

# BILLY BUNTER AMONG THE CANNIBALS

By  
FRANK RICHARDS



HARRY WHARTON AND CO. LINED UP IN  
THE PATH OF THE TRADER OF KAMAKAM

## CHAPTER I

### BAD OUTLOOK FOR BUNTER!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Enjoying life?"

Bob Cherry looked in at the doorway of No. 7 Study, in the Remove passage at Greyfriars. His cheery roar woke the echoes of that study.

Billy Bunter jumped.

Bunter was seated, or rather sprawled, in the study armchair. He did not look like a fellow enjoying life. His fat face, usually as broad as it was long, looked uncommonly lengthy. There was a pucker in his plump brow. His little round eyes blinked dismally behind his big round spectacles. Crumpled in his fat hand was a telegram, which perhaps had something to do with the fat Owl's pessimistic aspect.

He blinked round irritably at the cheery face under a mop of flaxen hair in the doorway.

"Beast!" ejaculated Bunter.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Are you always as polite as that when a fellow looks in to ask you to a spread?" he inquired.

The mere word "spread," as a rule, would have cleared all clouds from Billy Bunter's countenance. It would have chased away gloom, and banished dull care.

This was probably the first time on record that it failed to produce any such effect. Strange to relate, the gloom in Bunter's face did not lighten by a single shade. He remained plunged in pessimism. Even the magic word "spread" passed him by like the idle wind which he regarded not.

Bob Cherry gazed at him from the doorway. He felt quite concerned. If Billy Bunter was indifferent to a spread, evidently he was very far gone.

"Would you like to join up for a spread in Wharton's study, old fat man?" he asked.

Grunt, from Bunter.

"Wharton's had a cake from home—!"

"Blow his cake!"

"Johnny Bull's got another cake—."

"Blow his cake, too—!"

"Nugent's got a pineapple—."

"Blow his pineapple."

"Inky's got a whacking box of chocs—."

"Blow his chocs."

"And I'm putting in a bag of biscuits—sweet ones." added Bob, temptingly.

"Blow your biscuits."

"Well, my hat!" said Bob. "Wonders will never cease! Any other time a fellow has to guard with his left to keep you off his tuck."

"I'm not always thinking of food, like some fellows—."

"Oh, great pip! Are there really times when you don't think of it?" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Look here, Bunter, is anything the matter?"

"Yes!" mumbled Bunter.

"Not fixed up for the hols yet?" asked Bob, with a grin.

"Blow the hols." grunted Bunter.

"This is getting curiuser and curiuser, as Alice said in Wonderland." said Bob, in wonder.

It was indeed curious. Billy Bunter seemed to have lost his interest in spreads, and in the holidays, too. As a matter of fact, that spread in No. 1 Study was intended as a sort of consolation prize for Bunter, because every member of the Famous Five had turned down flat his proffered company in the "hols." But in his present state, the Owl of the Remove seemed in need of consolation that even a spread could not provide.

"Quelchy whopped you?" asked Bob.

"Blow Quelchy!"

"Not sent up to the Head?"

"Blow the Head!"

"Is Smithy after you? Has he found out who had his doughnuts?"

"Blow Smithy!"

"Blow everybody and everything you like, old chap. if it makes you happy," said Bob. "But if there's anything a fellow can do—."

"Yes, there's one thing you can do!" yapped Bunter.

"What's that?"

"Take your face away. It worries me."

Bob Cherry gave him a look. He was strongly tempted to give him a smack. However, he contented himself with an expressive look, and turned away.

But as he went, he heard a dismal, doleful squeak from Bunter's study.

"Oh, lor'!"

Evidently something was the matter with Bunter. And Bob, who was all good nature, turned back, and looked into No. 7 again.

"Look here, Bunter, what's up?" he asked. "If you're in any trouble, we'll all do anything we can. Give it a name."

Bunter blinked at him dismally.

"I've had a telegram," he mumbled.

"Well, chaps have had telegrams before, and no bones broken," said Bob, encouragingly.

"It's from my pater."

"Nothing alarming in that, is there?" asked Bob, mystified.

"He's coming to see me this afternoon."

"I'm jolly glad when my pater comes to see me," said Bob.

"You may be!" grunted Bunter. "I ain't! It's a row. It's all Quelch's fault, of course. He's never given me a good report. All the time I've been at Greyfriars he's never given me a report like yours, or Wharton's, or Nugent's. Never once! Never once said 'painstaking' even—."

"I wonder why?" said Bob, with gentle sarcasm.

"Oh, that's like him," said Bunter, bitterly. "You'd think Quelch would be pleased to have a fellow like me in his form, wouldn't you?—I mean, considering what the others are like. A thoroughly decent chap, good in class, good at games, upright, truthful, honest as the day—any beak but Quelch would be jolly proud of a man like me in his form. But is Quelch?"

"Oh!" gasped Bob. "Nunno! I—I haven't noticed it, if he is."

"The pater got his hair off over my mid-term report," went on Bunter. "You'd hardly believe that Quelch said I was lazy, would you?"

"Did—did he?"

"Yes, he did! And untruthful!" said Bunter. "He said untruthful! Me, you know!"

"Fan me!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"And a lot of other things," said Bunter. "Not a word about uprightness, or manliness, or being an example to other fellows in the form! Not a syllable!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"That's what's done it," said Bunter, darkly. "My belief is, that Quelch would like me to go. It's the sort of thing no fellow can understand, but I believe it's so. I don't believe Quelch would be sorry if I left Greyfriars. Fat lot he cares about my host of friends here who'd miss me!"

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

"And that's what the pater's coming about," groaned Bunter. "I jolly well know! Look at that telegram."

Bunter uncrumpled the telegram, and held it up. Bob looked at it. It ran: "Coming this afternoon, about new arrangements, Father."

Bob Cherry whistled.

"New arrangements!" said Bunter. "I know what that means! He's fed up with Quelch's yarns about my not doing any good here. He's been rorty ever since the fees went up—as if prices ain't going up everywhere, as well as in schools. He doesn't expect to get coal at a

pound a ton like it used to be—well, then, he can't expect Greyfriars to go on charging a pound a ton—I mean, charging pre-war fees. But I know he doesn't like the school bills." "Few paters do, I think," said Bob.

"Well, I'm worth it," said Bunter. "Your pater's wasting money on you here, Bob—but it's worth something for me—a fellow who's bound to do something big in the world, and make his old school famous."

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

"He doesn't care about that," said Bunter. "Quelch doesn't, either! The Head doesn't care a bean! He never takes any notice of me at all. Schoolmasters are pretty dense, you know. Dr. Locke hasn't the faintest idea that he'll be remembered as my old schoolmaster, if he's remembered at all."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob Cherry.

It was quite an involuntary yell. Bob certainly did not mean to laugh in the midst of Bunter's misfortunes and tribulations. He just couldn't help it.

Billy Bunter blinked at him indignantly. His very spectacles gleamed with indignant wrath.

"Why, you beast!" he ejaculated. "Think it's a laughing matter, when my pater's coming down to row me, and I may not be coming back next term! Think it's funny?"

"Oh! No!" gasped Bob. "Sorry—ha, ha! Not at all, old fat man—ha, ha—I mean—"

"Get out!" roared Bunter.

There was a cushion behind Billy Bunter's fat head in the armchair. He grasped it, and hurled it at the face in the doorway. Bob Cherry, grinning, side-stepped, and the cushion whizzed across the passage. It was Lord Mauleverer's ill-luck that he was coming along to his study at that moment.

"Oh, gad!" ejaculated his lordship, as Bunter's cushion landed on his noble ear, and he staggered against the wall. "What the jolly old dooce—!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob, and he trooped down the passage to rejoin his friends in No. 1 Study, leaving Lord Mauleverer rubbing his ear, and gazing in great surprise at the cushion on the floor.

Having rubbed his ear, and gazed at the cushion, Mauly picked the latter up, and glanced into No. 7. Why Billy Bunter had buzzed a cushion at him as he passed the doorway, Lord Mauleverer did not know. But he knew that the cushion was going home again.

"Here you are, Bunter!" he said.

"I—I say—look here—don't you chuck that at me—Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as the cushion landed on the widest waistcoat at Greyfriars School.

Lord Mauleverer ambled on to No. 12, leaving William George Bunter roaring—and forgetting, for a few minutes at least, even the impending visit of his pater.

## CHAPTER II

### PLAY UP!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Five Remove juniors, in No. 1 Study, glanced round at that familiar fat squeak. The Famous Five were all at home. And the study table presented a very unusual festive appearance. A feast was toward—though the juniors had not yet started on it. There were two cakes, both quite large: there was a pineapple, there was a large box of chocolates, there was a bag of biscuits: and there were other good things, such as eggs, sardines, jam-roll, and sandwiches, and jam.

It was a sight to gladden the eyes, and the heart, of William George Bunter—at any other time. Now he hardly noticed it. He blinked into the study with lacklustre eyes. All the troubles of a troubled world, and a few over, seemed to have descended on Bunter's fat shoulders. So deeply was he plunged into pessimism, that even such a feast of the gods did not seem to make life anything but weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable.

Billy Bunter did not always receive welcoming looks when he barged into a study where a spread was on. But on this occasion, Harry Wharton and Co. gave him their most friendly and welcoming smiles. Bob Cherry had put his chums wise about the sword of Damocles that impended over Bunter's fat head, and they were sympathetic. If Mr. Bunter's visit to the school really did mean that Bunter's number was up at Greyfriars, they agreed that it was rotten luck on Bunter. No doubt there would be dry eyes in No. 1 Study if Bunter did shake the dust of Greyfriars from his podgy feet. Still, it was rotten luck, and the chums of the Remove were prepared to be as nice as possible to the dolorous Owl.

"Trot in, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. The captain of the Remove had never addressed Bunter so cordially.

"Do come in, old man," said Frank Nugent.

"Here's a chair, Bunter," said Johnny Bull.

"Topping spread, old chap," said Bob Cherry.

"The topfulness of the spread is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, "and the sight of your estimable and idiotic countenance is a boonful blessing."

Billy Bunter rolled in. and Bob Cherry shut the study door.

But he did not sit down in the chair politely offered him by Johnny Bull. It seemed that it was not the spread for which Bunter had come. Even with that attractive array of edibles fairly under his fat little nose, he hardly wasted a blink on it.

"I say, you fellows, has Bob told you—?" he began.

"Yes," said Harry Wharton. "Sorry, old fat man, if it comes to that. But perhaps—."

"No perhaps about it," said Bunter, bitterly. "How often does my pater come down to see me? Not once in a blue moon. He's got his back up. Sending a chap a telegram, and rushing down like this all of a sudden! I jolly well know what it means!"

"Rough luck," said Johnny Bull

"The roughfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, sympathetically. "The sympathise is truly preposterous."

"Well, he can rush down, if he likes," said Bunter. "But he ain't going to see me here. I'm going to dodge him."

"Dodge him!" repeated the Famous Five, with one voice.

"I've been thinking it out," explained Bunter. "The pater's in a bait, I can see that. Well, he may get over it. I don't want to see him while he's got his back up. I'm giving him a miss."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"Tact, you know," said Bunter. "Tact is rather my long suit. If I'm out of gates when he blows in, he won't be able to blow me up. Then I can write to him afterwards telling him how sorry I am that I didn't know that he was coming—."

"Wha-a-t?"

"And putting in a lot of soft sawder," said Bunter. "See?"

"But you do know that he's coming!" exclaimed Frank Nugent, staring blankly at the fat Owl. "You've had his telegram."

"Well, I mightn't have opened it," argued Bunter. "Suppose I dropped it, and it blew away and got lost—."

"But it didn't!" hooted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—."

"And that," said Bob Cherry, "is the chap who wonders why Quelch described him as untruthful."

"Oh, that was Quelch all over," said Bunter. "I believe he sits up with a wet towel round his head thinking out rotten things to put in my report. 'Tain't as if he said you chaps were untruthful, you know—a fellow could understand that. But me—!"

"You fat villain—!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—."

"You can't walk out on your pater, Bunter," said Harry Wharton, "and it won't make him better-tempered if he misses you, after coming down specially to see you. Better stick it out."

"I'll watch it," said Bunter. "You fellows may like a jaw. I don't! I get enough from Quelch, without the pater weighing in with an extra lot. I'm jolly well going out of gates. And look here, I want you fellows to do something for me."

"Cough it up," said Bob.

"We'll do anything we can," said Harry. "But what—?"

"I don't know when the pater's coming," said Bunter.

"He may blow in any minute, for all I know. So I've got no time to lose. Now, when he turns up, I want you fellows to rally round. Get him into a good temper, see? First of all, explain to him that I never had the telegram—I mean, that it blew away before I could open it—so I never knew he was coming—."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Tell him how awfully cut up you know I shall be when I find out that I've missed him. Pitch that strong, you know."

"Ye gods!"

"And tell him," went on Bunter, impressively, "what a pal I am, and what a lot you think of me. How I help you with your Latin—."

"How you help us with our Latin!" repeated Bob Cherry, dazedly.

"How hard I work at prep and in class, so that you sometimes think I shall be ill if I don't go easy a bit on it—."

"Oh, scissors!"

"And you specially, Wharton, as captain of the form—you tell him that Remove games would simply go to pot if I left—."

"Help!"

"Make it clear to him how popular I am here, and what a blow it would be to everybody if I went," continued Bunter. "Just tell the simple truth about me—that's all that's needed—popular fellow, generous to a fault, always helping others and never thinking of myself—kindest friend and noblest foe, and all that—a man that the school simply can't afford to lose."

"Oh, jiminy!"

"It may make a big difference," explained Bunter. "So far, the pater's taken in by Quelch's prejudice against me. The simple truth from my pals may open his eyes."

"The simple truth!" gurgled Bob Cherry. "Fan me!"

"You can pile it on a bit, of course," said Bunter. "It doesn't really matter much what you say, only of course you must all say the same. So long as the pater comes round, that's all that really matters. I think it may do me some good if you tell him that life wouldn't be worth living at Greyfriars if I left."

"Oh, crikey!"

"My esteemed idiotic Bunter—."

"Well, that's about all," said Bunter, as the Remove Five gazed at him, almost dumbfounded. "I rely on you to play up as pals. It's up to you, after all I've done for you. Keep an eye open for my pater, and get going as soon as you see him—and mind you pile it on thick! And don't forget to tell him how fearfully cut up I shall be at having missed him—that's important! Perhaps you'd better say you were larking about and that's how the telegram got lost before I could read it—that sounds a bit more probable, doesn't it? I've got to cut now—or I may be copped."

Bunter turned to the door and opened it.

Harry Wharton and Co. were still gazing at him, dumb.

He seemed to have bereft them of the power of speech. Still dumb, they watched the fattest form at Greyfriars School roll out of the doorway.

Then there was a startled squeak. "Oh, crikey!"

Another plump figure loomed up in the passage. Billy Bunter almost walked into it. He stopped just in time, blinking in utter dismay at the rotund form of Mr. William Samuel Bunter, stock-broker, of Bunter Villa, Surrey.

"William!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I was coming to your study, William."

"Oh, lor'!"

"You do not look very pleased to see your father, William."

"Oh! Yes! No! I mean—oh, jiminy!"

In No. 1 Study, Harry Wharton and Co. exchanged glances. Bunter, evidently, had left it too late! He had taken a little too long to think out that masterly scheme of "dodging" his pater! There was Mr. Bunter, as large as life: and there was his hopeful son, blinking at him like a startled fat rabbit. Bunter, undoubtedly, was "copped."

"Come, William!" said Mr. Bunter. "Oh, scissors!"

Billy Bunter rolled dismally up the passage with Mr. Bunter. He rolled after him into No. 7 Study. The door of that study closed on the plump stock-broker and the unhappy fat Owl.

"Poor old Bunter!" said Bob, as he heard the door close up the passage.

"I was going to kick him," remarked Johnny Bull, thoughtfully. "But—"

"But the kickfulness is not the proper caper, in the present dolorous and dilapidated circumstances," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, shaking his dusky head. "Poor old Bunter! The sympathise is ludicrous and preposterous."

And the Famous Five sat down to tea—minus Bunter—quite concerned about the hapless Owl of the Remove, and far from envying him the interview with his plump parent in No. 7 Study.

### CHAPTER III

### THE BLOW FALLS!

MR. BUNTER sat, ponderously, in the only armchair in No. 7 Study. That armchair belonged to Peter Todd, and was generally occupied by Billy Bunter. Now it was occupied by his honoured parent: and the fat Owl sat on the edge of another chair, in a rather crumpled attitude, looking as if he found life on this planet a delusion and a snare, and scarce worth the trouble of living. Generally, Billy Bunter had an aspect of fat self-satisfaction. But the glory had departed, so to speak, from the House of Israel. It was a

woebegone Owl that sat stealing surreptitious blinks at Mr. Bunter, wondering dismally what sort of blow was going to fall.

He was slightly, though only slightly, relieved to find that there was no frown on the parental brow. Mr. Bunter's look was, in fact, genial. He seemed to have no perception of the feelings with which his hopeful son regarded this unexpected and dismaying visit. Could this mean that Burner's misgivings were, after all, unfounded? He could barely hope so—for why, after all, had Mr. Bunter come, if not to administer the K.O.?

Apparently unaware that he was keeping William George on tenterhooks, Mr. Bunter was in no hurry to speak. He was breathing rather hard. Stairs told on Mr. Bunter, as they did on all the Bunter family. It seemed that Mr. Bunter needed to get his second wind before he pronounced the words of doom.

It was Billy Bunter who broke the silence at last. "I—I say, father—," he stammered.

Mr. Bunter looked at him, without speaking, still renewing his supply of wind.

"I—I'm jolly glad to see you here, father," went on Bunter, "because—because I wanted to tell you how jolly well I've been getting on in class, since—since you had my mid-term report. I work jolly hard."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Bunter.

"I said to Wharton—I mean. Wharton said to me—that I should get ill if I swotted so hard." said Bunter. "But I—I'm so keen on study, that—that I just can't help it. I never sit in that armchair while Toddy and Dutton are doing their prep in this study. Mauly said the other day that I was looking pale. But I don't care—so long as I get on in class."

"Indeed!" repeated Mr. Bunter. He was getting his wind: but he seemed content, at present, with Spartan brevity.

"Yes, indeed," said Bunter "and I'm getting on in games, too. Wharton was saying only this afternoon that Remove games would simply go to pot if I left."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Bunter, for the third time.

"I'm going in for a Latin prize, too." said Bunter. "I've put my name down—I mean, I'm going to put my name down—it's a paper on Livy, father. Livy's awfully tough. But I've been getting on so splendidly that I fancy I can tackle him."

As Billy Bunter was wont to stumble helplessly over the easiest passage in Eutropius, his statement that he could tackle Livy would certainly have caused merriment among Remove fellows. But Mr. Bunter had probably forgotten all about Titus Livius during years and years among the bulls and bears of Throgmorton Street. Bunter hoped so, at least.

"Very good." said Mr. Bunter—. "I am very glad to hear that you are becoming more industrious, William, since Mr. Quelch remarked so emphatically on the subject of your laziness. Industry will be required of you in the future."

Billy Bunter's heart sank.

That could only mean that his worst misgivings were justified. It implied work. Awful visions of an office, where fellows had to work, rose before Bunter's mind's eye. It was appalling.

He gazed dismally at his parent.

"You tell me that you are progressing in class," went on Mr. Bunter.

"Oh! Yes!" answered Bunter, eagerly. "Quelch is awfully pleased with me, since—since that half-term report. I—I often have to help other fellows with their con—."

"What about arithmetic?" asked Mr. Bunter; uninterested, apparently, in "con."

"Simply splendid," answered his son, promptly. "I fancy I'm the best man at arithmetic in the form. In fact, I'm a dab at it."

"Good!" said Mr. Bunter. "Arithmetic will be required."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.



He realised that being a "dab" at arithmetic was not likely to prolong his career at Greyfriars, but rather otherwise. But he had done it now! Not for the first time, it was borne in upon Bunter's fat mind that truth had a certain value. Had he informed his honoured parent that when he added ten to twelve, he was likely to make it twenty-six, or twenty-seven, or almost any other number, it would have been true, and would not have encouraged Mr. Bunter to think of putting him into an office. But it was too late now.

"Sanders will find you quite useful. I am sure." went on Mr. Bunter.

Bunter wondered who Sanders was. He hated him already, whoever he was! Some beast in an office, of course, who would expect Bunter to work!

"You will at least be able to assist him with the books," said Mr. Bunter, regarding his son thoughtfully, "and later on, you will be able to take over the books into your own hands."

"Oh, lor'!"

"What did you say, William?"

"I—I—I—now I come to think of it, I—I ain't so jolly good at arithmetic." stammered Bunter. "I—I mean. Quelch doesn't think so—."

"You will improve," said Mr. Bunter. "I shall expect it of you, William. Now, as you know from my telegram. I have come here to discuss new arrangements—."

"I—I say. I—I don't want to leave Greyfriars," wailed Bunter. "I—I—I'm getting on so fine with arithmetic—I mean Latin—and—and—."

"Latin will not be required," said Mr. Bunter. "Nobody, I imagine, speaks Latin on the Island of Lololo."

Bunter blinked at him. He wondered dismally where and what the island of Lololo might be. It sounded to him like some foreign place.

"As for leaving Greyfriars," went on Mr. Bunter, "you are wasting your time here, William, and your father's money. In these days of exorbitant taxation, William, every parent has to consider such matters. Your fees here, added to those of your brother Samuel in the Second Form, and those of your sister Bessie at Cliff House, amount to a very considerable sum. Certainly, I should not take you away from your school for that reason: but I cannot lose the great opportunity that now offers."

Bunter could only blink at him dismally. He would have suggested that Sammy of the Second might have been taken away instead, or sister Bessie at Cliff House. But he could see that the parental mind was made up. Some "opportunity," it seemed, had transpired, and Mr. Bunter was not going to lose it.

"You will, therefore, leave at the end of the present term—."

"Oh, crikey!"

"I trust that you have not made arrangements for the holidays! If so, it will be necessary to cancel them."

"Oh, lor'." Billy Bunter's face, already long, lengthened still further. This looked like beginning work even in the holidays! "I—I say, I—I'm going with Wharton—one of my best pals here—I simply can't turn him down—."

"There is no choice in the matter, William."

"But I—I say—."

"Time must not be lost," said Mr. Bunter, firmly. "The journey to Lololo is a very long one—half round the world."

Bunter jumped.

"Half round the wo—world!" he stuttered.

"Certainly. You do not suppose that you can reach the Pacific Ocean in a matter of days, do you?" asked Mr. Bunter, testily.

"The Pip-pip-Pacific Ocean!"

Billy Bunter blinked at his parent, bleakly. "Did—did you say the Pip-pip-Pacific?" he stuttered.

"I did."

"I—I—I say, where am I going, then?" gasped Bunter.

"You are going to the South Seas," answered Mr. Bunter.

"Oh, scissors!"

Billy Bunter could only sit and blink. This was news—a "new arrangement," with a vengeance! He was leaving Greyfriars—not for Bunter Villa, not for an office in the City, but for the South Seas! He sat dumb, blinking at Mr. Bunter.

#### CHAPTER IV

### GLORIOUS!

"THE South Seas!" Billy Bunter found his voice, at last. "I'm gig-gig-going to the S-s-south S-s-seas!"

"Precisely," said Mr. Bunter.

"But—."

"It is superfluous to say 'but,' William, when the matter is decided."

"Oh! Yes! But—."

"This great opportunity must not be lost," said Mr. Bunter. "You may not have realised it before, William, but I have been considerably concerned about your future."

"Oh! Have you?" stammered Bunter.

"Boys have done badly at school, and yet succeeded in after-life," said Mr. Bunter. "But you have done so very badly—."

"Oh, really, father—."

"—that I have been anxious about your future. However, dunces at school have frequently turned out to be good men of business, and I hope that that will be the case with you, William."

Bunter breathed rather hard. He did not regard himself as a dunce at school, neither had he the least desire to turn out a good man of business.

"You are, I think, incorrigibly lazy," went on Mr. Bunter, ruthlessly. "You must acquire habits of industry, William."

"But I—I say—."

"I shall not expect too much of you," said Mr. Bunter.

"But I shall expect you to do your best. At Lololo—."

"But wha-a-at's Lololo—?"

"Lololo is an island in the Pacific Ocean, William. It is what is called an atoll—doubtless you know what an atoll is?"

"Oh! Yes!" gasped Bunter, wondering what on earth an atoll was. "I—I know all about atolls. But where is it?"

"It is a hundred miles from Kamakama," answered Mr. Bunter.

That answer left Billy Bunter as wise—or as unwise—as before.

"But what's Kamakama?" he asked, feebly.

"Kamakama is a larger island, where there is a regular steamer service from Singapore," said Mr. Bunter.

Bunter did not ask what Singapore was! He had heard of Singapore!

"You will travel as far as Singapore by Oriental Airways," went on Mr. Bunter. "You will travel in charge of the company. From Singapore you will proceed to Kamakama, under

charge of the steamer captain. At Kamakama it will be necessary to engage local transport for Lololo. There you will be met by our Mr. Sanders."

"But—."

"Mr. Sanders is our manager at Lololo."

"Oh! Yes! But—."

"If your constant repetition of the word 'but' implies that you have any objection, William—."

"Oh! No! But—."

"But what?" snapped Mr. Bunter.

"Ain't it awfully expensive, travelling by air, and all that?" asked Bunter. "I—I've heard it runs to hundreds of pounds."

"That is quite correct."

"Mind, I—I'm keen on it—awfully keen—," moaned Bunter. "I—I was only thinking that it would be awfully expensive, and—and that it would come cheaper in the end to let me stay at Greyfriars."

"If the expenses came out of my own pocket, William, what you state would certainly be true," said Mr. Bunter.

"But I have not explained everything yet. You will travel at the expense of the Comet Copra Company, of which I am a director."

"Oh!" said Bunter.

He had never heard of the Comet Copra Company before, though aware that his father was director on the boards of a good many companies.

"You know what copra is, of course," added Mr. Bunter.

"Oh! Yes! One of those South-Seas fishes," hazarded Bunter.

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Bunter.

"I—I mean," Bunter realised that copra was not a fish. "I—I—I mean, one of those tropical plants that—that grow in the South Seas—."

"Copra, William, is a product of the cocoanut, and is collected in great quantities from the Pacific Islands," said Mr. Bunter, severely. "It is used for the extraction of edible oils."

"Oh! Yes! I—I knew it was something—," stammered the fat Owl.

"The Comet Company does a vast business in copra," continued Mr. Bunter. "It has very many stations all over the Pacific, but the one we are concerned about is on the atoll of Lololo. Mr. Sanders is our manager there, and he manages a store and trades with the natives. He is the only white man on the island, and will be glad of your company among so many Kanakas."

Billy Bunter thought that possible. But he did not look as if he would be glad of Mr. Sanders' company.

"I have only lately become a director of the Comet and looked into its affairs," continued Mr. Bunter. "Mr. Sanders has applied for an assistant in his work on Lololo especially to give help with keeping the books. On learning this, it occurred to me at once that it would be a great opening for you, William."

"But—."

"I decided at once that it was only just that Mr. Sanders should have the assistant for whom he applied. It is only fair to him," said Mr. Bunter, benevolently. "Also it enables me to place my elder son in the service of the Company, at a good salary—."

Bunter's fat ears pricked up.

"Oh!" he said, as a change from "but." "I—I suppose the Company pays the salary?"

"Naturally the Company pays the salaries of all its employees, William. The cost of sending out the new clerk is also, naturally, borne by the Company. The Company also provides his outfit."

"Oh!" repeated Bunter. "I—I see! I—I didn't know a director could wangle things like that—."

"What did you say, William? Did you use the word 'wangle'? What do you mean by wangle?" thundered Mr. Bunter.

"Oh! Nothing! I—I mean—."

"I have the interests of the Company at heart, in placing my son, in whom I naturally have confidence, in its service," said Mr. Bunter, sternly.

"Oh! Yes! Of —of course—."

"You are not too young to begin as a junior clerk," continued Mr. Bunter, "and Sanders will make every allowance, and give you every help, as the son of a director of the Company."

"Oh!" said Bunter.

His fat face began to brighten considerably.

He had dreaded an office in the City, with the parental eye on him, and some beast named Sanders looking to it that he did some work. That awful prospect had faded out.

A trip to the South Seas, a good salary beginning when he took up his post, and only so much work extracted from him as could be extracted by a manager anxious to keep in the good graces of his father the director, was a very different proposition.

Bunter began to like the idea.

True, he had to leave Greyfriars. But the chief charm of Greyfriars was that it was a safe refuge from work.

Even Mr. Quelch had never been able to get much work out of Bunter. Sanders, it was certain, would get less.

Mr. Sanders, on Lololo, had applied for an assistant, and was going to get one—but the amount of assistance he was likely to receive from him was probably of microscopic proportions.

How much the Comet Copra Company would benefit from the services of the new recruit, was perhaps doubtful. But it was barely possible that the interests of the share-holders were not the first and principal consideration of their director. However, Bunter was careful not to mention the word "wangle" again!

Mr. Bunter, seeing his son's fat countenance brighten, smiled benevolently.

"You like the scheme, William?"

"I—I rather think I do," admitted Billy. "I say, I—I suppose I shall get a pretty decent outfit?"

"A quite generous allowance will be made for the outfit."

"And all expenses paid?"

"Every item."

"And a—a good salary?"

"Three hundred a year."

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bunter. His little round eyes danced behind his big round spectacles. Three hundred quids!"

"To begin," said Mr. Bunter. "It will increase in time. Living on Lololo will cost you nothing, as you will live in Mr. Sanders' bungalow, and everything will be provided by the Company. The Comet Copra Company is very generous in its dealings with its staff, William, and every consideration, naturally, will be shown to the son of an influential director."

Bunter grinned.

"Sounds jolly good," he said.

"It is the chance of a lifetime, William," said Mr. Bunter, impressively. "You must make the most of it: and you will, in any case, be provided for. You must cease to regard yourself as a mere schoolboy, and look forward to a life of useful and profitable business. No doubt it will be a wrench parting from your friends—I understand, from you, that you are very popular here. But in the circumstances even that may be softened. If you choose, you may take some of your friends to spend their holidays with you on the island of Lololo—all expenses will be met by the Company."

"Oh!" said Bunter.

"You have received hospitality from some of the boys here, and owing to various circumstances have been unable to return it," said Mr. Bunter. "Now you are free to do so if you wish. You may take half-a-dozen friends if you like, and all expenses both ways will be paid by the Company."

"Good!" said Bunter, beaming.

The clouds had rolled by now. Bunter's fat face was as bright as the sun at noonday. He had dreaded leaving Greyfriars, for an office in the City. But for this glorious prospect, he felt that he could hardly wait for the term's end. A lazy life in a glorious climate, with a handsome salary to draw for the work he wasn't going to do, compared very favourably with grinding Latin in the form-room under Quelch's gimlet eye. No more lessons—no more Quelch—no more borrowing bobs and tanners up and down the Remove—instead of that, Bunter saw himself lazing in a hammock under a shady tree, with obsequious natives waiting on him hand and foot, and Sanders, who could be sacked by a director, making everything easy and anticipating his wishes!

Mr. Bunter went on, telling him more about Lololo, and it was a happy and glorious Bunter who listened.

## CHAPTER V

### SURPRISING!

"POOR old Bunter!" said Bob Cherry.

"The poorfulness of the ridiculous old Bunter is terrific," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"It's tough," said Harry Wharton.

"Mayn't turn out so bad after all," remarked Johnny Bull. "Bunter's the man to yell before he's hurt, you know."

"There goes his pater," said Frank Nugent.

The Famous Five were sauntering in the quad, after tea. They did not, as a matter of fact, value William George Bunter very highly, as a member of the Greyfriars community. But they could feel for any fellow who was up against it—and the prospect of leaving Greyfriars was evidently a crushing one to Billy Bunter. Now that he was down on his luck, they forgot his little faults and failings and felt sincerely sympathetic. They would have been glad to do anything they could to soften the blow.

A taxi glided away from the House, heading for the gates. Within it sat Mr. William Samuel Bunter.

Bunter's pater was departing: leaving Bunter, they had no doubt, in a state of dolorous woe.

Mr. Bunter, certainly, did not look much like a Roman parent! His plump face was very genial. He looked amiable and cheerful—hardly like a parent who had administered the

K.O. Looking at the smiling plump face, the chums of the Remove wondered whether, after all, the blow had fallen.

They capped the plump City gentleman respectfully, as the taxi came along. Mr. Bunter, glancing at them, smiled and nodded.

The taxi stopped, and he beckoned to them from the window. As he evidently desired to speak to them, the juniors came up at once."

"I think I remember you, said Mr. Bunter genially. "You are my son's friends here, I think."

It was a little awkward, for the Famous Five were not exactly "pally" with Billy Bunter: however, they were feeling very friendly at the moment, in view of the fat Owl's disaster, so they were not disposed to deny the soft impeachment.

"We hope he isn't leaving, sir," said Harry Wharton.

"Yes, William will be leaving at the end of the term." said Mr. Bunter.

"Oh!"

The blow, it seemed, had fallen.

"No doubt you will miss him," said Mr. Bunter.

"The missfulness will be terrific and preposterous, honoured sahib," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, solemnly.

Mr. Bunter smiled.

"However it will be possible for you to see a good deal of him yet—in the holidays, I mean," he added.

"Oh!" murmured Bob.

Sympathetic as they were, the Co. were not precisely yearning to see more of Billy Bunter in the holidays. However, they did not think of mentioning that to Bunter's pater.

"I understand, from William, that it has been arranged for him to spend the holidays with you at your home, Master Wharton," remarked Mr. Bunter. "William said something to that effect."

"Oh! Did he?" gasped Wharton.

On the subject of the "hols," the captain of the Remove had said that he would boot Bunter if he saw him within a mile of Wharton Lodge. Even Bunter could hardly have construed that into a pressing invitation.

"I am sorry that it will not be possible to carry out that arrangement, in view of changed circumstances," said Mr. Bunter.

"Oh!" repeated Harry.

"Nevertheless, you will not lose William's company in the vacation," said Mr. Bunter, reassuringly. "I shall be very glad for his friends to accompany him where he is going, as he will be in very strange surroundings, which will seem less strange to him with his friends round him for the first few weeks."

The Famous Five could only gaze at the plump City gentleman in the taxi.

"No doubt you will be quite pleased to go with him," continued Mr. Bunter. "You will, of course, obtain the consent of your parents or guardians."

"But what—?" stammered Harry, quite bewildered. "The holiday will, of course, be no expense to you or to your parents," went on Mr. Bunter. "You will go as guests of the Comet Copra Company."

"The Comet Copra Company!" repeated Harry, like a fellow in a dream.

"Exactly."

"But—but what—?" began Bob Cherry.

"All expenses will be met by the Company, from the moment you step on the air-liner till you return."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"I wish," said Mr. Bunter, "that time permitted me to make such a trip myself. I am sure that you will find it very enjoyable: especially as William will be with you. And I shall feel much easier in my mind about William, if he has his friends with him on the journey, and for the first few weeks in his new and strange surroundings. He will have settled down by the time you leave him." Mr. Bunter beamed. "You will go as my guests—or rather, the Company's."

"But what—?"

"A trip to the South Seas," said Mr. Bunter, "does not come every schoolboy's way! What?"

"The South Seas?"

"Oh, my hat!"

Mr. Bunter glanced at his watch.

"I must catch my train," he said. "William will tell you further details. I shall make all arrangements. Goodbye!"

The taxi rolled on to the gate.

Harry Wharton and Co. stared after it till it disappeared. Then they stared at one another. They were quite bewildered.

"Anybody know what all that means?" asked Bob.

"Goodness knows," said Nugent.

"The knowfulness is not terrific."

"Blessed if I make it out," said Harry Wharton. "It seems that we're booked to go somewhere with Bunter for the hols."

"He can't be going to the South Seas," said Johnny Bull, blankly. "What on earth would Bunter do in the South Seas, unless make a meal for a cannibal?"

"Well, his pater said the South Seas," said Bob, "and he seems to take it for granted that we're going with Bunter. Decent old boy. I wouldn't object to a trip to the South Seas, for one."

"Hardly," grinned Nugent.

"Well, I don't make it out," said Harry. "I was thinking that we'd have Bunter for the hols, after all, as he's down on his luck. It seems certain now that he's leaving. It's rough luck, and it's up to us to play up as much as we can."

"Hear, hear," said Bob.

"But it looks as if he's got something better on, from this," said Harry. "If his pater's standing him a trip to the South Seas, he would turn up that pimple he calls a nose at Wharton Lodge."

"And Cherry Place simply wouldn't be in it!" chuckled Bob. "By gum! Fancy a trip among the Pacific Islands!"

"I don't make it out," said Johnny Bull.

"Well, his pater said that Bunter would hand out the details," said Bob. "We'd better see Bunter and get the dope from him."

And the Famous Five, still in a state of great astonishment, walked across to the House, to see Bunter and as Bob expressed it, get the "dope"

## CHAPTER VI

### JUST LIKE BUNTER!

BILLY BUNTER walked into the Rag.

There were a good many juniors in that apartment. And all eyes turned on Billy Bunter. There was nothing unusual in Bunter walking into the junior day-room. But it was very unusual for him to become the cynosure of all eyes when he did so.

Generally, Billy Bunter's unimportance was unlimited, and his comings and his goings interested nobody but William George Bunter.

But there was a change in Bunter's aspect that drew general attention.

That afternoon he had been seen, by many eyes, looking as doleful and woebegone as a boiled owl. Now all was changed. Bunter looked bucked. Not only did he look bucked, but he looked tremendously bucked.

And that was not all. He was, plainly, in high feather.

It is hardly correct to say that he walked into the Rag. He strutted into it.

His self-satisfaction, which had been in a state of eclipse since he had received his pater's telegram, had burst forth into full bloom again, only more so than heretofore.

If Bunter had suddenly come into a fortune, or if he had been made captain of the school, or if he had been knighted by the King, he might have looked as he looked now. None of those things, certainly, had happened. But clearly something must have happened which had caused Billy Bunter to swell, like the frog in the fable, till he seemed in danger of bursting.

He strutted in his walk. His fat chin was up. He glanced round the Rag, and at the fellows in it, with all air of ineffable superiority, indeed disdain. His fat little nose, which Nature had started on the way, was turned up more than ever. If ever a fellow looked as if he thoroughly disdained his surroundings, William George Bunter did. And a general stare was his reward.

"What's the matter with that fat idiot?" Vernon-Smith asked his chum, Tom Redwing.

"He looks bucked," said Redwing, with a smile.

Peter Todd came over to Bunter. Peter knew all about the telegram.

"Is it all right after all, Bunter?" he asked.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Eh! Oh! Yes! Right as rain."

"Then you're not leaving?"

"I'm leaving at the end of the term. Thank goodness it isn't far off now," said Bunter.

Peter stared at him. So did the other fellows. If a fellow had to leave Greyfriars it was regarded, in the general view, as a disaster. Billy Bunter had certainly seemed to regard it as one—till now! Now, it appeared, he was looking forward to it eagerly!

"You're going?" exclaimed Skinner.

"Yes, rather," answered Bunter, emphatically.

"Good," said Skinner. "Next term a fellow's tuck will be safe."

"Oh, really, Skinner—."

"Shut up, Skinner," said Squiff. "It's hard luck. Sorry, Bunter."

"Nothing to be sorry about, is there?" asked Bunter, blinking at him. "Think I want to go on being a grubby schoolboy like you fellows?"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Sorry for you," said Bunter. "Rotten luck on you fellows, sticking here, while I'm having the time of my life. You can go on kow-towing to Quelch, and jumping when a prefect says jump! Not me!"

"You're not glad to go?" exclaimed Peter Todd, blankly.

Bunter chuckled.

"Ain't I just!" he answered.

"As glad as other fellows will be?" asked Skinner.



"Yah!" retorted Bunter, inelegantly.

He blinked round at staring faces.

"I'm fed up with this show," he went on. "I'm pretty sick of saying 'Yes, sir,' and 'Oh, sir,' and 'Please, sir,' and 'No, sir,' to the beaks. I can tell you. I've a jolly good mind to tell Quelch what I think of him before I go, too."

"Oh, my hat!" said Peter.

"Who's Quelch?" said Bunter, disdainfully. "Who's the Head, if you come to that? Who's Wingate? Who's Loder? Fat lot I care for any of them."

"I'd guess you'd care pronto, if they heard you blowing off your mouth like that, you fat piecan," remarked Fisher T. Fish.

"Yah!" retorted Bunter.

"But what's happened?" gasped Peter. "Is your pater sending you to another school?" Sniff, from Bunter.

"Not likely," he answered. "I'm finished with school. Fed up with it. You fellows can mug up Latin in the form-room next term. You can swot over prep in the studies. You can hop when Wingate tells you to hop. You can watch Quelch's phiz to see whether he is in a good temper! Yah! I'm going to the South Seas—."

"What?"

"As manager—well, sub-manager—for the Comet Copra Company!" said Bunter, disdainfully. "Bit better than swotting Virgil under Quelch's eye, what?"

"You are?" gasped Vernon-Smith.

"Gammon!" said Skinner.

"That's what my pater came down about to-day," explained Bunter. "The Comet is a tremendous company, and they pay enormous salaries—I shall have three hundred—I mean, three thousand—a year—lots of natives to wait on me, hand and foot—and you can bet that I'll make 'em do it, too! You see, the Company want a specially good man for a very important post, and my pater thought of me at once—."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I'm going out by air," went on Bunter. "Oriental Airways to Singapore—stopping at Scratchy for a day or two—."

"Karachi?" asked Peter.

"NO—scratchy—I think that's the name of the place. It's in India or Burma or somewhere, I believe. Then we hop out to Singapore, in Australia, I think—."

"In Australia!" yelled Squiff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it's somewhere down there." said Bunter hastily. "New Zealand, perhaps—yes, now I come to think of it. New Zealand."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at," snapped Bunter. "I'll bet you'd all be jolly glad to get a trip there, at any rate."

"Singapore's in the Malay Peninsula!" howled Peter. "Is it?" said Bunter. "Well, wherever it is, that's where I'm going. After that a steamer to Kamschatka—."

"Kamschatka!" shrieked Peter.

"Or something like that," said Bunter. "Anyhow that's where I go on to Lololo—that's the island where I'm going to be clerk in the store—I mean, sub-manager for the Company. You can think of me eating cocoanuts under the palm trees, while you're swotting in the form-room with Quelch."

"We shall think of you eating, if we think of you at all," agreed the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There will be lots and lots to eat," went on Bunter. "I asked my pater specially about that. All you want to eat, and more! I'm going to have a topping time! You can cackle as much as you like. Fat lot I care for a lot of cackling schoolboys!"

Evidently, Bunter, in his own esteem, was no longer a schoolboy! Schoolboys were hardly worth his lofty notice.

"I'm jolly well done with this show," he went on, scornfully, "and while I'm sitting in a hammock under a palm tree, with tons of grub, and natives at my beck and call, I'll think of you fellows grubbing rations, and, bending over when that old ass Quelch is shirty in the form-room—wharrer you making faces at me for, Peter?"

Peter Todd had suddenly caught sight of an angular figure in the doorway of the Rag. Bunter, with his fat back to the door, was unconscious of the fact that Mr. Quelch, master of the Remove, was looking in. Peter was trying to put Bunter on his guard. But the fat Owl was not quick on the uptake.

"You can make faces at a chap," he said, disdainfully. "I'll bet you'd be jolly glad to get away from that gobbling old goat Quelch—."

"BUNTER!"

"Oh, crikey!"

Billy Bunter revolved on his axis, his eyes almost popping through his spectacles at the dread figure in the doorway. A pair of gimlet-eyes fixed on him, as if they would bore into him.

"Bunter! I came to speak to you about your lines—."

"I—I—I've done them, sir," gasped Bunter. "I—I had them all ready, only they blew out of the study window—."

"I heard your impertinent and disrespectful reference to myself, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, slipping a cane down from under his arm into his hand.

"Oh, crumbs! I—I wasn't speaking of you, sir—!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"I—I wasn't really, sir! I—I was speaking of another old goat—I—I—I mean—."

"You will bend over that table, Bunter."

"I—I say, sir—I—I—."

"Bend over!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Billy Bunter, momentarily, had forgotten that he was a schoolboy. Now he had to remember it! All the happy satisfaction was gone from his fat face, as he bent over the table. Once more he was sad and woebegone.

Whack! whack! whack!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Whack! whack!

"Oh! Woooh!"

WHACK!

"Yaroooh!"

Mr. Quelch tucked his cane under his arm, and departed. He left Billy Bunter rousing all the echoes of the Rag.

"Ow! ow! wow! ow! wow!"

"Chance for you to tell Quelch what you thought of him," suggested Skinner. "Why didn't you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! wow! wow! wow!"

Billy Bunter trailed away to his study, emitting sounds of woe as he went. It was in his study that Harry Wharton and Co. found him, a few minutes later in search of the "dope"

on the subject of that trip to the Pacific Islands. But it was some time before Billy Bunter was able to give them the "dope." For quite a long time, Bunter's remarks were limited to "Ow!" and "Wow!" and "Yow-ow-ow!"

## CHAPTER VII

### AT SINGAPORE!

"I'M tired!"

"Oh, push on"

"I said I was tired."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"It's hot."

"Did we come south to keep cool?"

"Beast!"

"Are you coming on, Bunter?"

"No!"

And Bunter didn't!

He halted. Five other fellows halted also.

"When Bunter says stop, we all stop!" remarked Johnny Bull, sarcastically.

"I should jolly well think so," said Bunter.

He mopped perspiration from a fat brow.

It was hot at Singapore, there was no doubt about that.

The city, the vast harbour, the innumerable shipping, the gliding sampans, the wooded islands, shimmered and simmered in tropical heat.

But really, the Greyfriars party had not travelled into equatorial regions in the expectation of keeping cool!

One member of the party, at least, enjoyed the warmth.

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh's dusky face beamed. In his native land, the nabob of Bhanipur was accustomed to the heat being turned on. No doubt the blazing sun in the bluest of blue skies over Singapore reminded him of his native Bhanipur.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull, did not exactly enjoy the sensation of being in an oven: but they took it in their stride. They were merry and bright, enjoying a saunter round Singapore, and the strange sights and sounds they met at every turn.

Probably they would have enjoyed Singapore more if Billy Bunter had remained in the shady verandah of the Oleander Hotel. But they could hardly suggest that Bunter should do so. They were, in a way, Bunter's guests on this trip to the sunny south—at least they were his father's guests: or, to speak still more accurately, the guests of the Company of which Mr. Bunter was a director. And guests had to remember their manners in dealing with their host. So they were very patient with Bunter.

Bunter required a great deal of patience. Hot weather made him peevish. His uncommon weight made a walk a tougher proposition to him than it was to other fellows. Nothing would have induced him to sit in the shade while the rest of the party walked about Singapore. But he compensated himself for the exertion by grunting and grouching. And now, on a scorching road outside the town, he announced that he was tired—and stopped. Five fellows stood round, waiting for him to get going again.

Bunter blinked at them reproachfully.

"You'd like to walk me off my legs, wouldn't you?" he asked. "Well, I can jolly well tell you I'm not going to be walked off my legs. Not that I ain't as good a walker as any fellow here," added Bunter. "But I ain't going on till I've had a rest."

He blinked round through his big spectacles. "Nothing to sit down on!" he yapped.

"They weren't told at Singapore that you were coming, I expect," said Bob Cherry, gravely, "or they'd have had special seats put along the road for you."

"Oh, really, Cherry—."

"How long are we going to stick around here?" inquired Johnny Bull.

Billy Bunter did not deign to answer that question. He was still blinking round him in search of something to sit upon.

"Can't you fellows get something a fellow could sit down on?" he asked.

"Plenty of earth." suggested Frank Nugent.

"Lots!" said Bob. "There's the whole jolly old globe for you to sit on, Bunter. But don't sit down too suddenly, and jolt it out of the solar system."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be a funny ass," grunted Bunter. "We ought to have taken a rickshaw to come this distance. Lots of rickshaws in the town. Look here, stop the next rickshaw you see, and I'll take it."

"Good egg!" said Bob, heartily.

And there was a general nod of approval. With Bunter in a rickshaw, the rest of the party would be able to walk, without stopping every five minutes to hear from the fat Owl that it was hot, and that he was tired. The snag was that jin-rickshaws, plentiful in the town, were scarce on the road outside the town. Rickshaw boys plied for hire in more populous spots.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, here comes one!" exclaimed Bob.

A light two-wheeled vehicle, with a brown-skinned coolie running between the shafts, came bowling along the road.

"Oh, good." said Bunter. "If you fellows want to do foot-slogging in this beastly hot place, you can do it—and I'll sit in the rickshaw, see? I fancy you'll be fed-up before I am. He, he, he!"

But as the rickshaw came nearer, the juniors perceived that it was occupied. A Chinese sat within, gently fanning himself with a Chinese fan. As that rickshaw, evidently, was not for hire, Harry Wharton and Co. did not think of calling it. But Billy Bunter's limited vision did not reveal the passenger in the rickshaw to his eyes or his spectacles, and he waved a fat hand at the rickshaw boy.

"Hi!" he shouted.

The running brown man did not even glance at him. He trotted on.

"Hi!" roared Bunter. "Stop!"

"You fat ass—!" began Johnny Bull.

"Can't you make that nigger understand that I want his rickshaw?" hooted Bunter. "Stop him, will you?"

"He's got a passenger," said Harry.

"Oh!" As the rickshaw came abreast of the Greyfriars party, Billy Bunter perceived the passenger inside. "Well, he's only a native. He can get out."

"Oh, my hat! Think he would?" gasped Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hi!" bawled Bunter. "Stop! Do you hear, you silly nigger? Stop, I tell you."

The rickshaw boy, without even glancing at him, trotted on. The rickshaw ran lightly on in the direction of the harbour.

Billy Bunter breathed hard, and he breathed deep.

Important person as he was, a half-clad native rickshaw boy had passed him by regardless. It was very irritating to Bunter.

"Well, are we moving on?" yawned Johnny Bull.

"I'm not!" said Bunter. "You fellows can, if you think that's a civil way to treat a chap who's standing you a splendid holiday, regardless of expense."

Johnny gave him a fixed look.

"You don't get a trip like this every day, I think," went on Bunter. "First-class air travel from home to Singapore. First-class accommodation at Scratchy. Everything first-class, expense no object. Topping hotel here, with splendid food. I can tell you that half the Remove would have jumped at it. Well, you're getting it."

"We are," said Bob Cherry, "and it was jolly decent of your pater, Bunter. And we're jolly well not going to kick you."

"What?"

"No," said Johnny Bull, thoughtfully. "I don't see how we can very well kick Bunter, when his pater's standing us a trip like this. Still, he'd better not keep on asking for it."

"Look here—!" roared Bunter. "I can jolly well tell you—."

"The Speechfulness is silvery, my esteemed Bunter, but silence is the cook that spoils the broth, as the English proverb remarks," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Yes, shut up, Bunter," said Bob. "You don't know how delightful your conversation is when you keep it bottled up."

"Beast!"

"There'll be another rickshaw along soon, Bunter," said Harry Wharton, soothingly. "Some will be coming back from the harbour."

"I expect there's plenty around, if you looked for them," snapped Bunter. "Might be one round any of the corners. I think you might treat a fellow decently when he's standing you—."

"Well, we're standing you!" remarked Frank Nugent.

"When he's standing you a splendid—."

"Bow-wow!" said Bob Cherry.

"Beast! Look here, will you call me a rickshaw?" hooted Bunter.

"Certainly, if you like," answered Bob.

"There isn't one in sight, Bob," said Harry.

"Well, Bob can look for one, can't he?" hooted Bunter. "Standing round doing nothing— never saw such a lazy lot. Call me a rickshaw, Bob."

"Bob can't call you a rickshaw when there isn't one in sight, old fat man," said Frank Nugent.

"My dear chap, I can call him a rickshaw if he likes," said Bob. "If you want me to call you a rickshaw, Bunter—."

"Haven't I said so?" yapped Bunter. "Don't hang about. Just call me a rickshaw."

"O.K.," said Bob. "You're a rickshaw!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"You're a rickshaw!" repeated Bob.

"You silly chump!" yelled Bunter. "Wharrer you mean by calling me a rickshaw?"

"Eh? Didn't you ask me to?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the rest of the party. Bunter, certainly, had asked Bob to call him a rickshaw! But he did not seem satisfied, now that Bob had done it.

"You silly idiot!" shrieked Bunter. "Will you call me a rickshaw?"

"But I've called you one," said Bob. "Didn't you hear me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—!" gasped Bunter.

"I'll call you one again, if you like," said Bob. "You're a rickshaw, Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you silly cuckoo!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter gave Bob so devastating a blink that it might almost have cracked his spectacles. He did not want Bob's little jokes—he wanted a rickshaw, in which to repose his fat person.

Luckily, an empty rickshaw came bowling along the road, heading back to the town from the harbour.

"Here you are, Bunter," said Harry.

He waved his hand to the rickshaw boy, who halted promptly.

"Jin-ricksha, sar?"

"Hop in, Bunter."

And the clouds cleared from Billy Bunter's fat brow.

He was going to sit down, while the other fellows walked—which suited Bunter. He was going to sit in the shade, while they slogged in the blazing sunshine, and he was going to enjoy it. The jin-ricksha boy eyed him, seemingly in some doubt, as he clambered into the lightly-constructed vehicle. Perhaps he was smitten with a doubt as to whether the rickshaw was equal to the strain it was about to undergo. No such doubt occurred to Billy Bunter, or he might have been a little more careful how he landed his uncommon avoirdupois into the rickshaw. As it was, he was not careful at all. He clambered in, and sat down with a heavy bump, in his relief at getting off his fat little legs.

Crash!

"Oh, my hat!"

"Look out!"

"Great pip!"

"Yaroooooh!" roared Billy Bunter, with a roar that the Bull of Bashan might have envied, and that woke most of the echoes of the Malay Peninsula.

The rickshaw might have sustained Bunter's weight, had he been careful. But the bump with which he landed that weight in it did the trick. There was a sudden crash, a howl of dismay from the rickshaw boy, a roar from Bunter, startled exclamations from everybody else, as the vehicle collapsed—and Billy Bunter, roaring, sat amid the ruins of the rickshaw, like Manus amid the ruins of Carthage.

#### CHAPTER VIII

#### LEFT BEHIND!

"YAROOOOH!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Whooh-hoop! Help!" roared Bunter. "Wow! Whooooooh!"

Bunter's done it!" gasped Bob Cherry. "The donefulness is terrific."

"I say, you fellows—ow! Wow! Help! Can't you help a fellow out?" roared Bunter. "I'm hurt! I've broken my legs! I believe my back's broken! Wow! Will you stop cackling, you beasts, and help a fellow out?"

"All hands on deck," chuckled Bob. "All together," said Frank Nugent.

"Many hands make the cracked pitcher go longest to the well," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

And the Famous Five gathered round to the rescue.

The rickshaw boy stared on in dismay. His rickshaw was in a sadly damaged condition, and he was beginning to look excited about it. Bunter, to judge by his roars, was in a still more damaged state. But he was still in one piece, which the vehicle certainly was not. The chums of the Remove grasped him on all sides, and lugged. Bunter was extracted from the wreck like a cork from a bottle. He tottered in the supporting hands of his comrades, still roaring.

"Hurt?" asked Bob.

"You silly idiot!" roared Bunter.

"Thanks! Does that mean yes or no?"

"I'm hurt all over!" yelled Bunter. "I've got pains and aches everywhere. I tell you, the fearful pain's all over."



"Well, if it's all over, what are you yelling about?" asked Johnny Bull.

"You silly chump, I don't mean that it's an over, I mean that it's all over," yelled Bunter. "I believe I've broken the spinal column in my leg—."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"And my left arm feels as if the jugular vein's severed--."

"Phew!"

"Fat lot you care!" hissed Bunter. "You'd see me lying at death's door and cackle!"

"Oh, dash it all, even you would stop lying at death's door," said Johnny Bull "or can't you help lying?"

"Beast! Hold me up! I can't stand, with the spinal column in my leg broken! You'll have to get an ambulance or something to get me back to the hotel."

"Like me to call you an ambulance?" grinned Bob.

"Yes, I jolly well would."

"All right! You're an ambulance, Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you stop making idiotic jokes." shrieked Bunter. "Think this is funny?"

"Well, I had a sort of idea that it was," admitted Bob. "Isn't it?"

"Beast!"

"Here, you, sar." The rickshaw boy pushed in. "You break a rickshaw—rickshaw he no go any more altogether—you pay."

"Well, of all the cheek!" exclaimed Bunter. He seemed to forget even his remarkable injuries, in his indignation at that demand. "Smashing a fellow up in his rotten rickshaw, and then expecting to be paid! Get out, blow you!"

The brown man waved brown hands. His black eyes rolled in his head. He almost danced in his excitement.

"Jin-ricksha he no go!" he bawled. "You pay fifty dollar."

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob. "The rickshaw isn't worth that, old bean, with you thrown in!"

"You pay fifty dollar—."

"I can see myself doing it!" snorted Bunter. "Get out before I boot you! I've no use for cheek from niggers."

"Shut up, you fat ass," said Harry.

"Yah!"

"The rickshaw's damaged," said Bob. "It will want sticking together again. Not to the tune of fifty dollars, though. These johnnies always ask about ten times as they expect. Try again, my man."

"Very fine rickshaw, sar! Now he no go! You pay forty dollar, sar!" said the rickshaw boy, moderating his transports, as it were.

"It's coming down," remarked Johnny Bull. "We'll wait till he gets a bit further on the downward path."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You pay forty dollar, sar?" demanded the coolie.

"Not so's you'd notice it," answered Bob Cherry, affably. "Try again."

"Him no go any more, sar! You pay twenty dollar?"

"Keep it up," said Bob, encouragingly. "You're on the right track, but you haven't got far enough! Keep it up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't pay him anything!" hooted Bunter. "Like his cheek to ask! These niggers are too cheeky! I'd boot him all the way back to Singapore as soon as look at him. You fellows don't know how to handle natives! I jolly well do! I'll clout his head to begin with."

"You fat ass—!" exclaimed Harry.

"Yah!"

"I wonder if he's got a knife tucked away in that cloth he wears," remarked Bob, thoughtfully.

"Lots of them have."

"Oh, crikey!" ejaculated Bunter. He gave quite a jump. "But never mind his knife, Bunter—get on with it!"

"I—I—oh—I—I mean, perhaps we'd better pay him! It's rather beneath our dignity to haggle with a native over money—."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Look here, you fellows settle with him and I'll walk on."

Billy Bunter walked on. The possibility of a knife being hidden in the rickshaw boy's sparse attire, seemed to have banished from his fat mind any desire to boot the coolie all the way back to Singapore. Quite forgetting, for the moment, how tired he was, Billy Bunter rolled on, at quite a good pace, leaving the Famous Five to settle the matter with the aggrieved rickshaw boy.

"You pay ten dollar, sar," said the rickshaw boy, moderating his transports still further.

"You pay ten dollar along rickshaw he no go."

"Not in your lifetime," said Bob, cheerily.

"Oh, sar! Him very fine rickshaw, and he no go any more altogether. You pay five dollar along he no go."



"We're getting along nicely," said Bob, while his comrades chuckled. "We'll meet somewhere, in the long run. Try again."

"You pay four dollar, sar—."

"Have another go," said Bob. "You're getting warmer!"

"Oh, sar! You pay three dollar!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Shall we make it three, you fellows? I dare say it will cost a couple of dollars to put a rickshaw right, after Bunter's sat in it! Here you are, old boy."

And the rickshaw boy having come down to three dollars, three dollars were accordingly handed over: and the chums of the Remove walked on after Bunter, who blinked round apprehensively at the sound of footsteps behind him.

"Look here, you keep off, you black beast—."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! I knew it was you fellows, of course," said Bunter. "If that nigger had the cheek to come after me, I'd knock him spinning! Fat lot I care for his knife."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, do stop cackling!" yelled Bunter.

"Want me to call you something again?" asked Bob, affably. "I'll call you anything you like—from a blithering bloater to a piffling porker."

"Beast!"

"Here comes another rickshaw," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Shall we call it for you, Bunter?"

"No," answered Bunter, promptly. "Rotten things! We'll walk as far as the tramway. This place looks more like a picture postcard than a real place, but they've got trams, at least. We'll walk as far as the trams."

"But we're not going back yet," said Johnny Bull.

"I am," said Bunter.

"And if you are, we all are, of course," remarked Johnny, with deep, intense, and withering sarcasm.

But sarcasm was a sheer waste on Billy Bunter.

"Of course," he assented, "Come on."

The Famous Five exchanged a smile, and they walked to the tramway. Amid all the sights of Singapore, only one was pleasing to the eyes of Billy Bunter—the sight of a tram! Wooded islands, shining sea, blazing sunshine and blue skies, crowds of Malays and Dyaks and Chinese, nodding palms and strange flowers, Bunter did not heed—but he was glad to see a tram. He gasped with relief as he deposited his fat person on a seat therein.

"I say, you fellows," he squeaked. "Hurry up—you'll get left behind."

The tram rolled off.

Billy Bunter blinked back at five figures on the road. There was plenty of room on the tram: but the Famous Five, somehow, had got left behind. And they smiled cheerily as they resumed their walk—not the less enjoyable because William George Bunter was rolling home in a tram!

## CHAPTER IX

### BUNTER KNOWS BEST!

SKY and sea—sea and sky!

The steamer "Annam" churned on, and on, and on: and day by day, the Greyfriars fellows looked at sea and sky, sky and sea, until they almost wondered whether they were in a new world of endless waters and endless blue sky, in which there was no land at all. Round them rolled the vast Pacific: true to its name, so far, for they had had only fair and sunny weather. What it was like in an evil mood, they had not yet experienced. Even Billy Bunter had not yet been sea-sick.

The steamer was by no means a luxury liner. It was a trading ship, and had many smells from many cargoes: and whether copra, or bananas, or bilge, predominated, the juniors had been unable to decide. The ship belonged to the Comet Copra Company, and Captain Corkran, in the service of that Company, made his passengers as comfortable as he could—and treated Billy Bunter with a civility that was grateful and comforting to that fat and fatuous youth—no doubt considering it discreet to keep on the right side of the son of a director.

To the Famous Five he was civil on their own account, for they were cheery and good-tempered and accommodating, and gave no trouble. Billy Bunter gave plenty of trouble, that being his happy way: but what the skipper thought of him was locked up behind his bronzed bearded face.

Day after day, on the churning steamer, grew monotonous after a while: but the chums of the Remove continued cheery as ever, looking forward to the arrival at Kamakama, and after that the trip to the atoll of Lololo.

And Billy Bunter, marvellous to relate, was generally in a cheery and contented mood.

There was plenty to eat, which was the first consideration: it was quite good, which was the second: and he was able to laze about all day, which was the third. And he was looking forward to a life of complete and satisfactory laziness on Lololo. If Sanders, the Company's manager there, succeeded in making Bunter work, he would have better luck than Mr. Quelch had ever had at Greyfriars. But Bunter had no doubt that a powerful director's son would be able to keep a mere island trading manager in his place. Bunter was going to be a fellow with power in his hands: and when a fellow like Bunter had power in his hands, he was the fellow to use it.

Now, in the hot afternoon, Billy Bunter's fat person was extended in a deck-chair, in an attitude which was comfortable, if not graceful. His fat legs were stretched out, his fat head rested in a cushion, his hat was tilted over his fat brow to shade his fat features from the sun—and on a stool beside him were lemon-squash, oranges, and bananas.

This suited Bunter, who, if he had sailed with Odysseus, would certainly have shared the desire of that ancient mariner's crew "in the hollow lotus-land to live and lie reclined."

It was hot—and Bunter did not like it hot. But he liked lazing, he liked lemon-squash, oranges, and bananas, he liked to have the Lascar steward at his beck and call: and he liked to contemplate his coming greatness on the island of Lololo.

There he was going—he hoped at least—to be monarch of all he surveyed. He was certainly going to stand no nonsense from Sanders: still more certainly no nonsense from the Kanakas.

So, on the whole, Bunter was contented: especially, as he reminded the Famous Five daily, or twice daily, as he was no longer a schoolboy as they were! He wasn't going back to a dim old form-room and a gimlet-eyed form-master—he wasn't going to hop when a prefect said hop—he wasn't going to swot at prep in a study! They were—and he wished them joy of it!

Greyfriars was behind him now—and he wasn't going to miss it! Blow Greyfriars! He expressed profound pity for the fellows who were going back after their holiday in the South Seas—leaving him to happy and glorious laziness. Bunter had adopted an air of

lofty patronage towards fellows who were going on being scrubby schoolboys, while he, William George Bunter, was going to be a man among men—and a jolly important man too! Bunter was now, indeed, a most superior person, in his own esteem—which added a spot of gaiety to life on the Pacific steamer!

Harry Wharton and Co. were all on deck, some of them in deck-chairs, Bob Cherry sitting on the rail. The "Annam" glided so smoothly through glassy water that the Pacific seemed like a pond.

"I wonder if there's a blow coming on," Bob remarked, his eyes on the skipper and mate, who were speaking together on the bridge, and glancing towards the western horizon.

"He, he, he!" from Bunter.

Bob looked round at him.

"Well, who are you he-he-heing about, old bloater?" he inquired.

"It's a dead calm, you silly ass," retorted Bunter. "Fat lot you know about weather signs. There isn't a breath of wind. If this were a sailing-ship, we shouldn't be moving at all—idle as a tainted ship on a tainted ocean, as Tennyson says."

"Oh, my hat! Do you mean a painted ship on a painted ocean?" gasped Bob.

"No, I don't!" yapped Bunter. "You can't teach me Tennyson, Bob Cherry."

"Wasn't it Coleridge?" chuckled Frank Nugent.

"No, it wasn't! Better ask Quelch when you get back to school!" jeered Bunter.

"Storms come on suddenly in the Pacific," remarked Harry Wharton, "and there's a big bank of cloud over in the west."

"Rot!" said Bunter, cheerfully.

"The rotfulness is not terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, mildly. "We are in the tropics now, and in my debilitated opinion it looks as if a terrific blow is coming."

"Bosh!" said Bunter.

What Billy Bunter did not know about weather signs would have filled whole almanacs. But with Bunter, ignorance was bliss. He was quite satisfied that he knew better than any other fellow could possibly know.

"Well, if there's rough weather, the captain will send us below," remarked Johnny Bull.

Snort from Bunter.

"There isn't going to be rough weather, and I jolly well shouldn't go below," he said. "You fellows can pack into that oven of a cabin if you like being cooked. I'm staying here."

"You'll go below if the skipper tells you to, fathead," said Johnny.

"I shall please myself about that," said Bunter, coolly. "I fancy the skipper knows better than to order me about."

"Ain't he nice?" said Bob, admiringly. "Doesn't he love throwing his weight about—and hasn't he a lot to throw?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I'm jolly well not going to be ordered about like a schoolboy," said Bunter, disdainfully. "All very well for you fellows! It won't suit me." And disdainful further speech with mere schoolboys, Billy Bunter helped himself to an orange, then to a few bananas, which kept him too busy for conversation.

"Here comes the skipper," said Bob.

Captain Corkran came down from the bridge.

"You young gentlemen had better go below," he said. "There's a big spot of wind coming on, and it will come suddenly."

"O.K., sir," said Bob, cheerfully. "Come on, you men."

"I'm not coming." said Bunter, calmly.

"Get a move on, you fat ass."

"Shan't."

Harry Wharton and Co. gave the fat Owl expressive looks. Bunter settled himself a little more comfortably in his chair, and chewed a banana. Captain Corkran eyed him. For a moment, his expression made the chums of the Remove wonder whether he was going to smack Bunter's head, or bundle him neck and crop out of the deck-chair. Probably he was inclined to do both. But behind Billy Bunter there loomed, as it were, the portly shadow of Mr. William Samuel Bunter, director of the Company!

Whatever were the skipper's feelings, he answered mildly: "I advise you to go below, Master Bunter. There's a big blow coming on, and this packet may go nearly on her beam-ends when the wind hits her."

"There's no wind at all," answered Bunter, calmly, "I prefer to stay here."

"Please yourself, sir," said the skipper.

"I mean to," said Bunter, a remark which the skipper either did not hear, or affected not to hear, as he went back to the bridge, leaving the fat Owl to his own devices.

Bunter grinned at the Famous Five. "You fellows going down?" he asked.

"Yes, ass."

"Afraid of a puff of wind, even if it comes, which it won't?" jeered Bunter. "Well, I'm sticking here."

"You'd better come," said Harry.

"The betterfulness is terrific, my esteemed idiotic Bunter."

Bunter blinked at them.

"When I want advice from a mob of schoolboys, I'll ask for it," he said. "Pack it up till then."

"What about kicking him down the cabin stairs?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

"Oh, come on," said Bob: and the Famous Five went below, leaving Billy Bunter still happily sprawled in the chair on deck, victoriously chewing bananas.

## CHAPTER X

### BUNTER GOES BELOW!

"OH!" gasped Billy Bunter.

He jumped.

Having finished the bunch of bananas, and washed them safely down with lemon-squash, Bunter had closed his little round eyes behind his big round spectacles, and slid into a happy doze.

Half-asleep, and wholly satisfied and comfortable, he gave no heed to sights and sounds of unusual activity on the steamer, and remained blissfully unconscious of the fact that the black cloud in the west had now overspread the sky, almost blotting out the sun. He could not see, and would not have understood or heeded, the catpaws on the glassy water that told of the coming wind. In the breathless pause before the hurricane broke, every face on the "Annam" was anxious—excepting Bunter's!

Then it came—suddenly! With a howl like that of a fierce animal, the wind rushed down on the steamer. The sea, glassy a few minutes ago, boiled and roared. The "Annam" rocked as if struck by a giant's fist, and Billy Bunter jumped, and opened his eyes, and gasped.

"Oh!"

Down in the cabin, Harry Wharton and Co. tottered and staggered, and clutched hold of anything that gave a hold. But there was nothing for Billy Bunter to clutch hold of, except the deck-chair—and the deck-chair was rocking frantically on a reeling deck.

"Oh!" gurgled Bunter. "I say, you fellows—help Yaroooh!"

The skipper had told him that the packet might go almost on her beam-ends when the wind hit her. And she almost did. Over went the deck-chair, and Billy Bunter sprawled on the deck, yelling.

"Ow! Help! I say, you fellows, what's up? Is it an earthquake? Beasts! Can't you lend a fellow a hand?" spluttered Bunter.

Bunter rolled. The ship rocked wildly, and with the deck at an angle of about forty-five degrees, Bunter had to roll. He rolled and rolled, roaring as he rolled.

"Oooooh! Help! Whooop! I say, you fellows—Whooooh-hoop!" roared Bunter.

He brought up against the rail, still roaring. Another slant of the deck sent him rolling back again. The deck-chair whizzed away on the wind like a seabird and disappeared into foaming waves. Where Bunter's hat went, he did not know, and did not care. He rolled and roared, while the "Annam" rocked and plunged, and the juniors below wondered what was happening to Bunter on deck.

Bunter ceased to roll, as a muscular Lascar seaman seized him, and picked him up.

Weighty as Bunter was, the big Lascar lifted him easily; and tucking him under one sinewy arm, plunged for the cabin hatch with him. Bunter's fat arms threshed the air, and his little fat legs kicked frantically, and he roared and yelled and spluttered. Unheeding those manifestations, the Lascar plunged on with him, heaved him down, and fastened the hatch after him. Bunter, quite unaware whether he was on his head or his heels, rolled once more—this time down the steps into the cabin.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"So you've come down, old fat man," said Nugent. "Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Didn't you prefer to stay on deck, after all?" inquired Johnny Bull.

Billy Bunter sat up, set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose, and blinked dizzily at the grinning juniors.

"Groogh! Beasts! Will you help me up?" he gasped.

Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grasped a fat arm each, and heaved the fat Owl to his feet. They rocked with the rocking of the ship, and Bunter rocked between them, clutching hold with frantic hands.

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, I'm bumped and bruised all over—woo! I say, hold me! Oooooh!"

Another wild plunge of the "Annam" sent the three tottering. Bunter lost his hold on his helpers, and clutched again, getting a grip on Harry Wharton's ear with one fat hand, and on Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's hair with the other. There were simultaneous yells from the owners of the ear and the hair.

"Ow! Leggo!"

"My esteemed idiotic Bunter—."

"Beasts! Hold me! Help me!" yelled Bunter. "I say, is the ship going down? I say, get me a life-belt! Oh, crikey!"

"All hands," grinned Bob Cherry. "Heave him into his bunk."

Five pairs of hands heaved Billy Bunter into his bunk.

There he had to clutch hold to keep himself from being tossed out again.

"By gum!" gasped Bob Cherry. "This is a blow! They call this jolly old ocean the Pacific! Feels like it, doesn't it?"

"The pacificfulness is not terrific," gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Urrrrggh!" came from Bunter's bunk.

"All right, old fat man," said Bob Cherry, reassuringly. "The ship isn't going down—it's as sound as a bell! Only a blow!"

"Wurrrrrggh!"

"Brace up," said Harry. "It's all right, Bunter."

"Gurrgh! I—I—I'm gig-gig-gig-going to be s-s-s-sick!" gurgled Bunter. "I—I—I—ooooo-er—ooooch!"

It was really inevitable. Inside Billy Bunter there was a large lunch, to which innumerable oranges and bananas had been added. Only on a very calm sea could the fat Owl have carried that cargo without disaster. With the sea raging and the steamer tossing almost like a cork the cargo shifted!

"Urrgh! I'm awfully ill—I—I—I think I'm dud-dud-dying!" moaned Bunter. "Oooogh! Oh, crikey! Wooooooch!"

They gathered round him, and did what they could.

They held him in his bunk, they brought him water, and they brought him a basin. But their kindly ministrations did little to ease Billy Bunter's sufferings. His fat face was like chalk—he gasped and he gurgled, he moaned and he groaned. He would have given all the Pacific Islands, with a couple of continents thrown in, just to be back in Greyfriars, even bending over under Mr. Quelch's cane! If this had been only a dreadful dream, it would have been sheer joy to wake up from it, even to feel Quelch's cane swiping on his fat trousers. But it was no dream—it was dreadful reality—and the hapless fat Owl mumbled and moaned and gurgled and groaned, and longed for the ship to go down and end his sufferings.

Luckily the ship did not oblige him. For an hour the "Annam" rocked and tossed and plunged in the fury of the hurricane—an hour that was centuries long to Bunter. Then the storm blew itself out, and the deck under the juniors' feet ceased to resemble a see-saw. The hatch was opened at last, and the Famous Five were able to go on deck, glad to get out of the hot stuffy cabin. But Billy Bunter did not stir. The ship was still rolling, and Bunter, though empty, still had a feeling of horrid uncertainty in his fat inside. He remained in his bunk, while the other fellows emerged into the sunshine and the breeze.

But when Bob Cherry gave him a look-in. an hour or so later, Bunter seemed on the way to recovery.

"Beast!" was his cheery greeting. "Thanks! Anything else?" asked Bob.

"Call the steward, will you?" hooted Bunter.

"Want another basin?" asked Bob. "I'll get it for you."

"No!" roared Bunter. "I'm hungry! I've called that lazy nigger a dozen times, and he hasn't come! Go and find him and tell him to bring me something to eat."

Evidently, Bunter was getting better! And Bob Cherry, chuckling, departed to rouse out the Lascar steward.

## CHAPTER XI

### MEFOO!

"A JOLLY old canoe!" said Bob Cherry.

It was two or three days later, and the "Annam" was drawing near her destination. On the following day Captain Corkran expected to raise Kamakama. But as yet there was nothing to be seen of land—the endless Pacific rolled round the Greyfriars voyagers, as far as the eye could reach.

On the waste of desert waters, anything out of the common was an object of interest: and the juniors had been looking for some time at a speck on the sea, on the starboard bow. And as it drew nearer and clearer, they made out the shape of a long canoe, paddled by fuzzy-haired black men.

They watched it with great interest. They noticed, too, that Captain Corkran had his eyes fixed on the canoe, with a very intent gaze.

"We're a jolly long way from land—for a canoe!" remarked Nugent. "Is that a canoe from Kamakama sir?"

The skipper glanced round. "No!" he answered.

Billy Bunter, who had his eyes and his spectacles on the canoe, indulged in a sniff.

"I don't see how he knows," he remarked. "I shouldn't wonder if it was from Kamakama."

"Dry up, you ass," murmured Bob.

"Shan't."

"Kamakama is a Polynesian island," the skipper went on, deaf to Bunter. "The natives there are brown. That canoe has a black crew—they are Melanesians."

"Elementary, my dear Watson—when you happen to know." said Bob Cherry. "Aren't they a jolly long way from land, sir, for a craft like that?"

"Mefoo is a long way from his own island of Kut," said the skipper.

"Mefoo!" repeated Bob.

"That is the name of the chief—the black man standing up and staring at the ship."

The juniors fixed their eyes upon the black man standing up in the canoe. He was a tall and powerfully-built man, and now that the canoe was nearer, they could make out his face—a hard fierce face, adorned by a brass ring in the thick black nose, with necklaces of spent cartridge clips round the thick bull neck. He was lightly clad in a rag of tapa, and his muscular black limbs glistened in the sun. The hard grim face was not pleasant to look upon, and it dawned upon the Greyfriars juniors that they were looking at a primitive South-Sea savage, and quite probably a cannibal.

"Looks a tough customer," said Harry Wharton.

"The toughness is terrific." remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, his dark eyes intent on the black man in the canoe. "It would not be pleasant to meet the esteemed Mefoo on his own island."

The skipper smiled.

"A white man landing on Kut would very likely go to the cooking-pots." he said. "They are cannibals on Kut."

"Oh, crikey!" ejaculated Billy Bunter. For the first time it occurred to his fat brain that there might be a fly in the ointment, as it were, and that life on Lololo might not be wholly lazy ease. "I—I say, they ain't anything like that on Lololo, are they?"

"Lololo is a Polynesian island, like Kamakama," answered the skipper. "The natives are peaceful and industrious. You have nothing to fear on Lololo. Master Bunter."

That was a relief to the fat Owl. Life on Lololo would have lost its attractions had that island been inhabited by black cannibals. Bunter was relieved: but he was not the fellow to admit it.

"I shouldn't be likely to be afraid of niggers," he said, disdainfully. "I've got some pluck. I fancy."

"Queer fancies some fellows have," remarked Bob. "Oh, really, Cherry—."

"But where is Kut, sir?" asked Johnny Bull. "Anywhere in the offing?"

"Fifty miles on from Lololo, and Lololo's nearly a hundred from Kamakama," answered the skipper. "You won't go anywhere near Kut."

"We'd rather not, if that's the sort of merchant that lives there," said Bob Cherry. "Not a nice man to meet in the bush."

"They're heading for us," said Frank Nugent. "I wonder what they want! Can't say I like the look of them."

"They can't mean trouble, surely," said Harry.

"Phew!" said Bob.

The juniors watched the canoe. Twenty black men were slogging at the paddles, heedless of the heat of the sun, and the native craft, long and heavy as it was, seemed almost to skim over the blue waters. It had appeared in view on the starboard bow, well ahead of the steamer, and now it was evidently seeking to cut into the "Annam's" course. Mefoo, standing up, was watching the ship like a hawk. Strange and startling as the idea was, to schoolboys fresh from a peaceful country, the idea came into their minds that hostility was intended by the black crew of the canoe.

"By gum!" said Bob. "If they mean trouble—."

"He, he, he!" from Bunter.

"Shut off that alarm clock, Bunter."

"Beast! I say, you fellows, don't be afraid," urged Bunter. "Nothing to be afraid of."

Five concentrated glares were turned on the fat Owl of the Remove.

"Who's afraid?" said Johnny Bull, in a deep sulphurous voice.

"You are, I fancy," said Bunter, cheerfully. "You look it! You're looking a bit pale, Bob!

Brace up, old chap."

"You fat chump—!"

"You blithering bloater—."

"You piffling porker—."

"You can call a fellow names," said Bunter. "But for goodness sake, don't show the white feather. We haven't come to the South Seas to be frightened by niggers, I hope." Bunter's fat lip curled with contempt. "Think they can do anything to us on a ship! Yah? Pull yourselves together."

Captain Corkran gave the fat Owl a curious look. "You are not alarmed, Master Bunter?" he asked.

"Not likely," sniffed Bunter.

"That is just as well, for that canoe certainly intends to attack the ship," said the skipper. Billy Bunter jumped almost clear of the deck. "What?" he yelled.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We're for it, Bunter! Now you'll need all that pluck of yours. I say, where are you going?"

Billy Bunter did not state where he was going! He just went! He gave the crowded canoe one horrified blink, and then bolted for the hatchway, and vanished. A bump and a howl from below indicated that the fat Owl had descended the cabin steps in a hurry.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob. "Come back, Banter! You're wanted! Plucky chaps like you can't be spared."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But from Bunter, answer there came none. He had disappeared from view, and he stayed disappeared.

There was a faint grin on the skipper's bronzed face.

Harry Wharton eyed him dubiously.

"They really intend to attack, sir?" he asked.

"Aye, aye! Mefoo is a dangerous customer," answered the skipper. "He has given trouble more than once, and there has been talk of sending a gunboat to his island. If we keep on



our course that canoe will lay us aboard, and in ten minutes they will be swarming over the side."

"Then we're in for a scrap?" exclaimed Bob, breathlessly.

"Not exactly! Steam will beat muscle any day, and we're going to give Mefoo a wide berth." The skipper turned away. The juniors watched the canoe eagerly. The black crew were paddling harder than ever, and they could now hear Mefoo's voice, as he shouted to the paddlers, in some unknown dialect, urging them to greater efforts. And they could now see the gleam of spears and axes in the canoe. Startling as it was, there could be no doubt that the savage chief of Kut, coming upon a white man's ship in such lonely waters, intended to attack and plunder it—if he could!

Had the "Annam" kept on her course, an encounter would have been inevitable. But the "Annam," changing her course, stood away to port, and the distance between the steamer and the canoe, instead of lessening, widened at once. Mefoo's harsh voice rose to a yell, as he shouted to the paddlers, and the black men slaved at the paddles in obedience to their chief. But it was in vain, and the canoe dropped astern.

"We're walking away from them," remarked Bob Cherry. He whistled. "If we'd been on a windjammer, in a calm—!"

"The scrapfulness would have been terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. The juniors could not help feeling a little excited. It was a glimpse, though a brief and distant one, of savage life in the Pacific—of barbarism red and raw. Looking back, they could still see the black crew, paddling fiercely, as if still in hope of running down the steamer—and Mefoo, obviously enraged and exasperated, brandishing a spear, his black eyes rolling over the brass ring that glistened in his thick nose.

But the speed of the "Annam" soon dropped the canoe into a mere speck: and it vanished at length into the blue of the Pacific.

"Exit Mefoo!" yawned Bob Cherry. "But I say, where's Bunter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh where and oh where can he be?" chuckled Bob. "Perhaps we'd better look for him, and tip him that he won't be served up for Mefoo's supper this evening."

And the Famous Five, laughing, went below to look for Bunter.

Bunter was not on view in the cabin. They looked for him, up and down and round about, wondering where the fat Owl had hunted cover. Bob Cherry grinned, as a hillock of bedclothes in Bunter's bunk caught his eye. Bunter was not to be seen—but there was evidently something under that hillock.

It was revealed as Bob dragged blankets aside. A pair of popping eyes blinked through a pair of spectacles from a terrified fat face.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter. "Keep away, you beast! I ain't here—."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help! Keep them off! Oh crikey, help!"

"You fat chump!" roared Johnny Bull. "It's us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" Bunter gasped, and blinked at the juniors. "Oh! I—I—I thought—I—I say, where are they? Have they kik-kik-kik-come on board? I say, you fellows, keep them off! I say—."

"They're about ten miles away by this time," said Harry.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Are—are they? Oh! All right! Of course, I wasn't scared, you know."

"You didn't look it!" chuckled Bob.

Bunter sat up. The danger, such as it was, being over, Bunter was Bunter again. Bunter was prepared to defy any number of black cannibals—if they were ten miles away!

"I say, you fellows, if you fancy I was scared—."

"You fat funk," grunted Johnny Bull. "You were scared to a frazzle."

"Beast!"

"It's all right now, Bunter," said Frank Nugent, laughing. "You can turn out. They're out of sight now."

"Fat lot I care whether they're out of sight or not. You fellows may be scared of Niggers—I'm not!" said Bunter, contemptuously. "What you fellows need is a spot of pluck."

"Oh, my hat! Here comes a black man down the ladder!" exclaimed Bob.

"Yaroooh!"

Bunter disappeared under the bedclothes again. Harry Wharton and Co., chuckling, went on deck and left him there. And Billy Bunter perspired and palpitated under the blankets till, peeping out, he discovered that it was the Lascar steward who had come down!

## CHAPTER XII

### THE TRADER OF KAMAKAMA

EZRA HUCK slouched into the shady verandah of the ramshackle bungalow, back of the beach, and stared out at the sea.

It was morning on Kamakama.

It was late morning, for Ezra was not an early riser.

The sun was well up in the sky, and already it was hot. The lagoon glistened like a sheet of silver, and beyond the reef the Pacific rolled bright and blue to infinity. Blue sky, blue sea, dazzling white sand, palm trees nodding in the breeze of morning, tropical flowers of almost unbelievable colour, natives with brown skins in white lava-lavas lolling or strolling on the beach, natives fishing from canoes on the lagoon; a ketch lying at anchor, its cable dropping a clear sixty feet, straight as a string, to the coral bottom—that was the view under Ezra's eyes, as he leaned on the verandah rail and stared.

And he muttered savage words in his shaggy beard. It was the view that met his eyes every day, week after week, year after year, till the weariness of it was in his very bones. Ezra had been twenty years on Kamakama: and he had always been going to get off the island, as soon as luck came his way: but luck had never come. And more and more, year by year, the trader of Kamakama had sunk under the temptation of all white men in the tropics, which he had not the moral fibre to resist: and innumerable long drinks had sapped away whatever energy he had once had. So many drinks, of so many kinds, had so long been mixed up in Ezra Huck that he was little more than a chunk of disagreeing chemicals. His looks were sulky and savage, his eyes bloodshot, his temper so ferocious that his house-boy, Suloo, came near him only in fear and trembling.

Ezra Huck kept the only store on Kamakama, where he traded and chattered with the islanders, exchanging trade goods for copra and pearl-shell. He put up the rare visitors to the island in his bungalow, the only place on Kamakama where accommodation of any sort was to be had—but visitors were few and far between, Schooners and ketches came occasionally into the lagoon, to pick up his trade, but even these were rare. Once in months a steamer came, staying only long enough to land a few supplies and old newspapers, and pick up cargo. Staring across the dazzling sea, Ezra's bloodshot eyes discerned a bar of smoke on the distant blue horizon. That meant that the "Annam" was coming—his only link with civilisation.

He scowled at the blur of smoke.

The coming of the steamer was the only event that ever happened on Kamakama. It was welcome enough to Ezra — it meant a few words with white men, a spot of trade, and a fresh supply of the poison with which he was slowly destroying himself. And on this

occasion it meant more than usual, for he had had a message from the Comet Copra Company, by a trading schooner, that a party of visitors were coming to the island, who would require accommodation, and transport to another island, all of which would be in Ezra's hands. But though the arrival of the "Annam" was a welcome event at any time, and though this time it brought opportunities of unaccustomed profit, the trader scowled at the steamer's smoke in the distance. When he turned out of his bunk in the morning, his head on fire with the long drinks of the night before, Ezra was in a mood to scowl at everything.

"Suloo!" he shouted, calling his house-boy, a brown-skinned native of Kamakama. "You feller Suloo."

There was no immediate answer. Suloo, when he was in hearing of his master's voice, was always prompt. Now it seemed that he was out of hearing.

The trader's sulky, discontented face reddened with rage. It was the wretched man's custom to begin the morning with a long "peg," to pull his shattered nerves together. It was Suloo's duty to have that long peg ready for his master, and if it was not ready, Suloo had to expect the lawyer—cane on his bare shoulders, or the sting-ray tail if Ezra was in an unusually savage temper.

"Suloo!" roared Ezra. His angry voice rang far beyond the bungalow, and natives on the beach stared, and grinned at one another.

There was a sound of running bare feet. Suloo, lazing under a palm tree, in the happy way of a Kanaka when his master's eye was not upon him, had heard the dreadful voice. He came bolting up the palm-wood steps of the verandah.

"Yessar," panted Suloo.

Ezra Huck glared at the breathless house-boy. Suloo was probably thirty years old, but all Kanakas were "boys."

"You bad feller Suloo, what name you no comey along master he sing out?" roared Ezra.

"Two time me call along you no comey."

"No hear, sar, ear belong me, sar," stammered Suloo. "Me makee long peg stop along white master plenty quick."

Both master and man spoke in the "pidgin" English, the common language of the Pacific. Ezra had been twenty years on Kamakama without learning, or thinking of learning to speak in the native tongue. And the only English the Kanakas understood was the "pidgin."

"You bad feller altogether too much," snarled Ezra. "Along you no plenty quick, feller lawyer-cane stop along back belong you."

"Yessar," gasped Suloo.

He disappeared into the house, and reappeared with a palm-wood tray on which was a bottle and a long glass. Ezra Huck had flung himself into a deep cane chair, and Suloo set the tray on a rickety little table beside him—with an anxious eye on a stout flexible lawyer-cane that lay across the trader's knees.

His anxiety was not without cause: for before he could back away after setting down the tray, Ezra has grasped the long cane and lashed with it. It landed crashing on a brown shoulder, and Suloo, with a loud yell, disappeared into the house again.

There was a clink of bottle and glass. Ezra tilted the long glass, and felt better when he had drained its contents. The potent liquor pulled him together, for the time at least. The wretched man knew, as he could not fail to know, that it was poison that was sapping away what remained of his strength and vigour, and that if he did not mend his ways he must come down in the long run to "combing the beach." But Ezra had long given up

thinking of the future, and he lived for the passing day like any of the unthinking Kanakas about him.

He sat watching the smoke-blur on the horizon, coming nearer and clearer, till Suloo brought his breakfast—with an eye on the lawyer-cane. He could make out the steamer's funnel now. It would not be long before she came into the lagoon, and Ezra heaved himself out of his chair, his breakfast done, to go and make himself a little more presentable to meet the eyes of white men.

Ezra was content, as a rule, with a pair of old duck trousers and a cotton shirt, and a chin with several weeks' growth of beard on it. But when the white man's steamer came, it made a difference. Once in two months the trader of Kamakama put up a more or less respectable appearance.

He shaved himself with a shaking hand, inflicting several cuts on his chin, and changed into clean ducks, and combed his tousled hair. The unaccustomed process was long, and the steamer was at the reef by the time he had finished. He went down the verandah steps, as the "Annam" threaded her way into the lagoon.

Her rail was lined with faces, and Ezra stared at them.

They were boyish faces, sunburnt, but fresh and bright. One of them was adorned by a big pair of spectacles. This Ezra concluded, was the party he had been told to expect—apparently a party of schoolboys, on their looks. He counted them—there were six in all, one of them dark-complexioned like a native of India. Ezra gave a grunt of satisfaction. All was grist that came to his mill, and six visitors on Kamakama meant a handful of money. He tramped down the beach, leaving Suloo busy in the bungalow making rooms ready for coming guests.

On the ketch at anchor in the lagoon, two young white men, and a crew of brown boys, were watching the steamer as she came in. The skipper and mate of the ketch "Dawn" seemed interested in a crowd of schoolboys arriving on Kamakama—a very unusual event on such a remote island. Ezra, standing on the coral quay, gave them a scowl. He had traded with Captain King and his mate Kit Hudson and found that they were "wise" to watered copra, and disliked them accordingly.

However, he wasted only one scowl on King of the Islands and his mate. Then he stepped into his whaleboat, snapped at the native crew to "washy-washy along ship" and pulled out to meet the "Annam" as she came to anchor in the lagoon.

### CHAPTER XIII

#### A SPOT OF TROUBLE ON KAMAKAMA

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Say on, old fat man," said Bob Cherry, cheerily. "This is topping!" said Billy Bunter.

"It is!" agreed Bob.

"The topfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The warmfulness of the esteemed sun is a boonful blessing."

"Well, it's too jolly hot," said Bunter. "Still, a fellow can't have everything. The grub here is splendid."

"And if the grub's all right, everything is all right, what?" asked Frank Nugent, laughing.

"Eh!" Bunter blinked at him. "Yes! Of course, I say, how did you like the turtle?"

"Fine!" said Harry Wharton.

"Can't say I like the looks of that man Huck very much," went on Bunter. "Still, he's civil."

"Quite," agreed Harry.

"I expect he's doing pretty well out of us," said Bunter, thoughtfully. "It was fixed up by the Company, you know."

"We know," assented Harry.

"So long as the grub's good, and there's plenty of it, we're all right," went on Bunter. "It's topping here."

"The topfulness is preposterous," said Bob Cherry, in playful parody of the nabob of Bhanipur, and the juniors chuckled.

They were sitting in the verandah of the trader's bungalow, in the sunset. Billy Bunter, with his fat limbs packed into a comfortable Madeira chair, and his extensive interior packed with excellent provender, was happy and satisfied. It was still hot, though the sun was low on the horizon: but for once, Bunter was not grousing. It couldn't help being hot so near the equator: and even Billy Bunter did not expect Nature to change her laws for his especial benefit. Everything else was topping, especially the food: and if Lololo was anything like Kamakama, the prospect before Bunter was happy and glorious.

Food did not appeal to the other fellows quite so strongly as it did to Billy Bunter—neither were they given to lazing and loafing. But they certainly were enjoying their trip to the Pacific.

They sat in the shady verandah, looking across the lagoon, at the "Annam," pulling out to sea. The steamer had stayed only the day at Kamakama, and at sundown was already on her way to other islands.

Ezra Huck was in his store, adjoining the bungalow, and every now and then his deep growling voice, mingled with the falsetto tones of the natives, floated to the ears of the schoolboys in the verandah.

Billy Bunter, who was not very observant, had not liked Mr. Huck's looks. Harry Wharton and Co. liked them still less. Still, what Mr. Huck was like was no concern of theirs, and anyhow they were staying only two days at the island. Then they were going on to Lololo, by what means of transport had to be arranged with the trader. Huck was, at all events, civil, as Bunter had remarked: and it was quite probable that he was, as the fat Owl sagely observed, doing quite well out of the party at the expense of the Comet Company.

Bunter had hardly stirred from the shade of the verandah since the party had landed on Huck's whaleboat early in the day. But the Famous Five had taken a long ramble on the beach, had fallen in with the skipper and mate of the "Dawn" on the coral quay, and had been delighted to be asked to visit the handsome little ketch. Billy Bunter did not miss them while they were gone: it was only a couple of hours, during which the fat Owl remained luxuriously extended in the Madeira chair, his little round eyes closed behind his big round spectacles, and his resonant snore awaking the echoes of Mr. Huck's ramshackle residence.

But Bunter was awake now, and in one of his best tempers. He was content with the present, content with the future, and full of sympathy for fellows who were going back to school at the end of their holiday, and weren't going to laze and laze and laze under palm trees like the happy and glorious Owl.

"Bit rotten for you chaps," remarked Bunter.

"How's that?" asked Bob. "We're all right, old fat man."

"I mean, going back to Greyfriars," explained Bunter. "Next term you'll be kow-towing to old Quelch again—and where shall I be?"

"Outside most of the foodstuffs on Lololo, I expect," said Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, you fellows, when you go back, you can give Quelch a message from me," said Bunter.

"Cough it up," said Bob.

"Tell him, from me, that he's a beast, and that I'm sorry that I didn't jolly well punch his nose before I left," said Bunter.

"I can sort of see us giving that message to Quelch," chuckled Bob.

"I shall think of you sometimes," said Bunter, kindly. "A set of inky schoolboys, swotting and listening to Quelch's jaw—he, he, he! Perhaps later on I may be able to use my influence and get you something out here."

"Thanks," said Johnny Bull, sarcastically.

"The thankfulness is terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Bunter," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I'll think of it," said Bunter, with a wave of a fat hand. "You've been rather beasts sometimes—only the last week of term you all cackled when I mentioned that I was expecting a postal-order—."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And you're cackling now!" hooted Bunter. "Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. You've never treated me really well, as you know—and now I'm standing you a magnificent holiday, regardless of expense. That's me all over! Kindest friend and noblest foe, and all that. Well, I'll see if I can use my influence for you later. I'm awfully sorry for you, you know."

"Fathead!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—."

"Bow-wow!" said Bob Cherry.

"I mean it," said Bunter. "I'm going to do all I can for you. I shall be a big noise on Lololo. I can tell you. I shall have Sanders eating out of my hand! I shall stand no nonsense from him, or from anybody. I shall simply give my orders. I may be able to fix you up on Lololo, and you needn't go back to Greyfriars at all. I'll see about it! Remind me if I forget—I shall have a lot of affairs on my mind, and may forget trifles."

At which the Famous Five chuckled.

Billy Bunter, as he drew nearer and nearer to greatness—in anticipation at least—grew more and more patronising. But patronage from the egregious Owl only seemed to provide the rest of the party with a little harmless and necessary entertainment.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Here comes that chap King."

"You're interrupting me, Cherry," said Bunter, with dignity. "I was speaking."

"You generally are!" sighed Bob. "Why not give your chin a rest, old fat frump?"

He waved his hand to Ken King, the skipper of the ketch in the lagoon, who was coming up the path from the beach. The handsome young sailorman nodded and smiled in reply, and passed on to the store. He was about to enter, when the bulky figure of Ezra Huck appeared in the doorway.

"Keep out, you!" snapped Ezra.

The trader's flushed face told that he had indulged in more than one "long peg" since the "Annam" pulled out. He was not intoxicated, but he was evidently in an ugly mood.

The young skipper of the "Dawn" came to a halt, eyeing the island trader with quiet contempt. Ezra emerged from the doorway, with a threatening glare.

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob Cherry. "Is there going to be a row?"

The Greyfriars juniors looked down from the verandah in silence. It certainly looked as if there was going to be a "row." King of the Islands backed away a pace or two, and Ezra Huck followed him, his looks more and more threatening.

"You'll do no more business on Kamakama, King of the Islands," went on Ezra. "You've been buying copra from the niggers—."

"Aye, aye," assented Ken King. "What about it?"

"All the trade on Kamakama goes through my hands, snarled Ezra. "If you want copra, you'll come to me for copra."

"Not if you water it to make it weigh more, Huck. I've no use for watered copra." answered the skipper of the "Dawn."

"That's enough lip from you," said Ezra Huck. "Get back to your ketch, and pull out."

"I'll take my own time about that, said the boy trader, with a smile.

"Will you?" snarled Ezra. "You've got another guess coming! Get back to your ketch, King of the Islands, or I'll run you down the beach and pitch you into the lagoon to swim out to it."

King of the Islands laughed.

"Better think twice, Huck," he said. "I'll keep out of your store: but I'll trade on Kamakama, a fair price for good copra, as long as I like."

Ezra's reply was a rush, with his horny fists up. Harry Wharton and Co., from the verandah, watched in breathless silence. Billy Bunter emitting a startled squeak. They fully expected to see the young skipper of the "Dawn" rushed off his feet by the bulky trader of Kamakama.

They were surprised the next moment—and so, doubtless, was Ezra Huck. The lashing fists were brushed aside, and King of the Islands' right shot out, landing like a hammer on the burly trader's jaw. Ezra Huck went backwards, almost heels over head, and crashed in the doorway of his store.

There was a cackle of high-pitched laughter from the Kanakas in the store, and from others on the beach.

"Oh, scissors!" murmured Bob. "That chap packs a punch, and no mistake."

King of the Islands stood, looking down at the trader sprawled in the doorway. Ezra Huck sprawled and spluttered, and made an effort to rise, and fell back again. Ken King shrugged his shoulders, and walked away. It was several minutes before the trader of Kamakama was able to get to his feet, and then he staggered into the store, his hand to his jaw, breathing fury. The juniors half-expected the infuriated man to follow the skipper of the "Dawn" on the beach. But Ezra Huck had apparently had enough of King of the Islands. He staggered into the store, and disappeared.



EZRA HUCK WENT BACKWARDS, ALMOST HEELS OVER HEAD

"Oh, crikey!" said Billy Bunter.

"Nice man!" murmured Bob.

"The niceness is truly terrific."

It was a rather startling episode. But it was over. The Greyfriars juniors saw no more of Ezra Huck that evening. Suloo served their supper in the verandah, after which they turned in, lulled to slumber by the ceaseless murmur of the Pacific on the island reef.

CHAPTER XIV

MORE TROUBLE!

"Oh what a beautiful morning!  
Oh what a beautiful day!"

BOB CHERRY was singing.

His voice, if not exactly tuneful, was vigorous, and woke many echoes on the beach of dazzling white sand and powdered coral.

Morning on Kamakama was undoubtedly beautiful.

The bright sun came up in a sky of deepest azure. The Pacific rolled calm and blue-calm as if it had never dreamed of lashing into fury under a hurricane wind. Early fishermen were pushing canoes out on the lagoon. A light breeze came over the reef, and every now and then was heard the "plop" of a falling cocoanut.

Harry Wharton and Co. turned out bright and early, to bathe in the lagoon—in which Billy Bunter did not join them. Early rising did not appeal to William George Bunter. He was done with Greyfriars and its rising-bell, now even more than with Quelch! They left Bunter snoring when they tramped down the palmwood steps of the verandah, and he snored on contentedly while they bathed and swam in the clear glistening water—with watchful eyes for sharks!

Bob Cherry, in exuberant spirits—it was seldom that Bob's spirits were not exuberant—burst into song as they came back up the beach to the bungalow.

"Oh what a beautiful morning!  
Oh what a beautiful day! "

Bob remembered only those two lines: and did not remember all the notes. As a musical effort, his singing, perhaps left something to be desired. But it was merry and cheery, and many Kanakas on the beach glanced with smiling faces at the young "feller white master" who seemed to find the world so jolly a place to live in.

"It's jolly here," said Bob, as they tramped up the creaking steps. Everything about Ezra Huck's bungalow creaked. Ezra's devotion to long pegs left him no leisure to attend to necessary repairs: and there were steps upon which it was essential to tread with care, doors that hung by a single hinge, and shutters that blew loose when there was wind. But the juniors did not expect luxurious quarters on a South-Sea island, and were not disposed to be critical.

"The jolliffulness is—!"

"Terrific!" chuckled Bob. "Not to say preposterous! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter's up! What are you doing out of bed, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—."

"Dreamed that you heard the rising-bell?" asked Bob.

"He, he, he! You fellows will be turning-out at rising-bell next term," grinned Bunter. " I shall jolly well be getting up at what time I jolly well like. Sorry for you poor chaps!"

"That's jolly kind of you, Bunter," grinned Bob.

"Well, I'm a kind-hearted chap," said the fat and fatuous Owl. "Rotten for you, sticking at school, while I'm going to be a jolly important man handling vast business interests and all that. I shouldn't wonder if I make a fortune in South-Sea trade. It only needs brains."



"And the brainfulness of the esteemed Bunter is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, solemnly.

"I fancy I know my way about," said Bunter, complacently. "But I say, I turned out because I wanted my brekker. Seen anything of Mr. Huck?"

"Not a thing," said Bob. "He doesn't seem to be up yet."

"Well, I'm jolly well not going to wait for brekker," said Bunter, positively. "I'm paying for it—at least the Company is—and I'm not going to wait. That nigger can serve it, whether Huck's up or not. Where's that nigger?"

"Better wait for Mr. Huck, perhaps," said Harry Wharton.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Who's boss of this show?" he demanded. "I'm managing this, thanks!"

"You fat ass—."

"When I want advice from schoolboys," said Bunter, with dignity. "I'll ask for it! I don't happen to want it now."

And Bunter rolled to the doorway at the back of the verandah, and shouted: "Here, you nigger! Where are you! Tumble up! Do you hear?"

Suloo came into the verandah.

"Me hear white master sing out, ear belong me," he said. "What name fellow white master he sing out?" The juniors had already heard a great deal of "pidgin" English, and they were aware that "what name" in that dialect meant "why."

"Isn't Mr. Huck up yet?" asked Bunter.

Saloo grinned.

"White master Huck sleep too much plenty along bunk belong him," he answered. "Too much long peg stop along that feller white master."

"Well, we're not going to wait for him," snapped Bunter. "Bring us our breakfast here, and buck up about it."

"Yessar."

Suloo disappeared, and there was a clatter of crockery and pots and pans. Billy Bunter waited impatiently. The famous Five, not quite so impatient, leaned on the verandah rail and watched the lagoon, and the handsome little ketch that rode at anchor there. They could see Ken King and Kit Hudson on deck, and Koko the boatswain, and the crew of brown Hiva-Oa boys. Everyone on the "Dawn" seemed to be busy, and they could guess that the ketch was preparing to put to sea.

"I say, you fellows! Here comes brekker."

Suloo reappeared with a large palm-wood tray, well laden. There were a good many things not quite up to the mark at the trader's bungalow on Kamakama: but the food was good and ample. And that, according to Bunter at least, was what mattered.

The fat Owl's fat face beamed over it.

"You don't get oodles of grub like this at home," chuckled Bunter. "Bit of a change from whalemeat and snoek and things, what? Awfully sorry for you poor chaps! Still. I'm going to see what I can do for you."

At which the Famous Five smiled. It was not easy for Billy Bunter to understand that food was not the beginning and end of all things in everyone's estimation. But the other fellows, though they found the Pacific Islands gorgeous for a holiday, as a permanent choice preferred England, home, and rations. Nevertheless, they quite enjoyed that ample breakfast. Suloo waited on them with a grinning cheerful face, quite happy among other cheerful faces, and forgetful for the moment of Ezra Huck.

But the cheery grin faded from his brown face when a heavy tread was heard in the interior of the bungalow. He cast an apprehensive glance towards the doorway, the change in his aspect so startling that the juniors all looked at him.

"Anything up, Suloo?" asked Bob.

"White master Huck comey, sar." answered Suloo, in a faltering voice. "White master Huck plenty too much mad, along feller King of the Islands kill jaw belong him. Tinkee he comey kill this poor Kanaka boy."

The juniors were quite startled for a moment. But they remembered that in the South-Sea dialect "kill" did not have its full meaning in English. It meant only to beat: the full meaning of the word being expressed in "kill-dead." Suloo was only expecting the lawyer-cane!

"Kill?" repeated Bob. "Oh! You mean wallop! But why the dickens should Mr. Huck beat you, because Captain King jolted his jaw? "

"Along he too much mad, he likee kill back belong me, along lawyer-cane belong him," explained Suloo.

The students exchanged uneasy glances. Exactly how to deal with such a brute as Ezra Huck appeared to be, was rather a problem to them.

"Here he comes!" murmured Bob. "Looks sort of cheery, what?"

"The cheeriness is not terrific."

Ezra Huck came tramping out into the verandah. He was not a pleasant sight. There was a large black bruise on his jaw where Ken King's knuckles had landed the previous day, and there must have been a severe ache in the jaw under the bruise. The more or less respectable aspect he had assumed for the steamer's visit was quite gone. He was dressed in a shabby old pair of dirty duck trousers, with a belt, and a ragged dirty cotton shirt. His eyes were bloodshot, and his face inflamed. Evidently he had consoled himself for his defeat at the hands of the young skipper of the "Dawn" by deeper and deeper "pegs": and, having slept off his potations, he had turned out late in the morning, in the worst temper ever.

The juniors could have felt compassion for a man of whom self-indulgence had made such a ruin. But their predominant feeling was disgust: and they were feeling very uneasy, too. Ezra Huck was in a temper that could only be described as fiendish; that leaped to the eye. And it could hardly be doubted that an outbreak was coming.

But they were under the same roof, and savage, aggressive, and threatening as his look was, they were very anxious to avoid anything like trouble.

"Good morning, Mr. Huck," said Bob Cherry, as cheerily as he could.

Huck glanced at him. He did not answer.

Undoubtedly he was glad that the schoolboys were there, and wanted to keep them there as long as possible, as their stay meant unusual profit for him. But such considerations had little effect on a man whom deep drinking had reduced to a state of mingled misery and fury, and who was quite unaccustomed to self-control. He did not answer Bob's greeting—only barely refraining from answering it with an angry oath. His glaring eyes fixed on Suloo.

"You feller Saloo," he snarled.

"Yessar," faltered the trembling house-boy.

"You lazy nigger, what name you no bring feller peg along bunk belong me?" roared Huck.

"White master no tell this feller bring peg along bunk belong him, sar," mumbled Suloo.

"Don't give me any back-chat, you lazy nigger." Ezra had a thick lawyer-cane under his arm, and that he was going to use it, with or without excuse, was quite plain. He slipped it into his hand. The next moment it rang with a crack like a rifle-shot across Suloo's bare

shoulders, and the yell of the hapless Kanaka rang far across the shelving beach of Kamakama.

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Billy Bunter. His eyes almost popped through his spectacles, in terror, at the truculent ruffian.

Harry Wharton and Co. all jumped to their feet. Suloo, yelling, ran along the verandah, Huck following him up, lashing with the lawyer-cane. Every blow rang like a shot, with all the force of the ruffian's arm in it. The wretched house-boy fell on the planks, and the trader stood over him, still lashing with the lawyer-cane.

Wharton set his teeth.

"That's not going on, you fellows," he said.

"Stop the brute, for goodness sake!" exclaimed Bob. Interfering between master and man, between white man and Kanaka, was certainly not what the juniors had expected, or wanted to do. But they could not stand by idly while the house-boy shrank and yelled and squirmed under the rain of savage lashes.

Harry Wharton ran forward, and caught the trader's arm as it was descending once more. "Stop that, Mr. Huck, please." he said.

The trader glared round at him. He did not trouble to reply. He swung out his left arm, catching the junior across the face, and sending him spinning backwards. Harry Wharton fell heavily on the verandah planks, and Huck, taking no further notice of him, resumed lashing the yelling house-boy.

"By gum!" exclaimed Bob, his blue eyes glinting.

"Collar the brute."

Wharton was on his feet in a twinkling, his eyes flashing.

"Back up here, you fellows." he shouted.

The Co. were with him in a moment. Billy Bunter sat in his Madeira chair and blinked. But the Famous Five, as one man, flung themselves upon the trader of Kamakama, dragged him by main force away from the houseboy, and pitched him over. Ezra Huck's bulky form landed with a crash that fairly shook the ramshackle building. Suloo leaped to his feet, stared for a second at his fallen master, and then darted down the steps and disappeared. Harry Wharton and Co. were left to deal with the infuriated ruffian as he staggered up.

#### CHAPTER XV

### SAUCE FOR THE GANDER!

"By hokey!" The man was stammering, almost gibbering with rage. "By hokey! You young swabs! I—I—I'll—."

"Stand back!" rapped Harry Wharton.

Ezra Huck was gripping the lawyer-cane, in an almost convulsive hand, as he spluttered for breath. It was only too clear what he intended to do with it.

"You'll lay hands on me," roared Huck. "You'll come between me and my nigger! By hokey! You—."

"Keep your distance, Mr. Huck," said Harry, quietly, though his heart was beating. "You won't be allowed to use that stick here."

"I'll take the skin off your back," roared the trader.

"Get on with it," snapped Johnny Bull, contemptuously.

"Somebody will get hurt if you try it on."

That was more than enough for the maddened ruffian.

He came at the juniors with a rush, lashing out with the lawyer-cane, dealing reckless lashes on all sides.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Billy Bunter, staring on with popping eyes. "I—I say, you fellows—oh, crikey!"

"Back up!" shouted Bob, as he caught a lash across his shoulder.

"Oh!" gasped Frank Nugent, as the lawyer-cane came cracking on his head.

"Ooooh!" gasped Johnny, catching it with his arm. The juniors scattered, for a moment, under the savage reckless slashes of the lawyer-cane. Quite likely the ruffianly trader expected them to run, as Suloo had done, and to lash them as they ran. But the Famous Five of Greyfriars were made of sterner stuff than the Kanaka house-boy. Only for a moment they scattered from the reckless lashes, then they rushed at Huck from all sides. And, heedless of a rain of blows from the lawyer-cane, grasped him, whirled him over, and crashed him down.

For the second time, Ezra Huck went down on the planks with a crash that rocked the ramshackle bungalow.

This time he was not allowed to rise. Every one of the juniors had had two or three savage lashes, and their tempers were up now, as well as Ezra's. They jammed the ruffian down on the planks, and kept him there.

The bulky brute heaved fiercely in their grasp. "By hokey!" he gasped. "I—I—I'll—."

"You'll stick there, you drunken brute." said Bob Cherry, between his teeth. He had hold of the lawyer-cane now. "Let go that stick!"

And as Ezra gripped the lawyer-cane all the harder, Bob grasped his wrist with both hands, and twisted it without mercy, till he dropped it. Ezra's other arm was in Harry Wharton's grip, and Johnny Bull had a grasping arm round his neck. Long "pegs" had sapped Ezra's vigour: but at his best he could never have dealt with five sturdy fellows. He struggled, and heaved, and panted, but he could not fling off the juniors, and he could not get on his feet.

"Hand me that stick." Johnny Bull took the lawyer-cane from Bob's hand. "Now roll him over! He's going to have some of his own medicine."

"Hear, hear!" panted Bob, breathlessly.

"My esteemed Johnny—!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Look at my cheek!" hooted Johnny Bull. There was a red mark across Johnny's cheek, where a reckless lash had caught him. "If that hooligan thinks he can handle fellows like that, he's got a lesson coming. Roll him over."

"Hold on," exclaimed Harry Wharton. "We're under that man's roof—."

"We'll get out—after he's had what he's asked for!" snorted Johnny. "He's asked for it, and he's going to have it. Ram him down, and stamp on his legs if he kicks."

"Good egg!" grinned Nugent. His head was singing from a crack of the lawyer-cane, and he was quite in agreement with Johnny.

"But—!" said Harry.

"I tell you he's going to have it!" roared Johnny.

Johnny Bull was generally a quiet fellow, slow to anger. But when his back was up, Johnny was rather like the "tyke" of his native county, liable to bite, alive or dead! And Johnny's back was up now with a vengeance.

Ezra, more infuriated than ever, struggled frantically as he was rolled over on his face. But he was rolled over, and jammed down, and as he kicked and struggled, Wharton and Bob held his arms, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh and Nugent tramped on his legs. Johnny Bull wielded the lawyer-cane.

He wielded it with as much vigour as Ezra himself. It came down with a crash on the trader's shoulders. A thin cotton shirt was not much protection against a thick cane wielded by a vigorous hand. Ezra yelled with pain and fury as it landed.

"Sauce for the gander, old bean," said Bob Cherry. "That's a tip what Suloo feels like when you get going."

"You swabs!" Ezra choked with fury. "I'll get a gun to you for this! I'll pitch you into the lagoon for the sharks! I'll—" He broke off, with a yell, as the lawyer-cane came crashing down again.

"Go easy, Johnny," murmured Harry Wharton. Snort, from Johnny.

"He's going to have a dozen! He gave that Kanaka more than a dozen! Let's see how he likes it himself."

The cane came lashing down again on Ezra's shoulders. His bellow of fury rang and echoed down the beach, and caused a crowd of Kanakas to stare towards the bungalow.

He heaved wildly in the grasp of the Greyfriars fellows: but he heaved in vain. He was safely held: and he had to go through it as Suloo had gone through it. Sauce for the goose was sauce for the gander: and Johnny did not intend to spare him a single swipe.

Lash after lash came down, with all the vigour of Johnny's sturdy arm. Ezra struggled and wriggled, and howled threats: but Johnny paid no heed. A man who handled a stick as Ezra had handled it, wanted a lesson, in Johnny's opinion: and Johnny was going to give him one. And he gave it—hard and heavy.

"There!" gasped Johnny, at last, a little breathless after administering a dozen. "Now let the brute go! If he gives any more trouble, we'll give him another dose of the same."

The juniors released the trader, and stepped back. Ezra Huck sat up, spluttering. The fury in his face was unpleasant to see. It had no terrors for the Famous Five. They were quite prepared to give Ezra more if he asked for it.

The ruffian staggered to his feet, lurching unsteadily.

His hands were clenched, his eyes glaring. It was the first time, in his twenty years in the South Seas, that Ezra had been beaten with a lawyer-cane, and yelled and howled under it as his house-boy had often yelled and howled. It seemed as if it was impossible for him to restrain his fury, and that he would rush at the schoolboys, hitting out on all sides with knuckly fists. They stood in a group, ready for him, Johnny gripping the lawyer-cane, not at all reluctant to handle it again if needed.

But there was a yellow streak in the ruffian, and he did not want another dozen on his shoulders. Somehow he contrived to restrain his fury.

"Get out!" His voice came hoarse and husky. "Get out of this! You don't stay here—you don't step on my cutter for Lololo—get out!"

"We'll get out fast enough," answered Harry Wharton, contemptuously. "We'll go at once! Come and get the bags, you fellows."

"By hokey! I'll make you pay for this! You won't get off the island in a hurry, and I'll—I'll—" Ezra choked with rage.

"You've had what you asked for, you bullying rotter," said Johnny Bull, "and if you ask for more, you'll get it, hard."

"You handled that stick pretty freely, Mr. Huck," said Bob, "and sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander."

"Get out!" roared Ezra.

"Come on," said Harry. "Let's get out of this."

Billy Bunter, still in his Madeira chair, had blinked at the exciting scene with popping eyes through his big spectacles. He was still blinking.

"Oh, crikey!" said Bunter.

"Come on, old fat man," said Bob. "Think you can walk after that brekker, or does it weigh too much?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—."

"Get a move on, Bunter," said Nugent.

"But I—I say, you fellows." stammered Bunter. "I say, there ain't any other place on the island where we can put up—."

"That can't be helped, old man," said Bob. "Come on."

"But I—I say—."

"Look here, are you coming or not?" snapped Johnny Bull.

"I tell you there ain't any other place—."

"Suit yourself, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "We're going. Come on, you fellows."

The Famous Five went into the house to pack their bags. Obviously, it was impossible to remain longer under Ezra Huck's roof—for the Famous Five, at least. Billy Bunter could please himself: and they left him to remain, or to follow, as he chose.

Bunter blinked after them, and then blinked at Ezra Huck. As he had taken no part in handling the trader, he did not see any reason why Huck's savage temper should turn on him: and certainly he was very unwilling to leave the only white man's house on Kamakama and its excellent supply of provender. But his blink at Ezra was very uneasy. The wretched man, a bundle of nerves from the effect of drink, his jaw aching from Ken King's punch, his back aching from the lashing lawyer-cane, did not look like being reasonable. The sheer evil in his face made Billy Bunter quake.

And he had cause to quake. As Harry Wharton and Co. disappeared into the house, leaving Bunter alone with the trader, Ezra started towards him. That was enough for the fat Owl. He jumped up from the Madeira chair and made a bound to follow the other fellows. Ezra had time for only one savage smack before the fat junior escaped—but it was a hefty smack, and a wild yell floated back from Bunter as he vanished.

Ten minutes later, the Greyfriars party left the bungalow, carrying their baggage: and Ezra, still twisting painfully, glared after them with evil eyes as they went.

#### CHAPTER XVI

#### STRANDED!

"STRANDED!" said Bob Cherry.

"The strandfulness is terrific."

"Like a jolly old lot of Robinson Crusoes, only we haven't got a jolly old Man Friday," said Bob.

"Oh, lor'!" said Billy Bunter.

"We're in a bit of a scrape, and no mistake," said Frank Nugent.

"We are—we is!" agreed Bob. "But what's the odds so long as you're happy?"

Bob, at least, had not lost his cheery spirits.

But the Greyfriars party were undoubtedly feeling "stranded."

They had had no choice about clearing out of Ezra Huck's bungalow, after what had happened there. And on Kamakama was no other white man's house. Back of the beach were dozens of native grass-houses, swarming with brown children of all ages and sizes. But Ezra's bungalow, and store, and warehouse, were the only white man's buildings. And Ezra's cutter was the only means of transport to Lololo. Getting off Kamakama without Ezra's aid was a problem.

Camping out under the palm-trees seemed, for the present, the only resource of the Greyfriars party.

They had dumped their baggage in the shade of the palms, as a distance from the trader's bungalow. They sat on their bags to discuss the situation.

Billy Bunter's fat face was lugubrious. One smack on his fat head from Ezra's heavy paw had been enough for Bunter: he did not want to go anywhere near Ezra Huck again. Neither was he worrying, for the moment, about the problem of transport to Lololo. He was thinking of the excellent provender at the trader's bungalow, and of the doubtful prospect of provender anywhere else. Like the Israelites of old, he looked back longingly at the flesh-pots of Egypt. The other fellows, less concerned about that important matter than Bunter, were not giving it a thought as yet.

Ezra Huck had gone into his store. The usual crowd of chaffering Kanakas had gathered there—a larger crowd than usual, however. No doubt they wanted sticks of tobacco and coloured calico and other trade goods: but most of all they wanted to see Ezra Huck—the white man who had yelled and howled like his own house-boy under the lashing lawyer-cane. Dozens of the island natives had witnessed the scene in the verandah, and the news had spread among the grass-houses, amid cackling laughter. Almost every Kanaka on Kamakama had dropped, or was going to drop, into Ezra's store that morning, to grin at the "feller white master" who was still squirming from the effects of the lawyer-cane. And Ezra's frame of mind, the mock of a grinning swarm of natives, was easy to imagine. The juniors had made a bitter enemy of the only white man on Kamakama. So far from getting any help from him, they knew that he would do them any harm he could. No consideration of gain or profit was likely to take the keen edge off Ezra's rancour, after what had happened.

"We're stranded, and no mistake," said Johnny Bull. "But I'm jolly glad we gave that brute a taste of the lawyer-cane, all the same." Johnny rubbed a swollen cheek, and grunted.

"Might have given him a few more, and no harm done."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Bob.

"The hear-hearfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "But where do we go onfully from here, my esteemed and idiotic chums?"

"That's the jolly old question," said Nugent, ruefully.

"We've got to get on to Lololo," said Harry. "No need to stay on this island another hour. if we can get off it. But how—?"

"Huck's cutter is washed out, after what's happened," said Nugent.

"Washed right out," said Bob. "We can't go near that brute without another shindy. And we don't want that!"

"Why not?" growled Johnny Bull. "We can handle him all right."

"Well, that wouldn't get us any forrarder," said Bob. "Better steer clear of him, if we can."

"I say, you fellows—!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Perhaps Bunter knows the answers," exclaimed Bob. "After all, Bunter's bossing this show—he's told us so. How are you going to get us out of this fix, boss?"

"Oh, really. Cherry—"

"Cough it up," said Bob, encouragingly. "Gather round, you men, and stand ready to jump to orders from Boss Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be goats," said Bunter, peevishly. "Look here. I'm thinking about dinner—!"

"Dinner!" repeated five fellows, with one voice.

"Yes, dinner," said Bunter, blinking at them. "We've had a jolly good brekker—that's all right! But now that you fellows have rowed with Huck, what about dinner? We can't feed there again, can we?"

"Hardly!" chuckled Bob.

"We're not thinking about grub, just at the moment, Bunter," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"That's like you!" said Bunter, with a sniff of contempt. "Just because you've had a jolly good brekker, you've forgotten all about dinner. Lucky you've got a fellow with you who can look ahead a bit."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle," hooted Bunter. "But I fancy you'll be thinking about dinner fast enough when the time comes round and there ain't any. If you fellows think that I'm going to miss my dinner—."

"Perish the thought!" said Bob. "Bunter can't miss his dinner, you men."

"I should think not," said Bunter, warmly.

"So never mind anything else," went on Bob. "Let's all put wet towels round our heads, and think out what Bunter's going to have for dinner."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

He relapsed into indignant silence. Obviously, the other fellows weren't going to give a thought to dinner—even Bunter's dinner! Fortunately, Bunter had packed away so enormous a breakfast that he was not yet hungry again. There was still time to think out that important matter. But it appeared that Bunter had to think it out for himself. With the selfishness to which Bunter was sadly accustomed, the other fellows couldn't have cared less.

"Feller white master!"

Harry Wharton and Co. all looked round, as a Kanaka's voice came from under the palms. Suloo came stealthily through the palm trees, glancing round him cautiously as he came. The slanting trunks screened the spot from Huck's store, but Suloo was evidently in dread of being seen by his savage master.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! It's Suloo," said Bob. He gave the house-boy a cheery nod.

"You'd better keep clear of us, Suloo," said Harry Wharton. "Mr. Huck may handle the lawyer-cane again, if he sees you speaking to us."

Suloo grinned.

"Me savvy, sar! That feller white master plenty too much bad feller altogether. Me see you white feller kill that feller Huck along lawyer-cane, sar, back belong him. Me likee, sar."

The juniors smiled. They had no doubt that the house-boy had been pleased to watch—from a safe distance—the castigation of his brutal master.

"Mee likee too much," grinned Suloo. "That feller Huck sing out plenty, mouth belong him, along lawyer-cane stop along back belong him. You good feller along Suloo, sar. Me good feller along you, sar."

Billy Bunter gave the Kanaka a blink.

"I say, you fellows! Perhaps Suloo knows where we can get grub—."

"Shut up!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—."

"For goodness sake, give grub a rest for a minute, Bunter," said Nugent. "Suloo's come here to tell us something or other."

"Yessar! That feller Huck no likee you feller any more altogether," said Suloo. "You no stop along house belong him, you no sail along cutter belong him. You wantee go along Lololo?"



"That's it," said Harry, and the juniors gave Suloo eager attention. It was clear that the house-boy was grateful and well-disposed, to the juniors who had intervened between him and the lawyer-cane. It was possible that he could help. "If you can tell us how to get to Lololo, Suloo—."

"Me tinkee, sar, head belong me," said Suloo. He pointed through the slanting palm to the lagoon with a brown finger. "Feller King of the Islands pull out along sea plenty too soon, sar. Plaps he takee feller white masters along Lololo, sar, spose you sing out along him, sar."

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry.

The juniors all looked in the direction of Suloo's pointing brown finger. Far out in the lagoon, the ketch "Dawn" was still at anchor, though they could see that Ken King and his crew were preparing for sea. They looked at the handsome ketch, and then looked at one another, with brightening faces.

"That's an idea," said Johnny Bull.

"By gum!" said Bob. "If Captain King happens to be going Lololo way—here, you feller Suloo, you savvy Captain King go along Lololo?"

"Me savvy, sar," answered Suloo. "Me tinkee plaps. Tinkee you feller go along feller ketch, along canoe, sing out mouth along you, plaps feller King of the Islands takee you feller, spose he go along Lololo."

And, having said what he had come to say, the house-boy, after another cautious glance in the direction of Ezra Huck's store, disappeared through the palm trees.

"By gum!" repeated Bob. "It's a chance. Easy enough to pick up a canoe at the beach, and ask Captain King. We're a bit of a crowd—but they might give us a passage if they're going our way—."

"I'll cut down to the beach, and get a canoe out," said Harry. "No harm in asking, at any rate. It would get us right out of this scrape, if the 'Dawn' could take us on to Lololo."

"Go it," said Bob.

"I say, Wharton," squeaked Billy Bunter, as the captain of the Remove turned away. "I say—hold on—."

"Well, what?" Wharton glanced back impatiently. "No time to lose, Bunter, if I'm going to catch them before they pull out of the lagoon."

"That's all very well," said Bunter. "I'm ready to go on to Lololo, of course. But what's the grub going to be like on a little ketch like that?"

"You fat ass!" roared Wharton.

"Well, you can ask that chap King what the grub is like, and tell him we're a bit particular about it. He'll have to get in something extra, with six passengers. I say, Wharton, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you! Beast!"

Billy Bunter was left to waste his sweetness on the desert air, as Harry Wharton hurried down to the beach. It was easy to pick up a canoe with a Kanaka boatman at the coral quay: and in a very few minutes Wharton was being paddled out swiftly to the "Dawn's" anchorage.

## CHAPTER XVII

### NOTHING DOING!

"FELLER canoe comey along ship, sar."

It was Koko, the brown-skinned boatswain of the "Dawn," who called. King of the Islands glanced round.

The "Dawn" was ready for sea: and the young trader was about to give the order "Up hook." But he paused, as he glanced at the canoe that was skimming the shining surface of the lagoon, across from the coral quay ashore. It was paddled by a native, with a white passenger.

"One of that schoolboy crowd," said Kit Hudson, the mate of the "Dawn," with a grin. "He's coming here. Ken—a schoolboy wouldn't be expected to know that there's a wind we want to pick up outside the reef."

King of the Islands smiled.

A visit from the shore, just when he was about to put to sea, was not what any skipper could possibly want. But the young trader of the South Seas was all good nature: and he liked the cheery party of schoolboys from "home." He held back the order to heave up the anchor from the coral bed of the lagoon.

"We'll see what he wants," he said.

"Aye, aye," assented Hudson.

Ken King waved a hand to the schoolboy in the canoe, and Harry Wharton waved back. The canoe skimmed on, and reached the anchored ketch. The Kanaka boatman stood up, holding on to the low teak rail with a big brown hand.

King of the Islands and his mate looked down over the side. Harry Wharton, standing up in the canoe, looked up at them.

"Ahoy, shipmate," said Ken, smiling. "What's wanted?"

"A passage to Lololo, if you're going that way," answered. Schoolboy as he was, he knew better than to waste a skipper's time when he was about to put to sea, and he came straight to the point.

"Lololo!" repeated King of the Islands.

"Yes! The Comet Copra Company's manager there is expecting us," explained Harry. "We were going across in Mr. Huck's cutter, but—" He hesitated for a moment. He did not want to allude to the "shindy" at the trader's bungalow. "But we'd rather find some other way if we could. If your course lies in that direction, and you'd be willing to pack six passengers on your ship—"

King of the Islands shook his head.

"I'd be more than willing to pack on the passengers," he said. "But we go nowhere near Lololo."

"Oh!" said Harry. He could not help feeling disappointed. Suloo's suggestion had seemed to indicate a possible way out for the stranded schoolboys. But the house-boy knew nothing of the "Dawn's" course: and evidently it was not on the eastern tack for Lololo.

"Lololo's due east from here," explained King of the Islands, "and our course is for Uma—due south. Sorry—I'd have been glad to give you a passage if it could have been done."

"O.K.," said Harry. "I thought I'd ask you, sir. I hope I haven't wasted your time when you're busy."

"That's all right," said Ken. "Hold on a minute, kid," he added, as Wharton was about to sign to the Kanaka to push off from the "Dawn."

Harry looked up at him inquiringly.

The skipper of the "Dawn" leaned over the rail.

"You young fellows are fresh from home," he went on. "You're griffins here—."

"Griffins?" repeated Harry.

"I mean, newcomers to the Islands," said Ken, smiling. "Have you any use for a word of advice from a man who knows these seas like a book?"

"I hope so, sir," answered Harry. "What is it?"

"You're going to Lololo," said Ken. "You'll be O.K. there. I've met Sanders, the Copra Company's manager, and he's a white man. But you may be thinking of taking trips round about Lololo—sailing, canoeing, and all that—."

"Yes, very likely," assented Harry.

"Well, if you do, steer quite clear of an island to the north of Lololo—the island of Kut. The natives there are very different from the brown boys you've seen on Kamakama. They're black Melanesians, and cannibals."

"You'll hit trouble if you go near Kut," added the mate of the "Dawn."

"There are heads smoking in the canoe-house on Kut, and Mefoo, the chief, would think just nothing of adding white men's heads to his collection."

"So keep on your guard while you're on Lololo," said King of the Islands. "If you go outside the lagoon, on the open sea, don't go unless Mr. Sanders is with you, with a loaded rifle."

"I'll remember," said Harry, smiling. "We've seen Mefoo—."

"Oh! You've seen him?"

"We passed him in a canoe, in the steamer coming here," explained Harry. "The skipper thought he intended to attack the steamer, if he could get close enough. He couldn't."

"My sainted Sam!" exclaimed King of the Islands. "It's high time that a gunboat cleared out that wasps' nest on Kut. Well, if you've seen Mefoo, you've seen a black chief you'd do well to keep in a wide offing."

"We shouldn't like to fall in with him and his crew at sea," said Harry. "I'll remember what you've said, and thanks. Good-bye, sir."

"Cheerio, kid."

The canoe pushed off from the ketch, and paddled away. King of the Islands waved his hand in farewell, and the next moment was calling to his crew of Hiva-Oa boys.

Up came the anchor from the coral, and the ketch glided away for the reef passage to the sea.

As she neared the reef, a canoe came paddling in from the Pacific, and King of the Islands and his mate glanced at it. It was paddled by a single brown-skinned Kanaka, who looked worn and weary. A rag of tapa tied round his head had a dull red stain on it.

"That's a Lololo boy," said Kit Hudson, eyeing the Kanaka curiously. "Looks as if he'd found trouble at sea."

"Mefoo, perhaps," said King of the Islands, knitting his brows. "Ever since Mefoo became chief, the black boys on Kut have been kicking over the traces. They'll have to send a gunboat from Fiji sooner or later."

The Lololo canoe glided on, slowly, its single passenger evidently weary and spent. The "Dawn" surged into the reef passage, and out to sea. Outside the reef, canvas was shaken out: and the handsome little craft danced away over the blue waters, tacking southward with the wind on her starboard quarter.

Kamakama and its nodding palms dropped into a blur astern; and passed out of sight, and out of mind, as the "Dawn" stretched on her southerly course. But both King of the Islands and his mate had a friendly recollection of the party of schoolboys from "home" whom they had met, and never expected to meet again—little dreaming where, and in what circumstances, they were to meet the Greyfriars party once more.

#### CHAPTER XVIII

#### UNEXPECTED!

"SOMETHING'S up!" said Bob Cherry.

"Looks like it!"

"The upfulness appears to be preposterous!"

Harry Wharton had rejoined his comrades under the palms on Kamakama—with the news that there was "nothing doing." By the time he reached them, the "Dawn" was out of the lagoon, and the juniors watched her tall sails sinking into the blue till they disappeared. It was then that they noticed the Lololo canoe that crawled wearily in and tied up at the coral quay. Immediately the man in it stepped ashore, he was surrounded by a crowd of Kamakama natives, and there was an excited outburst of cackling voices. Who and what the man was, the Greyfriars fellows had no idea. King of the Islands and his mate, when the canoe passed the "Dawn," had seen at a glance that its occupant was a Lololo "boy." To the shipmates of the "Dawn" the particular race of any Kanaka was apparent at once: but to the schoolboys fresh from England all the brown men of the Islands were much of a muchness. They watched the man curiously, but without thinking of connecting him in their minds with Lololo.

"That chap's been through it," said Frank Nugent.

"He looks all in," said Johnny Bull.

The Kanaka had evidently been wounded, and he looked utterly spent. He staggered as he clambered from the canoe, and many brown hands were stretched out to help him. One of the natives handed him a young drinking-nut, and he drained the milk from it in a long gulp. He was wounded, weary, athirst, and had evidently found trouble, as the mate of the "Dawn" had remarked.

From the distance, the sound of innumerable high-pitched voices reached the schoolboys under the palms, though they could not make out the words—neither could they have understood them, for they knew nothing of the Polynesian dialect spoken by the natives. But whatever it was the newcomer had said, it had caused tremendous excitement among the crowd of Kanakas on the beach, and the juniors could not help pondering what it was. It was quite plain that something was "up": but what that something was they could form no idea.

After a few minutes of excited talk and gesticulation, the man from the canoe left the crowd of natives, still in a wild buzz of excitement, and padded with his bare feet up the coral path to the trader's bungalow.

"Somebody to see Huck," said Bob.

The juniors followed him with their eyes. They saw Ezra Huck come out into the doorway of his store. He was staring at the man, as if curious and interested. The Kanaka came to a stop before the trader, and the juniors could see that he was speaking, though his voice did not reach their ears at the distance.

Whatever it was he said, it produced a startling effect on Ezra Huck.

He gave a start that was almost a bound, and stared at the brown man as if dumbfounded. His deep-set eyes popped in his stubbly face.

Harry Wharton and Co. exchanged glances. "What on earth's up?" murmured Bob.

"Something!" said Nugent. "What that Kanaka said made Huck jump nearly out of his skin."

The juniors could not help feeling curious. It was plain that the bandaged Kanaka had brought startling news to Kamakama.

They could see Huck questioning him, with an excited, eager face. For several minutes they talked together, the trader questioning, the bandaged Kanaka answering, till Huck, at length, signed to the man to go into the store. The Lololo boy disappeared into the building.

Ezra did not follow him in. He stood where he was, with the brilliant sunshine of Kamakama in his hard seamed face and bruised jaw. He seemed to be in deep thought, and a strange, malignant grin came over his face, which startled the juniors as they saw it. Whatever it was he was thinking of, only too plainly his thoughts were dark and evil. He looked up suddenly, staring towards the palm trees where the Greyfriars party stood with their eyes on him. He could see them among the trees, and the look on his face, as he stared, was so evil that they could hardly repress a shiver.

"By gum," muttered Bob. "I shall be jolly glad to get off Kamakama, and see the last of that brute."

"Same here," said Nugent.

"The samefulness is terrific."

"We've given the brute something to remember us by, anyhow," growled Johnny Bull. "I'd rather like to give him another spot before we go."

"I say, you fellows." It was an alarmed squeak from Billy Bunter. "I—I say, he's coming here! Oh, crikey!" Bunter jumped up from the bag he was sitting on. Ezra Huck, after that long evil stare in the direction of the Greyfriars party, came striding towards the palm trees. He was heading direct for the spot where the juniors stood—much to Billy Bunter's alarm.

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

"If that means more trouble—!" he said.

"Can't mean anything else." said Bob. "I daresay he's parked a few more whiskies, and he's ready for another shindy."

"I—I say, you fellows, let—let's go for a walk!"

"Fathead! We can handle him all right," said Bob. "If he's looking for trouble, we'll give him all he wants."

"And some over," growled Johnny Bull.

The Famous Five stood together, facing the island trader as he came. They certainly did not want another "shindy": but they did not intend to stir a step from where they stood. They were quite prepared to deal with Ezra Huck again—Johnny, for one, was quite keen on it. Only Billy Bunter blinked at Ezra in alarm as he came.

But the trader's manner was not threatening as he approached. Unless he was coming to renew the trouble, the juniors could not guess why he was coming at all. But that did not seem to be his intention.

There was a curiously stealthy look on his face, and his eyes were furtive. If ever a man looked treacherous, Ezra Huck did at that moment. The juniors wondered what could be in his mind. That he would gladly have done them any evil turn he could, they did not doubt for a moment. Yet it was clear that he was not thinking of renewing hostilities.

"You young swabs—!" he began.

"You can cut that out," interrupted Johnny Bull. "If you can't keep a civil tongue in your head, shut up."

Ezra's eyes smouldered at him.

"You'd better keep your distance. Mr. Huck," said Harry Wharton, quietly. "We want no more trouble with you, and we intend to get off Kamakama as soon as we can."

"I guess that's what I've come to chew the rag about," snarled Ezra.

"Oh!"

"It was fixed up for me to run you across to Lololo in my cutter," the trader went on. "Well, that goes."

"Oh!" repeated Harry.

Ezra jerked a horny thumb towards the coral quay, where the dingy little cutter was tied up. The juniors looked at him in surprise. That Ezra intended to keep to his engagement to run them across to Lololo in his cutter, was about the last thing they would have guessed. "I guess the cutter's ready, if you're ready," he went on, eyeing them, but without meeting their eyes. "I've seen more'n I want to see of you on Kamakama, and you can lay to that. I'll be glad to see the last of you here."

"Just what we feel like, Mr. Huck," said Bob, affably.

Ezra gave him a scowl.

"The Comet Company's paying me fifteen pounds for the run," he grunted. "I guess I can't afford to throw away the money."

"No reason why you should," said Harry. "We're more than ready to keep to the arrangement, if you are. Mr. Huck."

"There's a wind outside the reef," said the trader. "A wind from the nor'-west that will run us right across to Lololo, if it lasts. We can't afford to lose it. If you're going, you go now."

"We're ready."

"The readiness is terrific."

"Jolly glad to start this minute," said Bob.

"O.K., then," grunted Ezra. "Get your bags down to the cutter. I'll send my boy with provisions on board. I'll be after you in five minutes."

"Right-ho!"

Ezra watched their faces, with the same stealthy look on his own, which they found hard to understand. What he had said came as a relief. They were anxious to get off Kamakama, and the trader's cutter was the only vessel available. If Ezra chose to put rancour aside, and stick to business, it suited the schoolboys stranded on the island.

"O.K.," said Ezra again, and with that he turned and tramped back to his store.

"I say, you fellows—." squeaked Bunter. "Don't you want to go, fathead?" asked Bob.

"Oh! Yes! But what about the grub? We'd better see that the grub's all right, before we start. No good taking risks—."

"You fat chump, give us a rest about grub! Come on, you fellows."

Harry Wharton and Co. carried the baggage down to the cutter at the quay. Billy Bunter rolled after them with a worried expression on his fat face. Bunter was eager to get to Lololo, and comfortable quarters in the Comet Company's manager's house there, and to the life of lazy ease to which he had looked forward ever since his pater had told him the great news in No. 7 Study at Greyfriars School. But first things, after all, came first: and Bunter was anxious about the "grub."

But the sight of Suloo packing dozens of tins in the cutter's little cuddy reassured him, and the cloud cleared from his plump countenance. If the grub was all right, everything was all right: and it was a cheery and anticipative Bunter that lolled in a deck-chair when the cutter, with Ezra Huck at the tiller, and Suloo at the sheets, glided from the lagoon of Kamakama and stood out to sea.

## CHAPTER XIX

### SULUOO'S SECRET

"A wet sheet and a flowing sea,  
A wind that follows fast.  
And fills the white and rustling sail,

And bends the gallant mast."

BOB CHERRY'S cheery voice echoed over the blue waters. It was accompanied by Bunter's snore: the fat Owl having fallen asleep in his deck-chair in the heat of the tropic day. It was hot. Even Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh found it rather hot. There was hardly a spot of cloud in the deep blue dome of the sky that stretched from horizon to horizon without a sign of land. Kamakama and its nodding palms had long since vanished. Once or twice the juniors had glimpsed the feathery tops of palms on other islands, but they had dipped into the Pacific and disappeared. A world of water lay about them, seemingly illimitable. They sought what shade they could from the sails, but it did not amount to much. The blazing sun streamed down on them. On the steamer there had been awnings: and no doubt Ezra Huck could have rigged up an awning on the cutter, had he chosen to do so. But he did not so choose: and none of the party felt disposed to ask favours of the scowling man sprawling over the tiller. He had not spoken a single word to them since pulling out of Kamakama, and they had not spoken to him. He watched them almost continuously, with smouldering eyes under his wide-brimmed hat. The juniors did not need telling that his bitter hostility was unabated. Every now and then he wriggled and twitched, and they knew that he was still feeling the effects of the lawyer-cane that had scored his back. And every wriggle, every twitch, was accompanied by a black look at his passengers, and a muttered evil word. Harry Wharton and Co. gave him as little attention as they could. But cooped up within the narrow limits of the cutter, they could not keep very far from him. They had to remain on deck—nobody was disposed to seek shade in the cuddy, which was stuffy and foul and crawling with cockroaches. Ezra's cutter was the dirtiest craft they had yet seen. They could not help comparing it with King of the Islands' ketch, where everything was neat and clean as a new pin. And though they did not mean to show their disgust, it was very probable that Ezra saw it, and that it added to his rancour.

It was a long stretch to Lololo. The cutter, foul as she was, was at least a good sailor, and was making a good seven knots. Ezra knew how to sail his craft, and to get speed out of her. Every now and then he shouted or growled to Suloo: but to the juniors he did not speak a syllable. They would have been willing, indeed glad, to lend a hand with the ropes, but Ezra wanted no help from them. A voyage under such conditions was not exhilarating, and only Bob Cherry seemed quite able to keep up his exuberant spirits. Suloo, jumping to the snarled orders of his master, cast glances at the passengers from time to time. But he did not venture to speak. It seemed to Harry that the Kamakama boy was uneasy in his mind, and that he would gladly have communicated with them, though what he might want to say Wharton could not guess. But his fear of his master was evidently too deep. In the hot afternoon, the juniors stood or sat about the filthy deck, or leaned on the rail, eager to see the palms of Lololo rise from the sea on the eastern horizon. But that, they knew, could not be for a long time yet. They were not likely to sight Lololo that day. Whether they would arrive at night, or the next morning, they did not know.

"Rum-tum-tum-tum, rum-tum-tum-tum,  
Rum-tum-tum-tum-tee!  
The world of waters is our home,  
And merry men are we! "

Bob, as usual, did not remember all the words when he was singing. He cheerfully filled in the blanks with rum-te-tumming.

"The world of waters is our jolly old home, and no mistake," remarked Frank Nugent. "But it isn't exactly merry—with that ugly mug glaring at us all the time."

He spoke in a low voice, so not to reach Ezra's ears. Ezra was looking drowsy. He had been refreshing himself from time to time, from a flask, now empty. That kind of refreshment, added to the tropical heat, caused him to nod over the tiller.

Harry Wharton glanced at him as Nugent spoke. "Looks as if he's going to sleep!" he remarked. "I shall be jolly glad when this trip is over."

"The gladfulness will be terrific," murmured the nabob of Bhanipur.

"Can't understand the ugly brute!" muttered Johnny Bull. "He hates us like poison, you can see that. I believe he'd be glad to tip us into the Pacific, if he could—and dared! Yet he's giving us this passage."

"They're paying him for it," said Harry.

"I know! But—" Johnny shook his head. "I daresay fifteen quid is a lot to a boozy trader like Huck, but—" He shook his head again. "I don't get it! He would serve us any rotten turn he could, and a handful of quids wouldn't stand in his way."

"But we're getting the passage, old man," said Bob Cherry. "The good man doesn't seem to love us very much: but he's taking us to Lololo—no getting out of that."

"I don't get it!" repeated Johnny.

He gave the unpleasant face at the tiller a grim searching look. He was puzzled and dissatisfied, with perhaps a twinge of uneasiness.

All the party had been glad enough to get the passage on Ezra's cutter, instead of kicking their heels on Kamakama, hung up there and unable to reach their destination. It might have been days, or weeks, before a craft came into the lagoon on which they could have hired a passage to Lololo. Ezra's offer had come as a surprise, but as a relief too. They could only conclude that he did not want to lose the sum that was to be paid for the trip—that, indeed, seemed the only explanation. But Johnny Bull didn't seem satisfied with it. Some vague suspicion of intended treachery was at the back of his mind. Yet what other motive the trader could have, other than the obvious one, was a puzzle.

Another snore was added to that proceeding from Billy Bunter. Ezra's eyes had closed, and he nodded. His arm hung over the tiller kept the cutter steady: probably he was not quite asleep.

"Look at Suloo!" whispered Nugent, suddenly.

All eyes turned on the Kamakama boy.

Suloo was watching his master like a cat. Satisfied at last that the trader, if not sound asleep, was at least sufficiently sunk in slumber not to observe or heed him, Suloo secured the sheet in his hand to a cleat, and looked round at the juniors.

His brown face was full of excitement. He placed a brown finger on his lips: a sign of silence that the schoolboys could not fail to understand. .

Then, silent with his bare feet, he moved cautiously towards them.

They watched him in silence, their hearts beating a little. Several times Harry Wharton had thought that the Kanaka had something he wished to say, which he dared not utter under his master's eye. Now it was quite plain. Suloo was almost trembling, between eagerness to speak and dread of the savage-faced brute at the tiller.

"You feller white master." Suloo spoke in a frightened whisper. "You listen along this feller, ear belong you, no sing out mouth belong you."

"What is it, Suloo?" asked Harry, also in a whisper.

"You savvy that feller boy comee along Kamakama, tapa stop along head belong him."



The juniors knew at once to whom he alluded: the weary man with the bandaged head who had brought news to Ezra Huck—startling news of some sort, of which they knew nothing.

"Savvy," answered Harry. "What about him?"

"He Lololo boy," whispered Suloo.

The juniors all started a little.

"Lololo boy!" repeated Harry. "You mean that he came in that canoe from Lololo, with a message for white master Huck?"

"Yessar! He comee tell white master Huck. You no savvy what thing he tell white master Huck?"

"No savvy," answered Harry.

"He tinkee you no savvy," said Suloo. "Spose you savvy, you no likee go along Lololo, sar."

The juniors could only stare at him blankly.

They knew now that the bandaged man had come from Lololo, their destination. They knew already that he had brought news that had startled Ezra Buck. But why that should keep them away from Lololo they could not begin to guess.

"I don't understand," said Harry. "No savvy, Suloo! We came to Kamakama to go on to Lololo, and we have to go there—."

"We're expected there. Suloo." said Bob. "We go along Lololo, stop along white master Sanders."

"You no savvy, sar! Spose me sing out, white master Huck plenty kill this poor Kanaka. He no wantee you savvy. Spose you go along Lololo, sar—."

Suloo was suddenly interrupted.

A moment or two more, and the juniors would have known what the Kamakama boy was so eager to tell them. But at the moment Ezra Huck's eyes opened.

There was a roar from the trader, as he saw Suloo with the juniors. His stubbly face reddened with rage. His hand grasped the empty metal flask that lay by his side, and with all the force of his arm, he hurled it at the house-boy. It struck Suloo on the side of his head, and flung him half-stunned on the deck. There was a painful howl from Suloo as he sprawled.

"You bad feller Suloo!" roared Huck. "You talk too much mouth belong you, along you savvy white master say you no talk along white feller."

"You brute!" roared Bob Cherry, his eyes flashing. "You rotten brute!"

The trader did not heed him. He was looking about, as if for another missile.

Harry Wharton stepped between him and the yelling house-boy.

"Stop that!" he rapped.

Unheeding, the trader threw a rope over the tiller, and scrambled to his feet, grasping a thick lawyer-cane. He came along the deck with a red and furious face, and Suloo, howling in anticipation, scrambled away towards the bows. Billy Bunter opened his eyes behind his big spectacles, and blinked.

"I say, you fellows—."

Nobody heeded Bunter. Harry Wharton and Co. lined up in the path of the trader of Kamakama, Suloo howling and whimpering behind them.

"Put that stick down. Mr. Huck," said Harry, quietly. "You won't lay a finger on Suloo while we're on this craft."

"You handle that stick, you rat, and we'll give you some more of what we gave you this morning," said Johnny Bull, grimly.

The look that Ezra gave the juniors was deadly. But he threw down the lawyer-cane.

"You got it coming!" he muttered. "You got it coming. You jest wait a few—you got it coming."

He glared past the juniors at the cringing house-boy. "You feller Suloo!" he roared.

"Yessar," stammered Suloo.

"You no talk along white feller along this craft. Spose you talk along white feller, me kill back belong you, along sting-ray tail, along we stop along Kamakama."

"Yessar," mumbled Suloo. "Me no talk along mouth belong me, sar—me good boy along you, sar."

Ezra Huck slouched back to the tiller. Suloo, rubbing his bruised head, went back to his post. The juniors, angry and disturbed, could only wonder what it was that the Kamakama boy had desired to tell them. It seemed to them that it was some sort of a warning: though against what he wished to warn them they had no idea. But there was no further chance of learning anything from Suloo. Even when Ezra Huck's eyes closed again under his shaggy brows, Suloo did not venture to approach the schoolboys or to whisper or make a single sign. Whatever it was that the Kanaka knew remained locked up in his own brown breast.

## CHAPTER XX

### PERIL IN THE NIGHT!

"WHAT'S up?" asked Bob Cherry.

It was a night of almost breathless loveliness. High over the Pacific sailed the full round moon, like a round shield of silver, streaming down light on the rolling waters. The sea broke in silvery flakes before the cutter's bow, and a long white wake streamed astern. Even the dingy patched old sails had lost their dinginess in the soft moonlight, and glimmered white against the deep dark blue of the sky.

The Greyfriars party had been sleeping on deck, in their clothes. The night was warm and calm, even the wind that filled the tall sail and rattled the blocks was like a warm breath. A few heaps of sacking on the deck were all the bedding provided on the cutter, but they had not expected to find comfortable quarters on a little South-Sea trading craft. They slept soundly enough, to the rocking of the vessel and the murmur of the wind in the canvas: Bunter, who preferred the deck-chair, sprawling in the same and snoring.

Whether Ezra Huck slept or not, they did not know.

He had dozed a good deal during the day at the tiller, though he never failed to keep his craft under control. Several times during the night they had half-awakened at the sound of his growling, threatening voice, calling to Suloo, who nodded off whenever he fancied that his master's eye was not upon him. But they slept again: and might have slept on till dawn, had not unusual sounds and movements on the cutter awakened them.

Harry Wharton sat up and looked about him. The moon shone down on the cutter with almost blinding light; the sea was like a lake of molten silver. The little vessel was speeding through the water as before, the wind on her port quarter, the tall sail drawing full. Wharton's eyes turned on Ezra, no longer sprawling at the tiller, but standing up, staring at the sea. Wharton could see his profile, and saw that his face was hard set, his eyes gleaming and glinting under his shaggy brows, his lips drawn back and showing his discoloured teeth in a snarl. His whole attitude was one of keen watchfulness and alertness, his look fierce and savage.

Suloo stood staring in the same direction as his master, and there was fear in his brown face glimmering in the moonlight.

Neither of them glanced towards the juniors. Whatever had disturbed them, it had nothing to do with the Greyfriars party.

That something was amiss, Wharton did not need telling. What it was he could not surmise. He touched Bob lightly on the shoulder, and Bob Cherry's eyes opened drowsily, and he murmured "What's up?"

"Something—I don't know what," answered Harry.

"Better rouse up, I think."

"You feller Suloo!" came Ezra Huck's bark.

"Yessar!" The Kanaka's voice had a tremble in it.

"You fetch long-feller gun belong me along cuddy he stop."

"Yessar."

The Kamakama boy's bare feet padded into the cuddy. All the juniors, excepting Bunter, were awake now.

They rose quietly to their feet. Billy Bunter snored on in the deck-chair. They did not think of awakening him. All of them had a sense of danger in the air: and if there was danger, it was better for the fat Owl to sleep on knowing nothing of it.

Suloo came out of the cuddy with a rifle and a cartridge-belt in his brown hands. The juniors felt a little thrill. They had not been aware till now that there were firearms on board the cutter.

"What the thump—!" murmured Johnny Bull.

"There's something in the sea." Harry Wharton stared hard in the direction in which Ezra's eyes were fixed. "I think it's a canoe."

"We can't be far from Lololo now," said Nugent. "Most likely a Lololo canoe. Nothing to be alarmed about in that."

Bob Cherry whistled softly.

"Oh, scissors! Not our old friend Mefoo again, I hope."

"Not likely," said Harry. "Kut's fifty miles on from Lololo—what would a Kut canoe be doing here?"

"Huck seems to be expecting trouble," said Bob.

The Kamakama trader looked round, his eyes glinting at his passengers. There was a sour evil grin on his stubbly face.

"Oh! You're woke up, are you?" he growled.

"Yes," answered Harry, quietly. "What's wrong, Mr. Huck?" He spoke as civilly as he could, much as he disliked the man, and disliked speaking to him at all.

"One of you got hoss-sense enough to take the tiller?" snapped Huck.

"Any of us could steer the boat, if you want us to. I'll take the tiller, if you like," answered Harry.

"Take it, then, and keep her steady."

Wharton went to the tiller. All the juniors, now, could see the shape of a canoe distant on the moonlit water. So far as they could see, a canoe so near Lololo was likely to be a Lololo craft. But apparently Huck did not think so, for he had taken his rifle from Suloo, and was examining it, evidently with a view to using it. That could only mean that he expected hostility from the canoe crew.

"Isn't that a Lololo canoe, Mr. Huck?" Bob asked, bluntly.

The trader gave a hoarse chuckle.

"I guess not! If you use your eyes, you'll see that the Diggers on it have got black skins."

"It's a long way from Kut," said Bob.

Ezra gave him a strange look.

"Sure!" he said. "That canoe's a long way from Kut. Mebbe Mefoo's been on a trip!" he chuckled again. "He sure is a long step from his island."

What the trader found in that to cause him to chuckle, the juniors did not know. Some secret and evil thought was in his mind, but whatever it was, he did not intend to disclose it to his passengers. He half-raised the rifle, pointing with the barrel towards the canoe.

"That's a crew of black cannibals." he said. "If they lay us aboard, look out for the cooking-pots."

He glanced from face to face, with an evil grin. Plainly he expected to read fear in the schoolboys' faces. But he read nothing of the kind. Every face was grave, but there was no sign of the white feather.

Indeed, the juniors were quite aware that, though there was danger, Ezra did not expect it to materialise, or the yellow streak in Ezra himself would have shown. He would not have been grinning, if he had fancied himself in peril of the cooking-pots.

The canoe was drawing rapidly nearer to the cutter's course. The juniors could now make out the dark Melanesian faces, and catch the glint of black eyes in the moonlight. They had a glimpse of a brass ring on which the moonlight glimmered, in a thick black nose, and had no doubt that Mefoo was on board the canoe.

Ezra rested the rifle on the rail, and looked along the barrel, which bore full on the approaching canoe. The latter was now within easy range, and the trader dwelt on his aim. "Keep her steady!" he snapped over his shoulder, to Wharton at the tiller. The words were followed by the sudden roar of the rifle.

The juniors felt their hearts beat. Ezra was firing on the canoe, and crack after crack followed, till the magazine was empty. The first shot flew wide, and the second almost as wide: Ezra's aim was not steady, after so many long pegs. But after that, the lead pitched right into the canoe, and even at the distance, the juniors heard the outbreak of yelling and howling that followed.

They watched breathlessly.

Two of the black paddlers pitched headlong over, rolling among the legs of the others: then a third tumbled from the canoe into the sea. Frantic yells and howls echoed over the water, and a tall black savage, with a brass ring in his nose, brandished a spear. Ezra, grinning over the rifle, pumped out bullets: and suddenly the canoe whirled round and fled. Even on the fuzzy brains of the cannibal crew it dawned that the rifleman on the cutter could have picked off the whole crew, in the clear moonlight, long before they could get near enough to clamber on board. Wild howling echoed back over the sea as the canoe paddled frantically away.

Ezra dropped the rifle-butt to the deck with a clump. "Suloo!" he snapped.

"Yessar."

"You bring long-feller peg along white master plenty quick!"

"Yessar."

Ezra took the tiller from Wharton. He sprawled again, with one arm over the tiller, and a long "peg" in the other hand. The juniors continued to watch the sea: but the canoe had faded out of sight, and was not seen again. After what had happened, they did not feel inclined for sleep. Billy Bunter was still snoring: even the rifle-shots had not wakened him. Harry Wharton and Co. walked the narrow deck, or leaned on the rail, watching the sea and waiting for dawn to show them the palm trees and coral reefs of Lololo. But much was to happen before dawn of which the Greyfriars juniors did not yet dream.

## LOLOLO AT LAST!

"LAND-HO!" shouted Bob Cherry.

It was a distant glimpse of feathery fronds nodding in the moonlight that caused Bob to utter that cheery shout.

His comrades gathered round him to look. Land could only mean Lololo: and they were eager to see Lololo, whether by moonlight or daylight: to get off Ezra Huck's cutter, and to see the last of it and of Ezra. All faces brightened at that glimpse, distant as it was, of the palm trees, which told that they were nearing their destination.

But from Ezra Huck came a savage snarl. "Belay it, you young lubber!"

Bob looked round at him. Ezra was standing at the tiller, with no sign of drowsiness about him now. His hard face was set and alert, his deep-sunk eyes watchful as an albatross's. There was uneasiness in his looks, as well as intentness. He met Bob's surprised glance with a black scowl.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's biting you now, Mr. Huck?" asked Bob. "Any harm in calling land-ho when a fellow sights land?"

"You young fool, how'd you know whose ears might bear you yelling?" snarled Ezra. Bob stared at him.

"That canoe's miles and miles away, if that's what you mean," he said. "We're close on Lololo—that land must be Lololo. No danger on Lololo, is there?"

Ezra did not answer that question. He eyed the juniors furtively, with the same strange stealthy look on his face that they had noticed more than once, without understanding it. It was some moments before he spoke.

"You never know in these waters," he said at last.

"We've passed one canoe cramjam full of niggers—mebbe there might be another about. Keep a bight on your jawing tackle."

He turned away with that, staring anxiously with puckered brows across the moonlit water. The juniors exchanged glances.

That the Kamakama trader sensed danger in the air, they could see plainly enough. Why, they could not see, unless the brush with Mefoo and his crew had got on his nerves. There could be no danger on Lololo, where Mr. Sanders, the Company's manager, was expecting them. And there was no sign of a canoe or any other craft on the sea.

"That man's got the wind up!" said Frank Nugent, in a low voice. "What is he afraid of?"

"There's no canoe to be seen," said Harry. "We could pick up one a mile off in this moonlight."

Johnny Bull gave a grunt.

"What's he got in his mind?" he asked. "There's something he's keeping from us—something that Suloo knows, and would tell us if he dared. What is it?"

"Can't make it out," said Bob. "I wouldn't trust him an inch—but here we are, just on Lololo, and we shall soon be done with him."

"The donefulness with the esteemed and execrable Huck will be a boonful blessing," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The sooner we are off his ludicrous cutter the better."

"We were fools to step on it," said Johnny. "That blighter's got something up his sleeve—I don't know what—but something. We shouldn't have come on his cutter at all."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned a dusky grin.

"It is no use locking the stable door, my esteemed Johnny, after the cracked pitcher has gone to the well, as the English proverb remarks," he said. "It is rather too late to think of that."

"Well, we had to get to Lololo," said Harry. "And goodness knows how long we should have had to wait on Kamakama for a lift—perhaps until our time was up. We're not staying in the Pacific Islands like Bunter."

"True, O king!" said Bob. "It was Hobson's choice. It was a spot of luck for us that Huck came round, and gave us a passage."

"Was it?" grunted Johnny.

"My dear chap, we shall be on Lololo in an hour or less. Like to be still kicking your heels on Kamakama?" asked Bob.

Another grunt from Johnny was his only reply to that. His dislike and distrust of Ezra were deep, but the suspicion in his mind was quite vague, and could take no definite form. He could not get it out of his mind that the Kamakama trader had evil mischief in his thoughts. Yet, so far as even Johnny could see, all was plain sailing. Ezra had given them the passage to Lololo, which was what they wanted: and in an hour or so they would be done with him.

Ezra took no further heed of the schoolboys. The anxiety in his seamed face intensified as the nodding palms in the distance grew nearer and clearer in the bright light of the moon. Suloo, too, was watching the distant island with an anxious brown face. The house-boy shared his master's uneasiness, whatever might be its cause.

The juniors could only suppose that Ezra feared that some other Kut canoe might be lurking about the Lololo reefs. It seemed to them very unlikely, and certainly there was no sign to be seen of a canoe. He had driven off Mefoo easily enough, on the open sea: but at close quarters among the reefs it would have been a different matter, probably. But the juniors, at all events, could see no cause for alarm.

Ezra was muttering to himself, occasionally staring up at the round full moon that sailed above. They did not catch all his angry mutterings, but they were aware that he was cursing the brightness of the moonlight. That was another puzzle, for the clear light of the moon favoured a run in through the reef passage of Lololo. On a dark night it would scarcely have been practicable, and a vessel would have had to stand off the island till dawn.

Clearer and clearer, the tall palms nodded against the sky.

The juniors could now see the white lines of the surf breaking on the reef that encircled Lololo. Beyond the surf, the island rose in a dark mass.

Lololo was an "atoll," a circle of land round a lagoon. In the interior, which the juniors could not see, a shelving beach surrounded a calm lagoon; but the outer reef, on which their eyes were fixed, was rugged and grim. The Pacific broke in masses of white foam on great rocks, with an unending boom.

As in most of the Pacific atolls, there was a passage through the reef, giving access to the interior lagoon to small craft. And at length they discerned a break in the line of surf, indicating where the opening lay.

"That's where we go in," said Bob, pointing.

Ezra snarled orders to Suloo to take in the mainsail.

But he did not shout at the Kanaka in his accustomed manner. His voice was a subdued snarl. It seemed as if he fancied that a shout might be borne on the wind to alert ears. Suloo began to take in the canvas: and the juniors, who had sailed a cutter on Pegg Bay at home, and were handy men in a craft, did not feel disposed to look on idly while the Kamakama boy struggled with the flapping, booming sail. They all lent a hand. Ezra watched them, scowling, but did not intervene.

As they stowed the canvas, Suloo pushed against Harry Wharton, as if by accident, and his lips almost touched the junior's ear as he whispered hurriedly:

"Oh, sar, you look out, eye belong you, along you go Lololo—."

"Suloo!" came a savage bark from Ezra. His watchful suspicious eyes had detected the Kanaka whispering.

Suloo shrank away from Wharton at once.

"Yessar," he stammered. "Me no speakee, sar, mouth belong me."

"You bad feller boy, you talkee along white feller! You look out along sting-ray tail along Kamakama!" hissed Ezra. "Along we stop along Kamakama, me kill back belong you plenty too much."

There was a whimper from Suloo. No doubt he had had experience of the sting-ray tail, when his master was in an unusually evil mood, and knew what it was like. His brown face was a picture of woe.

Harry Wharton set his lips, his eyes gleaming at Ezra.

Suloo, it was clear, was seeking to befriend the schoolboy party in some way, though he had succeeded only in mystifying them.

So long as the Greyfriars party remained on the cutter, Ezra had to keep his savage temper in check: they were more than ready to handle him if he gave it rein. But his black and evil look showed what the house-boy had to expect when they were gone. It was not a pleasant thought to the juniors: but they could do nothing, beyond keep the trader's heavy hand off Suloo while they were there.

Under only her foresail, the cutter ran down to the island. What had looked like a little gap in the surf at a distance widened to a broad passage as the cutter neared it.

On a calm sea, in moonlight that made the Pacific almost as light as by day, it was an easy run in. Yet the juniors could see that Ezra's uneasiness intensified as he steered into the passage. He stood scanning the Island with searching eyes. A sudden order was snarled at Suloo, and the cutter hove-to, hardly half a cable's length from the open sea: and still far from the lagoon, of which the juniors now had a glimpse, glimmering in the distance.

Why Ezra had stopped in the reef passage, they did not know. Unheeding them, he snapped an order to Suloo to haul in the boat. The cutter, like most small craft in the South Seas, towed her boat: she had no davits. Suloo grasped the trailing rope that dipped in the sea, and hauled the cockleshell of a boat alongside. It was a dinghy scarce ten feet in length.

"Why have we stopped here, Mr Huck?" asked Harry Wharton, at last.

Huck gave him a sidelong look.

"Ain't you here to land on Lololo?" he snapped. "You're landing us here?"

"Sure thing."

"And why?" exclaimed Harry. "Why aren't you running the cutter into the lagoon, to land us near the manager's house?"

"I guess I ain't risking my timbers in the reef at night. Like me to pile her up, and make food for the sharks?" jeered Ezra.

"It's almost as light as day," said Bob.

"P'raps you're running this craft," said Ezra, in the same jeering tone. "While I'm running her she don't go on the teeth of the coral, and you can lay to that."

"Oh, let's get out of it," said Nugent. "A walk won't hurt us."

"I'd rather walk miles than stick on this packet another minute," growled Johnny Bull.

"We've had enough of it, and of him."

Whether the man was acting from malice, or whether he really did fear danger from the reefs, steering by moonlight, the juniors could not know. They were, at any rate, at Lololo: and so far as they could see, it meant only a tramp by moonlight to reach the interior

lagoon and the manager's house there. And undoubtedly they were eager to have done with Ezra Huck.

"Heave your dunnage into the boat," snapped Ezra.

And the juniors began to "heave" their baggage in, while Bob Cherry went to waken Billy Bunter, still happily snoring in his deck-chair.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE LANDING!

"BEAST!"

That was Billy Bunter's first cheery remark, as he was shaken by a fat shoulder, and came suddenly out of dreamland.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Wake up, old fat man," he said.

"Leggo! Beast! Tain't rising-bell!" hissed Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter sat up, set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose, and blinked round him. He realised that he was not in bed in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars. But that realisation did not diminish his annoyance.

"Wharrer you waking me up for?" he demanded. "Why, it isn't even light—that's moonlight! 'Tain't morning yet, you beast! "

"Not quite," agreed Bob. "But we're landing, old man! If you want to go back to Kamakama with Mr. Huck, go to sleep again."

"Oh!" said Bunter. "Are we there?"

"Sort of."

"Oh!" Bunter heaved himself out of the deck-chair. He blinked round again through his big spectacles. "Where's Lololo?"

"Just under that pimple you call a nose, old fat bean."

"Well, I can't see it," said Bunter irritably. "Ain't there a lagoon or something? Where's the manager's house? I don't see any lights."

"You won't just yet—we're quite a step from the manager's house," answered Bob. "We've got a bit of a walk before us."

Snort from Bunter.

"I'm not walking," he said, positively. "Look here, there's a quay, or jetty, or something, just in front of the manager's house: my pater told me all about it. Why ain't we there?"

"Huck's landing us here!"

"Oh, is he?" snorted Bunter. "Well, he jolly well ain't, see? I'm not getting off this filthy cutter till we get to the quay, or jetty, or whatever it is. See?"

"Better tell Huck so," said Bob, and he left the fat Owl, going back to help his comrades with the baggage.

Billy Bunter, with his little round eyes blinking wrath through his big round spectacles, rolled over to Ezra Huck.

"Look here—!" he began.

Ezra gave him a surly look.

"Wal?" he rapped.

"You've got to take us to Mr. Sanders' house," hooted Bunter, indignantly. "That's what you're paid for, Mr. Huck. You can't land us here, in the middle of nowhere."



"I ain't running this hooker into the lagoon," said Ezra, briefly. "You can land here, you fat clam, or you can stick on the cutter and go back to Kamakama. And I ain't staying long while you think it out, neither."

"Mr. Huck thinks it wouldn't be safe to run the passage by moonlight, Bunter," said Frank Nugent, soothingly, "and there's sharks about, you know."

"Oh!" said Bunter. He gave the glistening water an uneasy blink. "I—I don't mind landing here, if—if you fellows are afraid of sharks."

And that point being settled, the fat Owl stood watching the other fellows while they loaded the baggage into the dinghy, which went deep in the water.

The cutter's boat was a mere cockleshell, obviously not equal to taking the whole party as well as their baggage. Bag and baggage having been packed into it, Johnny Bull and Nugent stepped down, the rest waiting for a second trip. They expected Suloo to take the oars: but when the Kamakama boy made to enter the boat, Ezra drove him back with a savage snarl.

"You fellow Suloo, you stop along cutter!"

"Yessar," faltered Suloo.

"I guess you can pull that boat a dozen fathoms, you!" snarled Ezra, over the side, to the juniors in the boat.

Johnny Bull stared up at him, with a grim stare.

"What are you afraid that Suloo might tell us, out of your hearing, Mr. Huck?" he asked.

Ezra's only reply was a muttered oath.

"Oh, come on, Johnny," said Nugent.

Johnny Bull grunted, and took an oar. It was a short and easy pull, the water as calm as a pond. Where the cutter had hove-to there was a patch of sandy beach among the rocks, and the landing was easy enough. The boat scraped through shallow water to the sand, and Nugent jumped out. Johnny Bull passed the baggage out to him, bag after bag, and Nugent stacked them: Ezra watching the process from the cutter with unconcealed impatience.

The tow-rope was still on the boat, the other end in Ezra's horny hands. As soon as the unloading was over, Ezra hauled on the rope, hardly giving Johnny Bull time to jump ashore after the last bag.

The little boat came dancing back to the cutter. "Now you-uns!" snarled Ezra.

"I say, you fellows—."

"Come on, Bunter."

"You hold that boat steady," yapped Bunter. "I daresay you'd like me to fall into the water. It would be like you."

Wharton and Bob Cherry and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh stepped down into the boat. The cutter's freeboard was low, and it was hardly a jump. But what was easy to the other fellows was not so easy to the fat Owl of the Remove. Billy Bunter grasped hold, and lowered himself down backwards to the boat, his little fat legs kicking wildly. The three juniors below held on to the rail, keeping the boat close alongside to receive Bunter: they really did not want the fat junior to slip into the water.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Where's that beastly boat? I say, is it underneath me? I know you'd like me to go overboard!"

"Just under you, fathead," said Bob. "Drop, and you're all right."

"Sure?" gurgled Bunter.

He kicked out in quest of a foothold. There was a sudden roar from Bob, as he caught Bunter's foot with his ear.

"Oh! You fat ass—!"

"Beast!"

"For goodness sake, drop, Bunter," exclaimed Harry Wharton, impatiently.

"I'm not going into the water to please you, you beast."

"My esteemed Bunter—"

"Beast!"

How long Billy Bunter might have clung to the cutter's rail before he made up his mind to drop cannot be said, for Ezra cut the matter short by rapping his fat knuckles with the tow-rope. Bunter gave a yell and let go, and dropped into the boat like a sack of coke, sitting down as he landed there. The boat rocked wildly, and shipped water, which brought another yell from Bunter.

"Ow! I'm wet!"

"That's because the sea's wet, old fat image," said Bob, rubbing his ear. "What you want is a nice dry sea with no water in it."

"Beast!"

"Come on," said Harry Wharton, laughing. He lifted an oar and pushed off from the cutter.

"All right now, Bunter?"

"I'm not all right, you beast! I'm all wet!" hooted Bunter. "Why, I'm sitting in water! My trousers are soaked! Oooooooh! Can't you help a fellow up, you beasts, after all I've done for you?"



BUNTER DROPPED INTO THE BOAT LIKE A SACK OF COKE

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh gave the fat Owl a hand, heaving him up, and planting him on a thwart. Wharton and Bob Cherry sat to the oars, and pulled for the little beach among the rocks. Ezra Huck stared after them, with a grin that was ugly to see: Suloo, with black eyes rolling in his brown face, deeply perturbed, as the juniors could see, though why, they had no idea. They probably had a rough scramble before them, to reach the manager's house on the lagoon, but that, so far as they knew, was all. If they had been going to the sharks, the Kamakama boy could hardly have looked more dismayed and horrified.

The boat bumped on the sand.

Ezra hardly gave them time to scramble ashore before he hauled on the tow-rope. There was a yell from Bunter.

"I say, you fellows! Help a chap out! I say—"

The boat was dragging away under the fat Owl's feet.

Wharton and Bob Cherry, up to their knees in water, dragged Bunter splashing ashore, to the accompaniment of howls and squeaks.

"By gum!" panted Bob, with a glare back at the cutter, as the boat fairly whisked away under the haul of the rope, "Johnny was right—we didn't give that hooligan enough of the lawyer-cane. I'd like to give him a few more."

"Too late now," said Harry. "Thank goodness we're through with him."

"The thankfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the punchfulness of his ridiculous nose would be gratefully comforting. But here we are, my esteemed chums—landed on Lololo."

"I say, you fellows—," howled Bunter.

"Oh, dear! What's the matter now?"

"I'm wet!"

"So are we!"

"Beasts!"

That the other fellows were wet was, evidently, a trifle light as air in the estimation of the Owl of the Remove. Bunter squelched water and snorted with indignation. The other fellows squelched without snorting.

They watched the cutter, puzzled by Ezra's obvious haste to get away. The cutter slipped out to sea without a moment's delay, and immediately she was outside the reef, the mainsail was shaken out again. The wind, which had been favourable for Lololo, was not, of course, so favourable for the return to Kamakama, and Ezra had a great deal of tacking and wearing before him to get back to his own island. That was slow work: and, for some reason unknown to the juniors, he was in a pressing hurry to get away from Lololo. They saw that the cutter was put before the wind, floating away like a sea-bird to the south-east—which meant that Ezra intended to drop Lololo far astern before he tacked for Kamakama. In a few minutes the cutter vanished on the moonlit sea.

Bob Cherry rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"What's that blackguard's hurry?" he asked.

But no one could answer that question, at present: and the Greyfriars fellows dismissed Ezra and his antics from their minds, glad at least to have done with him.

#### CHAPTER XXIII

### THE SKULL IN THE SAND!

SNORE!

Dawn flushed up over the Pacific. Billy Bunter greeted the new day with a snore. Fortunately—since Bunter's comfort was concerned—it was a warm night, and the fat Owl had been able to go to sleep in the soft sand, with a fat head pillowed on a fat arm. The juniors had soon discovered that, beyond the patch of beach where they had landed, there were rugged rocks, full of channels and crevices, to be traversed, with thick bush beyond: and they sagely decided to leave it till daylight. Billy Bunter improved the shining hour by going to sleep again, but dawn was not far off, and the Famous Five watched for it till it came.

It came with tropical suddenness: a flush of rosy light in the sky, and then the sun, seeming to leap up from the horizon. It was day, and from the wooded island came the song of innumerable birds, greeting the dawn rather more musically than Bunter. The bright sunshine on the blue rolling sea had a cheering effect on the juniors. There was no sign to be seen of Ezra's cutter, and they had no doubt that it was already a good many long sea-miles from Lololo. But as Bob, shading his eyes with his hand, stared in the direction the cutter had taken, it seemed to him that he picked up a speck on the sea.

"Is that a canoe?" he said.

The other fellows fixed their eyes on the distant speck.

But it was too far away to be made out distinctly: it was not the cutter, but it might have been a canoe, or a boat, or a drifting fragment of wreckage.

"Might be Mefoo looking for his breakfast!" grinned Bob.

"Too far off to bother us, anyhow," said Harry. "We'd better push on at once, and get to the manager's house as soon as we can. It looks like a bit of a walk."

"It do—it does!" agreed Bob. "Wake up, Bunter."

Snore!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob. "Open those pretty eyes, baby."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Snore!

Johnny Bull jammed a toe into fat ribs, and Bunter's snore suddenly ceased. He sat up and blinked.

"Beast!" he said, provisionally, as it were.

"Show a leg, old fat man," said Bob. "We're moving on."

"I say, you fellows, I'm hungry."

"Same here," said Bob. "Like breakfast at once, Bunter?"

"Yes, rather," answered Bunter, promptly.

"Well, root round for some, old fat bean, and if you find any, we'll sit down to it before we start."

Billy Bunter gave him a withering blink, and heaved himself to his feet. The seagulls, screaming over the reef, were looking for their breakfasts in gullies and crannies of the rocks: but evidently there was no breakfast for the Greyfriars party before they reached the manager's house. That important consideration made even Bunter eager to get a move on.

"I say, you fellows, who's going to carry the bags?" he asked.

"Nobody," answered Bob. "They'll have to be left till called for, old porpoise. We've got a tough trot before us, without baggage."

"Mr. Sanders will send a Kanaka in a canoe to collect them," said Harry. "They'll have to be left here for the present."

"That's all very well," yapped Bunter. "You fellows can leave your things about to be pinched, if you like, but I don't want mine left here."

"Suit yourself, if you feel up to it," said Bob, cheerily.

"Nobody's stopping you, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Cherry! I think you fellows might carry a fellow's bags, among you, considering that I'm standing you a splendid holiday—."

"Come on," said Johnny Bull. "If Bunter keeps on asking to be kicked, I shall have to kick him."

"Beast!"

They started. The baggage was left stacked on the sand, out of reach of the tide, which was all that could be done with it. Billy Bunter could not help feeling that his bags, at least, might have been whacked out among the party, leaving the rest: but once more Bunter was up against the sad selfishness of human nature! He expressed his feelings in a contemptuous snort, and rolled after the Famous Five as they started.

They found it tough going—much tougher than it had looked in the moonlight when they had landed. There were rugged half-submerged reefs to be clambered over, deep gullies and rocky channels to be scrambled through: and Billy Bunter was soon in a state of warmth and perspiration and indignation that could never have been described in words—if he had had any breath left with which to utter them.

Even at that early hour, the sun was intensifying in heat, and it seemed to blaze down on the juniors as they tramped, and scrambled, and clambered, while from the hapless fat Owl came a series of breathless squeaks and squeals. It was a great relief when they reached the thick bush, which, already hot as it was, at least afforded a shade from the blazing sun.

There, Billy Bunter plumped down at the foot of a tree to rest: and the Famous Five, not sorry for a respite, rested also for a time.

The bush seemed trackless, and how far it extended, they did not know, only that it must be a considerable distance to the interior lagoon. But Bob Cherry, always the most energetic member of the party, scouted round in the hope of finding some sort of path while his comrades rested: and in a few minutes his cheery voice was heard calling from the bush.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's a path, you fellows."

"Oh, good! Come on," said Harry.

"Get a move on, Bunter."

Billy Bunter groaned. He was tired, he was peeved, he was indignant. But he was hungry also. Willingly he would have retorted that he jolly well wouldn't stir till he had had a jolly good rest, and that they could jolly well wait for him. But the inner Bunter called, with a call that was not to be denied. The other fellows were hungry, but their desire for breakfast, compared with Bunter's, was as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine. Bunter groaned, and heaved himself up, and they pushed through the bush and rejoined Bob.

He was standing in an open path, a native "run-way" in the bush, where the thick tropical growths had been cut away to give passage. The earth was hard from innumerable feet that had tramped up and down the run-way: overhead, the interlaced branches shut off the sky, making it rather like a shadowy green tunnel.

"Easy going here," said Bob. "Race you to the lagoon, Bunter."

"Beast!" moaned Bunter.

The juniors tramped cheerily along the run-way. It was, as Bob had said, easy going, evidently a path much used by natives of Lololo: though there was no sign of a native to be seen, either on the run-way or in the bush.

As they tramped on, the juniors began to catch glimpses of the lagoon, shining in the sun, through interstices of the bush. But it was a long, long tramp before they reached the end of the run-way and came out into an open grove of palm trees, with a glistening white beach before them that shelved down to the blue shining lagoon.

By that time, the whole party was tired, and Billy Bunter was tottering, hardly able to drag one weary foot after the other. This was not how Bunter had expected to arrive in his new kingdom, where all was going to be ease, and lazy loafing. But he was too tired even to be indignant. He just moaned.

"Can't be far now, Bunter," said Bob, encouragingly. "Ten to one, we shall see the manager's house once we're out of these trees."

"Oh, lor'!" moaned Bunter.

The Famous Five tramped onward, down to the shelving beach, Bunter tottering on behind, moaning.

Once clear of the trees, they looked along the shore of the lagoon, in either direction, in search of habitations. The Comet Copra Company's establishment was somewhere along the shore of the lagoon, though precisely where they did not know. The lagoon was several miles in circumference: and looking across it, they could see the white shining

beach on the other side, backed by tall palms and high bush. But to their surprise, there was no canoe visible on the water, and no native visible on the beach.

Lololo, as they knew, was inhabited by brown-skinned Polynesians like Kamakama. They naturally expected to see something of them when they emerged from the trees. But so far as their eyes could reach, there was no living being to be seen—not a sign of life but the birds that called in the trees, and the lizards that crawled in the hot sand.

Lololo, to all appearances, was a deserted island. It was puzzling and perplexing, and gave them a feeling of vague uneasiness.

"Blessed if I make this out," said Bob Cherry, in a subdued voice. Even his exuberant spirits seemed a little dashed by the unexpected silence and solitude of Lololo. "The make-outfulness is not terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Where are the esteemed and ridiculous inhabitants?"

"Must be about somewhere," said Nugent. "But—not a man on the beach—not a canoe on the lagoon! What the dickens can it mean?"

Johnny Bull breathed hard through his nose.

"It means that something's wrong here," he said. "I don't know what—but something! And that brute Huck knew it, and that's what he was keeping from us."

"But what?" exclaimed Harry Wharton, blankly.

"Something!" grunted Johnny. "And Suloo could have told us, if that brute would have let him."

"I say, you fellows, come on," mumbled Bunter. "I'm tired! I'm hungry! Let's get to the manager's house, for goodness sake. I say—Yaroooh!"

Bunter stumbled over something in the sand. He blinked down at it irritably, and then uttered a yell of terror.

"What—"

"Bunter, you ass—."

"What the thump—?"

"Ow! Oh, crikey! Look!" Bunter almost shrieked. "Look!"

He pointed, with a fat trembling finger, at the object over which he had stumbled, half-buried in the soft sand. The juniors stared at it, and the blood thrilled to their hearts. They gazed at it spell-bound, in silence and almost dread. The object that lay at their feet, glistening in the tropical sun, was a skull!

#### CHAPTER XXIV

#### WHAT HAPPENED ON LOLOLO?

THERE was a long silence.

The hot sun blazed down on the group of startled juniors on the beach of Lololo with almost aching heat. But they had a feeling of chill. The colour wavered in their faces, as they stared at that strange sign of death utterly unexpected and unnerving.

"A skull!" Frank Nugent spoke, at last, almost in a whisper. Good heavens, what has been happening here?"

There was no answer to that question. That there had been tragedy on that sun-scorched beach by the blue waters of the lagoon, they all knew. They ceased, at last to look at the grisly relic in the sand, and looked about them again. The sight of any living being, any brown native in a white lava-lava, would have been an immense relief. But all was solitude, as if no living thing dwelt on Lololo. All was silent, save for the eternal booming of the surf on the outer reef, to which their ears were so accustomed that they no longer

heard it. Of all the brown-skinned natives of Lololo, who just once have swarmed on the glistening beach, there remained only that sign of mortality at their feet.

"Something has happened here." Harry Wharton's voice, too, was low. "Something terrible, Push on—we must find the manager's house."

"Oh, crikey!" mumbled Bunter. The juniors moved on, and Bunter almost forgot that he was tired as he scuttled after them. His fat face was long and lugubrious. This was not the Lololo of his dreams!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" The old cheery ring was not in Bob Cherry's voice. "Look—there's the quay Bunter told us about."

At a little distance further on, along the curving shore of the lagoon, they could see it now: a little quay built of solid blocks of coral. It was at least a sign of human handiwork, and it made their faces brighten.

"The manager's house must be near that," said Harry.

"Must be," agreed Bob. "Push on."

They pushed on, following the curving shore.

From the coral quay a wide well-trodden path of coral chips ran up the beach into the palms. The juniors, when they reached it, turned into it, and followed it up the beach. It was easier going than the soft sand.

They made out a building under the shade of the palms: a long low bungalow, with a deep verandah the length of its front, facing the lagoon. Evidently that was the manager's house. But they were silent, and looked about them uneasily, as they tramped up the coral path.

That something was wrong—terribly wrong—on Lololo, they knew now, and they were half in dread of what they might find.

There was no sign of life about the bungalow. No one was in the verandah: there was no sound of a voice or a movement. It was borne in upon their minds that the building was deserted: that the Company's manager could not be there. There was no one to see the party approaching, and look out, as they came. A stillness as of death was over the whole place.

"Look!" breathed Bob, suddenly.

At a short distance from the bungalow was another building—or what had been a building. But all that remained of it was charred posts and a rubble of charred wreckage. It had apparently been a warehouse: and it had been burned out, whether by accident or design.

"Oh, crikey!" moaned Bunter.

They came to a halt at the verandah steps.

Back of the verandah were a doorway and two windows, the latter with palmwood shutters. The shutters were open and creaking loose—the door, split in two, lay in the doorway.

Those signs of violence confirmed the juniors' misgivings. The door had been beaten in—with axes or war-clubs. They no longer had any hope of finding the manager there.

"Good heavens!" breathed Harry Wharton. "What has been happening here?"

"Trouble with the natives!" muttered Nugent.

"It looks like it—but where are the natives then? There doesn't seem to be a soul on the island excepting ourselves."

"Might be the other side of the lagoon. But—from all we've heard, the natives on Lololo were peaceful brown boys, like those on Kamakama. The Company's manager had been here for years."

"There's been fighting here, that's clear," said Harry. "Either the Lololo people, or a war-party from another island."

Bob Cherry gave a whistle.

"Mefoo, perhaps!" he said. "If it's that, we're rather lucky to have arrived after they left."

"The luckfulness was terrific, my esteemed Bob, if—." Hurree Singh paused.

"If what, Inky?"

"If they have left," said the nabob of Bhanipur, quietly. "They may be still on the island, my esteemed chum."

"Oh, holy smoke!" ejaculated Bob.

"Oh, lor'!" squeaked Bunter.

"That villain Huck—!" breathed Johnny Bull.

"Think he knew?" asked Bob.

Johnny gave an angry snort.

"He jolly well knew! That's why he dared not sail his cutter into the lagoon—he might never have got it out again. That's why he was in such a hurry to get away after landing us in this. Suloo knew, too, and that's what he was trying to tell us."

"Oh, scissors!" murmured Bob. He cast a glance back towards the lagoon. All faces were very grave now. The possibility of a crowd of hostile savages on the island was startling. The schoolboy party were unarmed—they had never dreamed of weapons being needed. But if there were savages loose on Lololo, there was no sign of them to be seen so far.

"Let's look into the house," said Harry. "I—I suppose there's nobody there—goodness knows what's become of Mr. Sanders. But let's look through the place."

They ascended the steps, and crossed the verandah.

They looked in silence at a broken spear that lay on the planks. That made it plain, if they had doubted before, that some mob of savages had been there.

They found the interior of the bungalow, as they expected now, deserted. There were six or seven rooms, all in the wildest disorder. Furniture was overturned, boxes and chests broken open, cupboards ransacked, crockery smashed. The house looked as if a wild mob had raged through it, plundering, and wantonly damaging everything that was not worth looting. A number of spent cartridges lay about, from which it was easy to guess that there had been firing from the manager's house. But that the white man had been unable to drive off the attack was only too plain from the condition of the bungalow—and the absence of the white man. What had become of Mr. Sanders the juniors could only surmise. There was no trace of him, dead or alive, in the house, where he had lived and traded for many years—and whether he had escaped or had been dragged away a prisoner, they could not guess.

"Well, this tears it," said Bob Cherry, as they gathered in the verandah again. "Nobody's here—unless there's some gang of savages on the other side of the lagoon."

"Oh, crikey!" mumbled Bunter.

"Let's hope they're gone, whoever they are," said Nugent. "It can't have been Lololo natives who did all this—they'd still be here, and there's not a sign of them."

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"No," he said. "It must have been a war-party from another island—most likely Kut. The Lololo people have either cut for it in their canoes, or taken to the bush to hide. The manager here defended the house as long as he could—goodness knows what happened after that."

"I say, you fellows." Billy Bunter blinked dolorously at the Famous Five. "I say, wharrer we going to do?"

"We shall have to think that out," answered Harry. "We can't get off the island."



"We can't stop here if there's a lot of savage niggers about!" moaned Bunter.

"We can't do anything else," grunted Johnny Bull.

"I—I—I wish I hadn't come," groaned the fat Owl. "I say, I'd rather be back at Greyfriars! Quelch is better than this!"

The fat Owl seemed to be in the deepest depths of pessimism.

He had arrived on Lololo where there was to be lazy ease, a hammock under a palm tree, unlimited grub, and submissive natives waiting on him hand and foot! On Lololo he had been going to accumulate a fortune—doubtless by the easy means of lolling in a shady hammock while natives brought him cooling drinks!

That had been the happy anticipation. This was the ghastly reality!

The unhappy Owl, completely deflated, could only groan. Greyfriars School, swotting in the study, maths in class, and Quelch cane in hand in his fiercest mood, were really paradise compared with this! Bunter leaned on the verandah rail and groaned.

The Famous Five looked through the palms, across the dazzling beach and the shining lagoon. There was, so far, no sign of an enemy—all was silent and still. They could only hope that the war-party from Kut—if that was what had happened—had left the island after the destruction they had wrought.

If danger lingered, they were defenceless: and they had no means of leaving the island on which Ezra Huck had so treacherously landed them. Remembering Ezra's fear and uneasiness while running down to Lololo, they realised that Ezra, at least, must have believed that the savages were still there. For all they knew, the high bush across the lagoon might be swarming with ferocious cannibals.

"Oh, lor'!" mumbled Bunter, for the umpteenth time.

"Brace up, Bunter," said Johnny Bull, with grim sarcasm. "Look at the splendid holiday you're standing us!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"Well, we've got to face it," said Bob. "No good sitting round and feeling sorry for ourselves."

"I say, you fellows—."

"Still bossing the show?" asked Bob. "Go ahead, boss, and tell us what to do."

"Beast! I'm hungry!"

"Come to think of it, so am I," agreed Bob. "Let's scout for grub, you fellows—I've seen a lot of tins and things. Come on."

That practical suggestion was immediately acted upon.

Billy Bunter's gloomy fat countenance became a shade brighter when he found that food was available. There was a stack of tinned food which the savages had disregarded, and coconuts and bunches of bananas, for which they had cared nothing. With keen eyes open for danger, the juniors sat down in the verandah to a much-needed meal—and the fattest face in the party grew brighter and brighter, as Billy Bunter wrapped himself round a couple of pounds of corned beef, a pound or two of biscuits, a few coconuts, and uncounted bananas. The water-tank was almost full, and a few odds and ends of crockery were found, and even Bunter did not grumble at washing down the meal with clear cool water. Life, indeed, seemed once more worth living to the Owl of the Remove, and as he chewed and chewed, and munched and munched, and gobbled and gobbled, he forgot the somewhat precarious tenure on which it was held on the coral island of Lololo.

#### CHAPTER XXV

#### SULOO!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"What—?"

"A boat!"

Bob Cherry jumped to his feet, his face full of excitement. He pointed along the curving shore towards the reef passage.

From the bungalow, looking through the palms, the juniors could see a great distance along the shore of the lagoon. The opening of the passage through the reef was within easy range of vision. And Bob, looking in that direction, fairly bounded at what he saw there.

They had finished their meal—though Billy Bunter was toying with a bunch of ripe bananas, uncertain whether he still had room for them. It was now near noon, and the sun blazed down on Lololo rather like a furnace. If there were natives on the island, they were not likely to be stirring in the intense heat of midday: and at all events there was no sign of them. The Famous Five were discussing the strange situation in which they found themselves, and trying—not very hopefully—to think of a way out. But the sight of a boat coming through the reef from the open sea brought them all eagerly to their feet.

A canoe would have been alarming, in the present doubtful circumstances. But a boat could only belong to a white man's ship.

They watched it, with beating hearts. It was a small boat: it looked like one of the dinghies that were towed by small craft like Ezra Huck's cutter. It had a single occupant, of whom they could see only the back, as he sat at a pair of oars. At the second glance they saw that it was a native in the boat, not a white man. But it was obviously a white man's boat, and the man who was rowing had skin of a golden brown, like the natives of Kamakama—nothing like the black islanders they had seen with Mefoo.

"By gum!" said Bob. "If that means that there's a white man's ship outside the reef—."

"We're O.K., if there is," said Johnny Bull. "He's coming here, anyway—heading direct for the quay."

Billy Bunter blinked up from his bananas.

"I say, you fellows," he squeaked. "Who's coming?"

"A Kanaka in a boat," answered Harry.

"Oh, crikey!" Bunter bounded. "I say, are the niggers coming?" A bunch of bananas dropped unregarded on the planks, as the startled Owl scrambled to his feet. "I say, where can we hide? I say—."

"It's all right, Bunter—."

"Taint all right!" howled Bunter. "They've been here, as you jolly well know, and if they're coming back—."

"It's a brown boy, fathead, off some ship," said Bob. "Oh!" Billy Bunter joined them at the verandah rail, and blinked through his big spectacles at the approaching boat. "I say, sure he ain't a cannibal?"

"The surefulness is terrific, my esteemed idiotic Bunter."

"Nothing to be scared about, ass," grunted Johnny Bull.

"Beast! I ain't scared!" hooted Bunter. "But I'm not going to be gobbled up by black cannibals to please you, Bull! I say, you fellows, how do you know that that nigger ain't a cannibal?"

"Well, if he is, he couldn't bolt the lot of us," said Bob, reassuringly, "and he would find some of us tough."

"It's all right, Bunter," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "If there are enemies about, they'll come in canoes, if they come at all, and not one at a time, either."

"Well, I can't see from here whether that's a canoe or not," said Bunter. "Sure it ain't a canoe?"

"Sort of!" grinned Bob.

Billy Bunter blinked very uneasily at the little craft on the sunlit lagoon. He was far from sure that the boat was not a canoe, and that the brown boy in it was not one of Mefoo's cannibal blacks.

"I say, has he got a spear or anything?" asked the Fat Owl.

"Nothing like one," answered Bob. "By gum, though, he added, shading his eyes with his hand and staring hard, "isn't that a rifle in the bows?"

"Looks like it," said Harry.

"Oh, crikey! I say, if he begins firing at us—."

"You stand in front of us, old fat man! Lots of cover for the rest of us," said Bob, cheerily.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

And Billy Bunter revolved on his axis, and bolted into the house. If there was going to be firing, William George Bunter did not want to stop any of the lead. Very much indeed he did not.

Harry Wharton and Co. continued to watch the boat eagerly. It came on steadily, but slowly, across the shining water towards the little quay. The juniors could see the sweat glistening on the bare brown back of the rower, and it was plain that it was a fatigued man who was pulling at the oars—a man who was tired from a long and strenuous pull. That did not look as if he came from a vessel outside the reef: though where else he could have come from was a mystery. They noted, too, that as he rowed, he lifted a tired drooping head from time to time, and shot glances to and fro on the lagoon, as if on the look-out for possible enemies. And suddenly, as his face was turned towards the landing-place to stare at that also, they saw it in the bright sunlight, and there was a general exclamation of amazement.

"Suloo!" roared Bob.

"Suloo!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"The esteemed and ridiculous Suloo."

They stared at the tattooed brown face in the boat, almost dumbfounded. It was Suloo, Ezra's Huck's "boy," whom they'd last seen gazing after them with eyes full of fear from the cutter, when they had landed on that ill-omened island.

"Suloo!" said Frank Nugent, blankly. "Then that's the cutter's dinghy—the boat we landed in on the reef."

"Well, this beats Banagher, and then some," said Bob.

"That's Suloo—in Huck's boat. Can that villain Huck have come back for us?"

"Not likely," grunted Johnny Bull.

"He's seen us!" exclaimed Nugent.

Suloo looked round again, and this time, evidently, he saw the bunch of white faces looking at him from the manager's house. They saw his brown face brighten, and he released one oar, to make a sign with a waving brown hand. Then he rowed on, with more energy than before, as if the sight of the Greyfriars party spurred him on.

"Let's go down to the quay and meet him," said Harry. "Goodness knows what this means—but I'm jolly glad to see Suloo."

"The gladfulness is terrific."

"Come on," said Bob.

They ran down the steps, and cut quickly down the coral path to the quay. Suloo was close in now, pulling as hard as he could, though they could see that, strong as he was, he was weary to the bone.

The juniors waited eagerly as the boat surged in. It banged on the coral of the quay, and Bob Cherry caught the painter and made it fast. Suloo laid in the oars, and leaped ashore. He grinned all over his brown face at the juniors, with a flash of dazzling white teeth.

"You feller white master, this feller Suloo plenty glad see you feller, eye belong him! This feller tinkee plaps you feller no stop any more altogether," he gasped. "Tinkee plaps you go finish along black feller."

"Has Mr. Huck come back in his cutter?" asked Harry. "Cutter belong white master Huck stop along Lololo?" he added, putting it in the pidgin English understood by the Kanakas. "No, sar! Feller cutter belong white master Huck stop along sea, no comey along Lololo," answered Suloo. "White master Huck plenty too much fright along black feller stop along Lololo, my word."

The juniors exchanged glances. They knew now, if they had not been certain before, that Ezra had known that black savages were loose on Lololo, when he had landed them there.

"You no fright along black feller, Suloo?" asked Bob.

"Yessar," answered Suloo. "Me plenty fright along black feller. Plenty too much fright along Kut feller along he eatee long-pig, sar." The cheery grin faded from Suloo's face, and he cast an uneasy, searching glance round the lagoon. "Black feller belong Kut he bad feller too much, sar. Me too much fright altogether along black feller."

"But you came here," said Harry, puzzled. "What name you comee along Lololo, Suloo, along you plenty too much fright?"

"Likee white feller too much," said Suloo, simply. "You good feller along Suloo, sar, Suloo good feller along you, sar." He pointed to the rifle in the boat. "Me takee long-feller gun belong white master Huck, sar—sposee black feller comey, you shoot along long-feller gun, sar, plaps you no go finish."

"Well, my hat!" said Bob. "Suloo, you're a jolly old jewel. You're a jolly old gilt-edged prize-packet, and no mistake."

Suloo grinned again. The juniors could not help feeling moved by the brown boy's devotion. That he dreaded the savages from Kut was plain, with a deep dread, and he knew that they were loose on Lololo. Yet he had run the boat into the lagoon, which Ezra had not dared to enter, and cast in his lot with the abandoned schoolboys. from remembrance of kindness at their hands.

"You good feller too much, Suloo," said Harry. "We won't forget this, if we get away from Lololo. We're jolly glad to see you here—we likee plenty too much you comey along Lololo."

"Plenty too much altogether, and then some," grinned Bob.

He slipped into the boat and handed out the rifle, and a cartridge-belt, to Harry Wharton. How Suloo had obtained possession of them, how he had escaped in the boat from his cruel master, the juniors had no idea. They could guess now that the speck they had seen, at dawn, far away on the sea, was the boat in which Suloo was pulling back to the island. Apparently he had left Ezra Huck, in the cutter, far away in the Pacific, and it was no wonder that he was weary and fatigued from a long pull, of many long miles, on the open sea. They gathered round him, and marched him up the coral path to the manager's house, Suloo grinning all over his brown face at finding himself made so much of by the white masters. He plumped down in the shady verandah, and they brought him food and drink, of both of which he was in evident need.

"I say, you fellows!" A fat voice squeaked from the interior. "I say, is it all right?"

"Right as rain, old man! It's Suloo," called back Bob Cherry.

"Oh!" Billy Bunter emerged from the doorway, and gave the Kanaka an uneasy blink through his big spectacles. However, he recognised Suloo, and was reassured. "I say, has that beast Huck come back?"

"No: Suloo's come on his own."

"Fat lot of good that is!" grunted Bunter. And he sat down and resumed operations on the bananas.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### DANGER

"You savvy long-feller gun, sar?"

Harry Wharton was examining the rifle, making sure that it was fully loaded. Its possession gave the juniors a feeling of more confidence. Wharton was glad, now, that he had been assiduous in practice on the rifle-range. He was a good shot with a rifle: and though the thought of turning it upon a human being, even a savage cannibal, was far from pleasant, it was quite possible that a firearm might make all the difference between life and death for the castaways of Lololo. Certainly he wouldn't have hesitated to use it, in defence of his life, and the lives of his comrades.

Suloo, sitting hunched against the rail, a chunk of corned beef in one brown hand, a gourd full of coconut milk in the other, eating and drinking alternately, watched him with his glistening black eyes.

Harry smiled and nodded as the Kanaka boy asked the question.

"Yes," he answered. "Me savvy plenty long-feller gun, Suloo. But how did you get hold of it, and how did you get away from white master Huck?"

Suloo grinned with a flash of his white teeth.

"Along cutter he stop along sea, long way off, white master Huck make plenty long peg stop along inside belong him," he answered. "He makee lawyer-cane stop along back belong me—he tellee me sting-ray tail stop along back belong me along we makee Kamakama. Me no likee! Me watchee white master Huck go along sleep, along plenty long peg. He makee me keep feller cutter along wind, along he go sleepee. Along he sleepee, me takee feller rifle, feller cartridge, stop along boat, cut tow-rope along knife belong me, comey along Lololo findee young white feller master."

"Oh!" said Harry.

The juniors understood now what had happened on the cutter. At a safe distance from Lololo, Ezra had evidently indulged his longing for strong drink. He had left the Kanaka at the tiller, with orders to keep the cutter before the wind, and sunk into a drunken sleep. Evidently it had never occurred to his brutal mind that the Kanaka would venture to disregard his orders.

But Suloo, with his bare back aching from the lawyer-cane, and the prospect of the sting-ray tail before him at Kamakama, had done some thinking while he steered the cutter. But it was possible that it was his attachment to the schoolboys who had befriended him that had decided him to do as he had done. His motives no doubt were mixed: between his liking for the Greyfriars party and his fear of cruel punishment at the hands of his master. Harry Wharton and Co. could picture the scene: the brutal trader, stupefied with one long peg after another, snoring on the deck, the Kanaka stealthily packing rifle and cartridge-belt into the dinghy, cutting it adrift, and pulling away as fast as he could. They could picture, too, the cutter yawing wildly as it drifted aimlessly on the Pacific, at the mercy of

the wind and waves, with no hand at the tiller or the sheets. But if the vessel and its master were left in danger, that was the price Ezra Huck had to pay for his own brutality. "Me likee young white master too much," went on Suloo, cheerily. "You good master along Suloo. Me good boy along you, sar. You no makee lawyer-cane stop along back belong me." "Not in your jolly old lifetime, Suloo," said Bob Cherry, "and we'll take jolly good care that that brute Huck never lays hands on you again."

"What-ho!" said Johnny Bull.

"We're bound to stand by Suloo, as he's stood by us," said Harry. Whatever may happen, he's done with that brute. Tell us this, Suloo—did Huck know what had happened on Lololo—white master Huck he savvy what thing stop along this feller island?"

"Savvy plenty, sar. He savvy too much big-feller chief Mefoo comey in canoe along Lololo, plenty kill Lololo feller, stop along Lololo."

"I jolly well knew it," growled Johnny Bull. "That's why the brute came round, and offered us a passage here."

"The villain!" breathed Bob.

"But how did Huck know?" asked Nugent. "There was no news of it on Kamakama that we heard of."

"Lololo boy comey along canoe, along tapa stop along head belong him, sing out along white master Huck," answered Suloo.

"Oh! That was the news that bandaged man brought, was it?" exclaimed Bob. "You remember, you fellows—that man in a canoe with a bandaged head—."

"I remember," said Harry, compressing his lips. "That bandaged man brought the news that Lololo was over-run by a war-party from Kut. And then—."

"Then Huck saw his chance of giving us something back for thrashing him in his verandah," said Johnny Bull. "He never meant to give us a passage in the cutter—till after he got that news."

"The awful villain!" muttered Nugent.

"We ought to have guessed that he had something up his sleeve—he looked as treacherous as a snake," growled Johnny Bull. "We let him rush us off from Kamakama before we had a chance of hearing the news. No wonder he was in a funk running down to Lololo—knowing that there were cannibals about."

"Suloo would have warned us if he could," said Bob.

"Me likee too much sing out along white master, along cutter," said Suloo. "White master Huck no likee. Me plenty too much fright along white master Huck. He bad feller altogether. He likee young white master go along Lololo along black feller he stop."

It was all clear to the Greyfriars fellows now. But the knowledge came too late to be of use to them. They were landed and stranded on Lololo: and the cutter was far away on the sea. There was no escape for them from the island over-run by the cannibals from Kut—and if Mefoo and his tribesmen were still there—.

"Do you think Mefoo and his crew are still here, Suloo?" asked Harry. "You tinkee black feller stop along Lololo?"

"Me tinkee, sar."

"We've seen nothing of them," said Bob.

"Tinkee stop," said Suloo. "Me no savvy. Sposee comey along this place, young white master go bang along long-feller gun."

Suloo, evidently, had great faith in a "long-feller gun" in a white man's hands. The juniors could only hope that his faith was well founded. The prospect of an attack from a horde of savage cannibals was dismaying—or rather, appalling.

"I say, you fellows." It was a feeble squeak from Billy Bunter. The fat Owl had been listening with all his fat ears. "I—I—I say—."

"It's all right so far, Bunter," said Harry. "There's no sign of the savages—and they may be gone back to Kut in their canoes."

"We've got to get away from this awful island," mumbled Bunter. "Oh, lor'! I—I never knew it was going to be like this when the pater told me about it at Greyfriars! I—I wish I hadn't come."

"I think we all wish that," said Harry.

"The wishfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter."

"I—I don't like the Pacific Islands," groaned Bunter. "I—I hate the South Seas. I—I want to go back to Greyfriars next term. Oh, lor'!"

The juniors looked at him in silence. Greyfriars, and next term, seemed a very long way off, on that remote island of the Pacific, in the very shadow of death.

"I—I'd rather Quelch was whopping me, this very minute!" groaned the unhappy fat Owl.

"I—I'd rather Coker of the Fifth was booting me! Oh, lor'! I—I thought I was going to have a splendid time on Lololo. And now —!" Bunter wound up with another groan. Words failed him.

"Brace up, old porpoise," said Bob. "We'll pull out of it somehow. While there's life there's hope."

"Hope jumps eternal in the human chest, my esteemed fat Bunter," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"We've got to get away before—before they come!" groaned Bunter.

"We can't get away, old chap," said Harry, patiently.

"What about that boat that Suloo came in?" mumbled Bunter. "I tell you we've got to get away from this awful place."

"Seven of us packed into a ten-foot dinghy, on the open sea!" said Bob, shaking his head.

"Not much in that, Bunter."

"Food for sharks," grunted Johnny Bull.

"Then—then what are we going to do?" groaned Bunter.

"We're going to face it the best we can," answered Harry, quietly.

"Oh, lor'!"

"We're in no danger at present," went on the captain of the Remove. "If the savages are still here, they're on the other side of the island, and they can know nothing about us so far."

"That's a cert," agreed Bob. "We saw nothing of them coming here from the reef, and we've seen nothing of them since. They've looted this place, and cleared off—no reason why they should come back, that I can see."

"Unless they spot us here," said Nugent.

"We've got to lie low, and take jolly good care that they don't."

"They couldn't see us across the lagoon, any more than we could see them," Johnny Bull observed, thoughtfully. "They'd have seen Huck's cutter, if he had sailed it into the lagoon: but Suloo's boat was too small to be seen at the distance. They can't know a thing yet."

"And we don't know for certain that they are there at all," said Harry. "It's quite likely that they may have gone back to their own island."

"So brace up, Bunter," said Bob Cherry, encouragingly. "We may only have to wait for a white man's ship to blow in. Why, they'll send a gunboat when they get the news at Fiji. In a few days, old fat man, you may be sprawling in that hammock you've been dreaming about, under a palm tree, and telling us how jolly sorry you are for us because we've got to

go back to school, and kow-tow to Quelch, while you're making a fortune by wolfing all the foodstuffs in the Pacific Islands."

That happy prospect did not seem to comfort Billy Bunter much. Perhaps it seemed to him altogether too uncertain.

His only reply was a dismal groan.

Billy Bunter seemed to be fed up with the Pacific Islands, and all that appertained thereto. He would have given all the postal-orders he had ever expected just to be back at Greyfriars, even bending over under Quelch's cane!

So far from feeling sorry for the other fellows because they had to go back to school, William George Bunter was feeling fearfully sorry for himself because he couldn't! He did not want to loll in a hammock under a shady palm! He wanted to be a thousand miles from the Pacific Ocean!

He sat and groaned.

Groaning did not seem a useful resource to the Famous Five. Putting the manager's bungalow into a state of defence, as well as they could, appeared to them rather more useful.

But their faces were grave, and their voices low, and they kept a constant watch on the beach and the lagoon: in uneasy dread, every moment, of seeing canoes shooting across from the further shore, or fuzzy-headed savages padding along the beach. They thought of despatching the boat to collect the baggage left on the reef: but it was agreed that it was wiser to lie as low as possible, and run no risk of discovery by the savages, if Mefoo and his tribesmen were still on the island.

Their one hope was that the war-party from Kut had left Lololo. If the savages were not gone, their position was desperate, as they all realised clearly. It was with anxious eyes that they watched, as the long hot day drew to its breathless close. But there was still no alarm.

"They're gone," said Bob Cherry, hopefully, when the juniors sat down to a meal in the verandah, in the glowing red of the sunset.

"Looks like it," said Harry.

"The gonefulness would be a boonful blessing," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But we must not count our chickens before the bird in hand has gone to the bush, as the English proverb remarks."

"I say, you fellows—."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Got room for another bunch of bananas, old fat man?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—."

"Or a couple of dozen more coconuts?"

"I say, what's Suloo staring at on the lagoon?" squeaked Bunter. "I—I say, if—if they're coming—we shall have to hide somewhere—."

The juniors looked round at Suloo.

The Kamakama boy was standing by the verandah rail, staring across the sunset-reddened waters. They could see the dark grim expression that had come over his brown face with its strange tattoo-marks.

Harry Wharton called to him. "Suloo!"

"Yessar!" The Kanaka turned his head, and looked at the juniors.

"What thing you see along lagoon, Suloo, eye belong you?" asked Harry.

"See feller canoe, sar, eye belong me," answered Suloo.

"A canoe!"

The juniors all exclaimed at once, as they jumped to their feet. There was a squeak from Billy Bunter.



"I say, you fellows—I—I say—oh, crikey!"

The Co. ran to the rail, and stared in the direction indicated by Suloo's brown pointing finger. He was pointing towards the opening of the reef passage, at some distance along the curving shore from the manager's bungalow.

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

"That tears it!" muttered Johnny Bull.

"The tearfulness is terrific!"

"Mefoo!" breathed Harry Wharton.

They watched, with clouded faces and beating hearts.

Coming through the reef from the open sea was a long, tall-prowed canoe, with a dozen blacks at the paddles. Sitting on a raised seat, with an air of haughty command, was a brawny black savage with a brass ring gleaming in his nose.

The juniors gazed, in deep silence. They knew that canoe again, with its black crew and black chief. It was the war-canoe that Ezra Huck had driven off with rifle-fire, on the run down from Kamakama. Mefoo, it seemed, had been on a cruise round about the island over-run by his savage tribe—perhaps in pursuit or search of Lololo natives who had fled to sea—and now he had returned. That made it clear that Lololo was, for the time at least, the head-quarters of the savages from Kut. It was the end of the hope that the war-party had left the island.

The canoe paddled on from the reef passage, across the lagoon, at a distance from the bungalow. Not a glance was cast from it in the direction of the building under the palms. The savages had not the remotest suspicion that white faces were watching them from the bungalow as they paddled.

They paddled on, under the sunset, and the canoe grew smaller and smaller in the distance across the lagoon. It disappeared at last.

Bob Cherry broke the grim silence. "That's that!" he said.

"We've got to face it," said Harry.

The juniors had the courage to face it. But it was with anxious hearts that they saw the shadows of night close in over Lololo. Mefoo and his savage tribesmen were still on the Island—how many of them the juniors had no means of guessing, but quite possibly a dozen canoe-crews—or more. They were camped on the opposite side of the lagoon, that was clear now. For the moment, for the hour, the danger was not at hand. But if, or rather when, the savage horde discovered the presence of the castaways at the bungalow, every life there would be hanging on a thread!

#### CHAPTER XXVII

### BUNTER HAS A BRIGHT IDEA!

MORNING dawned on Lololo!

The night had been one of watchful anxiety. The juniors slept and watched by turns, Wharton with the rifle close at hand. Only Billy Bunter slept the night through, forgetting his woes and apprehensions in slumber, and the deep snore that had been wont to wake the echoes in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars rumbled in the dim verandah of the manager's house on Lololo.

But the night passed without alarm.

In the bright morning sunshine, Harry Wharton and Co. looked out over the dazzling beach and the shining lagoon. But for the canoe they had seen, they might still have

believed that Lololo was a deserted island. Now they knew that the savages were there, but could see nothing of them.

Suloo busied himself getting breakfast for the white masters. In the happy-go-lucky way of the South Sea Islanders, Suloo forgot danger when it was not visible, and his brown face was cheerful. He had risked his life to return to Lololo and join the schoolboy party: for all he could have known, they might already have been over-whelmed by the savages, and his boat might have been chased by Mefoo's canoes. But he was not thinking of the cannibals and their dreadful feasts of "long-pig" as he clattered pots and pans in the kitchen of the bungalow. The juniors could hear him crooning a native song as he clattered. The Kanaka's fuzzy brain had room for only one idea at a time: and for the moment he was happy in his change of masters. And he had, apparently, a faith in the "long-feller" gun which the juniors would have been glad to share.

"No sign of the blighters," said Bob Cherry, after a long and searching stare over all that could be seen of Lololo.

"They may never come round this side of the island again at all," remarked Nugent, hopefully. "They looted all they wanted here."

"It's possible," said Harry. "I don't quite make out why they're staying on Lololo at all. They must go back to Kut some time, sooner or later."

"The soonerfulness the betterfulness," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Perhapsfully the esteemed and ridiculous Suloo may know why they elongate their obnoxious presence."

And when Suloo brought their breakfast out into the verandah, Harry Wharton called to him.

"You feller Suloo, you savvy what name Kut feller stop along Lololo?"

Suloo's cheery brown face clouded at the mention of the savages.

"Yessar, me savvy plenty," he answered. "Tinkee black feller stop along Lololo, along hunt Lololo feller along bush."

"Oh!" exclaimed the juniors, all together.

"We've seen nothing at all of the Lololo people," said Bob. "What has become of them, Suloo?"

"You savvy what place Lololo feller stop?" asked Harry.

"Tinkee Lololo feller run along sea, along canoe," answered Suloo. "That feller run along sea—run along bush—run along all place along no likee black feller."

"I suppose that's what happened," said Bob, slowly. "Some of them got away in the canoes, and others took to the bush." He shivered. "They didn't all get away—from what we saw on the beach yesterday."

"Black feller plenty kill-dead Lololo feller, me tinkee," said Suloo. "Plenty Lololo feller hide along bush, me tinkee. Black feller hunt along bush along kill-dead Lololo feller. Black feller bad feller altogether too much."

"So they're staying on the island, to hunt the Lololo boys in the bush," said Johnny Bull.

"They may stop for days—or weeks—then."

"And if they come round the lagoon—!" said Nugent.

"All we can do is to lie low, and keep out of their sight, if we can," said Harry. "If they find us, we shall have to fight for our lives."

"Oh, crikey!" Billy Bunter was awake. "I say, you fellows—."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Brekker's ready, Bunter! Lots and lots and lots," said Bob Cherry, cheerfully. "We shan't go hungry here, at any rate."

"Oh, really, Cherry—."

"And when the grub's all right, everything's all right, isn't it?" asked Bob.

"Oh, lor'!" said Bunter.

For once, it seemed, the fact that the grub was all right did not make everything all right, so far as Bunter was concerned. Nevertheless, he made an extremely good breakfast, though his fat face was long, and he cast incessant blinks through his big spectacles towards the beach.

Bunter's fat face was not only long, but very thoughtful, as he packed away the foodstuffs. It seemed that some idea was working in his fat brain, though while breakfast lasted, his plump jaws were too busy for speech.

But the inner Bunter having been satisfied, at last, the fat Owl proceeded to communicate the outcome of his unusual mental exertions.

"I say, you fellows, we're in an awful scrape," said Bunter, with a dolorous blink at the Famous Five.

"We are," agreed Bob Cherry. "We is."

"The scrapfulness is terrific," sighed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But what cannot be cured must go longest to the well, as the English proverb remarks."

"I've been thinking—" went on Bunter.

"Did it hurt?" inquired Bob, sympathetically.

"Oh, really, Cherry! Look here, I brought you fellows here, I feel responsible," declared Bunter.

"Not at all," said Harry. "You couldn't help it, any more than we could. We're landed here by Huck's villainy."

"Yes, but you wouldn't have come at all, but for me," said Bunter. "I feel that I'm responsible for the whole thing."

The juniors could only gaze at him.

This was quite surprising, from Bunter. Certainly it was true that but for Bunter the Famous Five would not have been in the Pacific Islands at all. Mr. Bunter had wished them to accompany his hopeful son, and the Comet Copra Company had stood the expenses: Billy Bunter was not, as he rather liked to state, the "boss of the show" —nevertheless, but for Bunter, the Famous Five would never have been on Lololo. But that Bunter should feel any responsibility in the matter, or care two hoots about any fellow but himself, was altogether astonishing. It looked as if danger had made a difference in the fat Owl.

"It's all my fault, really," went on Bunter. "My idea was to stand you fellows a splendid holiday, regardless of expense, in my usual generous way. And it turns out that we're landed among a lot of filthy cannibals. I've got you into this."

"Rot!" said Bob.

"The rotfulness is terrific, my esteemed Bunter."

"Don't you worry, old chap," said Johnny Bull, which was probably the first time he had ever addressed William George Bunter as "old chap." "We're all in this together, and nobody's to blame."

"Well, it's jolly decent of you to put it like that," said Bunter. "But I feel, all the same, that I got you into it, and that it's up to me to get you out of it."

"If you can do that, old scout, we'll all be jolly glad," said Bob Cherry. "How are you going to do it?"

"I'm going to get help," said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"We've got a boat. It won't take the lot of us, and even if we could pack in, there would be no room for food. We can't all get away in it. But one chap could get away—with Suloo to row—."

"Oh!"

"That bandaged chap the other day got to Kamakama in his canoe from here," went on Bunter. "Well, a boat can do what a canoe can do. I'm willing to take the risk—."

"The risk?"

"Yes! I feel that it's up to me," said Bunter, nobly. "I got you into this, and it's up to me to get you out, see? I'll go for help in the boat—."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Suloo can row it," said Bunter, "and with only the two of us, there will be plenty of room to pack food. That's important. I—I—I'll send help from Kamakama when I get there—."

"You fat villain!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—."

"And what help will you send from Kamakama?" asked Bob. "Ezra Huck in his cutter?"

"Well, there might be a ship or something," said Bunter. "The point is, that I'm willing to take the risk of going in the boat, to get help for you fellows—."

"You fat, frabjous, footling, frumptious frump!" said Bob Cherry, in measured tones.

"There's no help at Kamakama, and they've got the news there already, anyway. So that's what you want, is it?—to sneak off in the boat and leave the rest of us to it."

"That's a rotten way of putting it, Bob Cherry! It's like you!" said Bunter, scornfully. "I've thought this out entirely for you fellows' sake."

"Oh, kick him," said Johnny Bull.

"Beast! "

Bunter had risen, for a moment or two, in the estimation of the Famous Five. Now he went down again with a bump!

Bunter's bright idea was to get off in the boat, going while the going was good. But even Bunter did not like to put it quite like that. He had thought out a much better way of putting it.

"Look here, I'm going to kick him," growled Johnny Bull. "Nobody's kicked Bunter since we started on this trip. He has to be kicked."

"Look here, you beast—."

"The kickfulness is the proper caper! Get up and turn roundfully, my esteemed fat Bunter."

"Yah!"

"Hold on, though," said Harry Wharton, thoughtfully, "Suloo could get the boat as far as Kamakama, if the weather keeps fair. It would carry enough food, with only one passenger. Why shouldn't Bunter go?"

"The fat funk!" hooted Johnny Bull.

"Well, Bunter's no use here," said Harry. "If there's trouble with the savages, he will only be in the way."

"Oh, really, Wharton—."

"No use, and certainly no ornament," agreed Bob. "If Suloo's willing to roll him to Kamakama, let him rip!"

"And good riddance of bad rubbish," grunted Johnny. Billy Bunter blinked indignantly at the Famous Five.

This was not, apparently, how he had expected his proposition to be received. If they were not satisfied with him, at least he was quite satisfied with himself. Bunter's fat brain worked in mysterious ways its wonders to perform.

"I like that!" said Bunter, bitterly. "I offer to take all the risk of getting help for you fellows, and all you can do is to call a chap names. I'm used to ingratitude from you fellows.

Tennyson says how sharper than a thankless child it is to have a toothless serpent—."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" snorted Bunter. "I've a jolly good mind to throw up the whole idea. It would serve you right. But I won't! I'm going in that boat—."

Billy Bunter was interrupted. From Suloo, who was watching the beach, came a sudden startled cry.

"Black feller comey."

"Oh!"

"Look out!"

The Famous Five rushed to the verandah rail, Wharton with the rifle in his hands. They stared out at the sun-scorched beach. Along the dazzling sand a figure came running—a Polynesian brown-skinned Kanaka, evidently one of the natives of Lololo—the first they had seen. He was running like a deer—running for his life: and behind him at a little distance, with fierce face and glinting eyes, brandishing a spear, came a fuzzy-headed black savage in hot pursuit.

#### CHAPTER XXVIII

#### THE ENEMY!

HARRY WHARTON and Co. watched breathlessly.

The Lololo native was running hard, bounding desperately along the sand. But the pursuing savage was close upon him, and gaining. The shark's-tooth point of the spear was terribly near the bare brown back.

The juniors' hearts beat hard.

The fugitive was being overtaken. It looked as if the pursuer would reach him by the time he came in front of the bungalow. There was no help for the hapless brown boy, and the juniors could read the desperate fear in his sweating face. They were about to see him done to death, under their very eyes.

"Good heavens!" breathed Bob, his ruddy face pale.

"That Lololo feller go finish!" muttered Suloo. "He go finish along spear belong black feller."

Harry Wharton half-lifted the rifle. But he paused.

Neither the fugitive nor his pursuer glanced in the direction of the bungalow, lying well back from the lagoon beach under the palms. The juniors had only to lie low and keep in cover to avoid observation, and stave off, at least the discovery of their presence on the island. Yet it seemed to Harry Wharton impossible to see the terrified Lololo boy run down and killed, without making some effort to help him.

Evidently, Suloo had been right—the savages from Kut were beating the bush on Lololo, to hunt down the natives who had run into hiding. The hapless native had been chased out of the bush into the open, speeding along the shore of the lagoon in a wild attempt to escape his inevitable fate. Close behind him raced the savage with ferocious face and uplifted spear.

Wharton set his teeth.

"We can't—!" he muttered. He lifted the rifle again, resting the barrel on the palm-wood rail. His face was tense.

Suloo caught his arm, in alarm.

"No shootee along gun, sar!" he breathed. "Black feller no see us feller, sar, eye belong him! He no savvy we stop along this place. Sposee you shoot along gun, all feller along Lololo savvy."

"I know!" muttered Harry. All the juniors knew that the report of a rifle would be heard all over the island, warning the horde of head-hunters that white men were there; bringing upon them the terrible peril they had so far escaped. "I know, Suloo! But—that man will be killed in another minute."

"He go finish, sar," said Suloo. "Plenty Lololo boy go finish, along black feller wantee smoke head belong Lololo feller. No likee Mefoo smokee head belong us feller, along canoe-house belong him."

"We can't let it go on." Johnny Bull was a little pale, but his voice was quiet and firm. "Very likely they'll rout us out anyway, as they're searching the island for Lololo boys. We've got to take our chance."

"We must!" said Bob.

"Oh, look!" breathed Nugent.

The running Lololo boy had reached the coral path on the beach from the quay to the bungalow. He stumbled on the coral and fell.

With a loud, fierce yell, the pursuer fairly hurled himself at the fallen man, to spear him before he could rise.

Harry Wharton had hesitated. There was so much at stake that he could hardly make up his mind to act. But at that sight, he hesitated no longer. He shook off Suloo's detaining hand, and took aim with the rifle.

Crack!

He aimed at the muscular black legs of the savage, and fired with a steady hand.

In another second or so, the leaping savage would have reached the wretched Lololo boy sprawling on the coral, and the spear would have sunk deep into the defenceless brown body. The shot came only in time. It struck a brawny black knee, and the savage crashed down headlong on the sand.

The report of the rifle echoed far across Lololo. It startled a myriad wild-fowl on the lagoon, who rose on the wing. On the silent island, it had an effect almost of thunder, dying away in a thousand echoes.

"Ooooooh!" came a startled squeak from Billy Bunter.

"That's done it!" muttered Bob.

The Lololo boy scrambled up. He gave one startled, terrified stare round him, and ran on along the beach, disappearing into distant palms. His pursuer was rolling in the sand, yelling and screaming.

The juniors watched, with thumping hearts. "We go finish!" muttered Suloo.

The black islander struggled up on one knee, staring with wild eyes towards the bungalow. The ferocity in his face had given place to fear and pain. It was useless for the juniors to hunt cover, now that their presence was betrayed, and they watched the man from the verandah rail. He stared at the row of white faces for a moment, and then began to crawl away, dragging his disabled limb, leaving a long blood-stained furrow behind him in the soft sand as he went.

Harry Wharton dropped the butt of the rifle, breathing hard.

"We had to do it," he said. "We had to stop that savage brute. We couldn't let that man be killed under our eyes."

"We couldn't," said Bob.

"We go finish!" mumbled Suloo. "Black feller savvy we stop along this place. Now we go finish close-up."

"I say, you fellows," came an almost expiring squeal from Billy Bunter. "I—I say, are—are they coming?"

"Not yet, old fat man. There was only one of them, and he's crawling away with a game leg," answered Bob. "We're not dead yet."

"We shall be attacked," said Harry Wharton, quietly. "There can't be much doubt about that, now they know we're here. We've got to defend the house, and our lives. We can block up the doors and windows, and stand up to it."

"Oh, lor'!"

Billy Bunter, squatting against the verandah rail, blinked at the Famous Five, with popping eyes behind his big spectacles. The prospect of defending the house against a horde of cannibal head-hunters did not seem to enliven Bunter. Never had his fat face looked so dismal.

Harry Wharton glanced at him. Every hand was needed now, in the desperate extremity to which they had come. But it was only too plain that Bunter would be of no use when the trouble started. The Famous Five were quiet and grave: but their courage did not fail them. Whatever courage Billy Bunter possessed had oozed out at his fat finger-ends.

"We may pull through yet, Bunter," said Harry.

"While there's life there's hope. Keep a stiff upper lip."

"Oh, crikey!"

"Might be a chance yet for Bunter to get away in the boat, if Suloo's willing," said Bob, with a commiserating look at the hapless fat Owl. "We can't all go—and this Co. is sticking together. But Bunter—."

"You feller Suloo," said Harry.

"Yessar."

"You tinkee can go along sea, along boat, makee Kamakama, along one feller white master stop along boat?"

"No tinkee, sar," answered Suloo. He pointed to the beach with a brown finger. "Black feller comey along this place."

"Oh!"

"Too late!" said Nugent.

"They're coming," muttered Johnny Bull.

Along the beach, in either direction, fuzzy heads were in sight. Two or three blacks had gathered round the wounded savage, who had now crawled some distance. Five or six were coming along the beach at a run. Evidently the rifle-shot from the bungalow had been heard far and wide, startling the savages in the bush, and apprising them that a white man was on the island. Fierce faces and glimmering spears met the eyes of the juniors as they looked out.

It was too late to think of carrying out Billy Bunter's bright idea. They could not even reach the boat, without running the gauntlet of the gathering savages.

As they looked, one of the blacks reached the little quay. Then he stared round at the bungalow: and then, gripping his spear, came running up the coral path towards the building.

"Look out!" breathed Bob.

Suloo gave a yell.

"Oh, sar! You shoot along long-feller gun."

Harry Wharton levelled the rifle across the rail. The savage running up the path came to a dead stop. He stared at the rifle, and the set face over it, turned, and bolted. There was a wild outbreak of jabbering, as the savages gathered on the beach, all staring towards the bungalow, some of them brandished their spears, but not venturing, for the moment, to approach.

"No likee long-feller gun, sar," said Suloo.

"We may pull out of this yet," said Harry. "If we get through, we shall owe our lives to Suloo. Better get into the house, Bunter—there may be spears flying soon."

"Oh, crikey!"

Billy Bunter rolled into the house. On the beach, more and more savages appeared, staring at the bungalow, jabbering excitedly, and brandishing spears. But there was evidently fear of the "long-feller gun," and the attack, though the juniors knew that it must be coming, still held off.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE ATTACK!

"MEFOO!"

The sun was high over Lololo.

The long nerve-racking hours had passed. More and more of the black islanders from Kut had appeared on the beach, gathering there and watching the bungalow from a distance, and there were now more than thirty of them. And across the lagoon the juniors had discerned moving dark dots on the water, which, as they came nearer, were seen to be canoes, crowded with savages. From one of the canoes a powerfully-built, muscular black man stepped: and from his swaggering manner, and the respect shown him by the other savages, the juniors would have guessed him to be the chief, if they had never seen him before. But they had seen him—and they knew the dark harsh face, with the shining brass ring in the thick nose, and the necklaces of cartridge-clips round the bull neck. It was Mefoo, the chief of Kut.

"Now for it!" murmured Bob.

They could guess that the savages had been waiting for the arrival of their chief. Mefoo had arrived at last. He stood on the quay, his black fierce eyes fixed on the bungalow under the palms, and the white faces that looked from it. The juniors felt their hearts beat harder. The struggle was coming now.

They had not been idle. Doors and windows of the bungalow had been blocked and barricaded with anything that came to hand, to make the house a last refuge. Only the doorway on the verandah had been left partly open, for retreat. The juniors remained, so far, in the verandah, which was surrounded by a strong rail, at some height from the ground, and the steps had been barricaded. It was a strong position, had not the enemy been so overwhelming in numbers. But they knew that a determined attack from such a horde must mean the end.

There was only the one firearm: but they had searched the looted bungalow for possible weapons. Suloo had found a long heavy bush-knife, Bob Cherry an axe. The others had trimmed billets of wood with their pocket-knives to make cudgels. Every face was set: and though their hearts were beating hard, they were cool. The choice before them was to stand up to the enemy, or to go down helplessly under spears and arrows: and they braced themselves to stand up to the test.

Several times arrows had been loosed off, but the savages were keeping at a respectful distance from the "long-feller gun," and the missiles fell short. There seemed to be only a few bows among them: like many Melanesian tribes, they relied chiefly on the spear. The spears made the juniors shiver to look at them: barbed with shark's-teeth or human thigh-bones, cut into jagged shapes to inflict ghastly wounds.



The jabbering among the savages rose crescendo, as the chief stepped ashore. But at a lordly gesture from Mefoo it died away. With a haughty air that was ludicrous in a half-naked savage with a brass ring through his nose, the great chief stood with his eyes fixed on the bungalow, his wild horde silent round him. Then, to the surprise of the juniors, he handed his spear to one of his followers, lifted his hand with the palm outward in sign of peace, and came striding up the coral path.

Suloo nudged Harry Wharton.

"You shoot along long-feller gun, sar," he whispered. "That feller Mefoo—he likee smokee head belong white master, along canoe-house belong him. Sposee kill-dead Mefoo, black feller run, me tinkee."

"He's coming to speak to us," said Harry. "Mefoo comey talk along mouth belong him, along us feller."

"No talkee good talk along us feller, sar."

"We'll see," said Harry. "He's unarmed, Suloo—he may mean peace."

"No tinkee, sar."

"By gum!" muttered Bob. "If there's a chance of keeping the peace—."

"The chancefulness is not terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The esteemed and execrable Mefoo is trying on the trickfulness."

"He won't get far with that," said Harry. "We'll give him a chance to speak, anyway. We want to steer clear of them if we can."

"No tinkee," murmured Suloo.

Harry Wharton held the rifle resting on the rail, watchful and ready. It was as good as certain that the savage intended treachery: but the slightest chance of peace was to be welcomed. Mefoo came striding up the coral path, with all the air of a mighty chief who was monarch of all he surveyed: but he had a wary eye on the "long-feller gun." When he was within a few yards, Harry Wharton signed to him to stop.

As the chief still came on, he made a movement with the rifle. At that, Mefoo came to a prompt halt. His hand was still up in sign of amity.

"What name you point long-feller gun along Mefoo?" he demanded. "Mefoo good friend along white feller."

"White feller good friend along Mefoo," answered Harry. "Plenty good friend along Mefoo, sposee Mefoo likee."

"Me likee plenty too much. Comey along house, talkee along white feller, all good friend altogether."

"Likely!" murmured Johnny Bull.

"Oh, sar," breathed Suloo. "Sposee Mefoo comey along house, kill-dead all us feller, close-up."

"We're wise to that, old brown bean," said Bob.

"Mefoo doesn't set a hoof here."

"Likee plenty white feller," went on Mefoo, twisting his harsh and unsociable features into a friendly grin. "Comey along house, give white master plenty yam, plenty coconut, plenty pig, all thing plenty too much altogether."

In less terrible circumstances, Harry Wharton could have laughed at the transparent treachery of the benighted savage. Mefoo was anxious to get a footing on the safe side of the "long-feller gun." What would have followed, the juniors could guess only too easily.

"No comey along house," answered Harry. "Black feller stop along beach, white feller stop along house."

"Black feller likee comey along house, good friend along white feller too much," urged Mefoo.

"No can," answered Harry.

"Not in your lifetime," said Bob Cherry "Nothing doing, old bean."

The grin faded from Mefoo's face, and was replaced by a threatening scowl.

"Sposee no wantee Mefoo comey along house, me comey along house all samee, kill-dead all white feller!" he snarled. "Makee head belong white feller go along smoke, along canoe-house belong me."

"No can comey along house, Mefoo," said Harry. "Sposee comey along house, this feller shoot along long-feller gun, plenty kill-dead black feller."

The savage chief stood glaring at him. His childish attempt at treachery having failed, all his ferocious nature glared from his fierce black face. He said no more but turned and hurried back to the waiting horde on the beach.

"Oh, sar!" Suloo almost wailed. "You shoot along gun, along back belong Mefoo, along he go finish close-up."

Wharton shook his head.

In a few moments, Mefoo was among his tribesmen again, his spear in his hand, brandishing it. Loud yells rang along the beach of Lololo, as spears and axes and war-clubs were brandished round him.

"They're coming!" breathed Nugent.

"Stand up to it!" said Harry. His face was pale and set, his eye steady as he looked along the rifle.

"Here they come!"

There was a sudden, scattering rush. The savages streamed through the palms, running straight up the path towards the verandah where the Greyfriars party stood. Harry Wharton pulled the trigger, and the roar of the rifle mingled with the yelling of the savages as they came swarming on to the attack.

#### CHAPTER XXX

#### PICKED UP AT SEA!

KING OF THE ISLANDS stood by the binnacle of the ketch "Dawn," with a faint frown on his handsome boyish face. Koko, the brown-skinned boatswain, at the wheel, glanced from time to time at him, with a sympathetic grin. Four brawny Hiva-Oa boys stood at sheet and halyard, ready to jump at the orders of their skipper. From the little galley forward, the voice of Danny the cooky-boy was audible, crooning a Hawaiian song. Kit Hudson was sitting on the taffrail, watching the bellying canvas that rose like a white cloud over the gliding ketch, in the bright sunny morning.

The wind, which had come out of the north-west when Ken King sailed out of Kamakama, had shifted more and more to the west. And that meant longer and longer tacks to make Uma in the south. Which was not only laborious work for captain and crew, with incessant swinging of the long heavy boom and padding of bare brown feet on the deck, but also loss of time: and time was money to a trader. King of the Islands was not nearly so far on his course for Uma as he had expected to be, and as the faithless wind shifted more and more, it looked as if he would have to beat down to Uma cable's length by cable's length, instead of skimming the blue waters as the "Dawn" was wont to do with a favourable breeze. Adverse winds, to a wind-jammer, were the next worst thing to a dead calm. Hence the frown on the boy trader's brow.

"We're for it, Kit." King of the Islands turned to the mate in the taffrail. "Might almost as well have left the hook down at Kamakama. We've got to crawl down to Uma—if the wind doesn't stiffen and blow us east to Nukahiva."

"It's the luck of the windjammer," said Hudson.

Ken King gave a grunt. A windjammer was the slave of the wind: but he would not have exchanged his graceful ketch for any vessel driven by coal or petrol. He was a sailorman to the finger-tips.

He looked to the east. Had his next port of call been Lololo or any island to the east, the "Dawn" would have boomed on at ten knots over the sunny sea. But it was Uma in the south that he had to make: and it was weary work. But as he looked across the blue Pacific eastward, his gaze became suddenly fixed, and he forgot for a moment the trouble that the shifting wind was giving him.

Far away on the rolling waters, hardly discernible between sea and sky, his eyes had fixed on a speck on the water.

For a long minute he stood gazing: then he turned abruptly to the Kanaka at the wheel.

"Koko!"

"Yessar."

"You look along sea, eye belong you, tell me what thing you see."

Koko's keen eyes, keen as those of the soaring albatross, followed the direction of his skipper's pointing finger. He stared long and hard before he spoke.

"Tinkee see feller boat, sar!" he answered, at last. Kit Hudson jumped from the taffrail.

"A boat, in these waters, a hundred miles from everywhere!" he exclaimed.

"Feller boat, sar, me tinkee," said Koko.

Ken King called to one of the Kanaka seamen.

"Lompo! You fetch long-feller glass, along cabin he stop."

"Yessar."

King of the Islands took the binoculars from Lompo, and focused them on the distant speck on the eastern horizon. What had been an almost shapeless blur took form and shape under the powerful glasses. He could make out a drifting boat, though whether it had occupants he could not make out at the distance.

In silence, he handed the binoculars to Hudson.

The mate of the "Dawn" focused the glasses in his turn. He gave a low whistle, as he lowered them at last.

"It's a boat," he said. "No crew that I could see—but—I think I saw something move, Ken."

King of the Islands nodded. The frown upon his brow deepened. He had lost time already owing to the shifting wind: time that was precious to a trader with dates to keep in many islands. He did not want to lose another hour or another minute if it came to that. But the first duty of a skipper at sea was to succour the ship-wrecked. It might be only a drifting boat that had broken away from a tow-rope. But he had to make sure of that before he passed it by. And he, like Hudson, had an impression that something had stirred in the drifting boat.

Hudson looked at him, with an unspoken question. Ken nodded again.

"We've got to run down to it and see," he said. "Only Davy Jones knows when we shall make Uma, at this rate. But if there's a castaway in that boat, we've got to pick him up."

"Aye, aye," said Hudson.

"Feller wind plenty good go along boat, sar," said Koko, perhaps by way of consolation, and King of the Islands laughed.

The wind, which made it weary work to beat down to Uma, was fair and full for the east. Ken shouted to the crew, and the ketch was put before the wind. For the moment, there

was no more weary tacking and wearing: the "Dawn" swept through the blue waters like a swooping sea-bird, and the Hiva-Oa boys, glad of the respite, contentedly chewed betel-nut.

King of the Islands and his mate watched the speck on the sea as the "Dawn" drew swiftly nearer. Soon they could make out the boat clearly with the naked eye: and they forgot all about loss of time and trade, as a haggard face was lifted over the gunwale, and a hand waved feebly. There was at least one living man in the boat—a white man.

The head sank back again.

"A ship-wrecked man, Kit." said King of the Islands, "and pretty far gone, from the look of him. But I don't get it. There's been no rough weather for more than a week—the last blow hit us when we were making Kamakama."

He watched the boat intently.

It was drifting aimlessly: there was no hand at the tiller.

The man they had seen was evidently too weakened to help himself. He had seen the tall sails of the "Dawn" bearing down, and had made an effort to make a signal for help: now he lay stretched in the bottom of the boat, and they saw him again as they drew nearer, and another figure, that of a Kanaka, that lay motionless, and apparently unconscious. Ken's face was tender with pity as he looked. From whatever cause the boat was adrift on the boundless wastes of the Pacific, it was plain that its occupants had suffered severely: weak from want of food and water, beaten on by the burning sun. But there was rescue at hand now.

The white man in the boat staggered to his knees: he seemed unable to get on his feet. His hand was waved again, and King of the Islands waved back.

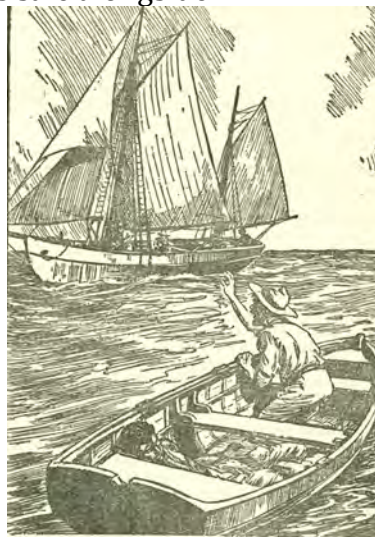
"Stand ready with the rope, Kit."

"Aye, aye."

"Ahoy, ship-mate!" shouted King of the Islands.

If the man called back, his voice was too faint to be heard. The ketch surged on, and hove-to within a few fathoms of the boat. The haggard face watched, with staring eyes.

Hudson tossed the rope, and the man in the boat caught it, and made it fast. A minute more, and the drifting craft was safe alongside.



A HAGGARD FACE WAS LIFTED OVER THE GUNWALE

Ken swung himself over the low rail of the "Dawn." and dropped into the boat. The Kanaka did not stir: he was quite insensible: but the haggard white man held out eager hands.

"Water!"

The one word came hoarsely from a parched throat. Hudson passed over a pannikin of water, and King of the Islands placed it in the eager shaking hands. The castaway drank it almost at a gulp.

Then he found his voice.

"You've saved me, King of the Islands—."

"You know me?" said Ken. He scanned the haggard face more closely. "My sainted Sam! It's you, Sanders!"

"Sanders!" repeated Kit Hudson, looking down. "The Comet Company's manager on Lololo!"

You're a hundred miles and more from your station, Sanders," exclaimed Ken. "How did you get adrift like this—in an open boat, without food or water—."

"We got away—no time to stop for food or water or anything else," the castaway answered faintly. "We got away by the skin of our teeth, with spears and war-clubs at our backs—they were at our heels—."

"From whom?" asked Ken, in wonder. "What has happened on Lololo, in heaven's name?"

"A war-party from Kut—Mefoo and his head-hunting crew—they have raided the island—."

"Good heavens!" breathed Ken.

Back into his mind came the schoolboy party from "home," whom he had left at Kamakama, on their way to Lololo. His handsome face paled under its tan. What had become of that cheery party of schoolboys, if they had gone on to Lololo—to land upon an island over-run by cannibal head-hunters?

#### CHAPTER XXXI

#### FOR LIFE OR DEATH!

BILLY BUNTER jumped.

Crack! crack!

"Oh, lor'!" gasped Bunter. Crack! crack! crack!

Billy Bunter blinked out into the verandah from the bungalow. His fat face, usually ruddier than the cherry, looked like dough. His little round eyes almost popped through his big round spectacles. He gazed at a scene that seemed to him like some horrible film, or like an evil dream.

Crack! crack!

Harry Wharton, his face set, his eyes glinting over the rifle, fired into the thick of the howling mob of savages, charging up to the bungalow.

It was impossible to miss, at point-blank range. Every bullet told on the yelling mass.

Almost in a moment, as it seemed, five or six savage islanders were rolling and shrieking on the ground, under the bullets that ploughed through flesh and bone. Howls and groans mingled with the furious war-cries.

"Ooooh!" gasped Bunter.

The captain of the Remove fired steadily and coolly.

The other fellows stood ready to strike at black hands clutching the verandah rail. But that they could hope to stop this swarming rush seemed impossible.

"I say, you fellows."

Bunter's faint squeak was not heard, and would hardly have been heeded if it had been heard.

"I—I say! Run for it!" gasped Bunter. "I say, you fellows, run!"

And Billy Bunter, perhaps by way of setting a good example, backed from the doorway, and bolted along the wide passage that ran through the bungalow from the front door to the back.

There was only one idea in the fat Owl's terrified fat mind—to get out before the cannibals got in! To escape from the bungalow, to flee into the bush, to find some hiding-place—that was the only chance that remained.

The back door was locked and bolted: and Bunter had no time to deal with locks and bolts. He dragged open a window and plunged out.

There was a heavy bump as he landed on the earth. But he was up again in the twinkling of an eye. With a celerity that was amazing, considering the weight he had to carry, the fat Owl of the Remove streaked through the coconut plantation behind the bungalow—breathless, panting, gasping, squeaking, stumbling, but plunging on without a pause, till he reached the bush, and hurtled into its deep shadows, and the yelling and howling of the savages grew fainter in the distance behind him.

Crack!

Harry Wharton had emptied the rifle into the howling horde. Not a shot had been wasted: but while the fallen screamed and writhed, the rest of the mob came swarming on.

"Back up!" breathed Bob Cherry.

Wharton was hurriedly cramming in fresh cartridges. But three or four of the savages reached the verandah before he could reload. Black hands grasped at the rail as they leaped and clutched.

Suloo's bush-knife flashed in the air, and came down on black hands. Bob Cherry's axe crashed on a fuzzy head. Thick cudgels, wielded in desperate hands, beat upon clutching black fingers. It was for life or death now, and the Greyfriars juniors stood up to it with desperate courage.

Then amid the hubbub of yells, and howls, and shrieks, the crack of the rifle was heard again, and Wharton was pitching bullets into the howling horde.

And then, in a flash as it seemed the scene changed, and the savage horde, dividing to right and left, were running round the house.

So swift and sudden was the change, that it seemed more like some ghastly film than reality.

Fifty savages, at least, had charged up the coral path, yelling with ferocity, brandishing spears and war-clubs. Now, only a few minutes later, all that could be seen were wounded, howling on the earth, and a few running back to the beach—the rest were scampering round the building, to attack in other quarters.

"No likee long-feller gun," murmured Suloo. Crashing blows, of axes and war-clubs, rang and echoed. Doors and windows, barricaded within, creaked and groaned under resounding blows.

"Back into the house!" panted Harry.

The rush had failed. The "long-feller gun" at close quarters had proved too much for the savages. But they were all round the bungalow now, beating at doors and windows, and even on the stout palm-pole walls, with axe and club, to break a way in, amid yells and howls, as if pandemonium had broken loose on Lololo.

The juniors backed through the doorway into the building: the verandah had to be given up now. Johnny Bull jammed the door shut. Bob Cherry and Nugent jammed boxes, furniture, and a heavy barrel against it.

"Look out!" yelled Bob, suddenly. "That window—."

"It's open—."

"Quick—."

But Harry Wharton had already seen it. Bunter, in his hurry to escape had not given it a thought—indeed, so far as the terrified Owl had thought at all, he had probably thought that the other fellows were at his heels. The window beside the back door was wide open—and a black savage, who had found it, was already half-way in, and spears in other hands gleamed behind him.

Crack!

Wharton fired along the passage. In a moment or two more, the savage islander would have been in, headlong. But the shot came in time, and with a wild shriek, he tumbled back among the savages outside.

Harry Wharton dashed along the passage. A second more, and he was firing from the back window: and the savages were scattering from the fire. Panting, he closed the shutter, and bolted it.

"Oh, crumbs!" Bob Cherry dashed a stream of perspiration from his forehead, with the back of his hand. "Hot work, old beans."

"We've stopped them, anyhow," panted Nugent.

"The stopfulness is terrific."

"No likee long-feller gun!" grinned Suloo.

The juniors listened. Blows were ringing on walls and shutters all round the bungalow. They could even hear a sound of some active savage who had clambered on the slanting roof, and was crawling there.

They had had a hope that the rifle-fire might drive the savages to retreat. It was very plain that, as Suloo said, they did not like the "long-feller gun." But the fire-arm, though it had stopped the rush, had not stopped the attack. In every spot, where the rifle could not be brought to bear on them, the savage islands were crowding and attacking, seeking entrance at all points, like a pack of ravening wolves round a sheep-fold.

Several times the juniors heard the loud, harsh voice of Mefoo, shouting and yelling to his followers, in a strange tongue they did not understand. The cannibal chief was evidently determined to push on the attack to a finish.

"I say, where's Bunter?" exclaimed Bob, suddenly.

Snort, from Johnny Bull.

"Hiding somewhere—under a bed, I expect."

"The under-bedfulness is probably terrific," grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

There was a padding of bare feet in the verandah. Now that it was no longer defended, a crowd of the savages had clambered in. They ranged along the front of the bungalow, beating at the doors and windows. The harsh yelling voice of Mefoo told that the chief was there.

"Look out!" breathed Bob.

A spiked war-club beat like a sledgehammer on the door, already split. A sudden glare of sun came through a gap. The war-club crashed and crashed again, and the gap widened, the sunlight streaming in.

A bare black arm came through the gap, thrusting with a spear through the tottering barricade within. Suloo made a leap, avoiding the spear, and his bush-knife came down on the black muscular arm. A shrieking savage dragged away the disabled limb.

Again the voice of Mefoo was heard, yelling. The door, and the flimsy barricade, rocked under crashing blows from the war-club, wielded with both hands by the savage chief.

Harry Wharton glimpsed the brawny black body through the gap that was widening further under Mefoo's blows.

His eyes glinted, as he took aim through the gap. Mefoo, as he wielded the club, was little more than a yard from him, the breaking door and the rocking barricade between. From moment to moment the savage chief was visible at the gap. Wharton pulled the trigger. The blows of the war-club suddenly ceased. The juniors heard a crash in the verandah as Mefoo went down. It was followed by a frantic outburst of yelling from the whole horde. Harry looked breathlessly from the gap. Mefoo was sprawling on the planks, blood streaming down his black face. He made efforts to rise, and fell back again. Five or six of his followers gathered round him, clutched him up, and carried him away. The juniors could hear the groans of the cannibal chief as he went.

There was a cackle of glee from Suloo.

"Mefoo go finish! Black feller no likee big-feller chief go finish! You see, sar, eye belong you." And it seemed that the Kamakama boy was right, for the fall of the chief was followed by a sudden cessation of the dreadful din all round the bungalow. Axes and clubs ceased to crash on door and window and wall. Wild cries came from the savages, but the war-cry was no longer heard.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bob. "They're going."

"They're going!" breathed Nugent.

"Oh, what luck!"

"The luckfulness is preposterous!"

"Hurray!"

It seemed to the juniors too good to be true. But it was true. The fall of Mefoo had put a sudden end to the attack. Looking from gaps and cracks in their defences, they could see the wild mob of blacks streaming down to the beach.

The attack was over—and the castaways of Lololo still lived!

## CHAPTER XXII

### WHERE IS BUNTER?

"WHERE'S Bunter?"

"Bunter!"

"Bunter! Bunty! Bunt!" roared Bob Cherry. But answer there came none.

During the wild excitement of the attack on the bungalow, Harry Wharton and Co. had had no time to think of Billy Bunter. So far as they had remembered his fat existence at all, they supposed that the fat Owl was in hiding in some remote corner—in a cupboard or under a bed. But now that the attack was over, and the excitement had died down, they remembered him, and were puzzled and perplexed not to see him.

Bob Cherry's stentorian voice rang through the building. No one inside, and for a considerable distance outside, could have failed to hear it. Certainly it must have fallen upon Bunter's ears, if those fat ears had been within the bungalow. But the Owl of the Remove did not emerge.

"Where on earth has he parked himself?" exclaimed Bob.

"Echo answers that the wherefulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Bunter!" shouted Harry Wharton.

"Show up, you fat chump!" roared Bob Cherry. "It's all over, fathead—safe as houses—come out of it, you blithering bandersnatch."

"Bunter!"

"Show a leg, Bunter!"

"Crawl out, ass."



But there was no reply, and the fat Owl did not appear, and the juniors could only wonder what had happened to him. That he was no longer in the building did not yet occur to them. The boldest spirit in the party would have hesitated to leave the shelter of the bungalow, with cannibals swarming on the island: and they could not guess that Bunter had done from sheer funk what they would have thought it too utterly reckless to do.

"Where on earth can he be?" exclaimed Bob. "He must hear us—why doesn't he crawl out of his corner, wherever he is?"

"He would, if he heard us," said Nugent. "Must have fainted—or something—."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Better look for him," said Harry.

"Poor old Bunter!" said Bob. "This is the jolly old island where he was going to have such a jolly old time! Let's root him out."

Harry Wharton glanced out at the gap in the doorway.

None of the savages remained near the bungalow. A few were to be seen on the beach, near the little quay where the canoes were tied up. But the greater number had disappeared from sight—along the curving beach, or into the high bush. Out on the lagoon, several canoes could be seen, coming across. It seemed that the savages, who had previously been camped on the further side of the lagoon, were transferring their camp to the hither side, in the vicinity of the bungalow. But there was no sign whatever of a renewal of the attack.

"All safe, what?" asked Bob, as the captain of the *Remove* turned from surveying the enemy.

"Looks like it," said Harry. "O.K. for the present, at least! Let's find that fat chump now."

The juniors spread over the bungalow in search of Billy Bunter. Several rooms, on either side, opened from the central passage. They went into every room, calling to Bunter, and looking for him in all sorts of possible and impossible places.

It seemed impossible that even Bunter could have fallen asleep: and as there was no sound from him, they could only suppose, at first, that terror had been too much for him, and that he had fainted. Every moment they expected to come upon him: but they did not come upon him, and their faces grew graver as the search was prolonged, without result. They gathered in the hall again at last. Unexpected as it was, and amazing as it was, they had to recognise the fact that Billy Bunter was no longer inside the bungalow.

"He—he—he's not here!" said Bob, in a low voice. "He's not in the house at all, you fellows."

"But what—?" muttered Nugent.

"That window!" said Harry. "You remember—it was open—I thought they'd forced it from outside but—"

"That's how he went," said Johnny Bull, with a nod. "Cleared off before they got round the house—"

"The mad ass!" breathed Bob. "What—what—what has happened to him? Good heavens, you fellows, what has happened to Bunter?"

Every face was pale now.

The juniors realised now that the hapless fat Owl had fled at the very start of the conflict. He had had, perhaps, three or four minutes before the swarming savages surrounded the bungalow. But what had happened to him since? Likely enough he had got clear, for the moment. But he could only have fled into the bush—and the bush was alive with cannibals.

"Poor old Bunter!" muttered Bob.

"What can we do?" said Frank Nugent.

"Nothing!" answered Harry Wharton, quietly. "Bunter may have got clear, while they were attacking in front of the house—he may have got into the bush—or—or—" He broke off, hesitating to put his thought into words—the thought of the hapless Owl going down under the thrust of a savage spear or the crash of a whirling war-club.

Bob shuddered.

"If he got into the bush, he will be hiding," he said.

"They—they may not find him—."

"If they did, they'd be more likely to take him prisoner," said Johnny Bull. "The brutes want prisoners—you know why—."

"What do you think, Suloo?" asked Harry.

"Tinkee fat feller white master go lost along bush, sar," answered the Kamakama boy.

"Plaps hide—plaps black feller findee. Sposee findee, makee kai-kai along that fat feller white master. No kill-dead close-up—makee plisoner, along makee kai-kai."

"A prisoner—in the hands of those demons!" muttered Bob. "And—and we can't help him—we can't even think of helping him—."

They looked at one another with clouded faces.

There was nothing that they could do. Bunter was gone: and where he was, or what had happened to him, they could not even guess. Their own lives hung on a thread: but they could not help thinking of the hapless fat Owl, lost in the trackless, tangled bush, or perhaps already a prisoner in the clutches of the cannibals.

#### CHAPTER XXXIII

### CAPTURED BY CANNIBALS!

"OH, lor'!" moaned Billy Bunter.

Only a dismal moan could express Bunter's feelings. Never, in all his fat career, had the Owl of the Remove felt so dismally down on his luck.

He had thrown himself down, to rest, at the foot of a tree, in the heart of the bush. Where he was, how far from the bungalow, how long he had wandered in the trackless bush, Bunter did not know. It seemed to him that he had wandered for hours and hours and hours, before he at last threw himself down to rest. He was tired, he was hot, he was perspiring, and he was getting hungry. And every moment he dreaded to see a black savage face looking at him from the tangled undergrowth: the chirp of a bird; the squeak of a parrot, the rustle of a branch, made his fat heart palpitate with terror.

Bunter's one thought when the cannibals attacked the bungalow was to get away—and he had got away! Whether the other fellows had got away, or what might have happened to them, Bunter had no idea—neither did he give the matter much thought, if any. His own troubles were quite sufficient to occupy his fat mind. He had escaped from the savages—for the time. But his last state did not seem much better than his first: and he could not help realising that his escape was rather in the nature of jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire.

He was lost in the bush! And even if he could have found his way, where was it to lead him? His only hope was to hide—to keep out of sight, as far as possible from the cannibals. If they found him—but he dared not think of that!

"Oh, lor'!" moaned the fat Owl. "Oh, crikey!"

He wiped streams of perspiration from a fat brow. It was hot as an oven in the bush—hotter than in the bungalow. Vast branches intercepted the rays of the sun, and a sort of

green twilight prevailed: but the thick foliage did not intercept the heat. The air seemed to ache with it.

But even heat and weariness and haunting fear could not quite make Billy Bunter forget the inner Bunter. He was hungry—and getting hungrier.

He blinked round through his big spectacles, in the hope of spotting a fallen coconut. But there were no coconuts to be seen. The tall trees and the thick tangled underwoods limited visibility to a few yards. He made an effort to heave himself to his feet, to go in search of coconuts or bananas or plantains. But he was too tired, and he sank back again with a moaning mumble.

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Bunter. "If only I was back at Greyfriars! Oh, lor'! If only I was anywhere else! Oh, crikey!"

It was a dismal and dispirited fat Owl. This was the island of his dreams—this! This was the life of lolling laziness that had drawn him like a magnet!

Bunter groaned.

But a stirring in the bush checked even that expression of his feelings. He forgot even that he was hungry, as his fat heart jumped.

Something stirred—and Bunter sat still, hardly breathing, and listened. Was it only a hopping parrot—or a wild pig rooting for nuts? Or—? He knew that the blacks had been ranging the bush, hunting for the Lololo natives who had fled into hiding. Was it—?

Bunter ceased to breathe, as a mass of tree-ferns parted, and a face came into view: a black face, with a coral ring in its nose, and rolling dark eyes. He sat transfixed, his eyes and spectacles glued on that face. His fat heart almost died within him.

For a moment, the savage did not see him. He was peering round, in the shadow of the tree under which the fat Owl sat. Then suddenly, the roving fierce eyes fell on Bunter, and blazed.

The savage leaped out into full view, spear in hand. Bunter did not stir. He could not. He would have fled, but his fat legs refused to move. He could only gaze at that dreadful apparition, like a fat rabbit fascinated by a serpent.

Perhaps that was just as well for Bunter. Flight could not have saved him, and resistance would have been still more hopeless. His helpless terror caused the savage fierceness to fade from the black face, to be replaced by a grin.

The black man came closer to him, staring down at him and grinning. To Billy Bunter's immense relief, the point of the spear was not turned in his direction.

"Little white feller too much fright!" said the black man. "Him plenty too much fright along this black feller Bomoo."

He grinned and chuckled.

"Me likee too much findee little white fat feller along bush," went on Bomoo. "Big-feller chief Mefoo plenty glad see little white fat feller. You comey along this feller."

Bunter did not stir.

"You comey!" repeated Bomoo.

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"No savvy Oh crikey!" said Bomoo. "You comey! Mefoo likee see you, all black feller likee see you plenty much."

Bunter blinked at him. His first glimpse of Bomoo had been terrifying. But the black man seemed now in high good humour, evidently greatly pleased by the capture he had made.

"I—I—I say—!" stammered Bunter.

"What thing you say, tongue belong you?" asked Bomoo.

"I—I say, I—I'd rather stop here, if—if—if you don't mind," moaned Bunter. "I—I—."

"You no comey along this feller?" demanded Bomoo.

"Nunno!" gasped Bunter, "I—I'm tired—."

The grin faded from Bomoo's black face. He gave the fat Owl a threatening glare, and in a moment, the jagged spear-point was touching the fat Owl's podgy chest. Bunter gave a yell of terror.

"You no comey?" demanded Bomoo. "You likee kill-dead along spear belong me?"

"Ow! Yes! No! Oh, crikey! I—I—I'll come, with pleasure," howled Bunter. "I—I want to come! I—I'll be very pleased to come! Oh, crumbs."

Bunter was tired. He had, indeed, been feeling too tired to put one foot before another. But he forgot that he was tired now. The touch of the spear-point banished fatigue. He bounded to his feet with the activity of a kangaroo.

Bomoo grinned again.

"You comee along this feller Bomoo." he said.

"Oh, dear! I mean, yes! Oh, crikey! I—I—I'm coming."

Bomoo, grinning, marched his prisoner off. Bunter, gasping and perspiring, stumbled along with him. The bush, which seemed utterly trackless to the fat Owl, did not seem trackless to the black man. Bomoo pushed on without a pause, winding his way among the bewildering trees.

Once Bunter blinked round at him, with a wild idea of bolting suddenly into the bush. But a motion of Bomoo's spear was more than enough to drive that idea from his mind. He stumbled on.

They emerged from the wild bush into a run-way. It was, if Bunter had known it, the same run-way that the Greyfriars juniors had followed in coming up from the reef the day before. The weary fat Owl stumbled along it, and in a few minutes more the shining blue waters of the lagoon came into view.

From the hot shade of the trees, they came out into the hot blaze of the lagoon beach. Billy Bunter blinked dismally along the shore.

He knew where he was now: far in the distance, along the curving shore, he had a glimpse of the coral quay, where innumerable canoes were tied up, prominent among them the great war-canoe of Mefoo, distinguished by its tall prow decorated with mother-of-pearl. He was close by the spot where he had stumbled over the skull in the sand.

But the beach was not deserted, as it had been then.

The horde of savages were no longer on the further side of the lagoon. Fifty or sixty of them were in sight, mostly lolling under the palm-trees, chewing betel-nut. Bunter dreaded to see the fierce harsh face of Mefoo. But the chief was not visible.

At the sight of Bomoo marching the white prisoner along the beach, there was sudden excitement among the lolling blacks. Twenty or thirty of them surrounded Bomoo and Bunter, jabbering in their own tongue, and staring at the fat Owl with evident satisfaction. In spite of his terrors, Bunter could not help feeling a little reassured. The blacks, who had been howling like demons round the bungalow a few hours ago, now seemed in good humour, grinning and chuckling and cackling. One of them pinched Bunter's fat cheeks—another squeezed his plump arm—another patted his podgy back, amid grinning and cackling, but with no sign of enmity or ferocity. Quite plainly they were glad to see Bunter. It was really almost an ovation, and the fat junior began to breathe more freely.

But his plump heart palpitated again, and he trembled, as a harsh loud voice reached his ears. The chuckling and cackling died away, and the crowd of savages fell back to right and left, as a brawny black man, his fuzzy head bandaged with a strip of tapa, a brass ring glistening in his thick nose, strode on the scene. And Billy Bunter, hardly breathing, his fat

knees knocking together, blinked in terror at Mefoo: and the cannibal chief, with grim satisfaction in his black face, stared at Billy Bunter.

#### CHAPTER XXXIV

### AWFUL FOR BUNTER!

MEFOO grinned.

It was not a pleasant grin. It seemed to the terrified fat Owl that there was something wolfish in it.

But it was a relief, all the same. For some reason, not clear to the fat Owl, Mefoo seemed to share the general satisfaction at the sight of him. The chief was not in a good temper. The furrow of a bullet under his thick fuzzy hair did not conduce to good temper.

Nevertheless, he grinned, showing a flashing set of white teeth.

"Plenty glad see little white fat feller, eye belong me," said Mefoo, grinning. "Too much glad you comey along this place."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"Likee little white fat feller altogether too much!" grinned Mefoo. "White feller plenty fat, my word. Likee white feller plenty fat."

Bunter blinked at him.

Bunter, in his own esteem, was not fat. He had a figure.

He was not skinny like the rest of the Greyfriars Remove. Other fellows often called him fat, but that was due to jealousy of a good-looking fellow. Still, if fatness was a recommendation to Mefoo's good graces, Bunter was quite satisfied to be considered fat. He would, indeed, willingly have been as fat as a prize porker, if that pleased the black chief and kept his ferocity in check.

"Too much plenty fat altogether," said Mefoo, with a curious relish. "Me likee too much."

He came closer to Bunter, and, as several of the savages had done already, pinched a fat cheek. Then he pinched the other fat cheek. They were quite gentle pinches, indeed almost affectionate. Bunter was more and more reassured.

Then Mefoo spoke to the other blacks in his own tongue, and the whole crowd moved on along the beach, Bunter in their midst. Not a hostile hand was raised—not a menacing glance was thrown at him. They seemed content to keep him in their midst, a prisoner. There was no escape for him: but they evidently regarded him as a valuable prize, almost as they might have regarded a pet animal. It was unexpected, it was puzzling, but it was an immense relief. As they seemed so friendly, the fat Owl almost ceased to be scared, and began to wonder whether he might venture to hint that he was hungry, and would like something to eat!

The swarm came to a halt again, near the coral quay where the canoes were tied up. In the distance, among the palms, the bungalow was now in view. Billy Bunter cast a blink towards it, remembering the existence of Harry Wharton and Co., whom he had rather forgotten with so many troubles of his own on his fat mind. The distance was too great for his spectacles, but he thought he glimpsed white faces and moving hats in the verandah. Apparently the blacks had not captured the bungalow after all, and the Greyfriars juniors were still there. Billy Bunter gave it a longing blink. Friendly as the blacks now seemed, he would have been glad to bolt up the coral path to the bungalow. But there was no chance of that.

Close by the quay, and quite near the margin of the lagoon, a single palm tree grew, at a distance from the other trees. Under it was a welcome patch of shade from the sun, into which Bunter would have been very glad to step.

As if anticipating his wishes, the savages walked him on to the solitary palm, no doubt obeying the instructions Mefoo had given them, in a language of which Bunter did not understand one syllable.

Bomoo threw a tapa cloth on the earth. Mefoo pointed to it. Bunter understood that he was to sit there, which he was very glad to do—his little fat legs were almost dropping off with fatigue.

In great relief he sat down, resting a plump back against the trunk of the tree.

That was agreeable enough: but what followed was not so agreeable. With a swarm of grinning black faces looking on, Bomoo passed a tapa cord round Bunter, and knotted it behind his back. Then he passed the cord round the trunk of the tree, and knotted it behind the trunk.

The fat junior's limbs were left free. But he was a helpless prisoner, for he was quite unable to get at any of the knots, tied out of his reach.

Not that it made a great deal of difference, for the crowd of savages made it impossible for him to cut and run, even if he had had a run left in his little fat legs.

Now the whole swarm of blacks turned their faces in the direction of the bungalow. Bunter, blinking in the same direction, could make out white faces lining the verandah rail, staring, and the brown face and black mop of hair of Suloo. There was a sudden outburst of yelling, brandishing of spears and war-clubs.

"Oh!" breathed Bunter.

He began to understand why he was there at that particular spot. Evidently, the attack on the bungalow had failed, and the Greyfriars juniors still held it against the enemy. The savage chief was displaying his prisoner to their eyes, taunting them with the sight of one of their party helpless in his hands. Bunter, sitting under the palm, was in full view of the friends who could not help him or save him.

The yelling and brandishing lasted several minutes.

Plainly it was intended to draw the attention of the defenders of the bungalow to the prisoner tied to the palm, as well as to express the savage triumph of Mefoo and his wild crew.

But it died away at last. Mefoo rapped out some command in his own tongue, and strode away along the beach, disappearing into the bush, where lay the camp of the savage tribesmen.

Some of the blacks followed him into the bush, others scattering on the beach, lolling under the shade of the palms, not very far away from Bunter. Only Bomoo stayed under the palm with him.

Bomoo grinned down at the plump prisoner. "You white feller likee eatee?" he asked. Bunter brightened up.

What the savages intended to do with him, he did not yet know: but his treatment so far had been reassuring. Even the fierce Mefoo had seemed almost amiable.

He could understand that they found a savage triumph and satisfaction in showing off their prisoner to the comrades who were helpless to aid him. But that did not worry Billy Bunter very much. He was not deeply concerned about what the fellows at the bungalow were thinking or feeling. If there was to be nothing worse than this, Bunter felt that he could stand it. And now he was offered food, for which the inner Bunter was yearning.

"Yes, rather," he answered. "I'm fearfully hungry! Famished! I've had nothing since brekker!"

"You eatee close-up," said Bomoo, reassuringly.

He departed along the beach, and went into the bush.

Bunter waited anxiously for his return. He was not only hungry, but, as he had said, famished. If they were going to feed him, it wasn't so bad after all. Bomoo seemed to him quite a good-tempered chap—and the others had been unexpectedly placable—indeed, the way they had handled him, pinching his fat cheeks, had really seemed almost affectionate. The whole crew seemed to have taken a liking to Bunter. It was unexpected, but reassuring and encouraging. The Owl of the Remove was feeling very much more at his ease.

Bomoo returned, carrying a large gourd, from which emanated an appetising smell.

Bunter sniffed appreciatively, as the black man set it down on the earth between his fat knees. His eyes beamed behind his spectacles. This was something like!

Fork or spoon there was none: Bunter had to rely on his fat fingers. But he was not over-particular in such matters, and anyhow there was no help for it.

Bomoo stood watching him with a cheery grin as he ate. Bunter did full justice to the contents of the gourd.

What it was he did not quite know, but he fancied it was turtle. At all events, it was good, and there was plenty of it. Not till the gourd was empty did Bunter lean back on the trunk of the palm, feeling ever so much better. He washed down the meal with the milk of a young drinking-nut, in a cup of coconut shell.

After which, Billy Bunter naturally felt disposed to go to sleep, in the overpowering heat of the tropic afternoon. He blinked drowsily at Bomoo, and then at the savages scattered along the beach, most of whom were looking towards him and grinning. Why they grinned so much, Bunter could not make out, unless it was in the sheer pleasure of seeing Bunter among them. That, perhaps, was natural, Billy Bunter being so eminently attractive a fellow—still, it was a little puzzling.

"You likee go sleep, you little fat feller white master?" said Bomoo, grinning down at him. That grin was quite good-humoured: yet there was something in it that caused Bunter's uneasiness to revive.

"Oh! Yes!" mumbled Bunter.

"You go sleep, sponsee you likee," said Bomoo. "You wakee along night he come."

Bunter blinked at him.

"Along night he come, me comey wakee," added Bomoo.

"I say, I'd rather have my sleep out." said Bunter.

After all his toils and fatigues, Billy Bunter was prepared for a good spell of slumber rather on Rip Van Winkle lines. He had no desire whatever to be wakened by Bomoo, until it was time for another meal, at least.

"I say, what are you going to wake me up for—what name you wakee me along night he come?" he added, putting it into the pidgin-English understood by Bomoo.

Bomoo stared at him.

"You no savvy?" he asked.

"Eh? No," answered Bunter. Apparently Bomoo supposed that he understood, as a matter of course.

As he realised that Bunter did not understand, Bomoo's grin grew wider and wider, till it revealed every tooth in his head.

"You no savvy!" he repeated. "You no savvy makee kai-kai along little fat feller white master, along night he come?"

"Wha-a-a-t?"

Bunter stuttered. His eyes almost bulged through his spectacles at Bomoo. He knew the native word "kai-kai," and what it implied. "Kai-kai" was food: and he remembered, with an overwhelming rush of horror, that he was in the hands of cannibals.

Bomoo waved a hand towards the bush where the savages' camp was hidden by the trees from the beach.

"Along night he come, makee cooky-fire," he explained. "Makee kai-kai along little white master. Little white master plenty too fat altogether, makee long-pig altogether too good." Billy Bunter's jaw dropped.

His fat face was white as chalk, as he stared up in horror at the black man. He understood now.

That was why the blacks had pinched his cheeks, pinched his fat arms—like a fat animal in a cattle-market. That was why they were so pleased to see Bunter among them. That was the cause of their grinning good-humour and their cackling glee. That night, at the camp in the bush, there was to be a cannibal feast—and he—!

The fat junior fell back helplessly against the palm, almost fainting. Bomoo gave him a grinning look, and loafed away along the beach, to join a group of other blacks, from whom came a loud cackle of falsetto laughter as Bomoo spoke to them. Bunter did not heed them.

He leaned on the palm, but he did not close his eyes behind his spectacles. The desire for sleep had left him now. He was in the hands of cannibals, and that very night was to take place the feast of "long-pig." This was the island of his dreams—the island that was to have been a paradise of lazy ease—and Billy Bunter was among the cannibals, and only divided by a few hours from the cooking-pots!

#### CHAPTER XXXV

#### THE WATCHERS!

"BUNTER!" breathed Harry Wharton.

"They've got him!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Makee kai-kai, close-up, along that fat feller white master," said Suloo.

In the blazing hot afternoon, the Greyfriars juniors were in the verandah of the bungalow, watching.

Through the long hot hours, there had been no sign of hostility from the savages: no sign of a renewed attack. That it would come, sooner or later, they could hardly doubt. But for the time, at least, the black islanders were keeping at a respectable distance from the "long-feller gun."

Many of them were in sight along the beach, sprawling under the palms in the heat of the day, jabbering, or chewing betel-nut. It seemed as if their fuzzy minds had forgotten the wild and savage outbreak of the morning. But the garrison of the bungalow did not cease to keep watch and ward for a moment.

Canoes were tied up at the quay, others beached along the shore of the lagoon. The whole horde had come across from the further shore, and so far as the juniors could make out, there were more than a hundred of them. Of Mefoo nothing had been seen since the attack, and since his followers had carried him away wounded and groaning.

While they watched from the verandah, the juniors could not help thinking of Bunter, and wondering whether he was lost in the bush, or had already fallen into savage hands. Many of the savages were in the bush, and while tracking and hunting the hapless Lololo natives, it was only too likely that they would come upon Bunter. But there was nothing that Harry



Wharton and Co. could do, except hope that the fat Owl had escaped the clutches of the cannibals.

But there was a sudden stirring among the lazy sprawling blacks on the beach, and an outbreak of excited voices and falsetto cackling. In a moment the juniors were on the alert, grasping their weapons, in expectation of a renewal of the attack. But they soon saw that it was not that. The blacks were gathering in a crowd at a distance along the beach: and for some minutes the juniors could not discern the cause.

Then, as the swarm came along the beach, they knew.

They made out the tall brawny figure of Mefoo, with his fuzzy head bandaged with tapa: and then, in the midst of the savage crew, a fat figure and a fat face only too familiar to their eyes. There was no longer any doubt about what had become of Bunter. There he was, under their eyes, in the midst of the savages.

"They've got him!" repeated Bob. His ruddy face was pale.

Harry Wharton grasped the rifle. At the sight of the hapless Owl in the hands of the savages, he was tempted to open fire—the whole crew on the beach were within rifle-range. But he dropped the butt to the verandah planks again. It was useless—it could not help Bunter. Indeed it was more likely to rouse the dormant ferocity of the savages, and turn their murderous weapons upon the fat junior who was helpless in their hands.

He set his lips hard.

"We can't help him!" he muttered.

"We can't!" breathed Nugent.

They could only watch, in deep and tense anxiety. All the fatuous folly of the hapless Owl was forgotten now. They watched with pale faces and anxious hearts as the crowd came swarming along the beach, nearer and nearer. What Mefoo's intention was they could not guess: they could only wait and watch.

They watched, while the fat junior was tied to the solitary palm down the beach. If a hand had been raised to harm him, Wharton was ready to fire. But they realised, by this time, that Bunter was in no immediate danger: and as the savages yelled, and howled, and brandished their spears and clubs, evidently to draw their attention, they guessed what was in Mefoo's savage mind.

"The savage brute!" muttered Bob. "He wants us to see that they've got one of us—that's the big idea."

"If we could reach him—!" muttered Harry. But he shook his head.

It was death to step outside the bungalow—swift death under whizzing arrows and thrusting spears. The prisoner was full in their sight, but they had no more chance of helping him than if he had been on another island.

The savages streamed away up the beach at last, leaving Bunter with Bomoo under the tall palm.

"Make plenty good kai-kai, that fat feller white master," said Suloo. "Makee eatee plenty too much, along him altogether too fat."

Harry Wharton clenched his hands.

They watched Bunter, after Bomoo had left him. He sat under the palm with a face like chalk, his eyes and spectacles turned towards the bungalow. Once they saw him give a jerk at the tapa cord that secured him to the trunk of the palm, as if some vague thought of escape had come into his mind. Evidently some of the savages noticed the action, for a shrill cackle of laughter sounded on the hot air.

After that, the fat junior sat still, leaning back on the palm, but his gaze was still fixed on the bungalow, as if in a mute appeal for the help that could not be given.

But at length, they saw his eyes close behind his spectacles. Heat and fatigue had had their effect, and Bunter, at last, had fallen asleep. Even at the distance, the juniors fancied they could hear the echo of a deep snore.

It was a relief to see that he was sleeping. So long as he was able to sleep, he could forget where he was, and the dreadful fate that impended over him.

There was a long, long silence in the shady verandah, as the hot hours wore on. Bunter was still sleeping, and they were glad of it. Suloo had stretched himself in the shade, to sleep away the hot afternoon. But there was no rest for the Famous Five.

Shadows gathered over Lololo: the brief tropical twilight was at hand. When the juniors looked at the fat figure sprawling against the trunk of the palm by the lagoon's margin, they could only dimly discern it, in the thickening dusk.

Harry Wharton peered at his comrades, in the darkening gloom of the verandah.

"You fellows—!" he spoke in a whisper. "Yes, old chap," came Bob's voice.

"It's dark now," said Harry. "It will keep dark till the moon rises. I—I've been thinking. We've got to help him. "

"If we could—!" muttered Bob, huskily.

"We must," Wharton's voice was low and intense.

"Those stupid brutes don't keep sentry-go. After dark, there's a chance—one fellow creeping down quietly, with a knife to cut him loose—."

"It's death," muttered Nugent.

"We can't stand for it, old chap. I'm going—."

"Harry!"

"I'll leave you the rifle, Bob—you can handle it as well as I can. It would be no use in the dark."

"You shan't go alone," muttered Bob.

"Much better alone, old fellow. One chap may dodge those fuzzy brutes—more than one wouldn't be likely to. I'm going to try."

His friends peered at him in the deepening dusk. Every face was pale—but Harry Wharton's was set and determined. And his friends, seeing that his mind was made up, said no more.

#### CHAPTER XXXVI

#### TO THE RESCUE!

KING OF THE ISLANDS knitted his brows, in troubled thought. Kit Hudson, sitting on the taffrail of the "Dawn" watched him without speaking.

The ship-mates had a problem on their minds, and one not easy to resolve.

The "Dawn" was still hove-to. Sanders, the Comet Copra Company's manager on Lololo, sat in a Madeira chair on deck, a faint colour now in his haggard face. Food and drink had revived him, after days of suffering in the open boat, in which he had fled to sea with his Kanaka house-boy, from the island over-run by savages.

The Lololo boy was squatting on the deck forward, where Danny, the cooky-boy, was looking after him. The boat had been taken in tow, and was rocking on the water under the stern of the "Dawn." All was clear for King of the Islands to resume his course, beating southward for Uma.

But the boy trader had not yet given an order. The Hiva-Oa crew chewed betel-nut, and waited, quite content to take their ease until the white master made up his mind.

"Time's trade, Ken," said Kit Hudson breaking the long silence at last. '

King of the Islands nodded.

"I know! But—"

"But—!" repeated Hudson, with a nod. He smiled faintly. He knew what was in his ship-mate's mind: it was in his own also.

"Mefoo and his cannibal crew are on Lololo," said Ken, abruptly. "There's been mischief ever since Mefoo became chief on Kut, and now they've broken out of their own island on a head-hunting raid. Sanders held his bungalow as long as he could, and escaped in the boat with his house-boy—but there's two or three hundred natives on Lololo who couldn't get away, Kit."

Hudson nodded again.

"A good many would run to sea, in their canoes—but most of them would have to take to the bush. Mefoo's crew will be hunting them, Kit. When the news gets out there will be a gunboat from Fiji—but it will be all over before then." Ken King paused. "But—I'm thinking chiefly about that schoolboy party we left at Kamakama."

"Same here."

"If they went on to Lololo, what's happened, Kit? I'd rather let trade go to pot, than leave them to it, if—if—"

"But did they go?" said Hudson, slowly. "Now that we've heard from Sanders what's happened, we know why that Lololo boy came into Kamakama with a bandaged head. He must have brought the news from Lololo, Ken."

"It looks like it! But—"

"There was only Ezra Huck's cutter to take them on to Lololo. He wouldn't be mad enough to give them a passage there, if he'd had the news."

"No!" said King of the Islands. "If that bandaged man brought the news. Ezra Huck must surely have heard it before he pulled out in the cutter. But—but we can't be sure of that, Kit."

He took a restless turn up and down the deck. Then he came to a halt again, facing the mate on the taffrail.

"We can't risk it, Kit! Most likely Huck got the news, and if he did, he wouldn't pull out of Kamakama for Lololo—but we can't be sure. And if he did run down to Lololo, he sailed his cutter into the midst of them."

"That means that it's all over," said Hudson, with a slight shiver.

"That's not at all certain. Mefoo would be most likely to take them prisoners. You know the ways of those brutes, Kit—they take prisoners if they can for the feast of long-pig—the cooking-pots, and the heads smoking in the canoe-house—you know! "

Hudson gave another nod.

"Anything may have happened," went on King of the Islands. "They might have taken to the bush, like the Lololo people—or they may be prisoners—we just don't know. But—we can't leave it at that."

"We can't!" agreed Hudson. "I'm with you, if you're thinking of running down to Lololo to see what's happened, and whether we can help."

"I'm thinking of just that!" Hudson rose from the taffrail. "It's a go." he said.

"And I'm glad now that the wind shifted, and drove us out of our course for Uma," went on King of the Islands. "We've saved Sanders—and we may save the boys, if they're there and—and still alive."

Kit Hudson smiled.

"All the easting we've made, that kept us away from Uma, will be all to the good for a run to Lololo," he said.

"That's luck, Ken—if we're making Lololo to look for the schoolboys. I'm with you, Ken."

"It's up to us." said King of the Islands.

And that point being settled, King of the Islands shouted orders to the Kanaka crew, who packed their betel-nut into their thick hair, and jumped to activity.

The wind, still shifting eastward, was favourable for Lololo, though adverse for Uma. The ship-mates, who had been sorely chafed by it hitherto, were glad of it now.

Whether that cheery party of schoolboys from "home" had landed on Lololo or not, they simply did not know. But if they had, King of the Islands and his ship-mate were going to save them, if they could.

With all canvas set, the "Dawn" sped on her new course, east by north, for the distant island of Lololo. And with the wind almost astern, the ketch cleaved the blue water at ten knots.

"We're making Lololo, Sanders," said King of the Islands. "Whether the schoolboys are there or not, you'll get back to your station, and I reckon that Mefoo and his crew won't give any more trouble when we're through with them. They'll get a lesson that will make them glad to get back to their own island and stay there, I reckon."

Through the long hot hours of the long hot day, the ketch boomed on, with every stitch of canvas drawing in a stiff wind. King of the Islands knew how to get every ounce of speed out of his ship in a favourable wind, and the "Dawn" seemed almost to flyover the blue waters like a sea-bird.

But it was a long, long run to Lololo, with all the easting that the "Dawn" had made: and the palm-tops on the island were not yet visible when the sun went down in a blaze of crimson and gold into the Pacific.

The sun dipped: the sudden tropical night dropped like a dark cloud on the wide rolling waters. But the "Dawn" did not shorten sail. With her lights gleaming through the velvety darkness, she boomed on over the shadowed sea, as the stars came out in the dark blue vault overhead.

The moon came up, streaming silvery over the sea—the full round moon, like a sheet of silver, that made the surging Pacific almost as light as by day. And Koko, releasing one brown hand from the wheel, pointed with a brown finger.

"Island he stop, sar!"

"Lololo!" breathed Kit Hudson.

In the bright moonlight, they could make out the tall tops of feathery palms, nodding against the bright sky.

The island was still distant, but it was in sight. King of the Islands and his mate watched it, with anxious eyes, as it drew nearer and nearer. And as the long lines of white surf, breaking in an unending boom on the outer reef, came into view, Ken called out an order: and rifles were broken out below, and served to all on board. Every hand would be wanted, and every shot needed, when the ketch ran the reef passage into the lagoon at Lololo, into the midst of a swarm of cannibal head-hunters. Not that the ship-mates had any doubt of the result, or cared the toss of a ship's biscuit if the "Dawn" was surrounded by all the war-canoes of Mefoo's cannibal tribe. They had no doubt of scattering the savages, like a school of mullet at the approach of a shark.

The ketch flew on like a swift sea-bird. But sail was shortened as she drew nearer to the rugged coral reefs on which the Pacific rollers broke with an endless roar.

King of the Islands had keen eyes for the break in the reef, that marked the passage into the lagoon of Lololo. He knew the passage, and did not hesitate to run it by the light of the moon. And as the ketch steered in, with all eyes and ears on the alert, there came a sudden sound from the island.

Ken started, as he heard it, and caught his breath. It was a rifle-shot, fired on the shore of the inner lagoon, that echoed over the reef.

Kit Hudson pressed his arm. "That was a rifle, Ken—."

"Aye, aye."

"White feller stop along Lololo, sar," said Koko. "White feller makee talkee long-feller gun, sar."

"They're there, Kit," said King of the Islands, between his set teeth. "Thank heaven we came—and heaven send that we're in time to save them."

And, following his words, came crack on crack, amid a burst of wild fierce yelling from savage throats. The "Dawn" surged on into the lagoon.

#### CHAPTER XXXVII

### HARRY WHARTON'S DESPERATE VENTURE

SNORE!

Harry Wharton gave a little start.

That familiar sound, rumbling through the dark, struck him strangely. It was a sound familiar enough to his ears, in the old dormitory at Greyfriars School—so far away now. It seemed strange, almost uncanny, on the beach of Lololo, in the midst of darkness and terror and the shadows of death.

Snore!

It was dark on Lololo. Between sunset and moonrise, the island lay black. Only in one spot a red glare danced against the dark sky, where the savages had lighted a fire at their camp in the bush.

The juniors had seen that red glare, from the verandah: and they knew what it meant—what it must mean. The night was hot—it was not a camp-fire that had been lighted. They knew, with shuddering certainty, that it was a cooking-fire—that some victim was destined for the cooking-pots. Unless Bunter could be saved, in the brief interval of darkness between the setting of the sun and the rising of the moon, they would never see the unhappy fat Owl again. And that knowledge would have spurred Harry Wharton on, even if he had hesitated to face the deadly peril of so desperate a venture.

He had had luck, so far. In the deep, velvety darkness, he had crept down from the bungalow under the palms, leaving his comrades anxiously watching. Every step had been taken with silence and caution. Once, when jabbering voices had sounded terribly close, he had crawled on his hands and knees in the soft sand, and as if by a miracle had eluded savage eyes.

Many of the savages were at the camp in the bush. But many of them were on the beach: some of them, as likely as not, watching the bungalow. The captain of the Greyfriars Remove knew that all the chances were against him—that he walked hand-in-hand with death, and that every step on the beach at Lololo might be his last.

But his nerve was steady, his head cool and clear, and he did not falter. He had to get through, if he was to get through at all, before the moon came out over the island. Only in darkness was there a chance, a faint hope, of success—of saving the prisoner from the eaters of men, and of getting back to his comrades alive.

The night cloaked him: but made it difficult for him to grope his way to the palm by the lagoon's margin. He had marked the spot carefully before night fell: but in the dark he could not be sure: and a single false step might lose all. Then came that rumble through

the gloom, and it guided him—strange and eerie as it seemed in such a situation, it was a relief to him to hear it.

Snore!

He was close to the palm tree. But so deep was the darkness that he could not see it, nor Bunter. Only by that rumbling snore he knew that the Owl of the Remove was still there. As he groped nearer, there was a sudden outbreak of jabbering voices in the distance along the curving beach, and he glanced quickly in the direction of the red glare that danced over the bush.

He caught his breath.

A crowd of the savages were coming along the beach.

They were still at a distance, but they were coming towards him, and their excited jabbering came to his ears on the wind. He guessed—or rather he knew—what it portended. The fire was ready—the cooking-pots were ready—and it was a matter of minutes now.

He set his teeth, and groped in the dark. "Bunter!" he breathed.

Snore!

Swiftly, Wharton groped for the rope, and sawed it with his knife. It fell from the fat body it had encircled. He grasped the dim, half-seen figure of the sleeping Owl, and shook.

"Bunter!"

"Urrrrrggh!"

The snore changed to a grunt. Bunter's eyes opened behind his spectacles.

"Urrggh! Wharrer marrer?"

"Bunter—quick—."

"Leave off shaking me, you beast! Urrrggh! 'Tain't rising-bell! Urrgh."

Then, suddenly and swiftly, recollection came. "Oh! Oh crikey! You beast, let go—I—I know what you mean, you awful beast—I won't—."

"Bunter! Quiet—it's Wharton," breathed the captain of the Remove. "Quick—I've cut you loose—."

"Wharton!"

Bunter stuttered, blinking in the darkness.

"Yes, yes! I'm here to get you out of this—."

"Oh, crikey!"

"Quick—and quiet!"

Wharton dragged the gasping fat junior to his feet. Bunter lurched in his grasp, but that strong grasp held him up.

"I—I say—!" gasped Bunter.

"Quick! They're coming for you!" whispered Harry.

Pull yourself together, old chap, or it's both of us for the cooking-pots! Quick!"

"Oh, crikey!"

Bunter was free, but in such a state of hopeless confusion and terror, that he could not have helped himself. But Wharton's grasp on his fat arm led him away in the darkness, and Bunter shuffled and stumbled at his side.

Over the lagoon appeared a faint glimmer. It was the reflection of a dawning gleam in the dark sky.

"Quick!" breathed Harry.

He was running up the beach, dragging the stumbling Owl. Bunter panted and gasped. His feet clumped heavily on the coral path and Wharton dragged him off it into the soft sand, that gave no sound. He pushed on up the beach, Bunter stumbling and panting at his side, dragged on by an iron grip on his fat arm.

Three or four dim figures loomed up in the gloom, and there was a jabber of voices close at hand. Wharton stopped, and dragged the gasping Owl down into the sand clapping a hand over his mouth just in time. Within a couple of yards of them, the dim figures passed—going towards the crowd that was advancing along the beach from the opposite direction.

For a moment, Harry Wharton felt like ice all over.

But the savages passed unseeing, unsuspecting.

It was death that had passed him by in the darkness, terribly close: it was as if he had heard the rustle of Azrael's dark wings. But it had passed.

"Urrrggh!" Bunter gurgled, as the hand was withdrawn from his gasping mouth. "Beast! Urrrggh!"

"Come on—quick!"

"Choking a fellow—."

"Quick!"

Wharton dragged him up, and rushed him on. There was silver on the lagoon now, silver in the sky. But palm fronds were nodding over their heads—they were nearing the bungalow.

Suddenly, from the darkness down the beach, came a wild and frantic outburst of savage yells. It came from the palm by the lagoon's margin. The escape had been discovered—those yells of fury told that the savages had missed the destined victim of the cooking-pots.

"Quick!" panted Harry.

He ran desperately, dragging at a fat arm. Full and round and clear, the moon sailed in the blue heavens, and all was light. From the beach came enraged yelling, and the padding of naked feet.

"They've seen us—Quick!" Wharton almost groaned.

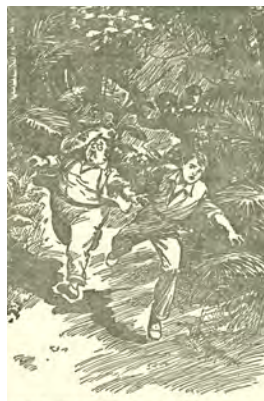
Fast behind him, as he ran and dragged at the lurching, stumbling fat Owl, came padding feet. One at least of the savages had seen them, and was racing in pursuit.

High and white the moon sailed: it was as light as day.

Wharton could see the faces of his friends now, staring from the verandah—he saw Bob Cherry, his face white and set, the rifle in his hands levelled across the rail. Faster and faster came the padding feet behind.

Bang!

Wharton heard the roar of the rifle, a shriek and a heavy fall behind him—so close behind, that he knew that the pursuing savage must have been almost within a spear-thrust. But Bob had not missed, and the wretch was rolling and shrieking on the earth. A minute more, and they reached the verandah, and eager hands were helping them in.



EASTER AND FASTER CAME THE PADDING FEET BEHIND

CHAPTER XXXVIII

SAVED!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Nobody heeded Bunter.

The fat junior lay sprawling in the verandah, blinking dizzily through his spectacles, hardly able to believe that he was no longer in the hands of the savages—that he had escaped the cooking-pots of the cannibals by so terribly narrow a margin. Breathless, gasping, blinking dizzily, the fat Owl lay—and he rubbed the fat arm where Wharton had grasped him to drag him to life and safety, and where an ache lingered after that iron grip.

"I say, you fellows," squeaked Bunter.

Harry Wharton and Co. were lining the verandah rail: Wharton with the rifle in his hands, Bob Cherry grasping his axe, Suloo his bush-knife, the other fellows their bludgeons. From the beach came yell on yell of savage rage and vengeance. The whole horde had streamed out of the bush and were gathered there, yelling, brandishing spears, loosing off arrows—in a frenzy of fury at the escape of the prisoner, and the loss of the feast of long-pig. In the bright moonlight, the juniors glimpsed now and then the tall brawny figure of Mefoo, with the tapa bandage on his fuzzy head, the brass ring glistening in his nose, and the swarm of yelling, maddened blacks.

"They're coming!" muttered Bob.

"We'll beat them again!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The beatfulness will be terrific."

"Black feller plenty too mad altogether, along no makee kai-kai along little fat white master." said Suloo. "Likee too much kill-dead all feller stop along this place."

That the attack was coming was clear. The yelling blacks on the beach seemed like a swarm of demons in the moonlight. Only too clearly, they were working themselves up to a pitch of fury for the attack, and any moment might come the sudden rush up the coral path, and the garrison of the bungalow would be fighting for their lives.

They were ready and steady. But they all knew how desperate their case was now, and how little likely it was that any fellow there would survive the onrush of the savage horde in their mad fury.

Their faces were pale and set, as they stood grasping their weapons and waiting. Every minute seemed an hour, as they watched and waited. Yells, howls, shrieks, came in hideous chorus from the beach.

And then, suddenly, it came—the whole savage horde streaming up towards the bungalow, yelling like demons.

"They're coming!" breathed Nugent. "Look out!"

"Stand up to it!"

Crack! crack! crack! Harry Wharton was already pulling the trigger, his rifle resting on the verandah rail, his eye cool and steady over the barrel. The bullets pitched into the thick of the yelling mob, and black savage after savage reeled over under the fire. But they came on, with undiminished fury, yelling and brandishing spears and war-clubs.

Crack! crack! crack! Wharton fired till the rifle was empty. But the raging horde still came on.

Crack! crack! crack! crack!

It was not Wharton who was firing now—he had clubbed the rifle to beat back clambering savages. It was from the direction of the lagoon that that sudden burst of firing came.



It came like a startling thunderclap to all ears. Bullets tore into the savage horde swarming up to the bungalow from behind.

It seemed to the Greyfriars juniors that they must be dreaming. Not a glance had been cast towards the silvery lagoon, either by attackers or defenders. Not an eye had caught the tall sail that loomed over the reef, or saw the handsome ketch that surged into the lagoon from the reef passage. To white and to black alike that sudden burst of rifle-fire from the ketch came as a bolt from the blue.

Every rifle on the ketch was pumping out bullets, sweeping the beach, tearing through the horde of savages. With frantic howls, the savages broke and fled under the unexpected fire, racing along the beach, bolting into the bush.

With almost unbelieving eyes, the juniors stared at the graceful ketch out on the lagoon, at the faces over her rail, the smoking rifles that roared and roared again, pumping bullets into the swarm of cannibals as they howled and scattered and fled.

"The 'Dawn!'" gasped Harry Wharton.

"We're dreaming this!" stuttered Bob Cherry.

"The dreamfulness is not terrific," chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, his dark eyes dancing in his dusky face. "It is the esteemed 'Dawn,' and the estimable and ridiculous King of the Islands."

"Hurray!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Hip-pip!" yelled Johnny Bull.

It seemed like a dream—but it was no dream. Volley after volley pealed from the ketch, sweeping the beach of Lololo till it was clear of the savages. The Greyfriars fellows stared on, almost dizzy with the sudden relief. It was the "Dawn"—King of the Islands had come to their rescue—and they were saved. The danger, which had seemed overwhelming, was past—the enemy in frantic flight—they were as safe on Lololo, as if Mefoo and his cannibal crew had never landed there! After what they had been through, it was hard to believe!

The firing died away.

The whaleboat dropped from the "Dawn's" davits, and the Kanaka seamen pulled for the beach: with King of the Islands, and a white man the juniors had never seen before: but whom they were soon to learn was Mr Sanders, the missing manager of the Comet Copra Company on Lololo.

"Saved!" breathed Frank Nugent.

"Safe, sound, and sober!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Dashed if I know how the 'Dawn' got here—but here she is, my beloved 'earers."

"I say, you fellows—"

Bob grinned round at the Owl of the Remove. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he roared. "Enjoying life, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"All right now, Bunter," said Harry Wharton. "Safe as houses, old fat man. The 'Dawn's' in the lagoon—the cannibals are running for their lives—and King of the Islands is coming ashore to us."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He sat up, and rubbed a fat arm. "Wow!" he squeaked.

"Anything wrong, old porpoise?" asked Bob.

"Ow! Yes! Wharton twisted my arm—"

"What?"

"Dragging a fellow along like a sack of coke," said Bunter. "I believe I've got a bruise on my arm where you grabbed it, Wharton! You might have been a bit more careful, I think."

Harry Wharton gazed at him.

"Oh my hat!" gasped Bob. "You think that, do you, Bunty?"

"Yes, I jolly well do! No need to twist a chap's arm," grunted Bunter.

"What about kicking him?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—."

"The kickfulness is the proper caper," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky—." Harry Wharton laughed.

"Sorry I had to grab your fin, Bunter! We were in a bit of a hurry, you know. Come on, you chaps—let's cut down to the beach and meet the boat—."

"I say, you fellows."

But Bunter was unheeded again. Suloo, grinning all over his brown face, dragged away the barricade on the verandah steps.

"Come on!" exclaimed Bob.

And the Greyfriars juniors ran down to the coral quay to meet their rescuers as they landed.

#### CHAPTER XXXIX

### ENOUGH FOR BUNTER!

BILLY BUNTER blinked to the right.

He blinked to the left.

Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that way. Like Moses again, he saw no man.

Then he climbed into the hammock slung under a shady tree. He settled down in it with a grunt.

It was hot on Lololo.

Heedless of the heat, five cheery fellows were in a canoe on the lagoon. Mr. Sanders, the Comet Company's manager, was in his office in the bungalow. Suloo squatted contentedly in the shady verandah and chewed betel-nut. On the dazzling beach, brown-skinned natives in white lava-lavas lounged and chattered. The tropical sun burned down on a scene of peace—a strange contrast to what had lately been seen on the island of Lololo. It was a week since the "Dawn" had sailed into the lagoon.

King of the Islands had not lingered there. Time was trade, and trade was livelihood, to the skipper of the "Dawn." He had stayed only long enough to assure that the island was clear of the cannibals. The surviving savages had fled in their canoes, back to their own island, glad to escape: with a prospect before them of a visit to Kut by a gunboat from Fiji, to impress upon them that head-hunting was a thing of the past. The Lololo natives had emerged from their hiding-places, and resumed their former easy and care-free existence, apparently forgetful already of the cannibal raid, in the happy way of the unreflecting children of the south.

But Billy Bunter couldn't forget.

Billy Bunter was not much given to reflection. Neither was his memory particularly good.

But he could not forget his awful experiences among the cannibals.

Bunter still saw a black cannibal face peering from every bush. A burst of happy cackle from the Lololo boys came to his fat ears as a war-yell from raging savages. Even those grinning brown boys he eyed with doubt and suspicion—not at all sure that some of them mightn't be cannibals.

The other fellows, at night, slept in the verandah for coolness. Not Bunter! Bunter parked himself behind a locked door at night, and perspired and almost melted. By day he never

ventured beyond the garden—and even in the garden he blinked suspiciously about him before he ventured to consign his fat person to a hammock.

Bunter was not enjoying life.

Lololo was now, once more, all that he had dreamed of it. Mr. Sanders, after a few attempts to carry out the instructions he had received from Mr. Bunter, had given it up as a hopeless task. Billy Bunter was certainly not on Lololo to undertake anything in the nature of work. He was on Lololo because he couldn't get off! And he was going to get off as soon as he possibly could.

There was the life of lazy ease to which he had looked forward—there was ample food—there was a cheerful house-boy to answer his beck and call—and there was a fortune to be made, if fortunes could be made by sitting in deck-chairs and lolling in hammocks. But all these things no longer had any appeal for the fat Owl of the Remove. Black cannibals and cooking-pots haunted his fat thoughts. He was fed up to his fat neck with the Pacific Islands and all that therein was!

Harry Wharton and Co. were enjoying their holiday in the South Seas. They had been through a tough time and terrible perils: but that was all over, and the recollection of the past made them enjoy the present more. Billy Bunter only yearned to leave the South Seas a few thousand miles behind him.

There was likely to be a spot of awkwardness with his honoured parent. That could not be helped. Mr. Bunter expected his hopeful son to remain on Lololo when the Famous Five went back to Kamakama to catch the steamer on its return trip to Singapore. Bunter couldn't help that! When Bunter turned up at home, obviously Mr. Bunter would have to make the best of it. And Bunter was quite determined that he was going to turn up at home. After which, all the King's horses and all the King's men could never have dragged him back to the Pacific Islands.

Indeed, Bunter would have been gone already, had any means of transport been available. But transport was limited at Lololo.

Bunter had to wait for a schooner that was booked to call at Lololo on its way to Kamakama. By that schooner the Famous Five were going, Bunter had made up his fat mind that he was going by that schooner too!

In the meantime, Harry Wharton and Co. enjoyed life on Lololo—and Billy Bunter, after all his gorgeous and glorious anticipations, didn't!

Lololo suited the Famous Five. It suited Suloo, who had entered the service of Mr. Sanders, and was going to remain there, regardless and indeed forgetful of Ezra Huck. Whether Ezra and his cutter had gone down in the Pacific, or whether they had got back to Kamakama, Suloo did not know—and cared as little as he knew. He was safe from his former master on Lololo, and that was all Suloo cared about. And Harry Wharton and Co., though not quite so indifferent to Ezra's fate as the happy Suloo, were glad to see him landed in so happy a haven.

Billy Bunter, like Gallio of old, cared for none of these things! Bunter's fat thoughts were concentrated on making himself as comfortable on Lololo as his haunting dread of cannibals and cooking-pots would permit—and on getting away as soon as ever he could! Now, as he settled himself in the shady hammock, for one more of his many naps, Bunter did not slide into slumber with his accustomed ease.

He blinked round him with watchful eyes and spectacles, not at all sure that a ferocious black face might not suddenly appear among the palms.

When his little round eyes closed behind his big round spectacles, they opened again, several times, for another wary blink. But slumber, at last, supervened.

Then a deep and resonant snore rumbled under the palms of Lololo. Suloo glanced out of the verandah, perhaps thinking that it was the rumble of distant thunder. Then he grinned, and returned to his mat and his betel-nut.

Billy Bunter snored on.

Once asleep, he was not easy to wake. Rip Van Winkle or Epimenides had nothing on Bunter in that line.

So he did not hear a canoe tie up at the quay: or the tramp of feet on the coral path, or the cheery voices of the Famous Five as they came along to the bungalow. But the Famous Five heard that deep rumble.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that thunder, or a stranded porpoise, or Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry, as the fat Owl's musical effects fell on his ears.

"The esteemed and ridiculous Bunter," chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The snorefulness is terrific."

They paused to gaze at Bunter, with smiling faces.

He was fast asleep: but he did not seem to be enjoying slumber. Between the snores came grunts and mumbles. Bunter was dreaming. He was dreaming of cannibals, of black fierce faces, gleaming spears and spiked war-clubs, cooking-fires and cooking-pots, wildly mixed. He mumbled and grunted and snored, and snored and mumbled and grunted, in quite an alarming way.

"Looks like nightmare," said Harry Wharton. "Better wake him up."

"Day-mare, at any rate," agreed Bob. "I'll wake him." He bent over the sleeper, and roared: "Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Even Billy Bunter was not proof against that. He woke with a jump. The jump was followed by a frantic yell. Coming so suddenly out of the mists and shadows of sleep, the fat Owl's confused mind was still full of cannibals and cooking-pots.

"Yaroooh! Help! I say, you fellows, help!" yelled Bunter. "Keep them off! They've got me! Help! Yarooop."

"What the thump—."

"Bunter—."

"You fat ass—."

"Help! They've got me! Help!" raved Bunter. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. That roar of laughter enlightened him. He jammed his spectacles straight on his fat little nose, and blinked at the Famous Five. "I—I thought—."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I thought it was the cannibals!" gasped Bunter. "Oh, crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter sat up in the hammock. He realised that those five laughing faces did not belong to black cannibals.

"Oh! I—I say, you fellows. I—I didn't think it was the—the cannibals, you know: I'm not afraid of cannibals, of course. Not like some fellows I could name."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, do stop cackling! If you fellows had half my pluck, you'd be twice as plucky as you jolly well ain't! You fellows were pretty scared of them—."

"You fat ass!"

"You can call a fellow names!" sniffed Bunter. "You were jolly well scared stiff! I wasn't! I've got pluck. I hope."

"Hopeful chap, Bunter," remarked Frank Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, with a sudden dramatic start. "Who's that coming through the palms? Is that Mefoo?"

"Yaroooh!"

Billy Bunter made one bound out of the hammock. He did not stay for one blink at the harmless and necessary house-boy who was coming through the palms. He flew. He charged up the steps of the verandah, and bolted across it, stumbling over Suloo as he bolted. Suloo gave a howl, as he rolled on his mat.

"Oh, sar! What name you tread along legs belong me, along foot belong you?" gasped Suloo.

Billy Bunter did not answer. He did not even hear. He disappeared into the house. A door was heard to slam, and a key to turn.

Behind that locked door, Billy Bunter palpitated and listened for the yells of the cannibals. He did not hear them. If he heard anything, it was yells of laughter from the Famous Five.

"Gentlemen, chaps and fellows," said Bob Cherry "I don't think we're going to lose Bunter, after all. I fancy we shall have his company on the copra schooner, and on the steamer back to Singapore, and on the plane back to home. I've an awful feeling that we're going to see him at Greyfriars next term!"

. . . . .

AND they did!

Mr. Bunter, probably, was not pleased. Neither was Billy Bunter wholly pleased. Quelch was still a beast. There was rising-bell—there was prep—there was "con" —there were disappointments about expected postal-orders. Billy Bunter found ample cause for grouching. But never again, if the fat Owl could help it, would the tropical sun shine down on Billy Bunter among the Cannibals!

THE END