist as he pitched headlong to the deck.

Gregg jumped up, pistol leveled. But the man was dead.

Startled footsteps rounded the bow. Looking up, Gregg saw Mrs. Scanlon coming—and the woman stopped short,

both hands to her face, and screamed. Gregg strode toward her.

"You won't be hurt, Mrs. Scanlon. Go back to your stateroom."

He locked her in there. Returning, he tied up the sailor he had knocked senseless and took the dead man's pistol.

"Any more ammunition on board?" Gregg asked Lanphier as he untied him.

"Yes. In my cabin."

"Look, could you and I run this boat?"

"Why, yes, if necessary," the youngster nodded.

"Fine! I'm going ashore. If I come back at all, it'll be with another man and your sister. *Have this tub ready to sail back to Honolulu!*"

"How about Scanlon and his outfit?"

"If they come back, I *won't!*" Gregg said grimly . . .

Rowing ashore in the dinghy, he realized it would be wisest to send Susan back to the yacht now, where she'd be safe. Beaching the boat, he hurried to the trading station.

"Susan!" he called.

"She not here," DeCoursey's native house-boy told him. "That man Hawes come for picks and flashlights. He see girl, and make her go with him." The Puna-Pukan pointed to the trail inland.

Gregg bit off an oath of utter dismay. This was something he hadn't counted on. It was a staggering, crippling blow. All too clearly he foresaw complications.

"This makes a set-up too tough for one man to handle!" he warned himself. "Unless I can catch up with Hawes and the girl!"

Turning on his heel, he headed for the trail inland.

THE sun beat hot on Gregg's shoulders, until the trail reached the canyon

where huge ferns and bamboo arched over the river banks to make cool shade. Gregg started running through dense groves of island ebony, of mango and rosewood trees, and jungle-thick growths of crimson hibiscus and the gardenia-like *pua*. Startled parakeets screamed as he passed, and darted like winged bomb-bursts into tall *hutu* trees that luxuriated in gorgeous crimson blooms.

But Gregg didn't sight Hawes and the girl. They had too long a start on him. Doggedly he ran on, laboring for breath as the trail climbed the steepening canyon side. Far below, the river formed deep, shaded pools in which fish jumped.

Ahead of him, finally, Gregg saw the terrace overhanging the river on which Scanlon's men were working. He slackened pace, and approached cautiously. Surprise would have to be a big part of his ammunition. Keeping under cover of the brush, he approached Scanlon's party on the plateau gouged out of the side of the canyon wall.

FROM the cliff above, a waterfall poured down in a shower of silvery spray, and flowed in a broad stream across the flat, to arch down again into the river below. Along the edge of the plateau, Gregg saw with surprise that a line of elm trees was growing—huge, magnificent old giants of the kind he'd often seen in New England towns.

He could see now only the stocky, white-haired figure of Scanlon, Susan and DeCoursey. The other men were inside a tunnel they had dug into the back wall of the terrace. Scanlon held a gun in his hand.

Coming closer, Gregg saw Scanlon peer into that tunnel, heard him yell, "Find anything?"

Hawes came out of the tunnel, carrying an old-fashioned Chinese chest of

carved wood and leather.

"Just clothes," he said disgustedly, setting the chest down and flipping the lid back. "Scanlon, there's a *house* in there! Funniest damn' thing. Furniture and a bed that looks a hundred years old. How do you figure it?"

DeCoursey said, "The natives tell me that there was a stone house built here, but an avalanche came down and covered it up. But that was so long ago that nobody now living on the island ever saw the house."

"That's *your* story," Scanlon retorted, his fleshy face mottled with anger.

He looked toward the tunnel then, for Skipper Rogg and a sailor came out, lugging an old sea chest with a big lock.

"That looks more like it!" Scanlon said. "Quick, get that thing open!"

Hawes broke the lock off with a pick. The men crowded close to look inside as he lifted the top.

"Uniforms!"

"What the hell is this, a costume shop?"

"Dueling pistols, by God! What's this, Skipper?"

"A sextant—and a damn' old one."

"To hell with this trash!" Scanlon burst out. "Go on back inside, everybody! Look sharp. Don't bring out any more junk, damn you!"

"But there's nothing else in there," Nigel Rorke insisted. "Just furniture and books and rugs and pictures."

"We've gone through the place like a cop friskin' a tramp," Skipper Rogg offered weakly.

"The chart says that money is here!" Scanlon raged.

"Maybe the chart is a fake," DeCoursey said mildly.

Scanlon looked at him, eyes narrowed, for a long, thoughtful moment, and the mottled red of his fleshy face deepened. Abruptly he took a step

toward the little trader, reached out and grabbed his shirt front in a big fist.

"DeCourcey, you've already looted this hideaway. Haven't you?"

The mild little trader blinked with surprise.

"Me? Good Lord, no!"

Scanlon smashed his fist into DeCourcey's face, knocked him sprawling to the ground. Reaching down, Scanlon hauled him onto his feet.

"What did you do with it?" he roared.

"With wh-what? I tell you—"

"Gold and silver bullion!" Scanlon rasped. "Is it in your trading station?"

"So help me, Scanlon, I've never—"

A GAIN Scanlon knocked him down. And as the gray-haired trader got up, blood streaming across his jaw, Scanlon ordered,

"Hawes—and you, Rorke—make him talk!"

They grabbed DeCourcey. Stripped off his shoes. Hawes struck a match. Touched the flame to the bare sole of DeCourcey's foot—

And Gregg, watching from the brush, sprang into action. The gun blazed from his hand, and Hawes plunged flat on his face to the ground, a bullet in his brain. Gregg burst out of cover then, charged the surprise-stunned group.

They broke and ran for shelter—all except Scanlon, who jerked the muzzle of his gun toward the fighting youngster. But Susan grabbed Scanlon's arm, and the bullet went wild. He pulled violently away from her; struck her across the temple with the gun barrel, knocking her to the ground.

Gregg triggered a slug at him that slashed his thick arm from wrist to elbow. The gun dropped from Scanlon's grasp, but he snatched at it with his left hand, caught it and darted into the tunnel opening.

DeCourcey had scrambled to his feet.

He bent now, picked up the senseless girl, and ran unsteadily to meet Gregg.

Scanlon shot at them from the tunnel. Gregg whipped a slug at him that knocked rock fragments into Scanlon's face, and the man dodged back. His men had taken shelter behind the elms at the far end of the terrace, and now they started shooting.

"Here, I'll take the girl, DeCourcey!" Gregg said.

He thrust one of his two guns into DeCourcey's hands, took Susan in his own arms, and started back down the trail to the beach at a lurching run.

A bullet knifed through leaves over Gregg's head, and another hissed past his ear. Behind Gregg, the trader shot back at Scanlon's men, his gun going *wham! wham!*

And then Gregg heard DeCourcey gasp, heard the thud of a heavy fall. Gregg halted, look back and saw the trader sprawled face down on the path.

"DeCourcey! You hurt?"

"No, I—"

DeCourcey tried to get up, but his right leg buckled under him and he fell. Blood streamed from his thigh. Gregg looked wildly around. A few paces on down the trail was a pile of boulders that had avalanched from the rimrock.

He ran to the midst of the rock fall and put the senseless girl on the ground. Running back to the trail, he helped DeCourcey to his feet, helped him hop into the shelter of the rock barricade. A bullet creased Gregg's hip as they ran, and another slug scattered rock splinters into the side of his face and ricocheted screaming to one side.

Gregg triggered a shot in answer at the four men coming down the trail, and they scattered into the brush for protection.

DE COURCEY bent over Susan Lanphier. A stain of crimson

showed at the roots of her shining bronze-red hair.

"Lad, you think that fat swine fractured her skull?"

"Don't know. I'd like to fracture his!"

"Look, Gregg. You take the girl on down to the beach. I'll stay and keep shooting to hold these crooks back."

"Like hell I will! You'll get killed. Damn it, you're forgetting I got to take you to Honolulu to swear me out of twenty years in prison!"

"But I'm hurt. We can't all get away, boy."

"Listen—soon as it's dark, we'll sneak off. I got a boat on the beach. We'll row out to the yacht. The girl's brother has got control of it by now. We'll get to hell-and-gone away from Puna-Puka!"

Gregg spoke confidently—but his words ended with a choked oath of consternation, for he saw something that staggered him with dismay.

Scanlon and his three men were climbing down the wall of the canyon, descending to the river.

"They'll swim across the river," Gregg realized. "They'll get past us here, and go on down to the beach. They'll find the dinghy, and row out to the yacht. They'll take over the *Lee-ward* again—and once they've done that, I'm sunk!"

His serious young face wild with panic, he turned to DeCourcey.

"Come on! We got to beat that gang to the beach!"

"You go, lad. Take the girl—"

"No! Man alive, I've told you I've got to take you to Honolulu. Come on!"

"But the girl needs to be taken care of—"

"She's got to take her chances!" Gregg blurted in desperation. "All I know is I'll rot in prison if I don't get

you down to the beach in a hurry. Damn it, *come on!*"

He reached out, to put an arm about DeCourcey's shoulders so as to support him—and DeCourcey, standing on one leg, struck him across the temple with the side of his pistol.

Gregg staggered, stumbled back over a rock and fell. And DeCourcey hopped across the trail, and started down the steep canyon wall toward Scanlon's party descending to the river. Scanlon saw him. Pointed.

"Get him! Get the little ape!" Scanlon ordered his men.

They started shooting, their pistols lancing fire. DeCourcey doubled over and rolled headlong down the slope. He clutched with his hands in a frantic effort to grab rocks or shrubs to ease his sliding fall. But on down he slid and skidded, in a miniature avalanche of dust and rocks, toward Scanlon's men.

Gregg, jumping to the rim of the trail, looked down and saw Scanlon's killers shooting at the little trader as he came hurtling down the slope almost directly toward them. Gregg saw goutts of dust spurt from the trader's coat, as if bullets had thudded into him like slugs striking a dusty pillow.

"The crazy little fool!" Gregg choked—and launched himself down the slope in a reckless, sliding jump.

DeCourcey slammed to the canyon floor and brought up against a pile of driftwood at the river's edge, sprawled out on his face. Slumped and inert he lay. Their guns ready, Scanlon and his three men lunged toward him.

ABRUPTLY DeCourcey raised up on one elbow. The .38 spat flame from his hand. Instantly the other men shot back at him, and the canyon rocked to the echoing *wham-bang!* of gun shots. Nigel Rorke stiffened convulsively and dropped, dead before he

hit. Skipper Rogg doubled over and keeled head-first into the river.

Then DeCourcey himself was slumping face down into the dust again, his body jouncing to the smash of bullets into his back.

Scanlon and the remaining sailor laughed harshly. They didn't see Gregg, didn't hear him until he was almost on top of them.

Then Scanlon jerked his head around, saw Gregg, and triggered a bullet that seared along Gregg's throat like the slash of a jagged knife. Gregg hit the bottom of the slope and fell on hands and knees. Scanlon's second bullet whipped over his head.

Gregg shot, pointblank. And Scanlon staggered back from the smash of the slug into his chest. His arms dropped, and he swayed. With a terrific effort, he steadied himself, raised his gun—buckled at the knees, and collapsed.

Gregg's gun had barked again as he whirled toward the sailor, but the bullet missed. The fellow flung up his hands.

"Don't shoot! I quit, I give up!" the man yelled—and flung his own weapon to the ground in surrender . . .

Gregg bent over DeCourcey. Turned the little trader over on his back. DeCourcey groaned, and opened his eyes.

Thank the Lord he's not dead! Gregg thought. And aloud, he said shakily,

"It's all over, pal. Look, I'll carry you to—"

"No, lad. I'm all shot up," the trader whispered. "Listen. I—you look in my safe. I wrote that—that letter for you. You know. My testimony. About the robbery. The DeGroot theft—you wanted it—"

"Don't worry about that! I'll carry you to the beach. We'll—"

But DeCourcey wasn't hearing,

wasn't caring. The little trader was slipping beyond reach of voice or aid.

CHAPTER V

The Last Act

SUSAN'S scalp wound proved minor.

Next day, Gregg and Susan and her brother Tom returned to the treasure cache on the flat above the river. With a flashlight, Gregg led the way through the tunnel Scanlon's men had dug into the old stone house which been covered, for so many years, by a fall of rock.

Part of the structure had fallen in, but some of the rooms were intact. And as Gregg looked around, he had the eerie feeling of stepping through a door of time into the distant past. He played the flashlight beam on furniture that was a century old, on bookcases, on pictures on the walls, on rugs and mirrors.

"Susan," young Tom Lanphier blurted excitedly. "This must be the house that Captain Lanphier built on Puna-Puka! Gregg, we have a Yankee ancestor who came into the South Seas in 1813 on a United States man-o'-war under Admiral Porter."

"Susan told me that."

"Captain Lanphier liked it so well that he returned some years later with a wife, and settled down for keeps."

"And you two," Gregg asked, "are his legal heirs?"

"Why, yes—if there's anything to inherit."

Gregg flashed his light beam around again, and in his voice was an edge of excitement as he said,

"This place has been hermetically sealed for about three generations, I guess. This Captain Lanphier—was he a cultured man who liked books and pictures and had the money to satisfy his whims?"

"Yes, he was," Susan said, with a sudden catch of expectancy in her voice, for she was quick of intuition.

Gregg turned his flashlight on a table.

"Look at that. Isn't it a beauty? And at least a hundred years old! I don't know the great furniture makers, but these pieces were likely brought from New England—where they had come from England! Chippendale? I bet it is. I bet every one of these pieces is worth a house and lot!

"And look on the wall. Those are engravings by Hogarth. And that portrait over the mantel, of a British naval officer—Come here. So help me, it's a Joshua Reynolds! And look at the books."

"He likely got books off every sailing vessel that put in at Puna-Puka," Tom said, his voice hollow with awe.

"Look at these!" Gregg blurted. "Copies of Chaucer and Beaumont and Fletcher and Goldsmith that were likely old before Captain Lanphier got them.

"And here—a first edition of 'Confessions of An Opium-Eater,' and of Dr. Samuel Johnson's 'Rasselas'. And, as I live and breathe, a first of Keats' 'Lamia'!"

Gregg looked at Susan and her brother, his eyes shining.

"You realize that this house has been a sort of vault, keeping these things safe for you for over a century?"

"They're really valuable?" Susan breathed.

"When Captain Lanphier got 'em, most of them were valuable, but they weren't heirlooms, they weren't museum pieces. But now they *are!** I'm

* Sir Joshua Reynolds was England's great portrait painter, Hogarth a great English satirical painter and engraver. The literary works described represent some of the finest flowerings of English culture. The value of such a collection of paintings and books would be incalculable, the paintings because they are originals and the literary masterpieces because in all probability they are first editions.—Ed.

telling you, you've got a fortune here!"

Gregg laughed shakily. "That rat Scanlon came here to find gold, didn't find any—and walked out on a fortune right under his nose! These things are worth a damn' sight more than a satchelful of pirate coin!"

SUSAN slipped her arm through his.

"John, we'll take these things to Honolulu and sell them. Whatever they bring, you'll share equally with us."

Gregg pulled away, his lean face tightening.

"Forget it. I'm not going to Honolulu."

"You're not— You mean, you're staying here?" Susan asked, dismayed. "On the island?"

"You got it," he said harshly. "I'm staying right here."

LATE that afternoon, the villagers buried DeCoursey on a rise near the beach.

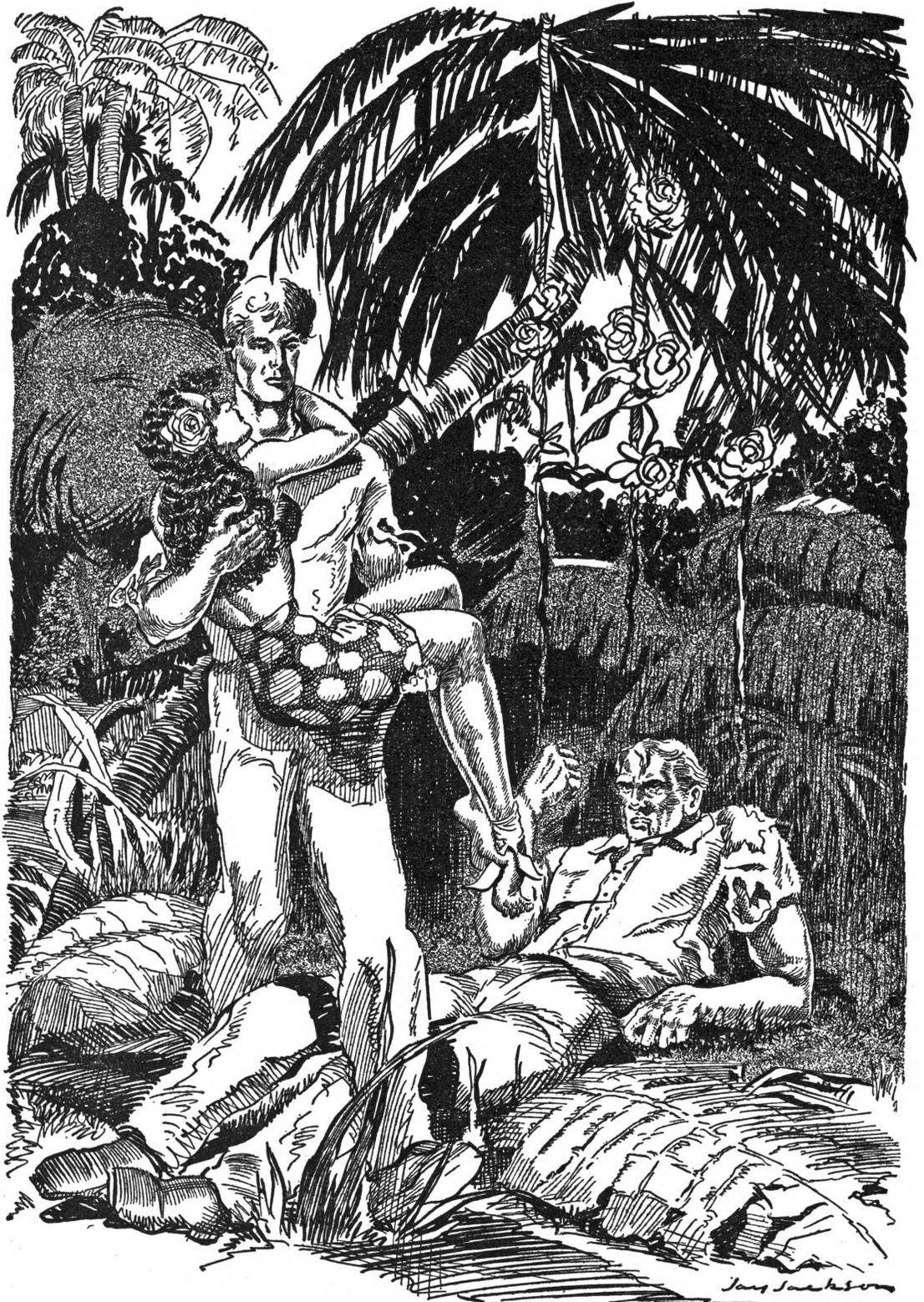
Afterward, Gregg and Susan and her brother went to the trading station. Depressed, Gregg pattered around. This trading station was going to be his and he might as well get used to it.

Tom Lanphier walked out after a bit. Susan sat in a chair and watched Gregg. In the morning, the *Leeward* was sailing away, and leave-taking now was hard.

The lamplight shone with golden sparkles in her bronze-red hair. Gregg was conscious of it, and was conscious of the way she looked at him, concern in her blue eyes. But he made himself turn his back on her. No use storing up any more heartache for himself than he had to.

Looking in the safe, he saw a letter there with his name on it. He remembered, then. DeCoursey had written

(Continued on page 136)



Gary Weston ignored Singapore Pete's rage as he picked lolani up and strode through the jungle

LOVE OF A PRIMITIVE

By Maurice Mulford

To Iolani, the island girl, to know that she loved the white man was enough to justify any means to steal him away from the white woman

IT was mid-afternoon on the island of Toau.

Iolani crawled silently over the sand floor of the beach shack. Bright sunlight teased the blade of the dagger she held between her strong white teeth. Her eyes she kept upon "Singapore" Pete's back, as he sat at the old table, two empty whisky bottles in front of him.

Iolani took the knife from her mouth. She straightened with the grace of a jungle cat. Intense hatred gleamed from the depth of her luminous dark eyes.

Suddenly, Singapore gave the table a vicious kick. He leaped to his feet, whirled around toward the girl. His hairy arm shot out. He grabbed her right wrist.

"Goin' to stab me, weren't yuh?" His grip tightened. "Thought I was drunk."

"Let go. You keel my sister Maunoa," Iolani snarled back at him.

"You're nuts! She did it herself." Another vicious twist and the knife slithered down into the sand.

"*Aole!* You tell big lie!" Iolani bent her head swiftly. She buried her teeth into Singapore's dirty arm.

"Damnation!" He let go of her, smashed his fist cruelly into her face.

The impact sent her sprawling backward out of the doorway of the wretched shack. Her gaudy red and white sarong slipped up, exposing her bare brown legs.

A hungry look came into Singapore's small, yellow-flecked eyes.

"Come here, girl." He walked toward her. "You're a sight better lookin' than your sister; younger, too!"

"Don't you touch me!" Iolani leaped to her feet and raced across the beach toward the fringe of palms which bordered the jungle.

"Come back here!" Singapore Pete chased after her on unsteady feet.

Iolani ran more swiftly. She knew what had happened to Maunoa, who had been housekeeper for the dirty white man. In a drunken rage he had pressed his fingers tight around her neck and had thrown her into the lagoon. Kuula, her sweetheart, had found her. All the people knew who had done it . . .

Iolani darted between the palms and into a dense growth beyond with its familiar sweet, sweating odor that she knew and loved. She turned her head with its cloud of glossy black hair to see if Singapore Pete was still following her.

In that instant, Iolani's foot caught

under a raised root. She fell sideward, her ankle twisting under her. Singapore came crashing heavily toward her, as she tried to rise. Sharp pains shot up her leg. She fell back upon the floor of the jungle with a little moan.

If she kept quiet, perhaps the killer of her sister would not find her. Iolani curled under the giant ferns and delicate tamarinds. But Singapore came nearer and nearer, mouthing the foul words the good priest had said must not be uttered.

Iolani shivered despite the fact her body was covered with perspiration. In her mind she could see limp Maunoa with the horrible red marks at her throat. She, Iolani, didn't want the dirty white man to kill her too. Life was sweet as the milk of the coconuts. It was good to be in the dance on Lei Day and smell the fragrance of the ginger blossoms and hyacinths, to eat with the others when the feast was served.

"So, you little she-devil, this is where you're hidin'!" Pete's cruel fingers reached down suddenly and fastened themselves in Iolani's thick hair. "I like spirit in my women, I do." He laughed coarsely. "More fun tamin' 'em."

HE dragged her from the hiding place. Iolani screamed.

"Shut your fool mouth or I'll punch you one!"

Singapore pulled her along the ground by her hair. Briars and thorns tore her smooth flesh. The torture to her head was maddening. Iolani screamed again—

"Hey, you big bully, what are you doing to that girl?"

Singapore Pete halted. Iolani turned her anguished eyes upward. A slender *haole* — white man — in a clean white suit and pith hat stood in the small clearing. Angry fire was in his eyes,

wrathful disgust turned up the corners of his mouth. There was a look about his face such as the good priest had.

"I said," repeated the intruder, "what do you think you're doing?"

"That's none of your damn business!" Singapore snarled.

"You'd better let the girl alone."

"Like hell I will. She's my woman!" Singapore Pete bellowed.

"*Aole! Aole!*" Iolani denied his statement in her own tongue.

"She says she doesn't belong to you."

"She's crazy. You know what these native girls are like." Singapore started dragging her again.

"Let go of that girl!" the tense young man demanded.

"Vamoose, wise guy! Scram! Back to your hole!"

Like the transition of light the other man's fist crashed abruptly into Pete's face.

Singapore Pete spat out a foul oath. "Okay, Mister Wise Guy, you asked for it!"

Singapore let go of Iolani. He hit the shorter, slighter man a terrific blow to the side of the head.

The two of them closed in on each other, pounding and butting. Iolani sat up with an excited glitter in her dark eyes, a half smile upon her hibiscus red lips. A rich tint like a ripe pomegranate came to stand out on her softly rounded cheeks.

A moment more and the two men crashed to the ground, a milling bundle of thrashing feet and smashing fists.

Singapore, burdened with useless fat and weakened with rum, became winded. His punches packed less dynamite. The other man was quick to take advantage. With a sudden rolling motion he came atop his adversary, straddling him and grinning down into the other's unshaven face.

"Had enough?"

"By God, Mr. Wise Guy, I'll get you for this!"

"You and who else?" The younger man threw back his head and laughed. He had good teeth like Iolani's people. That was well, the girl thought. She liked his hair too. It was the color of the gold bracelet that Loki, her brother, had bought from the trader.

The young man got to his feet. He looked at Iolani.

"You'd better go back to your people, sister, while the traveling is good."

She smiled shyly at him. "Iolani live with brother and brother's wife. Anyhow, can no walk. Foot hurt much."

The man bent down and felt of her injured ankle with gentle fingers.

"Um-m—your ankle is swollen. I'll carry you to my bungalow. I've a first-aid kit there. I'll bandage it up for you."

Her smile deepened. "Maybe Iolani go be your housekeeper? Yes?"

"So, Wise Guy," whined Singapore Pete from the ground, his long face twisted into an evil leer. "That's your game, eh?" He laughed nastily. "Want her for yourself!"

"Shut up, you," the young man snapped.

He gathered Iolani up into his arms. She looked at his face. It was dirty and bruised and scratched but it was a good face. Her arms crept around his neck.

DELIBERATELY the man stepped over Pete's bare feet.

"I'll get you, Wise Guy, if it's the last thing I ever do!" Singapore Pete's voice trailed after them like the remembrance of a frightful dream . . .

Iolani sniffed delightedly at the good tobacco odor of the young man, at another fragrance that smelled of flowers she had never known.

"Well, Iolani, if that is your name. Here we are," he was saying.

She turned her head. A small low building with an iron roof and a screened veranda was surrounded by jade-white *pikake* flowers, jasmine and gorgeous cream-colored orchids.

The young man opened the screen door and crossed the veranda. He carried the girl inside and placed her upon a divan.

Curiously Iolani looked around. Strange-colored boxes on shelves adorned the room. Over to one corner by a window was a counter such as one saw in the trade store. On it was a large glass ball with a funny little tail. In a rack were glass tubes.

Some of the tubes held liquids the color of the sunset and the rainbow. A slanted black tube was held in position above a crystal glass. Back of the counter on other shelves were cages with little animals in them, and jars containing funny bugs.

The man brought a box from another room. He opened it, took out a small bottle with liquid in it the color of dry earth. He touched it to the girl's ankle. She drew back.

"Don't be frightened, Iolani, it is medicine. Iodine. It will make your ankle better." He painted it as he talked.

"My name—Gary Weston. I am an entomologist connected with the United States Department of Agriculture. That means I study bugs. I'm trying to find a bug or lizard that will eat up another bug which is killing the pineapple crops of Hawaii."

He saw the expression of bewilderment on Iolani's face.

"Never mind, honey, I just work with bugs, that's all."

"Bugs?" She nodded her head and smiled. That she understood. She waved toward the shelves. "Pretty boxes."

"They are books. You read them.

They tell you about other people and places. That other stuff is where I make my experiments—make tests," he added.

"So," Iolani said softly when he had finished. She added: "Iolani stay here? Cook *poi*? Be your house-keeper?"

Young Gary Weston straightened up. "Look here, that's mighty nice of you, but you see I am going to marry a girl from my own country soon. She teaches children to read the pretty books and to write. She will come to me presently. You understand?"

Iolani threw back her head proudly. There was an arrogant look in her large brown eyes.

"Ship may go down, other woman die. Iolani take care of you always. *Ae*—yes?"

A quick look of pain came into Weston's blue eyes.

"Child, you mustn't say things like that or even think them. I love this woman who is coming to me."

He paused, running his long fingers through his coppery blond hair. His gaze dropped to Iolani's wistful pleading face.

"All right, if you want to stay here and keep house for me. I've lots of work to do; have to tramp all over the island almost daily. I'm not always up to cooking my own food when I get back. Yes, you may stay."

LONG after Weston's lamp was out that night, Iolani lay in the darkness thinking about him. He had been kind to her. She wanted to do something for him. She had only her love to give—but he had promised himself to another woman. Then it came to her. When Ukanako, son of the tribal chief, had brought her the pretty conch shell, she had pretended she didn't want it at first.

All the time she had craved it, but she had wanted him to offer it to her several times before she would finally accept it. So it was with this white man, Gary Weston.

She rose from the divan, got down on her knees and crept silently into the other room. Moonlight, white as the beach sand at midday, was coming in through the window. It made a path of light to Weston's bed. Iolani's heart pounded against her young breasts. She felt excited and so different. She raised herself to the edge of the bed. With loving tenderness she bent over and laid her cheek against his. A delicious sensation made her tingle all over.

Weston stirred. He awakened.

"What in the name of—Iolani! What are you doing here?"

"Iolani grateful." She brushed her soft fingertips over his bare shoulder. "Iolani want to kiss you good night."

"You little minx! Get out! Get out, I say! Good Lord, do you think I'm made of iron?"

Weston sat up and grabbed her unclad shoulder. He shook her roughly.

"Get back into that other room at once!" he demanded.

Iolani slid off the bed and crawled away. How had she failed? She had meant only to kiss him. Her heart felt bruised and crushed. She wept silently but her tired, healthy body soon forced her to sleep.

IN the days that followed Iolani tried in every way she knew to gain Gary Weston's favor. After her foot became better, she hunted and found brilliantly colored flowers, which she wove into *leis* for herself and for him. She tucked frangipani blossoms into her dusky hair, but Weston remained the same; kindly, aloof and impersonal.

One day as Iolani sat cross-legged on

the veranda weaving a *lauhala* mat, Gary Weston came from the direction of the one-street village that faced the ocean, where a ship was anchored beyond the lagoon. Flat white packets were in his hand. He waved them at her as he came on to the porch and flung himself into a chair.

"Great news, Iolani! Lucille Barclay, the girl I am to marry, has finished her teaching contract. She is coming to me on the very next boat."

A dark cloud seemed to blot out the brilliance of the day for Iolani. She looked up. A shining light was in the young man's eyes. He was glad this other woman was coming to him. Iolani swallowed hard, her fingers idle.

"We'll buy bright goods at the trade store," he was saying. "Perhaps you could make fresh curtains for the windows. I'll order some new native furniture. I've already brought a radio from the boat. You, Iolani, shall clean everything. You'll just love my Lucille when you see her!"

"I won't," the girl thought. "I will hate her!"

The time arrived when the ship was due that would bring Gary Weston's Lucille. Woven in and out of the mind of Iolani were threads of morbid thoughts, as she covered the wedding table with *ti* leaves, and prepared the *luau*s of chicken while the *kukui* nuts roasted.

There were to be great bowls of coconut *poi* and *lomi-lomi*. All the while Iolani cried and would not go with young Weston to meet the ship's launch. Neither would she promise to be at the chapel to see the good priest marry him to his Lucille. If only this were Iolani's own wedding feast!

Suddenly Iolani paused in her table setting. The procession from the village was coming to the bungalow. She could hear the voices. Quickly she ran to the veranda. She saw Gary Weston

first, so straight and tall and handsome in his new white suit and pith helmet. To his left was the priest, while to his right was the despised Lucille Barclay.

IOLANI'S lip curled back in disgust. She thought:

"This woman is flat-chested. Her stomach has not the rounded way. She has no hips at all, is little—sick-looking. Bah, she will not be able to give Gary fine fat babies such as I, Iolani, could give him. Her hair is as a dead leaf's color beneath the hat of grass hue."

A mask of intense hatred covered the native girl's sensitive face as this new woman smiled up into Gary Weston's pleased face.

Iolani's soul seemed to shrivel up within her. She could stand no more. She turned and dashed through the room and out the rear door into the jungle. She raced unseeingly through the rank growth, ripping and tearing her new batik sarong, cutting her smooth brown flesh.

Tired at last, she threw herself face downward in the coarse grass. Sobs shook her firm young body as she lay with fists clenched and toes dug into the earth.

The day finally passed into the night. Iolani was tortured with the thoughts of the skinny woman resting in Gary Weston's strong arms; the same arms that had carried Iolani that day away from Singapore Pete . . .

With the coming of the dawn, Iolani rose stiffly. Slowly she made her way back to the bungalow for she had nowhere else to go. Her people had taken it for granted that she was Gary Weston's wife.

Noiselessly she entered the house. Quietly she changed into her old red and white sarong. She began busying herself about the small kitchen.

The wedding table had been cleared by someone. The dishes had been washed and arranged neatly on the shelf.

"Iolani, where have you been?"

The girl whirled swiftly to face Gary Weston in his blue silk pajamas.

She threw back her head. "Iolani take walk."

"So, this is Iolani! My, what a beautiful child!"

The native girl looked past Weston to see the thin white woman, with her dull hair hanging down over a lagoon-green robe sewed with silver moon-beams.

Iolani drew herself up tall. There was a haughty, defiant look in her handsome brown eyes.

"Iolani not child. Iolani woman!"

"Of course," Lucille Weston smiled kindly, which made her almost pretty. "I'm sorry to have offended you. Gary has written of you so frequently, I felt as though I almost knew you."

Iolani turned back to her work in sullen silence. Weston and Lucille left her alone.

That afternoon, George Nahaolelua, the village trader, came to call. He was a small shrewd Polynesian with black eyes and short, fat fingers which betrayed his very materialistic viewpoints.

Iolani was sitting at the far end of the veranda with her back to the railing, doing her mat weaving. Lucille was making tiny stitches in a piece of white stuff with a needle and colored thread. Gary Weston was sipping a gourd full of *oke*. He rose in greeting at Nahaolelua's visit.

For a long hour there was small talk of great politeness, with Iolani getting the trader a drink. Finally Nahaolelua drew from his coat pocket a little chamis bag. He opened it with two pudgy forefingers and upturned it. Two pink-

ish white pearls, larger than Iolani had ever seen, tumbled out upon his red-lined palm.

"How beautiful!" Lucille dropped her work to lean forward, the better to examine the exquisite gems.

"You like?"

"Indeed I do. Aren't they gorgeous, Gary?" Lucille appealed to her new husband.

"Never seen nicer specimens." Weston took them into his own palm and examined them with his long, knotty fingers. "How much do you want for them, Nahaolelua?"

THE trader mentioned a certain sum. "Sorry, that's more than I can afford. Maybe you could get rid of them in Honolulu."

"Too bad you cannot buy pearls for your lady," the trader purred.

"Soon we'll be leaving Toau for Hawaii. Just as soon, in fact, as I find a parasite that will destroy the mealy bug which is destroying the pineapple crops of the islands. We'll be getting our own place and there will be furniture to buy. Pearls we just can't afford at present."

Quick little breaths came up to choke Iolani. So, her Gary Weston would be soon going away from Toau. If only he would take her with him! Perhaps this thin one would die one day, and then Iolani would find favor in his eyes—

"Those pearls would make handsome earrings, Gary," Lucille was saying wistfully.

"No doubt about it." Gary Weston stuck out his stubborn chin. "I'd like to get them for you, darling, but I simply can't afford it at this time."

Presently Nahaolelua left.

Iolani thought about the two pearls. Perhaps if she could get them for the white lady, it would make young Wes-

ton like her more. A cunning plan began to form in her mind.

After the evening meal, Iolani took from the back of the drawer her knife, which she had recovered from Singapore Pete's beach shack, when Pete had been helping load copra on the last ship.

Iolani left by the back door and followed the jungle trail toward the village.

She sniffed happily at the overpowering sweet odor of the frangipani. The twittering of birds was mingled with the tinny music from Schultz's Café as she moved silently behind it on her bare feet.

By her nose Iolani recognized the trade store even before she was aware that it was directly before her. She crept forward slowly, every nerve tensed, not out of fear of what she was about to do, but because she might be discovered.

A sickly yellow glow trickled from the single window at the rear of the trade store where Nahaolelua lived alone. She peered within. An oil lamp stood on a rattan table. The trader was seated at the table. Her eyes widened as she saw the two handsome pearls in his palm. He was cuddling them and talking to them. For long minutes he remained so. Finally he slid them into the chamois bag and tucked it into his faded clothing.

Barely breathing, Iolani saw him go to a closet and take down a dark brown bottle. He tipped it to his mouth and drank deeply. After putting the bottle away, he walked over to the table and blew out the lamp. Iolani ducked down. There was a creaking sound. She knew the trader had thrown himself down on his bed to sleep.

Long minutes she waited as the moon began rising over the palms. Her body was wet with sweat and her thighs ached from being doubled so long in one

position. She rose cautiously, taking the dagger from the bosom of her sarong. Carefully she ripped the netting with the blade and climbed into the stuffy, odorous closeness of the unclean room.

Almost silently she crossed the mat-covered floor toward the cot. She reached out tentative fingers. They came in contact with hot, human flesh. Her hand touched a bulge in the man's clothing. She inserted her fingers and began drawing forth the bag.

"Maanei! What happens?" Nahaolelua's hand shot out. He grasped her wrist.

A SAVAGE impulse seized Iolani. With the strength of a jungle animal, she buried the dagger she carried in her left hand into the man's chest. A scream of agony rose to his lips. Iolani threw herself across him so to smother the sound. His grip upon her loosened. His struggles became weaker. He slumped beneath her weight.

Iolani withdrew the bloody dagger. She wiped it clean on the man's own suit. The bag of pearls was in her hand. Quickly she thrust them down into her sarong and left the room quickly, running all the way back to the Weston bungalow.

She was up at dawn, making a great noise in the kitchen so as to awaken Gary Weston and his bride quickly. When they came into the big room she confronted them immediately, the chamois bag in her honey-colored hands.

"Iolani bring present for lady." Her fingers trembled as she opened the bag, thrusting the two pearls toward Lucille Weston.

Gary Weston's bride looked incredulous.

"Good gracious, Iolani, those are the very same pearls the trader wanted to

sell us yesterday!"

The smile froze upon the native girl's face as she saw the confirming look in Gary Weston's blue eyes.

"Iolani, you stole those pearls from Nahaolelua, didn't you?"

"Just take," she said softly. "Your lady want much. You can no buy. I take. Make you both very happy. *Ae?*"

"Give me those pearls and that bag. I'm going to take them right back to the trader. Iolani, you could be put in jail for stealing. I'm ashamed of you!" Weston declared.

Iolani hung her head. It had all been for nothing. Gary Weston would discover that she had also killed the trader. He would be more angry than ever then.

Weston banged out of the house.

Iolani sank down onto the floor and began crying. Lucille knelt beside her.

"Don't cry, honey, it is all right. You did what you thought was right. Gary will give them back to Nahaolelua. Come, forget all about it." Her arms went around the native girl's bare shoulders.

"He can no give them back!" cried Iolani.

"Of course he can," soothed Lucille. "Gary will make the man understand how it happened. Tell me, darling, something about your wonderful island. I'd like to have the root of a purple-colored orchid. Could you show me where I could get it?"

Iolani wiped her eyes on her arm. Dimly she became conscious of what Lucille was saying.

"—have a little collection of coral at home but I'd love to have a branch of very pink coral. Do you know where I could get some?"

A daring thought flashed across Iolani's mind.

"Iolani know. Plenty pink coral in lagoon toward setting sun. You take

swim maybe too."

Lucille jumped to her feet. "I'll change into my swim suit. You can show me the place to get this pink coral."

Iolani was silent as she walked along the beach with Lucille. The reef where she was taking Gary Weston's bride was known as Shark Lagoon. The coral reefs stretched out into the Pacific like arched arms, but the fingers did not quite touch. The opening was large enough for sharks to enter the still waters, where was to be found a species of crawfish which attracted them.

Lucille invited.

"Stay and swim with me, Iolani,"

"Iolani can not do. Have to fix *poi*. Plenty pretty pink coral way out far." She pointed to the finger of the reef.

THE girl turned away from the white woman and raced back to the bungalow. Presently she saw Weston returning from the village, the chamois bag in his hand. He came onto the veranda.

"Couldn't find Nahaolelua. His place was locked up. Probably taking one of his trips to the other side of the island. Have to give him back his pearls another time."

He pushed back his helmet and mopped the sweat from his forehead with his damp handkerchief.

"Where's Lucille?"

Iolani leaned seductively against the doorframe.

"Iolani not know."

"Well, where did she go? For a walk?"

Iolani shrugged her shoulders eloquently, bringing into play her firm young breasts. Her dark eyes focused upon Gary Weston's puzzled face in an alluring fashion.

"Hey, what is this? What's the idea?" He stepped forward and grabbed

her bare shoulders roughly. "Where's Lucille?"

She didn't answer. He shook her again.

"Have you seen Singapore Pete around here?"

"Not see."

Fresh sweat broke out on Weston's forehead and on his upper lip.

"Good Lord, what's happened?"

"If Iolani tell, will Gary marry Iolani?"

"My God, no!" He flung the chamois bag upon a chair. "For once and for all, get it into your silly head, Iolani, that I don't want you. I'll never marry you! Understand?"

Tears filled the girl's luminous dark eyes. Gary Weston didn't want her. She had killed the trader, had sent Weston's woman to probable death in Shark Lagoon.

"Now then, where is my wife?" Gary Weston demanded.

"Her go swimming Shark Lagoon."

"Oh, good Lord!" Weston flung wide the screen door, leaped off the porch and started through the coco grove toward the beach.

Held tightly between Iolani's breasts was the dagger. She was suddenly very conscious of it, as one is of the heat of the sun at midday.

She ran quickly from the porch and through the grove. She knew of a path through the jungle that would bring her to Shark Lagoon more quickly than the beach route. Unmindful of the giant thorns that tore at her sarong and skin, she fled like a winged horse. The path brought her out ahead of Gary Weston. He shouted at her but she kept running.

In a flashing moment, Iolani drank in the bright blueness of the sky, the aquamarine glory of the lagoon, the brilliance of the chromatic green of the trees. She breathed deeply of the sweet jungle odor. She saw in the same in-

stant the form of Gary Weston's wife, far out on the reef in her crimson bathing suit and cap, make a beautiful dive into the lagoon.

Weston, behind Iolani, shouted frantically to his bride to go back to the reef. But Lucille was beyond hearing.

Iolani ran down into the water just as she caught sight of a dorsal fin headed toward the red bathing cap on the water. She placed her dagger between her teeth a moment before she struck out toward Lucille.

"Iolani, don't kill her, save her!" Gary Weston's desperate voice struck her eardrums like a soft bullet.

There was a splash behind her. She knew the man she loved was swimming after her. The shark's fin was closer now to Lucille, who seemed completely unaware of the danger. Iolani's bright eyes caught sight of an ugly snout.

It was time to strike!

SAVAGELY Iolani grabbed the dagger and slashed at her own left arm and at her shoulder. Bright blood spurted as she headed away from the white woman and toward the middle of the lagoon. A swirl of crimson surrounded her head like a halo. Two more fins appeared from the far side, and still the native girl continued toward them.

Iolani closed her eyes as giant forms, maddened by the presence of blood, threshed the water into lurid red-flecked foam. A terrific pain shot up her leg. She felt herself being pulled under the surface.

Gary Weston and his woman would have time to reach the reef. Yes, probably it was better this way, Iolani thought. Her tawny young body could not have been meant to be embraced. Undoubtedly she was unworthy of this white man. But the sharks did not deny themselves of her offering. . . .

THE WHITE MAN



By Alexander Blade

All that Tane Heva could remember of the past was that he had a bitter reason to hate women

TANE HEVA, they called him. The white man who was wrong in the head. Now he reeled dizzily and dropped to his knees in the shoal water. As he clutched at the rough coral for support, he felt the newly healed scar throb: a white band that ran from the corner of one eyebrow diagonally upward to the opposite tem-

ple. Like a sinister garotte across his forehead, it drove him mad with pain and jiggled his world insanely.

He arose presently, his tattered blue *pareu* dripping, and waded ashore. He dug his toes into the warm white sand and wondered dimly why he had gone out into the surf; but he had forgotten, of course. His head would hold

WHO WAS TABU



Tane Heva gripped her soft throat in his hands, a red haze of rage before his eyes

nothing but pain these days.

Tane Heva wandered to a pool the swirling surf had left in the sand, and gazed intently at his reflection. The face of a young man, perhaps twenty-six years old. Big and strong. Blond hair, blue eyes and a blonde beard. And that white scar slanting up across his brow. Who was he? Where had he gotten that scar?

The pool sifted through the sand and disappeared. Fearful that the world was beginning to dance again, Tane Heva straightened and looked anxiously about.

Far down the beach he saw a stately procession advancing. Three men and a girl.

They came up to him after a bit. The men were in bright *pareus*, loin-cloths that stood out sharply against their brown skins. Two of them were old, white-haired and stooping. The third was young and strong. He had a cropped black head with heavy sullen features, and he showed his teeth in an arrogant smile.

But the girl . . .

Tane Heva stared. She wore an *ahu*, a strip of white cloth across one shoulder, and swathed lightly around her hips. She was beautiful . . . and despite himself, Tane Heva wanted to kill her! He looked around for a stone to throw, his mind twisted with mad fury.

The old man who bore the chieftain's staff paused and turned to the girl.

"Go slow, Nania," he said. "You know Tane Heva will no have women near him."

She nodded and stepped back to allow the others to advance without her. Tane Heva glowered at her; at the black hair, the soft almond eyes and pouting lips and sleek amber skin.

Something within him whispered: "Kill! She is a woman! Kill!" He began to shake.

"Greeting!" said the old chief.

The white man recognized him dimly. He was Laana, chief of the tiny island tribe. He had seen the others too. Ipu, the witch-doctor, shriveled as a mummified cat, with a necklace of shark's teeth. Kaoha Ipu, the witch-doctor's son. Tall and muscular. Almost as tall as himself.

"What do you want of me?" said Tane Heva sadly. "I am sick . . . of no use to myself or anyone."

"White men have come to our island," said Chief Laana slowly. "This afternoon at the fourth hour. In a great canoe with two masts. To me they came and offered to buy Motu Atua, our island, if we would leave at once. For many guns and bolts of cloth; for tobacco, barrels of meal and casks of rum.

"It is a rich price that they offer for Motu Atua, and many would accept. But we, older ones, do not willingly sell our homes. What shall we do?"

"**WHY** do you ask him, the mad one?" snapped the witch-doctor's son. "He is only good for snatching the fancy of silly girls." He cast a jealous glance toward Nania.

"A good price?" said Tane Heva weakly. He wished they would go away.

"The young men want the goods that are offered," explained Laana carefully. "They are tired of this lonely island that is never visited by white men. They want to go out into the world."

"It is bad not to have a home," Tane Heva said at length.

"You mean we should not sell?" asked Laana. He leaned forward eagerly. Tane Heva nodded.

"It is well!" exclaimed Laana. He confronted the witch-doctor's son, who nodded sullenly. Then he turned to Tane Heva.

"You are white," he said. "You speak the language of the whites. Will you

not come with me and tell them your decision? Me, they cannot understand, and perhaps they will make trouble. . . .”

Tane Heva nodded and permitted Laana to lead him down the beach.

A few minutes later they turned the bend of the beach and came upon the deep inlet of the island stream. It was a V of blue, cut sharply into the towering green *tohonu* trees, and edged with the white of the sand. Anchored in the inlet was a schooner. She was black and rakish, built for speed. The sight of her stirred distant memories in the back of Tane Heva's mind. He fought desperately to cling to the faint clues.

A small camp had taken root on the beach. White tents fluttered in the evening breeze, equipment was strewn about. Tane Heva looked at it curiously as the five white men of the crew got the place in order. There was a familiarity here that stirred Tane Heva's mind again. He even knew some of the names. Canvas; Rubber hose; Helmet; Compression pump. . . .

Then Laana brought him to a big tent. Tane Heva turned back. The girl and the other two men had vanished.

“Just a minute,” a smooth voice called. “I'll be right out.”

The flap was brushed aside and a white man appeared. He was tall and slender, with red hair plastered down on his head and a thin butter-colored mustache. He wore slacks and a white shirt, and one was dirtier than the other.

“Oh, brought an interpreter, huh?” he said, dropping the canvas flap behind him. He turned to Tane Heva. “I'm Luke Swanson,” he said, “and I think I've made a fair offer. I— Oh, my God!”

He staggered back against the tent pole, staring at Tane Heva. His mouth dropped and choking noises sounded in his chest. He fumbled at his belt. Tane Heva stepped forward.

“Do you know me?” he cried. “In God's name, man, who am I?” He gazed at the revolver shaking in Swanson's hand. “You *do* know me—”

“No . . . No,” answered Swanson. He returned the gun to his belt.

“If you know who I am,” persisted Tane Heva, “tell me, in the name of mercy. I'm out of my head, you see. Laana, here, tells me I drifted to Motu Atua six months ago. . . . That's all I know.”

“I've never seen you before in my life,” answered Swanson slowly. “At first you reminded me of someone who is dead. But now. . . .” He shrugged.

Tane Heva began to tremble and shake again. He felt tears well up in his eyes and turned away. Swanson caught him by the arm.

“Just a minute,” he said. “What about the sale? I'm prepared to ship you and the natives off in twenty-four hours. Any place you want to go.”

“Sale?” echoed Tane vacantly. “Oh . . . Sorry, Swanson, there won't be any sale.”

“*What's that?*” shouted Swanson.

“No sale,” repeated Tane Heva.

“**D**AMN you!” swore Swanson, clutching at Tane Heva's arm. “What do you want? Blood? All right, I'll double the offer! More than this lousy hunk of dirt is worth!”

“No.” Tane Heva shook his head.

“Name your price,” insisted Swanson. “Anything you say.”

Tane Heva turned away and motioned to Laana.

“All right!” Swanson snarled. “You are asking for this. I give you fair warning, Mister Out-Of-Your-Mind, if you and your pals don't get off this island, there'll be plenty happening!”

Tane Heva's scar began to ache and throb again.

“Madison, Brent!” shouted Swanson.

"Go back to the ship and tell Miss Marsh to come ashore."

Tane Heva saw two burly men run down to the beach, their white duck pants fluttering. Then he could see nothing more, for the island was dancing again and the blue-black sky was crashing down on his head. He broke loose from Laana's restraining hand and made for the cool island jungle.

HE thought he heard a branch snap.

The branch snapped again, then a whole tree seemed to fall crackling to the ground, far in the distance. Tane Heva leaped to his feet. That was the sound of rifles.

He ran swiftly through the moonlit jungle in the direction of the native village, weaving and sliding through the tangles like a human snake. The firing was coming from that way. The red-headed man, Swanson, must be making trouble.

Tane Heva caught a glimpse of dull orange through the trees. He paused and stared. Yes, a glow in the distance, the flare of giant flames. Swanson must have fired the village! Tane Heva broke into a run again. As he panted up the low slope of the island, he prayed that his mind would stay clear long enough for him to be of some use.

The sharp reports of rifle fire banged just ahead of him. He could hear the brisk crackling roar of flames. He slowed his pace, flitting from tree bole to tree bole, until at last he reached the clearing that surrounded the village. A great mass of scarlet flame roared in the center. Silhouetted before the bright glare he could see dark kneeling forms. Their shoulders kept jerking back as white needles flashed out from the gun muzzles. There were six men. One of them was screaming and gesticulating.

"All of 'em!" he howled. "We've got to wipe 'em all out. We've got to!"

It was Swanson.

Tane Heva turned right and crept carefully around the clearing until he had the fire between him and Swanson's men. The flames towered thirty feet into the air blanketing the black house frames with red. A column of twinkling sparks shot high into the sky to merge with the stars.

He thought he saw a tail-end of native figures drifting away up the mountain trail, hurrying from the fire. He could hear nothing but the cackle of dry burning wood. Even the rifle shots sounded like pops. Tane Heva backed away from the wave of heat and nosed up the trail. He found old Laana stumbling feebly. A broken rear-guard.

TANE HEVA rushed to him. Laana's legs were horribly burned to raw red. There was a great black gap behind his shoulder. It looked like a mud-pie, fresh blood oozed out when Tane Heva placed his arms under Laana's shoulders to lift him.

"To the crater," groaned Laana faintly. The man who had lost his memory had to bend over to hear him.

"And the others?" he asked.

"We have saved all we could," said Laana. "The rest . . . To the crater."

Tane raised Laana carefully to his shoulder and began the ascent of the steep facade of the volcanic cone.

It was a hard climb. The giant trees thinned out presently and at last gave way to the smaller brush.

Tane's feet sensed the change in the earth under him. No longer soft loam, but the hard smooth surface of ancient lava. Above loomed the flat top of the volcano, outlined against the night sky. Long dormant, it looked like a cone of incense with the tip cut off.

Bent double under his burden, Tane Heva followed a faint channel up through the lava. It deepened, and the

walls of black stone seemed to rise up alongside him. Then the walls had passed his head and slowly narrowed until he was moving sidelong through a narrow tunnel. He groped through the blackness, crashed against a solid wall, saw there was a turn and abruptly passed through the tunnel mouth into the open. He was on the crater floor.

It was a round, level plain, a hundred feet in diameter. In the center of the crater floor lay a great white stone, a platform twenty feet across, on which a fire burned. Abutting the platform at each cardinal point were four monstrous white stone monoliths, ancient and weathered. The entire surviving population of the island, one hundred natives, was clustered around the white platform.

"*Aue!*" they cried as Tane Heva lay the inert chief down.

A swift aisle appeared as Nania burst through the crowd and knelt alongside her father, her great dark eyes glistening with tears. A second shrill cry rang out. Tane Heva saw the twisted gnarled figure of Ipu, the witch-doctor, standing alongside the fire.

"There lie the bodies of the people of Atua!" "Shall it be peace or war?"

A dull mutter sounded from the men. The mutter turned into a roar. Tane Heva glanced around at the brown faces gleaming in the firelight. The witch-doctor was whipping the men to a frenzy.

"The sacrifice?" shouted his warrior son. "What shall be the sacrifice?"

Ipu, the witch-doctor, looked down at Tane Heva. The white man could see the malicious jealous and hatred in Ipu's face—the jealousy of an island priest who has lost his power to a rival.

"*Aue!*" shouted Kahoa, his son.

He threw himself on Tane Heva. The derelict doubled him over with a slam

in the belly, then dumped him to earth with a savage right hook that landed under the ear. But the other natives were on him before he could take a step toward the tunnel.

They dragged him toward the north monolith and bound him to it with coils of fiber-rope. The scar on his forehead began to throb again under the strain, and Tane Heva felt his body shaking.

But first there must be a ceremony.

The *Pahu*, the giant war drum with a head of human skin, was brought out before the monolith directly opposite Tane Heva. At the first stroke, a deep roll of thunder spread through the crater, and suddenly Nania was thrust out from the darkness. The drum whispered softly. Horrified, Tane Heva looked at her.

Her hair was in two plaits of jet, and there were glittering ghost flowers over her ears. Her lovely body was rounded with the sheen of silk; but Tane Heva saw the short knife in her hand, and he understood how the ceremony would end.

NANIA began to dance to the throbbing drum, so close to him that he caught the fragrance of her skin. The blood swelled into his head and ached. He watched her flit around the platform, and at last pause before him. Then she stepped close. He felt her breath on his neck. The natives roared frenziedly. Nania raised the knife toward his throat.

Tane Heva strained forward. There was a dull rasp and suddenly the fiber ropes dropped around him. He made a fierce lunge toward Nania. She stepped back quickly, showed her teeth in a hawk-like smile of triumph, turned and ran. Tane Heva followed her, bursting through the crowd around the platform like a scythe through wheat.

At first he only knew the desire to

follow Nania and rend her to shreds. His mind, obsessed with the hatred of women, was a red riot when he reached the tunnel mouth. A haze of spears crashed against the wall around him. He felt the icy sear of metal rip his side and the impact jolted him against the wall.

Then he turned and was in the black depths, running for his life. He made an erratic course, scraping his arms and legs against the narrow lava walls. Behind him came the crash of pursuit.

Overhead, a thin line of sky suddenly appeared. It widened, and the sides of the tunnel lowered abruptly. Then Tane Heva was picking up speed, going downhill through the scrub brush, straining to reach the cover of the tall trees.

A hand reached out and grasped at him as he passed. A small hand but strong. He slithered to a halt.

"Tane Heva," whispered Nania, "you must come with me. I know a secret place."

He stared at her.

"Hurry!" she urged. "Come with me or else they will take you again."

He nodded and followed her silently down the mountainside.

IN all his six months of wandering over Motu Atua, Tane Heva had never heard of the cave. It was low, not more than five feet in height. The walls and roof were as smooth as glass from the centuries of coursing water. The floor was of fine white sand.

Nania replaced the pandanus fronds that masked the cave mouth, which was only a few feet above the inlet beach, two hundred yards in from the ocean. Tane Heva crept up the cave as far as he could go. It was hardly twenty feet deep. The rear was choked with fallen earth and stone.

"Once," said Nania softly, "our

mountain river ran through here. But that was many, many years ago."

She lay down on the sand and patted her scraped body painfully.

"Nania," Tane Heva said slowly, "I owe you my life."

"Mine is yours, Tane," she answered simply.

"But mine . . . is not my own. *Aue!*" He groaned softly. "I have no life, Nania. I am nothing but an empty husk when I am sane. . . . A creature without memory. And when I am mad . . . I am a devil."

"Why is that, Tane?" she asked. She nestled alongside him and brushed cool fingertips across his aching brow. "When first you came to Atua, you were not wrong in the head."

"No, no," he said. "Chief Laana told me I came to the island like a wild thing. Starving and thirsting on a broken outrigger. And with this scar on my brow."

"But that was the second time," insisted Nania. "And I could not be mistaken about you, Tane. Besides, how do you know? You never let us come near you to talk, and when we do tell you things, you cannot hear us."

"Then tell me now."

THE first time you came, you were swept ashore in a great storm. Then you were all in white, with gold buttons and ropes of gold at the shoulder."

"White—gold—" The back of Tane Heva's mind stirred again, but faintly, as faint as the dawn that now sent fingers of light through the cave mouth.

"Rest, Tane." Nania pressed him back. "I will tell you. You were gay then, and strong. You built a big outrigger and took two of our men who wanted to see the world. It was a long dangerous sea voyage to the world outside, but you laughed and said you

would come back soon in a big ship."

"And my name?" said Tane Heva eagerly. "Did I tell you my name?"

"Yes," answered Nania sadly. "It was in the language of the white men. I cannot remember it, Tane. No one can."

"White—gold," repeated Tane Heva. He stared at the frond outlines against the pearly light. Images were flashing through his brain. Vague impressions that would not remain to be examined.

"And that is all," finished Nania. "You did come back, but not the way you said. Instead you had this scar across your brow and you were sick, very sick. Then, when your strength returned, your mind was still sick.

"You wandered around Atua like an angry animal, snapping at those who would care for you. Then the men said you were touched by the gods and they called you the 'Sacred Hermit'."

"And did you believe?" Tane Heva asked her.

"I?" Nania smiled. "No. That was foolish talk for foolish people. I knew you were only talking the talk of sick ones."

The pale dawn filled the cave and set the walls to gleaming. Outside, Tane Heva heard the first sleepy comments of the island birds leaving their roosts. Soon the gulls would begin to scream over the reefs, dropping clams and arguing impatiently.

Nania was lying close beside him, still caressing his forehead. Tane Heva looked up at her. The glint of her smooth tawny skin in the soft light!

A nerve far back in his head began to twitch. Each stroke of her fingertips brought the scar on his brow to life. Something whispered:

"Kill! See, it is a woman! Kill!" Suddenly he turned sick with horror.

"Nania," he whispered, "go . . . quickly!"

"What is it?" She leaned over him and peered into his eyes.

Tane Heva lay rigid. The madness was whipping through his brain again.

"Please!" he groaned.

Nania got to her knees and then halted. She turned decisively and faced him.

"No, Tane," she said simply. "I will never leave you again."

"You must! Until the sickness leaves me forever, you must go when I tell you."

"No . . ."

Then it struck him, this uncontrollable madness born of the injury to his head. He snarled and thrust his hands out at her. Nania screamed so that the cavern rang. Tane Heva got his hands on her shoulders and tried to pull her down. She struck his face until he was forced to let go, then tried to scramble out of the cave.

HE caught her just at the entrance and dragged her back a little. His head was whirling furiously and it seemed that it was a game—like tag. And then it was deadly in earnest and he was a spectator watching the hideous things some evil being was forcing him to do. He gripped his fingers around Nania's neck.

"Darling!" she cried. "No, Tane, no! You must listen to me!"

He was shaking and running hot and cold at a breath. His face was bathed in sweat.

"Tane! No!"

His brain was bursting into a thousand pieces. . . .

Slowly he released his grasp.

And then there was a ripping noise at the mouth of the cave and a shouting outside. Nania gasped before Tane Heva could manage to move his head around. Then he saw Luke Swanson leaning in the mouth of the cave, one

hand supporting his weight. There was a revolver in his hand and Tane Heva could see the crew standing behind him.

"Sorry to interrupt the soiree," leered Swanson. "Would you mind coming out?"

THE schooner deck was cold and moist with dew underfoot. Nania, surrounded by five grinning white men, became acutely conscious of her scanty attire and clung close to Tane Heva. He put an arm around her and glowered at the crew. Vaguely he remembered seeing their kind before. Greasy cutthroats with seamy lines of grime lacing their faces.

"Goldie!" yelled Swanson. "Hey, Goldie Marsh! Come on deck, will you? We've got company."

Goldie! The name struck a chill down Tane Heva's spine. He felt that his memory was straining at the sluice gates, aching to burst forth.

A yellow head appeared at the cabin door. Then a girl stepped outside. She was short, soft and curved. Bright gold ringlets swept up in a crown. Her eyes were a soft baby blue and her mouth was crumpled and gentle. She sauntered up the deck in white sandals and a blue linen robe. Then she saw Tane Heva.

"My God!" she breathed.

Swanson's red head bobbed. He grinned triumphantly.

"Exactly," he said.

"John Chalmers!" said Goldie Marsh. "I thought you—"

"To did I." Swanson pointed to the scar across Tane Heva's brow. "A reasonable error, don't you think?"

"Well, what the hell are you waiting for now?" snapped Goldie with her incredibly soft and gentle mouth. "You've got a gun, haven't you?"

"My little joke," laughed Swanson. "I like to have young Captain Chal-

mers around. He's harmless, you see, because he's lost his mind."

The blond girl stared, then grinned maliciously. Tane Heva's head was fluttering like a fish just out of water. They were speaking of him as though his name were John Chalmers. It did have a familiar ring. . . .

But just now he was overcome with wave after wave of savage hatred for the blond girl. He was realizing that all his six months' aversion to women, all his savagery had in some way been only a substitute for his hatred of Goldie Marsh.

WHILE he and Nania stood close together, the crew under Swanson's orders hauled anchor and set sail. As the schooner turned lazily and eased out of the inlet toward open sea, Swanson and Goldie eyed the captives. At a sign from Swanson, two husky sailors seized Tane Heva's arms.

"Lock him up in the f'c'sle," ordered Swanson. "We'll bring him out to watch our operations. Life plays some pretty queer tricks, but the queerest is going to be played over Thunder Reef this morning."

"Wait a minute," cut in Goldie sharply. "What about the girl?"

"The girl?" echoed Swanson in surprise. He eyed Nania insultingly. "Why, we'll keep her for a hostage, of course. It'll make wiping out those savages easier when we get back tonight. You can use her for a maid if you like, Goldie."

"I don't like!"

Then Tane Heva could hear no more. The sailors hustled him forward into the long narrow crew's quarters. The door slammed and he heard the rasp of the key in the lock. Then he was left to watch the sway of the overhead lamp and the ceaseless shifting shafts of light shining through the ports.

They said he was John Chalmers. Thunder Reef sounded familiar too. But that was the trouble. All the pieces of the puzzle belonged, but he couldn't fit them together. He felt the way a man feels when he looks at an object at night in his darkened bedroom.

The ship lurched as it passed through the channel in the reef and hit open sea. Feet trampled overhead and voices called. Tane Heva went over and tried the door. They had left the key in the lock. He hunted desperately for a way out. At last, in a sailor's kit bag, he discovered a small pair of pliers. He ran to the heavy door and patiently tried to grip the end of the key and turn it over. The minutes flew by.

He heard commands, the crack and flapping of loosened canvas. Tane Heva stopped his work and went to the porthole. Motu Atua lay a mile distant, low and purple on the horizon. Tane Heva listened to the rapid clank of anchor chains paying out. He looked down into the transparent blue water. They must be close to Thunder Reef. The floor of the ocean showed clearly through the shimmering waters. A thousand forms of life weaved and swayed under Tane Heva's eyes. His gaze took in giant furbelowed clams, white and tinged with red, saffron and brown-yellow. They lay like beds of beautiful giant tulips.

But most beautiful of all, most miraculous of all was the vast ship that lay on its side deep under the surface, already quilted over with masses of brilliant plant life.

Tane Heva looked once at the familiar outlines of the ship—*his ship!*—and suddenly the puzzle pieces fell into place. He was no longer the man who was wrong in the head.

He sat down and took stock.

He remembered the storm eight

months ago, when he had lost his ship on this little-known reef off the almost forgotten island of Motu Atua. He—Captain John Chalmers, the sole survivor—had swam ashore, made friends with the natives and enlisted their aid in getting back to civilization where he could report the position of his wrecked ship.

HE remembered how Luke Swanson the company treasurer, had spotted him as he came in the office and gotten him out before he could make his report. How cleverly the "innocent" blond girl, Goldie Marsh, had worked with Swanson to trick the secret from John Chalmers and then shoot him. It was only a miracle that the bullet had creased his brow; but it was no miracle the way he hated Goldie Marsh and, through her, all women from then on.*

Swanson and Goldie had waited a long time before they fitted out their expedition. Swanson knew how strict salvage laws were and he'd wanted to certain there would be no suspicion. That was probably the reason he wanted to get rid of the natives of Motu Atua, even at the price of mass murder.

Natives can and will talk freely. Luke Swanson was taking no chances with two hundred thousand dollars in gold bullion at stake. Two hundred thousand dollars worth of gold in that broken ship's safe lying there on the bottom!

Tane Heva straightened, picked up the pair of pliers he had found and attacked the lock again. There was no

* There are many cases where pressure on the brain—the impact of a bullet across the forehead, as in this story—will cause any one of a number of queer reactions. In Tane Heva's case, he was injured just at the time his mind was seething with bitterness toward a woman who had betrayed him. His memory being impaired through the injury to his head, he was able to remember only this one thing.—Ed.

sense battering down the door. It was so heavy, the rumpus would attract attention, and he had to get on deck quietly to be of any use. He nipped the key between the plier tips and turned with the patience born of an hour's practice.

The door creaked slightly when he pushed it open. He crept up the steep narrow stairs and lifted an eye above deck. All looked safe so far. Two of the crew were making the last anchor adjustments, the other three were laying out the diving apparatus he'd seen drying on the beach the day before. Helmet, hose pumps.

The ship was anchored barely a hundred feet off Thunder Reef. The reef barely lifted its black head to the surface. As the great ocean swells passed over it, it would show ebon for a second and then disappear in a smother of booming foam. Beyond the reef Tane Heva saw the low-lying island.

He turned his head and started in surprise. Coming toward the ship from far out in the open sea, he saw the small threads of native outriggers. Foolish brave natives! Creeping up on the schooner with their spears in the face of crack .30-.30 rifles.

"Why, hel-lo, madhouse! Come up for a breath of air?"

Tane Heva yanked around. Goldie's red-lacquered toes were an inch from his face. She stood at the head of the companionway and looked down at him.

"You forget how to talk, too?" inquired Goldie. One of the sailors came up.

"Hell," he said. "I guess we forget to lock Bughouse in."

"He's harmless," grinned Goldie.

Tane Heva came up to the deck slowly. He had to keep their eyes off the horizon until the natives got to the ship. The islanders were his only chance now.

"I like to talk," he said amiably.

He tried to grin idiotically. Goldie and the sailor laughed. The others stopped their work to watch him. Tane Heva surveyed the ship furtively. Swanson and Nania were nowhere in sight. That wasn't so good.

"Boo!" shouted Tane Heva.

He stood on his head and kicked his heels. They roared with laughter. He got down on his belly and wriggled energetically.

"I'm a *puhi*," he explained. "That's native for conger eel."

He wriggled up and down the deck until his belly could stand no more. But it kept their eyes lowered.

"Now," he announced, "I'm a *puhi* fighting an *ava*. *Ava* is native for salmon."

TANE HEVA thrust one hand into his mouth and chewed with relish. He kept that up until the amusement began to slacken.

How long would it be before those outriggers arrived?

Sounds drifted toward him from the aft cabin. A girl's voice, a man's, then the scuffle of people fighting and overturning furniture. Tane Heva's heart sank. He raised his voice to cover the sounds and sang wildly in gibberish.

Then a cry ripped down the length of the schooner. Nania burst out of the cabin, her jet hair flying, and after her rushed Luke Swanson. He caught up with her halfway across the deck and pulled her back against him, his thin bony fingers exploring her flesh. He laughed as Nania fought and clawed.

Tane Heva took a breath and scrambled to his feet. Before he could move an inch, a thunderbolt with blond ringlets passed him. Goldie tore Swanson away from Nania.

"Swine!" she screamed. "You dirty doublecrossing swine!"

Swanson tried to shove her away.

Goldie, jealous as a witch, dug her hands into his red hair and clung, kicking at him, while Swanson beat her face with his fists. She squawled and screeched but would not let go.

At last Swanson seized her shoulders, tore her away and shook her violently. He heaved her off her feet and slammed her heavily to the deck. Goldie's screams were suddenly cut off. She lay on the planking, her arms and legs sprawled, her head lolling crookedly on its broken spinal column.

Swanson looked down at her in silence, panting heavily. At last he raised his head and stared off toward the sea, a tiny rivulet of blood oozing from the corner of his mouth. Then he blinked wide-eyed, his chin jutted forward, and Tane Heva knew he had seen the approaching outriggers.

Before Swanson could utter a sound, Tane Heva leaped forward across the deck, folded his arms around Swanson's knees and brought him down. There was a shout from the crew behind him and Nania screamed excitedly in native dialect. Swanson kicked furiously, his heavy heels driving into Tane Heva's chest and face.

Then Tane Heva heard savage yells alongside. He let go and got to his feet. Out of the corner of his eye he saw fierce brown-skin hordes piling over the schooner rail.

He never knew whether he was fighting in madness or sanity. He stood toe to toe with Swanson and drove his punches savagely into the man's face, one for each finger that had touched Nania, one for each time the man had looked at her.

He was only slightly conscious of the roar of Thunder Reef, the shouts and screams of agony behind him. He slammed his knuckles into Swanson's eyes, nose and mouth until the face turned into a distorted caricature. He

advanced, step by step, as Swanson gave ground, never once ceasing the steady drive of punches that was methodically ripping Swanson apart. He drove forward until suddenly he became aware that Swanson was swaying, back to the rail.

Tane Heva paused, almost in astonishment, as he saw the red-headed, red-faced man slump backward, teeter on the rail for an instant, upend like a log going over a falls, and drop into the ocean. The splash was lost in the boom of Thunder Reef.

Swaying, Tane Heva watched the slender stream of silver bubbles as the figure sank soddenly toward the bottom. It lay still, until slate-colored snouts eased up to it. Then Heva turned away in horror. Horror, and a dull throbbing pain. For some of Swanson's punches had gone home, jarred his head and forehead badly. He did not know it then, but the pressure of the old scalp wound above his brow had been relieved at last. Tane Heva was normal again.

THERE was no more fighting on deck. Five figures lay like rag dolls, spattered with crimson. The natives stared down at them with the overwhelming humiliation of a people long out of the habit of killing. Tane Heva strode to Nania and swept her to him.

"You're all right?" he begged.

She nodded and managed to smile.

"I too," he said. "I am no longer sick. My soul has returned to me. My head still throbs, but it is only from the fight."

"And now that you are well," asked Nania, "you will sail away in this ship, back to your own world?"

He paused and contemplated the schooner and the sunken ship that contained a fortune. When he finished scuttling the schooner, he knew, there

(Concluded on page 142)

Morua Fights for Love

(Continued from page 37)

He saw her coy little wriggle when she looked at him again, and the way she dropped her eyes . . . but came closer to him!

"Ah!" he breathed. "Now this is something like it! Come to papa?"

Morua "came to papa," came with her face hidden so he wouldn't see the revulsion that was clear in it. She came and dropped down on the man's knee and let him put his arm around her waist and draw her to him.

"*Maybe,*" she hoped wildly, "*maybe my Paul somehow escaped! Maybe he somehow is going to save the island yet!*"

BUT as time passed and the shots didn't recur, she was troubled. In addition, Pete was becoming more active and less inhibited in his love-making. The girl struck at him savagely when he almost ripped her *pareu* from her body, and she scuttled around the table in McGarrah's living room. But she was careful to make her eyes mischievous and her smile wide.

"You wanta play!" Pete roared his glee.

He jumped the table and had the girl in his arms, dragged her to a great easy chair of rattan, forced her into it with him. When he tried to maul her, Morua threw her arms around his neck and made as if to embrace him. Pete gurgled his ardor and wrenched her around roughly, forced her back to the easy chair, and lusted on her ripe beauty with oily eyes.

"My babe!" he breathed. "My babe!"

"Oh!" the girl sobbed to herself, as he struck her hands from his way. "Oh, oh, oh, I made a mistake. My poor

Paul, whom I had hoped had escaped, is dead; and this beast—"

The door of the *fare* burst open and Paul Archer was in the room, with a roar of fighting fury welling from his throat! Pete threw himself back and to the floor, drawing his gun at the same time. He crashed a shot at Archer; but it missed. He never had another try.

Archer sighted his gun coolly on the man and squeezed the trigger. Three slugs had effectively shut off Pete's evil life for all time, before the roar of guns abated. The bandy-legged bully lay on his side, eyes wide and sightless on his killer, and three rivulets of blood seeping from his belt-line.

Morua shrieked her joy and ran to throw her arms around Archer; but he calmly pushed her away.

"Where is McGarrah?" When Morua pointed, her face troubled and still drawn from what she had been through, Archer went past her and into McGarrah's room.

The triumphant natives poured up onto the veranda, led by Chief Tuomi. Four cringing sailors from the *Southern Cross*, all that was left ashore of the crew of ten that had remained, showed the effects of the beatings they had taken from the islanders. Morua greeted her battered but triumphant father with a glad cry and threw her arms around the old man.

Meanwhile, Archer had freed McGarrah, had dragged him hurriedly into the living room, and was ordering,

"Get us a couple of *pareus* and some good fighting knives. We're going out to the *Southern Cross!*"

McGarrah grunted at the change in Archer, but his eyes were still contemptuous.

"It's crazy ye are," he said scornfully. "One man can't do it. Schultz and two others are there." His eyes

were sad when he said, "God knows I want to see that colleen again—but the only way is to wait and hope the thieving scoundrel comes back in the morning!"

"You *want* to see her, and I'm *going* to see her!" Archer snapped. He wouldn't meet Morua's wide eyes. "And don't make that 'one man' crack again!"

McGarrah spat his contempt. "Why, ye smooth-faced goat—"

Crack! Smack! "Ugh! Argh!"

Archer's left and right had flashed and laid the big trader back over the table. McGarrah came to his full stature easily, blood trickling slowly from his mouth. He blinked at Archer, turned his stunned eyes around at the gaping natives.

"Well," he said finally. "Well, now, maybe I have had you wrong, Archer! That blow—either of them—would have knocked out a lesser man than Tim McGarrah." A grin wreathed his face. "I'm proud to have the company of such a glorious puncher when I pay me respects to Mister Schultz this night!"

THE *pareu*-clad men waited under the shadows of the stern until the watch there had flicked his cigarette into the water and turned up-deck again. Then McGarrah leaned close.

"'Tis a fine swimmer ye are, me lad! Divil a bit did I think any man but me-self could beat such a sea!"

Archer grunted. "You hate yourself, don't you! Shut up and follow me up the anchor chain. We'll split, once aboard, and close in on the watch."

And he was gone, a writhing wraith that was gobbled up in the dark. McGarrah followed swiftly.

The sailor on watch stopped suddenly, peered around and asked:

"Who is that? That you, Jake?"

McGarrah murmured, from behind the armed man,

"Say your prayers, me bucko!"

He swung for a point behind and under the right ear, and he scored a bull's-eye. Archer came erect and caught the sailor in his arms and smashed him again to assure plenty of working time.

Archer stepped to the ladder then and called down softly,

"Hey—*Jake!* *Jake*—come here!"

A sailor came up cheerily from the galley, his mouth full of fried fish. Bones and all, and mixed with his teeth, it was rammed down his gullet by the terrific uppercut McGarrah swung. Archer, working with him like a seasoned teammate, caught the man in his arms and laid him alongside his mate.

McGarrah was spitting on his hands and starting for the ladder below deck when Archer stopped him and pointed to where a light shone through a port-hole. The two went over and looked.

Hermann Schultz was pouring a huge cup of black coffee down, but his eyes were still feasting on Muriel.

"Ah! The fourth cup always sobers," he beamed at her. "A man fights better *und* loves better when he is sober!" He spread his hands and half rose from his chair.

Muriel retreated, but her eyes were losing the fight. She was tiring, and it couldn't go on much longer.

McGarrah was hurrying to the ladder when Archer overtook him and shoved him back.

"This is my fight," he said grimly. "I brought this girl to this island once; I'll bring her back a second time. You stay out of this, and don't come until I call you!"

"Quickly, man, for God's sake!" the Irishman moaned. "That damned divil—"

"Leave it to me," the new Paul Archer said with a savage chuckle.

CHAPTER IX

Full Moon

MURIEL'S eyes widened over Schultz's shoulder when the cabin door swung in and the rippling-muscled Archer stood there in his dripping *pareu*. Schultz, who had only that moment trapped the weary girl, twisted his head. His eyes bugged out when they rested on Archer; and then he let out a roar of recognition.

"Ah! The beachcomber!"

His nasty eyes raked down and marked the knife Archer wore strapped to his slim hips.

"So! A knifeman!" His eyes darted to where his gun was—on the table—and he sprang for it.

Archer beat him to it and got the gun. Schultz fell back, licking his lips. Archer laughed and threw both the knife and the gun over his shoulder into the companionway behind him.

"Come on!" he grated. "I don't need a weapon for a toad like you!"

Schultz roared his delight. A powerful man, he had confidence in his brute strength; and too, he remembered the backhanded clout he had struck Archer, without return. Schultz specialized in close-quarters rough-and-tumble. He was on Archer with a rush that carried both men back crashing against the bulkhead.

But the lithe man in the *pareu* punched hard and viciously and drew a grunt of distress from Schultz. The pirate straightened, then brought his knee up in a terrific kick at Archer's groin. If the treacherous blow had connected, the fight would have been over—but Archer had sensed its coming.

He twisted and took much of the force of it on his thigh, but a wave of nausea swept him nevertheless. Schultz dug a cruel thumb at Archer's eye, then

clubbed him with a dazing rabbit-punch. Archer moaned with the pain of it, but he struck out rhythmically and methodically with right and left and lashed Schultz back across the cabin.

The brutish man crashed down on a chair, broke it, rolled over swiftly and came up. He lunged for the table, lifted it over his head and hurled it.

Archer ducked and the table shattered against the bulkhead. Muriel May, who had been cowering in a corner, screamed and fled out of the cabin.

Schultz was breathing hard now, and his wicked little eyes never once left off looking for some weapon, some chair or club, with which he could bash out Archer's brains. But the lighter man fainted him out of position, struck with knuckles that were torn and bleeding, and struck again and again.

"You — murdering rat!" Archer taunted him, when Schultz made a break for the door. He hooked him back savagely. "Kill a lot of decent island people, will you? Land a crew of foul, ratty jailbirds and turn them loose on the *vahines*, will you?"

Schultz had one more trick up his sleeve. He played it.

He made as if to stumble and go over; and when Archer closed with a fast charge, the wily thief kicked his heavily shod foot hard and true for the other's face. Archer rolled with the kick and the force of it was spent when it landed; but his bruised chin told eloquently of how close it had come to finishing him off. He became merciless and more careful.

He jabbed and hooked until Schultz's right eye was closed and his face, on that side, a raw and bleeding collection of lumps. Then Archer shifted to a right-hand attack. Schultz backed up,

(Continued on page 133)

Famous Pirates

Jean Lafitte

By **TED LEITZELL**

The strangest hero of all times was the pirate who saved New Orleans from the British in 1815

IT is an ironical fact that of the two men who deserve chief credit for saving New Orleans from the British invaders in 1815, one should have gone on to become President of the United States, while the other was forced to flee his country in disgrace, and found a final resting place in a shallow, unmarked grave on the coast of Yucatan.

General Andrew Jackson is recognized as the hero of New Orleans, yet had not pirate Jean Lafitte shown quixotic loyalty to his fellow Creoles, instead of accepting a magnificent bribe offered by the British, it is probable that the English flag, and not the American, would be flying today over the Mississippi Valley.

MAN OF MYSTERY

Of all the men who have played important roles in building and protecting our country, none is more completely embraced by legend, mystery and romance than Jean Lafitte. It is generally believed that he was born somewhere in France and that he had an adventurous early career in the West Indies. We find him first in New Orleans in 1809, operating a blacksmith shop in partnership with his brother, Pierre.

But Lafitte was no horny-handed son of toil, no village smithy; the labor was done by a crew of husky Negro slaves. The Lafitte brothers, debonair, suave and handsome, moved through the fringes of New Orleans society and built their business with plantation owners and shipping interests.

The coast of the Gulf of Mexico at this period was the last stronghold of piracy in the New World. South of New Orleans is a labyrinth of lakes and twisting bayous, terminating in deep water Barataria Bay, shielded from the gulf by the islands of Grande Terre and Grande Isle.

Here for generations a hardy crew of fishermen and smugglers had lived and died, impudently bringing their goods to New Orleans under the very noses of the French and Spanish customs inspectors. After the United States acquired the ter-

ritory, their business continued as usual.

THE SLAVE MART

In 1808 the United States banned importation of slaves into the country, and hell broke loose. With crops rotting on the ground for lack of labor, slave prices rose to fantastic heights. The smugglers promptly began to cash in on this, buying their human chattels for \$300 each in nearby Cuba and reselling them at prices ranging upward from \$1,000. They found ready customers in the respectable plantation owners, just as bootleggers and smugglers of another century found easy markets for illicit liquor.

The Lafitte blacksmith shop did a thriving business in chains used for making up slave caravans for transportation into the interior. As the bootleg business expanded, the Lafittes soon found themselves acting as both purchasing and sales agents for the smugglers, and many a questionable business deal was closed in the blacksmith shop on St. Philippe Street.

LAFITTE BRANCHES OUT

By 1810 the smugglers needed Jean Lafitte more than he needed them. He moved to Grande Terre, leaving the shop in the hands of his brother, built a strong fort, and was soon acknowledged "boss" of a thriving outlaw community. Hard-bitten outlaws came from near and far to join him, and soon submitted to his discipline.

Within a few months Lafitte had a fleet of more than a dozen armed vessels, sailing as privateers under commissions from his newly formed "Republic of Carthegena." No longer did they buy slaves; instead they plundered Spanish slave vessels before they ever touched the coast of Cuba, and extended operations to include rich prizes of all descriptions that sailed under the Spanish flag.

Lafitte made every effort to remain respectable, and refused to acknowledge piracy. When one Gambi, a buccaneer of the old school, jeered at his orders, Lafitte showed the iron fist. A group

of Gambi's followers announced their intention of sailing anywhere they wished and taking any and all prizes they found, American or otherwise. Lafitte drew his pistol, shot the most vociferous man through the heart, and thereafter had little trouble.

THE LAW CRACKS DOWN

Dark rumors spread of attacks on American, French and British ships. Far too many captured vessels were brought to Baratavia with no members of their original crews on board. "Smuggled" goods of British origin was sold in the open market. Ships outbound from New Orleans disappeared with no storms to account for wrecking.

There were whispers of orgies on the beaches, with women prisoners from prize ships dragged screaming into the shadows, women who soon after vanished from human ken. But Lafitte indignantly denied such reports. If they were true, he succeeded in covering them by ruthlessly following the old maxim, "Dead men tell no tales."

Citizens of New Orleans, fascinated by Lafitte's personality and by the fine bargains they secured in slaves and smuggled finery, continued to regard him tolerantly. But Governor Claiborne felt differently. Here was open lawlessness, cheating the government of customs revenues, injuring the territory by fear-engendered reduction of shipping.

Claiborne attempted to get action, but the legislature refused to appropriate funds. Then he managed to arouse customs officials enough so that the Lafittes were arrested for smuggling in 1812. After months of delay they forfeited bail and fled to Baratavia.

BRAZEN DEFIANCE

Claiborne followed this success by posting a reward of \$500 for Lafitte, which the pirate contemptuously answered by posting a counter offer of \$1,500 for Claiborne. Lafitte continued to parade the streets of New Orleans whenever he wished, and the outlaw community thrived and became even more unimpressed with law and order, with prize money reaching more than \$500 per month per man as his share in the thievery.

Slave and merchandise auctions were openly advertised. When a customs official attempted to interfere with one in early 1814, Lafitte shot and killed him. The Federal government, snowed under by the disastrous war with England, could not send help. But Governor Claiborne won a heat by getting secret indictments and having Pierre Lafitte arrested. From that time on Jean Lafitte made his New Orleans visits secret.

HERE COME THE BRITISH

In August a British fleet appeared in the Gulf of Mexico, intent on an invasion of Louisiana. Proclamations were sent to all citizens urging them to assist in liberating Louisianans from their "faithless, imbecile government." Indians were enlisted as allies and incited against the Americans.

Then, with fine disregard for neutrality, the

fleet took up its base at Pensacola, Florida—then Spanish territory—and sent emissaries to Lafitte, with the offer of a captain's commission in the British Navy, a bribe of \$30,000, and immunity against any charges of piracy. The "or else" was destruction of Baratavia.

Lafitte stalled the British, promising an answer in two weeks, as soon as he eliminated some who would be hostile to the alliance. Then he wrote to Governor Claiborne, volunteering for service. He followed this with valuable reports on British fleet movements, gathered by his fleet of vessels. But his offer was spurned, and by some strange irony Claiborne at this time secured the forces he needed to attack Baratavia.

Baratavia was captured without firing a shot. The pirates who had been openly contemptuous of Uncle Sam a few weeks earlier, and who were in a powerful defensive position, having sworn to stand off the British fleet if necessary, refused to fire on the American flag. Instead, they drew off with all weapons they could salvage.

JEAN LAFITTE—PATRIOT

Lafitte repeated his offer this time to General Andrew Jackson, who was defending New Orleans. Again he was scorned. But as the large force of British veterans drew near, Lafitte visited Governor Claiborne with drawn pistols and repeated his offer. This time it was accepted!

Every American schoolboy knows how the motley crew of convicts, Kentuckians who had marched 1,500 miles, militia hastily organized from the citizenry, and other odds and ends of the population prepared to fight off the British. They had no flints for their rifles; Lafitte supplied 7,500. They were short on powder, and what they had was of poor quality. Lafitte made up the deficiency from secret stores.

Jackson disposed his forces as best he could, and whooped with delight when he saw Lafitte's men dragging in cannon they had taken from their ships.

Mountaineers from Kentucky and Tennessee broke up the first British landing in the gray morning hours of December 24. On Christmas Day the British dragoons, 8,000 strong, lined up for their first frontal assault. As they neared the American lines a group of plantation buildings were blown up, and the dragoons faced a 'row of ships' cannon, manned by Lafitte's hellions.

Blast after blast crumbled the British lines. In five minutes the battered regiments, pride of the British army, were in full flight.

DISASTROUS DEFEAT

For the next attempt the British lined up heavy artillery to blast Lafitte from his position, but in an artillery duel of less than two hours the pirates blew them to pieces. The British withdrew to lick their wounds, and Jackson had so few men that he could not follow up his victory.

A last assault was made on the morning of

January 8, an "all-out" attempt to drive back these impudent backwoodsmen from Louisiana. But it was the same old story: Lafitte's artillery blasted great holes in the columns; American rifles caused terrible execution before the British smooth-bore muskets were in range. Three thousand British troops lay in a bloody shambles; the Americans had lost only eight killed.

Lafitte reached a new high of popularity, but it was not for long. Among the goods taken by government agents in the leveling of Baratavia by Governor Claiborne prior to the battle were jewelry and possessions of a New Orleans woman who had taken passage on one of the ships which had disappeared. Charges of open piracy were revived. Angered by this turn of public feeling, and by the government's refusal to recompense him for the merchandise seized by the raiders, Lafitte went over to Spain, and had a grand time selling false information.

RETREAT FROM GLORY

He took his followers west to Galveston, then not American territory, and under the flag of the Republic of Mexico began his old business of buccaneering. For a time he prospered; then came a disastrous hurricane that leveled the community.

Charges of outright piracy against members of his gang were now substantiated, and although

Morua Fights for Love

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made a stand, and then backed again. His eyes told of the one last charge he was going to make, and Archer steered his weary frame to meet it.

SCHULTZ backed clear to the bulkhead, leaned against it to get leverage, and came out at bullet speed. Archer took two canny steps back and swung an uppercut with every ounce of power that was in him. The blow bent Schultz's head back, and the man catapulted for the bulkhead.

He contacted with an ugly, sickening *snap!* that was somehow a finality in itself. The burly, thick-set thug slumped down at a ludicrous angle, one leg bent under him and his pig eyes a glazed, steady stare at Archer in the lamplight. Archer stepped to the bulkhead light and twisted it higher.

"My God, his neck is broken!"

Lafitte tried and executed some of his cohorts himself, U. S. Naval detachments appeared with orders that he leave Galveston. One by one his old friends left him.

Fat, forty and embittered Jean Lafitte reverted to open piracy. In November, 1822, he was captured after a shipwreck in Cuba and imprisoned, but was helped to escape by friends. Pickings grew lean as naval protection for merchant fleets increased. If Lafitte made any successful captures, he must have followed the old practice of killing all the crews, for there is no record available to show him in action after 1823.

THE LAFITTE LEGEND

In 1826 Lafitte made an effort at honest trading, but came down with fever and died in the little Indian town of Silan, on the coast of the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico.

All that is left of Jean Lafitte is legend. There are countless tales of great wealth buried at various points along the Gulf of Mexico. They have led to murders, and have caused more than one man to devote a lifetime to fruitless search. But nothing of value has ever been found that could be traced definitely to Lafitte, and it seems probable that if he ever buried substantial treasure, he would have dug it up himself during the dark twilight of his life.

The next moment McGarrah burst into the cabin with a joyous roar. He threw his arms around Archer and belted and shouted until his infectiousness got to the bruised and battered fighter.

"Ah, God, life will be worth living now!" the Irishman bellowed. "Sure, an' the Lord always loved a fighter, an' who am I to question the taste of the Lord!"

They were laughing and clapping one another on the back when Muriel came in, her eyes half puzzled, half hopeful. She looked at Archer and her eyes were plainly calling herself seven kinds of a chump. Archer's eyes agreed with her. But Muriel was a fighter, too.

She came close to Archer and said,

"Oh, Paul, you are so marvelous! Swimming out here—all this rough way!—to save poor little me!"

McGarrah came forward and spoke fast and furiously, but to the point.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. How did the island of Niuafooo get to be called "Tin Can Island"?—Gregory McKelvey, Columbia, Mo.

A. Niuafooo became known as "Tin Can Island" as a result of delivering mail in soldered kerosene cans. When the monthly mail boat nears the island, the native postman and his mail carriers start swimming from shore, packing their mail with them in soldered kerosene cans that bob at the ends of bamboo sticks and somehow manage to keep above the water. Reaching the steamer's side, they deliver their tin cans and catch those containing the incoming mail as they are flung overboard to them.

Q. Tell me something about New Zealand. What's the population? Are they all natives?—Gübert Holt, Los Angeles, Cal.

A. New Zealand is a British Dominion, consisting principally of North Island and South Island, to which are attached politically a number of small outlying islands, whose total area of 103,283 square miles about equals that of New York and Illinois combined.

Although only 40% inhabited, its population is 1,460,000, of which about 94% are British and less than 5% are Maori or half-caste. This seems to indicate the thoroughness of the English as colonizers. New Zealand is over 10,000 miles from England and yet is 94% British.

Q. Who was "King" Steimberger?—Miss Helen Wolfe, Sioux City, Iowa.

A. "King" Steimberger was one of the United States' few overambitious statesmen. In 1873 he was sent to Samoa by the State Department in Washington to collect data for his country. Although he was in Samoa for strictly scientific reasons, he got to dreaming and, after a few months, he decided he wanted to be crowned king of the island. He promptly severed diplomatic relations with the United States and formed his own government. He turned out to be a miserable ruler; and in short order he was embroiled with other foreign governments and deported.

Q. Who was Harry J. Moors, of the South Seas? I've heard a lot about him from people who've been to the South Seas, and I'd like to know more about him.—Bill Lindsay, Albany, N. Y.

A. One of the most colorful and scrappiest persons ever to do business in the South Seas was the head of the South Sea Pacific Company, Harry J. Moors. If you go to Samoa, you will find the South Sea Pacific Company noisy with clicking typewriters and the clatter of much business. It is one of the largest firms in all the South Seas, and Moors founded the company in the 1880's.

Moors, an American, dealt a shrewd hand in the game of international intrigue then being played by the consuls of the three interested powers—the United States, Great Britain and Germany. (It is interesting to note that at that time, Germany was a power to be reckoned with in the South Seas. At the outbreak of the World War, some 35 years later, German colonizers fought desperately to get supplies to Germany from that area. The raids of Count Felix von Luckner, the "Sea Devil," on Allied shipping are legend.)

Moors became so influential that he was regarded as a sort of god among the Samoans. Most of the Europeans who sailed into Apia Harbor on warships or clippers in those early days became his friends, and no one reciprocated his hospitality more enthusiastically than Robert Louis Stevenson, the famous English author of "Treasure Island."

Harry Moors and "R.L.S." became such fast friends that frequently Moors would be asked to read and criticize Stevenson's manuscripts. Harry J. Moors, Jr., a graduate of a California university, has succeeded his father in the business.

Q. Is there any horse racing in the South Seas?—George Heitz, Chicago, Ill.

A. Yes, there are half a dozen racing clubs within twenty miles of Auckland, New Zealand. The Ellersi Racing Course in the outskirts of Auckland has racing every Saturday afternoon, and it is the largest and most popular trade there.

Q. Does Papeete have a "Barbary Coast"?—James Fuller, Atlanta, Ga.

A. When you go to Papeete you want to be sure you visit a place called Tony's. There you can order what Tony likes to call "pleasant and forbidden drinks" and enjoy yourself with the loveliest of Tahitian ladies. From six to eight every morning native maidens keep appointments with their latest boy friends and, over steaming hot coffee, they gloat over sharp bargains driven at the market.

METRO AUTHOR

GEORGE ARMIN SHAFTEL Author of
MYSTERY ON DEAD MAN REEF

"I'M the Census Taker," said the lean man. "Come right in! Sit down! Have a smoke! What's on your mind?" I said, all in one breath. My wife says I can talk the arm off a guy.

"Name?" asked the Census Taker, hereinafter known as C. T.

"George Armin Shaftel."

"Occupation?"

"Writer."

"Oh!" he said, looking at me kind of awed.

"Then you've been a soldier of fortune, and —"

"No! And I've never crossed the Pacific in a 16-foot ketch, flown with the old Lafayette Escadrille, or shot lions with bows'n arrows, and I've never worked for the old *New York World*, stowed away on a freighter, been a Chinatown guide or advertising copy writer, or rode with Pancho Villa or starved in a garret."

The C. T. gawked at me, real suspicious.

"You *sure* you're a writer?"

"Listen, brother. When I get a story accepted, I'm a helluva good writer. When I get a rejection, I wonder why in blazes I didn't finish Engineering School."

"Oh, then you've been to college?" he asked, doubtfully.

"A.B. and M.A., pal. Taught literature and rope spinning at my alma mater. Rounded it off with tramping the Sierras, and gasoline-bumming from Tia Juana to Seattle."

"Born?" he asked. "No cracks, please!"

"In St. Louis, Missouri."

"Married?"

"And working at it."

"What do you write?"

"Fiction, for a living. Plays, for fun. Books,

for speculation."

"Did you ever sell to the *Satevepost*?"

"Sure!"

"When did you start writing?"

"While still in college. I wrote a play. Entered it in the annual college contest. Thirty-two plays were considered, and were returned numbered in the order of merit. Thirty-two plays—and mine was *not* numbered 32 when it came back. No, it was numbered 33. I ask you—Was that literary criticism? I got mad. Next year, I won *first and third prizes* in that contest."

"When did you start writing professionally?" the C. T. finally blurted, getting a word in edgewise.

"Sorry!" I apologized.

"My wife says I can talk an arm off a wooden Indian. When she saw that armless statue of the Venus de Milo, she said Venus must'a been married to a guy like me. Why, I started writing soon's I left college, under the guidance of my friend William Byron Mowery, who has probably given aid and comfort to more young writers than any top-flight fictioneer I know of. The sixth story I wrote I sold to Harold Hersey, then Clayton's chief editor. Hersey asked for more, and wrote that he was *desperately* in need of more such stories. Yeah, he

underlined the *desperately*. Happy days! . . . The third story he bought, he jumped my pay rate from 1c a word to 2c. Oh boy oh boy! And a little later, Clayton offered a number of us writers a better proposition still: he'd keep us at 2c a word for a year. Then, with each succeeding story he bought, he'd raise our rate 1/10 of a cent until 3c was reached—and pay us that for a year. Then, ditto, to 4c, to stay there for a year; then ditto to 5c."

"In real dough?" gasped the C. T.

"No bushwah. Real folding money. And what's more—"



GEORGE ARMIN SHAFTEL

"How do you work?"

"Both ways."

"Both ways!"

"Yeah. Lots of writers plan a story in full detail before starting to write. Used to be, I'd have more wordage jotted down in notes *about* a story than the yarn would amount to when finished. I'd work out maps of the action scenes—"

"Do you own this house, or rent it?" asked the C. T.

"—and time tables for events. But lots of writers don't jot down a single note. Once they get a title and a first line, they start writing, visualizing the story as they go. I used to think this way of working was pure insanity. But now I'm just as crazy as the next guy. Sometimes I plan a story in detail, sometimes I start writing and build it as I go, and I'm sure—"

"Okay, okay! How many people live in this house?"

"—that most editors agree that one method is as good as the other. And while we're on the subject, I *do* think that writers should spend part of each year in New York City. Why, when I lived in New York, I'd take a story to a certain editor at 11 o'clock of a Friday morning, then go to a

Fiction Guild luncheon. I'd get home at three o'clock in the afternoon—and I'd find a phone message saying that the editor liked the story and a check would be coming for it next week! Nice, huh? Topping that, though—"

"I said," yelled the C. T., "*who else lives in this house?*"

"—is the case of a friend of mine who was so trusted by an editor that he would bring in a story and lay it on the editor's desk, and the editor would just ask how long is it?—and sign a voucher; and my friend would pick up his check on the way out! You asked have I ever sold to the POST—"

"No! I asked *how many luckless devils got to live in the same house with you?*"

"—and I *have* sold to the POST! But my name didn't appear on the piece and I don't even know what the item was, for it was one of a bunch of jokes I sent to *Post Scripts*, and I don't know which joke it was. But I got a POST check for it—for \$5. Hey! Wait! Hold on!" I yelled.

For the guy had jumped up. Fled. I shouted, I bawled for him to wait—for on the rug was lying his left arm. . . .

—George Armin Shaftel.

Mystery on Dead Man Reef

(Concluded from page 105)

out his testimony in regard to the DeGroot murder.

"Damned little good it'll do me," Gregg muttered to himself. Only by DeCourcey's appearing in Honolulu in person, being identified and sworn in, could his word that Gregg was innocent of the DeGroot robbery have stood up. Now DeCourcey was dead.

Idly Gregg opened the envelope and unfolded the letter. He read:

Dear Gregg,

I've felt awfully bad about refusing to go to Honolulu to testify in court that you're not the man who robbed DeGroot and to identify the man who did do the thievery. I just couldn't do it. You'll understand why when I tell you that I, myself, am the thief who robbed DeGroot.

I was a watchmaker for the firm, remember. The robbery was an "inside job," and my testimony that a thief broke in and chloroformed me after a struggle was just a cover-up. . . . I chloroformed myself.

I'm writing this letter now, so that if anything happens to me, you'll have a way of proving your innocence of the theft.

In the "H" Street Branch of the National Trust Bank, in Honolulu, I have a safe deposit box, under my full name of Philip DeCourcey Leroux. The court can order the box opened. The jewels are there. And the bank people know that nobody but myself ever had access to that box.

I think that will clear you once and for all of any suspicion. DeCourcey.

Thunderstruck with surprise, Gregg read the letter a second time, to make sure—and let out a wild whoop of joy.

WHEREUPON Susan jumped up, startled. He grabbed her by the elbows, waltzed her around the room, and kissed her resoundingly on the lips.

"J-John!" she gasped happily. "Why this sudden outburst?"

"I'm free! I'm an honest man and I can prove it! I don't have to hide, I've got my life ahead of me and a future! Susan! Can I still go to Honolulu with you and Tom?"

"Well, maybe," she said, laughter in her blue eyes. "Do you think you could kiss me like that again?"

Gregg grinned hugely. "Honey," he said, "you ain't seen nothin' yet!"

SOUTH SEA

QUIZ

The following quiz has been prepared as a pleasant means of testing your knowledge of things concerning the South Seas. We offer it solely for the pleasure it gives you and with the hope that it will provide you with many bits of information that will help you to enjoy the stories in this magazine. If you rate 50% correct in your answers, you are considerably ahead of the average. Give yourself 2 points for each correct answer.

TRUE AND FALSE

1. Although the trees having the bark from which quinine is produced were brought to the South Seas from Peru, almost 100% of the world's supply of quinine comes from Java. True..... False.....
2. The "South Sea Bubble" is a rare species of coconut. True..... False.....
3. When speaking about the starboard side of a ship, you are speaking about the left side. True..... False.....
4. The three principal races of the South Seas are the Polynesians, Micronesians and the Melanesians. True..... False.....
5. The *Golden Hind* was the flagship of Sir Francis Drake's pirate fleet. True..... False.....
6. The rainy season in Tahiti usually falls between the months of April and September. True..... False.....
7. The breadfruit is never used or eaten until it has been cooked. True..... False.....
8. 10½ days is the average time it takes a sailing vessel to ply between Tahiti and San Francisco. True..... False.....
9. The Polynesians who inhabit Tahiti were formerly cannibals. True..... False.....
10. Taboo, to the South Sea inhabitants, freely translated means "come and get it." True..... False.....

A MATTER OF CHOICE

1. A belaying pin is a pin used to (A) sew sails, (B) hold the mast in place, (C) hold ropes in place, (D) pry shells apart.
2. Conchology is the study of (A) tribes, (B) shells, (C) fish, (D) sailing vessels.
3. A clipper ship is (A) an old unseaworthy hulk, (B) a two-masted Dutch vessel, (C) a light racing boat, (D) a vessel with a sharp bow, built for fast sailing.
4. The best South Sea colonizers are (A) the Americans, (B) the Dutch, (C) the English, (D) the French.
5. A Hollywood movie filmed in the South Sea

- was (A) "Trader Horn," (B) "It Happened One Night," (C) "Mutiny on the Bounty," (D) "Stanley and Livingstone."
6. The real name of the pirate Blackbeard was (A) Edward Teach, (B) Captain Cook, (C) James Farrell, (D) Sir Francis Drake.
 7. The percentage of the earth's surface that the Pacific Ocean covers is (A) 75%, (B) 14½%, (C) 17.29%, (D) 36.05%.
 8. Christmas Island is located in (A) the Dead Sea, (B) the Indian Ocean, (C) the Atlantic Ocean, (D) the Pacific Ocean.
 9. The distance between Tahiti and San Francisco is (A) 3658 miles, (B) 4231 miles, (C) 5648 miles, (D) 2359 miles.
 10. A kedge is (A) a small vessel, (B) a light anchor, (C) a carnivorous fish, (D) a ballooning sail.

THE KNOWLEDGE TEST

Can you select the ten correct combinations?

1. Blackbeard—Edward Teach.
2. Scurvy—vitamin A.
3. Java—densest population.
4. Ula—ukulele.
5. Hawaiian—Negroid.
6. *Poi*—taro root.
7. Port—right-hand side.
8. "Long pig"—cannibals.
9. Tramp ship—beachcomber.
10. Waterline—lifeline.
11. Kris—dagger.
12. Aloha—welcome and farewell.
13. Captain Cook—the *Bounty*.
14. Copra—soap.
15. Molokai—lanai.
16. Tahiti—French possession.
17. Easter Island—U.S.A.
18. Papeete—basket of water.

ISLAND QUIZ

The Fiji Islands are made up of about 250..... islands, of which..... are inhabited. The islands are well wooded and are situated about..... miles north of New Zealand. The population is 176,800, of which..... and..... are most numerous. The temperatures in Fiji are moderated by cool sea breezes. The wet season from..... to..... is often accompanied by severe..... Fiji is governed by the..... The cultivation of sugar cane,..... and..... is the main agricultural industry. run wild in large numbers; sheep, horses and Angora goats are widely raised.

(Continued on page 144)



Reader's Page

THE UPA-URA DANCE

Sirs:

SOUTH SEA STORIES is a very exciting, romantic, and adventurous book.

There are two things I would like to ask; first, tell me if the south seas are becoming civilized; second, is the *upa-ura* dance real and could you send me complete instructions for the steps, both male and female portions of the dance?

You mentioned it in "The Bum Who Reformed."

Harold Whittington,
504 Capitol Street,
Charleston, W. Va.

The islands of the south seas are very numerous, and in the majority, are quite civilized. It is only on the small islands that the white man's curse has no influence. All large, habitable islands under mandate of foreign powers, are quite civilized. The upa-ura dance is a native dance on which no complete instructions are available. You have us stumped there, but perhaps some of our readers can help you. How about it, you who have visited the south seas and seen this dance? Can you help us out?—Ed.

WHAT ARE THE SOUTH SEAS?

Sirs:

The possibility of readers accepting Sumatra and the Philippines as "South Sea" stuff is scant—they get plenty of that in other pulps. Tabu everything submitted unless it concerns an island, a small island is better because every man's idea of the south seas is a small paradise of waving palms, dusky beauties, set in a serene blue sea in the sun—and no work attached. People who read SOUTH SEA STORIES are nuts about islands—little islands. And nothing else.

Is your magazine staff-written?

H. V. Steinhart,
Cristobal C. Z.

We are inclined to agree. The South Seas properly are islands in the Pacific tropic zones, and just as you picture them. We are trying to keep that atmosphere.

No, SOUTH SEA STORIES is not staff-written. We buy all our material from free-lance writers, and we are much interested in seeing manuscripts from anywhere and anybody. But at that, we are flattered by the idea of calling these authors our "staff."—Ed.

WANTS TO BUY AN ISLAND

Sirs:

Are there any inhabitable islands in the South Seas, no matter how small or remote, which can be leased or purchased for a reasonable price?

Emory Hodges,
31 Belmead Street,
Petersburg, Va.

At the present moment it is rather hard to say just who has islands for lease or sale, because with the war going on, their ownership is in doubt, but we suggest that you query the colonial authorities of British, Dutch, or French governments for further data.—Ed.

TOO LONG TO WAIT

Sirs:

This is the magazine that is going to satisfy all adventure-loving people. It is also the magazine that will pinch hit for the actual South Seas. I have traveled quite a bit, and I marveled at the exactness of the stories.

There is one drawback to this magazine and that is it does not come out often enough and I think it is too long to wait.

Rex Millard,
Box 233,
York Village, Maine.

We will give you SOUTH SEA STORIES monthly just as soon as we are convinced our readers want it that often.—Ed.

RATES OUR STORIES

Sirs:

I rate your stories as follows:

"Paradise, No Angels Wanted"—This is not only the best yarn in the book, but the best I have ever read. From the first paragraph to that punch ending, I couldn't take my eyes off the magazine. More!

Next was McGovern's story about the pearls. It was really different.

"Havoc Over Hanua" was interesting because of the characters. The idea of tossing an entomologist into the south sea atmosphere was a "pip."

O'Sullivan's story was good, and so was McGee's. Count me as a steady customer in the future.

Michael Harmon,
4214 N. Seafet Drive,
Jacksonville, Fla.

Morua Fights for Love

(Continued from page 133)

"We had him wrong," he said, "and no doubt you would not look at a poor, lonely duffer of an Irishman like meself when a glamorous young man like this wan is handy. Right, colleen?"

He took a breath. "Well, I'm no man to lay back out of a fight—so here an' now, before my good fellow-me-lad here can open his mouth, I am proposing marriage to ye."

His eyes were shining blue and begging her.

"Would ye marry a hulking hound like me, colleen?" McGarragh whispered. "I'd—I'd be good to ye!"

Muriel's eyes swung to Archer hopefully, searching an answer. She got orders instead. Archer's eyes fairly shouted at her,

"If this guy wants you, marry him! Your number is up, Muriel! All your life, you have flitted around putting the boys on the spot. Well—you're on a spot now . . . for life! The spot is called Okeloa! Marry this man and treat him right, and you'll have cakes all your life—if you behave; and you will behave, married to Tim McGarragh! Give up, kid, the game is over!"

Muriel called him a few impolite names under her lashes, but she was brilliantly joyous when she threw her arms around the Irishman's neck and said,

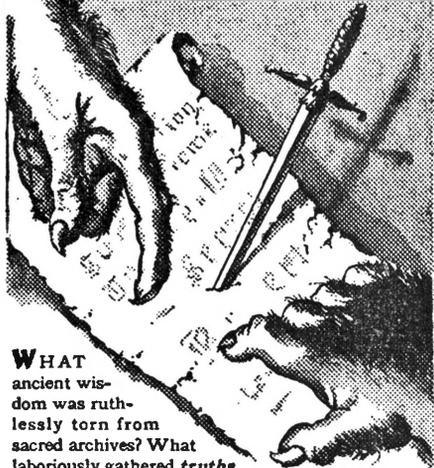
"Oh, Tim, I always said you were so strong and masterful! How could I resist you!"

Archer grinned when he looked at the boyish joy on the big Irishman's face.

"Damned if he isn't just the type to tame that girl, at that!" he thought. He grinned again and said,

"Far be it from me to intrude on a love scene! Start your stuff, Irish—

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she's a timid gal!"

Muriel tried to murder him with her eyes, but her grin wouldn't let her.

From deck, Archer roared, "The blow is over! The storm has passed! Has this sloop a kicker—an engine? Let's pull in to the wharf!"

McGarrah and Muriel came above deck and looked at the big yellow moon and the placid waters. The storm had blown itself out. The satiny sky was standing-room-only with stars. The Irishman went back to kick the motor over, and Muriel stayed up forward near Archer. She was coming closer when McGarragh's brittle voice said:

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30x4.50-20	22	1.85	1.00	31x4	2.95	1.25	32x4 1/2	3.45	1.45
30x4.50-21	24	1.10	1.10	32x4	2.95	1.25	30x5	3.65	1.65
32x4.75-19	24	1.25	1.25	32x4 1/2	3.25	1.35	33x5	3.75	1.75
32x4.75-20	24	1.25	1.25	32x4 1/2	3.25	1.35	33x5	3.75	1.75
32x5.00-19	22	1.85	1.25						
32x5.00-20	22	1.85	1.25						
32x5.17-17	22	1.90	1.35						
32x5.25-18	22	1.90	1.35						
32x5.25-19	22	1.90	1.35						
32x5.32-20	22	1.90	1.35						
31x5.25-21	31	3.25	1.30						
31x5.50-18	31	3.25	1.40						
31x5.50-19	31	3.25	1.40						
31x5.50-20	31	3.25	1.40						
31x6.00-18	31	3.40	1.40						
31x6.00-19	31	3.40	1.40						
32x6.00-20	32	3.45	1.50						
32x6.00-21	32	3.45	1.50						
32x6.50-20	32	3.75	1.75						
32x6.50-21	32	3.75	1.75						
30x6.00-18	30	3.40	1.40						

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31x6.50-21	4.25	2.20	34x7	11.45	4.95
31x6.50-21	4.25	2.20	34x7	11.45	4.95
31x6.50-21	4.25	2.20	34x7	11.45	4.95

TRUCK BALLOON TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires	Tubes
30x6.00-20	\$3.75	\$1.50	36x50-20	\$6.95	\$3.75
30x6.50-20	3.95	1.95	36x50-20	6.95	4.95
30x7.00-20	3.95	2.05	36x50-20	10.95	5.85
30x7.50-20	3.75	1.75	36x50-20	13.25	6.45

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"It's back here I am, colleen! Hadn't ye missed me?"

Archer grinned. He whistled a few bars of Verdi's "Goodbye, Forever!"

"Hell," said Muriel, "is too good for a handsome mug like you!" And with her shoulders drooping in defeat, she joined her husband-to-be.

Torches flared on the wharf. Archer sobered. He was looking for someone!

A SHORE, Tim McGarrah rounded up the remainder of the band and said,

"Off with ye, ye damned scum! Take your dead and the rest of the smelly lot of ye out into the open, where the authorities can get a crack at ye! I'll warrant you're being searched for in every port in the Pacific, now!"

WITH the pirate ship scuttling beyond the reef and glad to get beyond it, McGarrah roared at Chief Tuomi,

"Get out the marriage drums, ye black ould darlint, and pound them hard! A wedding the likes of which has never been seen on Okeloa is about to take place!" He nodded at Muriel. "The visiting lady here—" The Irishman paused for a breath.

Morua's eyes filled with tears in the light of the flares, and she dropped her head brokenly. Archer frowned, puzzled.

"—an' meself, Tim McGarrah!" the big trader roared, when he could go on again.

Morua's eyes flared with hope again, and sought Paul Archer. They stared long and hungrily at one another. Archer motioned to her, and drifted away from the excited, cheering natives. Men ran for drums, for drink, for food. *Vahines* raced off for their marriage-feast regalia. Children screamed their excitement and ran up and down the

(Concluded on page 142)



TRAPPED ON IO!

OTHER GREAT STORIES IN THE OCTOBER ISSUE Include:

RESCUE INTO THE PAST—by Ralph Mills Farley. Barney Baker went into the past to Fort Randolph and 1776 to get an all-important diary for a law case. But when he fell in love, a weird thing happened . . .

THE VOYAGE THAT LASTED 600 YEARS—by Don Wilcox. What strange course would life take for a group of people isolated on a huge space ship bound for a world 600 years away? Here's a tremendous tale of love, hate, intrigue, and danger in space!

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October Issue

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LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 975-L Chicago
A Correspondence Institution

Morua Fights for Love

(Concluded from page 140)

beach with a horde of yapping dogs at their heels.

Morua drew back quietly from the happy throng and melted away down the beach. Arms locked around each other, the happy pair started up the path to their pool in the clouds.

FROM far below them, the marriage drums beat an excited tattoo that bounced around the valley and climbed to Okeloa's highest peak. It grew to a thunder as the natives got into the spirit of the thing, and it was as a living, breathing, pulsing thing.

But standing in the moonlight high above the sea, Morua and Paul Archer scarcely heard. They turned from the view of the sea, the girl yielding herself to her beloved, and the man tenderly compelling her lips. The only thunder they could hear now was the thundering power of the love that beat through their veins as they melted into one another's arms.

All was well at last on Okeloa.

The White Man Who Was Tabu

(Concluded from page 127)

would be nothing left to remind him of his world, a world without happiness.

"A strange world," he said, smiling down at Nania. "It is bad not to have a home."

"And where is your home, Tane?"

"Suppose you tell me."

"Stay here always and rest with me," Nania whispered softly.

"And how!" he grinned.

The natives stared in amazement. Pressing his mouth down on hers! As though he were drinking her breath! Such foolishness!

The PIRATE QUEEN of RENEGADE COVE



FORGETTING about their valuable human treasure, the excited natives rushed to the shore to meet the approaching canoe. The steersman rose. His long yell came floating across the water. "French say—pearl bed—taboo!"

These words sealed the doom of Kurt Rommer, daring, young pearl hunter, and Lanura Beal, pirate queen of Renegade Cove! To remain captives of the band of natives meant that lovely Lanura would go to a South Sea harem, Rommer to the cook pot, or both to rot in a French prison!

Left unguarded, Rommer grabbed Lanura. "Come on," he snapped. "Now's our chance to escape! We'll make for the jungle!" Bare-footed, bare-legged, her torn dress revealing every curve of her lithe, young body, Lanura raced beside Rommer for the edge of the jungle.

Savage yells of the native warriors sounded behind them as they made for the dense green tangle. "They've seen us," Rommer gritted. "Hurry, Lanura, we've got to move fast! We'll lose them in the tropic darkness!"

They were safe . . . but dawn would inevitably come. Had they only gained a reprieve as long as night lasted? Would Lanura and Rommer be hunted down like two wild animals when daylight came?

Don't miss *The Pirate Queen of Renegade Cove* by Robert Moore Williams in the next issue of SOUTH SEA STORIES. Read how adventurous Kurt Rommer spent five years of hell to acquire a fortune in pearls, how he fell in love with pirate queen Lanura Beal, how she tricked him, drugged him, played with him, like a cat with a mouse!

In the DECEMBER ISSUE you'll also want to read:

★ **24 HOURS OF HELL**—by Craig Ellis. One of the most powerful short novels you have ever read. The strange and complex story of what modern war can do to the loves and hates and intrigues of an island of paradise!

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South Sea STORIES

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SEPTEMBER ISSUE

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SOUTH SEA QUIZ ANSWERS

(Quiz on page 137)

TRUE AND FALSE

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. True
6. False. Between January and April.
7. True
8. False. Between 30 to 50 days.
9. True
10. False. It means "hands off" or "strictly forbidden."

A MATTER OF CHOICE

1. A.
2. B.
3. D.
4. B.
5. C.
6. A.
7. D.
8. B.
9. A.
10. B.

KNOWLEDGE TEST

1. Correct
2. Wrong
3. Correct
4. Wrong
5. Wrong
6. Correct
7. Wrong
8. Correct
9. Wrong
10. Wrong
11. Wrong
12. Correct
13. Wrong
14. Correct
15. Correct
16. Correct
17. Wrong
18. Correct

ISLAND QUIZ

The Fiji Islands are made up of about 250 *volcanic* islands, of which 80 are inhabited. The islands are well wooded and are situated about 1,100 miles north of New Zealand. The population is 176,800, of which *Fijians* and *East Indians* are most numerous. The temperatures in Fiji are moderated by cool sea breezes. The wet season from *October* to *May* is often accompanied by severe *hurricanes*. Fiji is governed by the *British*. The cultivation of sugar cane, *coconuts* and *bananas* is the main agricultural industry. *Cattle* run wild in large numbers; sheep, horses and *Angora* goats are widely raised.

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● **JONGOR OF LOST LAND**—by Robert Moore Williams. Deep in Australia there was something unknown and terrifying, and also something of great value. But to Jongor, magnificent savage, it meant nothing, except to flee. Then, when other white men came to the valley, he found a reason to fight the weird science of the ancient city.

● **THE UNCANNY POWER OF EDWIN COBALT**—by Noel Gardner. Some men doubt even the truth. But Edwin Cobalt was the world-champion doubter. He could look at a picture, begin to doubt its existence, and presto, it was gone! It didn’t always happen, but doubting things was dangerous . . . especially when you begin to doubt even your own existence . . .!

● **SPECIAL AGENT TO VENUS**—by Thornton Ayre. The whole solar system was engaged in war, and Venus held the whip hand. The Earth expeditionary forces in Venus jungles were dying like rats in a trap . . . and to one man was entrusted their fate. . . if he could get through the space forts that ringed the planet like a vast floating Maginot line!

● **THE SCIENTIFIC MILER OF BOWLER U.**—by Ivan Sandrof. Prof. Donald Kitery, science teacher at Bowler University, had no qualms about wrecking the track squad by flunking its star miler. “Why,” asked he, “is it that your best athletes have to be champion dumbbells?” The coach couldn’t answer that one, but Kitery could . . . and did! With an amazing serum that bestowed fantastic energy!

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Name.....Age.....

Position.....Address.....

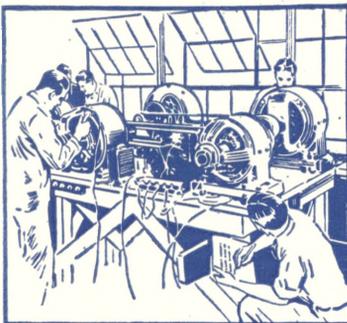
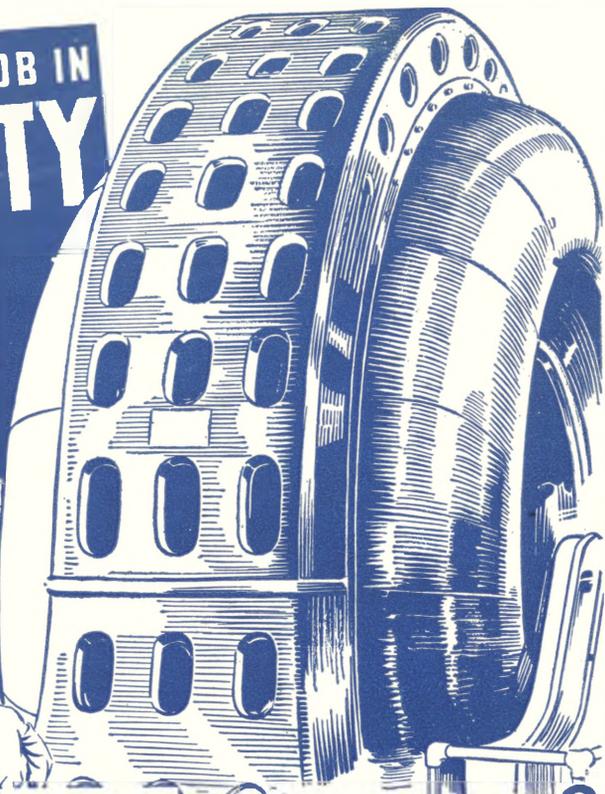
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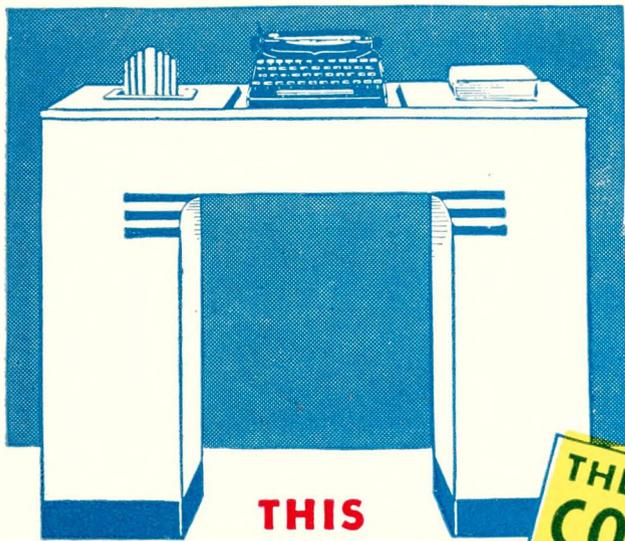
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