



# MYSTERY ISLAND!

## THE FIRST CHAPTER THE MYSTERIOUS LIGHT!

THROUGH the velvety darkness of night on the Pacific a solitary light glimmered and twinkled from the black mass of Ka'a Island.

From the deck of the trading ketch *Dawn*, Ken King, known as King of the Islands, glanced at it curiously. Kit Hudson, the mate of the *Dawn*, followed his glance.

Kaio-lalulalonga, the Kanaka boatswain, at the helm of the gliding ketch threading a passage between Ka'a and Lu Islands, turned his dark eyes on the distant twinkling light with a gleam of uneasiness in them. To the boatswain that solitary glistening speck of light seemed like the shining eye of an "aitoo," a devil, watching in the darkness.

It was six bells in the first watch, and Hudson was due for his watch below. But he remained on deck

while Ken King was taking the ketch through the rocky passage between the two islands. Between Ka'a and Lu the coral reefs ran far into the sea, with surf creaming over them, and few skippers would have cared to take a vessel through at night. King of the Islands did not hesitate to do so; but the passage required all his care, and the mate of the *Dawn* preferred not to go below till the ketch was through.

By  
CHARLES HAMILTON

*Van Tromp, a bullying Dutchman, has his reasons for making it hot for strangers who land on Ka'a Island. But all the reasons in the world wouldn't keep away Ken King, the boy trader!*

save the white creaming of the surf, and a hollow booming came from all directions. The deep channel between the reefs ran nearer to Ka'a than to Lu. The latter island was hidden from sight to the starboard, and to port Ka'a was only a blacker shadow against blackness.

"Somebody's up late on Ka'a,"

remarked Hudson as he watched the light from the unseen shore.

"Aye, aye." King of the Islands looked puzzled. "Looks like a signal. But I reckon old Van Tromp can't be signalling to any man on Lu."

He rapped an order, and Koko shifted the helm. The *Dawn* glided a fathom's length from a creamy jut of coral.

Ken's eyes turned on the light again.

It gleamed like a beacon in the night. But from the open sea it could not have been seen. It was visible only from the direction of the neighbouring island and the intervening channel.

"If it's not a signal, I don't get what it is," said the boy trader. "But if the old Dutchman is signalling to any man on Lu, he's changing his manners and customs a lot."

"Who's Van Tromp?"

"I've never seen him," said Ken. "I've never landed on Ka'a—very few white men have. There are pearlers on Lu—but the old Dutchman is the only white man on Ka'a. There's a big plantation, and he runs his own cargoes of copra in a cutter. They say on the beaches that he has fired on men for landing on Ka'a—it's his own island, and he's mighty rough on trespassers. I suppose he's got reasons for keeping to himself—though goodness knows what they are. There's a story of a white woman on Ka'a—a daughter or niece whom he keeps in strict seclusion in the bungalow. I don't know if there's any truth in it."

Ken stared at the twinkling light. It burned steadily, a spot in the darkness, doubtless from a window of the Dutch planter's bungalow.

"Might be a signal to his cutter, if she's at sea," remarked Hudson.

Ken shook his head.

"The anchorage is on the other

side of Ka'a. That light can only be seen from this channel and from Lu. I don't make it out. He's got no friends on Lu—there are a dozen or so pearlers there, but he's on the worst of terms with them—they're not allowed on Ka'a."

"No other white man on Ka'a?" asked the mate of the *Dawn*.

"No. Van Tromp had a brother once, years ago, but he went down in a canoe in a storm. Some say that the girl on the island is the brother's orphan daughter, and that old Van Tromp is her guardian. If she's really on Ka'a, Van Tromp keeps her pretty close—I've never come on anybody who's actually seen her. Most likely only a yarn of the beaches. I fancy—"

Crash!

King of the Islands was interrupted by the sudden crash under the bows of the ketch.

"My sainted Sam!"

"Feller canoe along sea, sar!" exclaimed Kaio-lalulalonga.

There was an excited cackle from the Hiva-Oa crew. King of the Islands shouted a command, and the ketch was instantly hove to.

A minute more and the whaleboat splashed into the water.

King of the Islands leaped into it.

He flashed a lantern into the darkness on the sea and shouted:

"Ahoy!"

The darkness was baffling.

Evidently a canoe, running across the channel between the islands, had run athwart the bows of the ketch, and had been run down in the darkness. But the boy trader could see nothing of swimming natives.

On a surge of the sea a broken fragment of a small canoe was dashed against the whaleboat. The tiny craft had been cut in halves by the sharp prow in the sudden collision.

"Ahoy!" roared King of the Islands.

But there came no answer from the blackness of the sea. Ken's face was tense.

Suddenly, from the darkness, a glimmer of white caught his eyes. He reached over from the boat and grasped a white cotton jacket.

A moment more and he had dragged the drowning man into the whale-boat.

"Feller white man, sar!" exclaimed Lompo, one of the crew.

him down into the cabin, and he was laid on Ken's own bunk in the little state-room amidships.

Evidently he had received a hard knock when his canoe was run down by the ketch. The boy trader did all he could for him, but the man remained insensible. King of the Islands rejoined the mate on deck at last. He was greatly puzzled. The ketch remained hove-to in the channel between the two invisible islands.

"It's a white man," said Ken.



Crash! There came the sound of a sudden collision as the sharp prow of the Dawn cut into a small canoe that had run athwart its bows in the darkness.

King of the Islands stared at the man he had rescued in the lantern-light. He was completely unconscious, and there was a trickle of crimson on the pallor of his face.

He was a young man, hardly older than the boy trader, sunburnt and handsome, though his white face looked ghastly in the glimmer of the lantern.

The Kanakas pulled back to the Dawn.

The unconscious man was passed up the side. Lompo and Lufu carried

"He must be one of the pearlers of Lu, going across to Ka'a. Looks as if that light was a signal, after all."

He glanced at the light on Ka'a; it was still burning steadily through the night.

"Is he badly hurt?" asked Hudson.

"He's had a hard thump on the head, and he won't come to yet. I fancy he will be all right, though. But"—the boy trader whistled—"we can't carry the man away with us, Kit. He must belong either to Lu or Ka'a, or he wouldn't have been

crossing this channel. This looks like losing time. We can't land him in his present state, unless there's somebody to care for him. If that light was a signal to him, he must have been going to Ka'a, though it beats me why he was running the channel at night. Still, it looks like it, and if the Dutchman's expecting him, we can hand him over to Van Tromp. Only—"

"What?" asked Hudson.

"I can't understand it. Van Tromp never lets a man land on his island. It looks as I've said, but—"

King of the Islands shook his head. He was hopelessly puzzled.

"What about sending the boat ashore and asking Van Tromp?" suggested the mate of the *Dawn*. "He must be still up, as there's a light burning in his bungalow."

King of the Islands wrinkled his brows in thought, but he nodded at last.

"I reckon so," he said. "Ten to one that light's a signal to the man in the canoe. If so, the poor fellow was going over to see Van Tromp. And send off a boat for him when I give him the word. I'll anchor the ketch while I run ashore and take word to the Dutchman."

Hudson stared towards the blackness of Ka'a.

"You'll land safe in the dark?" he asked.

"Ay, ay; I've run this channel like a book. There's a little cove on this side of Ka'a where a boat can get in safely, though there's no anchorage for a ship—even a ketch

Ken rapped out orders. The cable was run out, and the ketch anchored in sixty feet of water. King of the Islands stepped into the whaleboat,

and Kaio-lalulalonga and Tomoo took the oars and pulled away into the darkness.

Hudson stared after the boat. In a few moments it vanished into darkness.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER

### ON KA'A ISLAND

THE whaleboat grounded on soft, shelving sand at the head of a cove; no doubt the spot for which the canoe had been making when it had run under the bows of the *Dawn*. The Kanakas dragged the boat up the sand, and Ken stepped ashore on the forbidden island of Ka'a.

He had never landed on Ka'a before—few white men had—but he knew the channel and he knew the shore, and he had steered the whaleboat safely into the little cove amid coral reefs and creaming surf. Standing on the shadowy beach, he stared round him.

He could not see the light now.

"Feller light he no stop, sar!" said Kaio-lalulalonga. Koko was staring about him uneasily. "Me no likee that feller light, sar! Me tinkee he all samee eye belong aitoo."

Ken laughed. The Dutchman's bungalow, he knew, was on the high ground a good distance from the beach. Thick palm groves intervened. Out in the midway channel, and across at Lu, the light could be seen, but from where he stood on the beach of the cove the intervening woods hid it from sight.

"You stop along boat, Koko," he said. "You stop along this place, along me comey along boat."

"Yes, sar!" answered Kaio-lalulalonga.

Tomoo stretched himself on the sand to sleep while he waited for the boy trader's return. Kaio-lalulalonga sat on the gunwale of the beached boat, his eyes following his white

master as King of the Islands strode away up the beach. Ken was soon out of sight of the Kanaka boatswain. The mist still veiled the stars, though it was clearing a little, and the darkness was thick on the island.

Ken was thinking as he tramped into the palm grove. He recalled many strange stories he had heard of the mystery island, and of the lonely, surly Dutch planter of Ka'a. For what reason Van Tromp desired to keep all other white men away from the island, nobody knew, but there was no doubt of the fact. His trade was carried on in his own cutter, with a native crew and a native skipper, Van Tromp himself seldom or never leaving the island. Shots had been fired, more than once, to warn off white men who had landed, and Ken had heard of intruders who had been beaten with lawyer-canes for venturing to set foot on Ka'a.

That made it all the more strange that a beacon-light had been shown to guide the man in the canoe. Still, it seemed that there could be little doubt of it.

Ken made his way through the thick palm grove, picking a path through innumerable slanting trunks, towards the high ground in the interior of Ka'a, on which the planter's bungalow stood.

There was a glimmer of light now. The veiling mist was rolling away from the sky, and the stars glimmered faintly down on the mystery island.

Now that he was clear of the trees he saw the light again. It was still burning steadily, as he had seen it from the ketch.

The bungalow faced the other way, towards the anchorage on the western side of Ka'a. But there was a veranda at the back of the building, with two rooms opening on it. From one of these rooms the light gleamed, and

from the high position of the bungalow it shone over the tops of the palm trees on the lower ground.

King of the Islands, as he drew nearer, made out a doorway at the back of the veranda, closed by a pandanus screen. This screen was drawn partly open, and from the narrow opening the light shone.

He started suddenly, glanced round him, and listened.

A faint rustle had come to his ears.

Except for that solitary light, shining out into the night, the whole place seemed buried in silence and slumber.

In the silence the rustling sound near at hand had a startling effect, and Ken's eyes swept round him watchfully.

But the sound died away, and there was no one to be seen.

He went on his way again and reached the steps. Quickly he mounted them and stepped on the veranda.

He crossed the wide veranda to the lighted doorway.

He heard a movement in the lighted room, and the next instant the light was blotted out.

Ken halted at the doorway in astonishment.

He had taken it for granted that it was the Dutchman who was in the lighted room. There was no other white man on Ka'a, and it was extremely unlikely that a native house-boy would be sitting up late burning a light. But it was strange enough that the Dutchman should extinguish the light at the sound of a footstep on the veranda.

Anyhow, the sooner he spoke and stated his errand the better. After the first moment of astonishment, as the light went out, he opened his lips to speak.

Before a word could pass his lips, the pandanus screen in the doorway was pulled aside, a hand was laid on

his arm, and a voice whispered :  
" Silence ! "

A thrill of amazement ran through the boy trader.

It was a soft, clinging hand on his arm, and the voice that whispered was low and sweet—a woman's voice.

The " white woman " of Ka'a was no myth, after all ! Evidently this was she !

In spite of the warning word, the amazed boy trader would have spoken—but a soft palm was pressed over his lips, and the almost inaudible voice whispered again :

" Silence ! "

He felt himself drawn into the darkened room.

The pandanus screen fell into place behind him, shutting him in. The soft hand still held his arm, the slim fingers warm through his thin linen jacket.

In utter amazement Ken stood, wondering whether he was dreaming. It was the white woman of Ka'a, the mythical niece or daughter of the Dutch planter who was talked of on a hundred beaches, said to be kept in nun-like seclusion by the gruff, savage-tempered old planter. There could be no doubt of that. But what could it all mean ?

He stood silent—feeling, rather than knowing, that there was danger in the air. But what danger ?

He could not begin to guess.

But he knew it, felt it ; there was a quiver of fear in the girl's whispering voice that was not to be mistaken.

In the black darkness of the room he could see nothing, but he could feel the trembling of the unseen figure beside him.

" Silence ! " came the faint whisper again. " It is death—death—if you utter a sound—silence ! He will kill you—he will kill you—oh, heaven, if he finds that you are here, he will kill you ! "

And then, as if the girl divined that,

in spite of the whispered warning, he was about to speak, the hand was pressed to his lips again, silencing him.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER TRAPPED !

KING of the Islands stood silent, the soft hand pressing his lips.

He was dumbfounded with amazement.

It seemed like a dream to the boy trader of the *Dawn*. There was danger about him ; he felt it almost like a tangible presence. But what did it all mean ?

" Listen ! " The quivering whisper was close to his ear. " Do not speak—listen ! He suspects—my uncle—suspects—he will kill you ! Listen ! He went to bed as usual—at the usual hour—I burned the light believing that all was safe, and then—"

Ken felt the unseen figure trembling.

His lips moved, but the fingers pressed them to silence. He stood dumb.

" Listen ! Only a few minutes since, I looked out, and—and Nalasoo was watching—"

Ken made a movement.

" Oh, be silent ! Nalasoo was watching. He did not know that I saw him, but I caught a glimpse of his face under the edge of the veranda rail. He was watching. I think you have seen him—Nalasoo, the Solomon Island boy—my uncle's servant—he was watching ; he is there—at this hour ! My uncle must have set him to watch."

Ken remembered the faint rustle he had heard as he came up to the veranda steps.

" I—I—I would have put out the light then, but—but I feared you would stop. They would have killed you, out there in the darkness—"

She shuddered.

" Listen ! Nalasoo must have

heard you—I heard you. Why were you so incautious? I heard you before you reached the veranda. Nalasoo knows—and he has gone to tell my uncle. Only Otto van Tromp can have set him to watch. Philip, Philip, he has gone to wake my uncle, to tell him—”

Ken started violently.

A glimmering of the truth dawned on him now.

He had not seen the girl of Ka'a in the darkness. She had not seen him. It was another whom she was expecting—and in the blackness she had taken King of the Islands for “ Philip,” whoever Philip was.

And it flashed into his mind that “ Philip ” was the man in the canoe that had been run down under the bows of the *Dawn*.

“ Listen—not a sound! He will come—he will kill you! Once he suspects, he will guess everything. Follow me—in silence. While they are coming here, I will take you through the house—you will escape by a front window, while they are coming—but be silent—silent—if they hear you, you are lost—”

The voice broke off with a low, scared scream as a light flashed into the room from the doorway on the veranda.

The pandanus screen had been pulled aside from without, and a large hurricane lamp shone into the room, held up by a grinning native boy.

The girl, revealed to Ken's eyes now by the sudden glare of light, turned from him, facing the man who entered from the veranda.

He saw a thick-set, thick-bearded Dutchman, with a hard, grim, heavy face, burned almost to copper by tropical suns. Little light-blue eyes



The pandanus screen in the doorway was pulled aside, a hand was laid on Ken's arm, and a voice whispered: “Silence! ”

glittered from the coppery face—little bright eyes that reminded Ken of a snake's. There was a sardonic grin on the face—a grin that was more cruel and threatening than a scowl. Ken had never seen the man before, but he knew that this must be Van Tromp, the Dutch planter of Ka'a.

The girl stood with clasped hands, overcome with terror. Her face was white as chalk.

Behind the Dutchman, as he trod heavily in, crowded five or six black boys, grinning with a flashing of white teeth.

The planter hardly noticed the terrified girl. His little glittering eyes were fixed on Ken, and he made a clumsy, mocking bow.

" Goeden avond, mynheer ! " he said gutturally. " But—I see that you are English, my young friend. I speak that tongue, though not so well as my niece, whose mother was English. I have never had the pleasure of seeing you before, and I heard your name a moment ago for the first time. Mynheer Philip—I do not know your other name—you are very welcome to my poor house."

Evidently the Dutchman had overheard the girl's whispering through the thin pandanus screen at the doorway.

The spying Solomon Island boy had not gone to waken him ; the planter was already wakeful, and himself on the watch.

" My little Stella is alarmed for you, Mynheer Philip—not without cause," went on the Dutchman, with the same sardonic grin on his harsh face. " Do not approach that door, through which my dear niece would have guided you—it is secured on the other side. I did not leave an outlet to this trap when I trapped you, mynheer."

The girl found her voice.

" Uncle ! " she breathed.

" You may leave us, Stella ! " said the planter. " I have something to say to Mynheer Philip which you need not hear."

King of the Islands spoke for the first time.

" You are making a mistake, Mr. Van Tromp," he said quietly. " My name is not Philip, and this young lady has made a mistake also."

The girl spun round at the sound of his voice. For the first time she saw King of the Islands, and her blue eyes opened wide in amazement.

" It is not Philip Grahame ! " she exclaimed.

" I am sorry for the mistake, Miss Van Tromp," said Ken. " But you gave me no chance to speak."

The colour flushed into the girl's face in a wave of crimson.

" Oh ! " she exclaimed. " I—I thought—I supposed—I believed—But you are not Philip ! How came you here, then ? "

Without waiting for an answer to the question, she turned to the grinning Dutchman.

" This is not Philip. I have never seen him before, uncle. I know nothing of him."

" Good ! " grinned the Dutchman. " Clever ! Very good ! You do not expect me to believe you, Stella ? But very good."

" I tell you, I have never seen this man before ! "

" You may tell me so a thousand times, Stella, but I am not a child," said the planter. " No doubt Mynheer Philip Grahame will tell me the same."

" Ay, ay," said King of the Islands. " My name is King—Ken King."

" Your name is quite indifferent to me, my young friend," said the Dutch planter. " There are many men in the Pacific who have more than one name, and perhaps you are one of them. But, whatever your name may be, mynheer, let me tell you one thing : you will never own this island of Ka'a."

Ken stared at him.

" Ach ! You do not understand ? " grinned Van Tromp. " You would like me to believe—ach !—that you think only of my niece, and not of my plantation ! Tell me, if you please, that you did not know that Stella was the daughter of the elder brother, that this plantation belonged to the elder brother, that now she is of age it belongs to her, and must be handed over to her husband by her faithful guardian. You did not know all this, mynheer ? You did not think of calling in the English law of the English Commissioner to put you in possession of Ka'a,

once you had secured it by marriage with my niece? Ach!"

He chuckled gutturally.

"I am not the man you take me for," said King of the Islands coldly.

"This young lady is a witness——"

"No doubt! No doubt!" grinned the Dutchman. "The young lady will bear out all you say, to save your life. Ja, mynheer! But I am not a child! Stella, you will leave us."

"I will not leave you!" panted the girl. "I tell you, uncle, this man is a stranger to me. Let him go."

"Nalasoo!"

A grinning Solomon Island boy stepped forward. The Dutchman's thick, stubby finger pointed to Stella Van Tromp.

"You take feller white Mary along room belong him, Nalasoo."

King of the Islands made a step forward as Nalasoo stretched out a black hand to grasp the girl's arm. The heavy Dutchman strode in his way, his hand on a revolver at his hip.

"Seize him!" he snarled. "You feller boy, you hold along this feller."

He turned to Ken.

"Lift a hand, mynheer, and—ach! Gott!"

The Dutchman suddenly broke off with an oath and staggered back, with the boy trader's fist crashing in his coppery face.

At the same moment the crowd of blacks rushed on the boy trader, and King of the Islands, struggling desperately, was borne to the floor.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER

##### IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH!

**K**EN KING struggled furiously. One of the blacks was still holding up the hurricane lamp, shedding light on the scene. Nalasoo was grasping the arm of the terrified girl, but the rest—and there were five of them—had hurled themselves in a

body on the boy trader, grasping him on all sides with sinewy black hands. Ken was strong and sturdy, but in the grasp of so many powerful hands he had little chance.

Twice he released an arm and struck with clenched fist, and a black man rolled, panting and howling, on the floor. But the others held on like bulldogs, dragging him down.

Once he almost succeeded in dragging the revolver from his pocket. Had his gun reached his hand, matters might have gone very differently that wild night on Ka'a.

But they were too many for him.

Hard he fought, with set teeth and glinting eyes, but they had him down and piled on him, and his struggling died away in breathless exhaustion.

The Dutch planter stood watching, passing his hand over a mark on his face where Ken had struck and muttering oaths in guttural Dutch. He had his revolver in his hand, and there was little doubt that he would have used it had Ken succeeded in getting loose.

But it was not needed. Strong and sturdy as he was, King of the Islands was soon a helpless prisoner in the hands of the Solomon Island boys.

Meanwhile, Nalasoo was pulling the girl away to the door on the veranda. She clung with one hand to the palm-wood door-post and shrieked.

"Uncle! Uncle Otto! I tell you he is not the man! He is a stranger here—I have never seen him——"

"Of course not!" grinned Van Tromp. "You feller Nalasoo, you take away white Missy, or me tan your black hide plenty too much."

"Yes, sar!" gasped the houseboy.

And exerting his strength, Nalasoo dragged Stella Van Tromp from the door, out into the dim starlight of the veranda.

King of the Islands heard another door, farther along the veranda, close. The girl had been shut in an adjoining room.

The boy trader lay panting. He was powerless in the grasp of the blacks, but his eyes gleamed defiance at the menacing face of the planter.

"Ach Gott!" said Van Tromp. "You are a fighting man, it seems—ach! It is well that I had force to deal with you, Mynheer Grahame."

King of the Islands panted.

"Fool!" he snapped. "My name is not Grahame—my name is King! I have never set foot on Ka'a before—"

"Lies will not save your life, mynheer!" The Dutchman growled an order to the panting blacks. "You feller boy, you put feller rope along foot, along hand, belong that feller!"

Tapa cords were wound round the boy trader's wrists and ankles and knotted tightly.

Then the blacks released him and crowded back to the veranda.

Otto Van Tromp rubbed the mark on his face again, his little, evil, light eyes glinting at King of the Islands.

"You came to see Stella, my friend," he said. "You have seen her—for the last time. The missionary of Lu is waiting—he will wait long." He grinned savagely. "I did not know your name—all I knew was that you were one of the pearlers on Lu, and that you crossed the channel in the dark, when my niece showed a light to tell you that all was safe! Hound! Do you hope for help from your friends on Lu? They will never learn your fate."

King breathed hard.

"I tell you that you are mistaken, fool and scoundrel!" he said. "If you will listen—"

"Enough, mynheer! It is you that are the fool, to dream that you

can delude me with such lies. You have walked into the trap that was prepared for you—and now you would tell me that you are not the man for whom it was laid! Ach!"

"I came—"

"Ach! Do I not know why you came, mynheer?" grinned the Dutchman. "Luister—listen, you! How long this has gone on, I know not, neither do I care. It is only lately I have discovered it! Stella has always repined—ach! she did not like the lonely life on Ka'a—but I was her guardian, even by your English law. Now she has reached an age when, by your English law, I should hand over to her my brother's estate, and all Ka'a belonged to my brother, and now belongs to the daughter of his English wife! Ach! All the more carefully, mynheer, I have guarded her."

He grinned down at the scornful face of the boy trader.

"How you made acquaintance with my niece, I know not," said the planter, watching his face keenly.

"I am curious to know, if you care to tell me. More than once, men have landed on Ka'a, but they have been driven off. But you, it seems, made acquaintance with my niece—"

"I tell you I have never seen her before—I—"

"You may tell me all the lies you choose, mynheer; they will not save your life," said the Dutchman coolly.

"But to save your breath, I will tell you that I know all. I have suspected for some time that there was something—Stella was less sad—her eyes were brighter—she seemed to hope! Ach! I set Nalasoo to watch! So I learned, mynheer, that after I slept in my room on the other side of the bungalow, Stella would set a lamp sometimes at her door, as a signal to you that all was safe—and you would cross the channel from Lu in a canoe."



"Seize him!" snarled Van Tromp. "Lift a hand, mynheer, and—ach! Gott!" The Dutchman suddenly staggered back, with Ken King's fist crashing in his coppery face.

Ken thought of the canoe that had been run down under the bows of the *Dawn*, of the insensible man who lay in the state-room of the ketch.

It was fixed in the Dutchman's mind that he was the man who had come from Lu under cover of darkness.

The mistake was natural; indeed, in the strange circumstances, the Dutchman could hardly have believed anything else.

And he was not likely to believe the denials of the man he had trapped to his death.

Ken would have spoken, but the planter waved him to silence again.

"Three nights ago," he said, "you came—and Nalasoo was watching. He did not see you—but he was watching, and he heard. All that he heard was told to me when you had gone. Now you know why I was aware that you were coming to-night—that you were to take Stella away in the canoe

—to Lu, where the missionary waits! Once you had made her your wife, mynheer, she would have been safe from my pursuit, and the English law would have taken from me my brother's estate—ach!"

He swore in Dutch.

"That is why I let you come to-night, mynheer—it was easy for you to come, but—ach! it will not be so easy for you to go. From this night, Stella shall be more closely guarded—this shall not happen again! Neen! Neen! I shall take care, mynheer!"

He turned from the bound boy trader.

The planter growled an order in bêche-de-mer, and Nalasoo and another black boy entered the room and lifted the boy trader in their strong arms.

Van Tromp picked up the hurricane lamp.

He led the way from the room, the

two blacks following him with King of the Islands carried between them like a sack of copra.

They crossed the veranda to the steps and descended, the planter leading the way with the light.

Ken's heart was beating fast. His face was white and set. It seemed to him that the rustle of the wings of the Angel of Death was in his ears.

Nothing could shake the Dutchman's conviction that it was his niece's lover who had fallen into his hands. And he had planned the death of the man from Lu.

Where were they taking him? They passed the yam fields, and entered the palm grove—the way King of the Islands had come. The Dutchman, without once glancing back, led the way with the hurricane lamp down the sloping ground. Behind him the two Solomon Islanders marched in silence, carrying the boy trader. Where they were taking him Ken did not know—but he knew that they were taking him to his death!

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER

### ON THE BEACH

**K**AIO-LALULALONGA trembled.

In the darkness beside the beached boat, Tomoo lay fast asleep, his breathing deep and regular. But Koko was not sleeping while he waited for the return of his little white master.

To King of the Islands and to Kit Hudson that solitary shining light on Ka'a had been a signal-light, but to Kaio-lalulalonga's superstitious mind it seemed much more like the shining, less "devil-devils" that haunted the darkness of night.

On all other subjects, the opinion of the boy trader was a law to the faithful Kanaka, but on the subject of "aitoos," Koko knew things that white men could never know.

Koko, as he often said, was no common Kanaka, but he had his full share of the superstitions of the natives of the Islands.

He sat on the gunwale of the boat and watched and waited, and rather envied Tomoo sleeping soundly in the sand. Koko could not sleep like the Hiva-Oa boy because his thoughts followed his little white master through the dark woods, towards the hidden interior of the island where the mysterious light gleamed.

It was a comfort to Koko that the light could not be seen from the little beach at the head of the cove. But he started and trembled when from the blackness of the palm grove a light twinkled.

The Kanaka's heart thumped against his brown ribs.

The mist was clearing from the stars, and there was a glimmer of faint light on the beach. But in the grove of thick palms that extended between the shore and the distant bungalow all was black—until the winking light came from the blackness.

It appeared and disappeared from moment to moment, like a light carried by someone who was winding a way among the slanting trunks of the palms.

But to Koko's startled eyes, it was not a light carried by a human hand. Who should be carrying a light through the palm groves of Ka'a at midnight?

It twinkled far distant, a mere speck at first, growing more clear and steady as it approached.

It was the gleaming eye of a devil of the dark night—that devil was coming through the palms towards the cove.

Kaio-lalulalonga, brave as a lion, trembled. He had faced a horde of cannibals without a tremor; he had fought with a shark in deep waters

and never known fear, but he was shivering now. His black eyes fixed, as if fascinated, on the light that twinkled, appearing and disappearing, among the trunks of the palms.

That was the way King of the Islands had gone ; that was the way he would return, when he came. But King of the Islands had no lantern ; it could not be he. Yet as the light came nearer and nearer, it dawned even on Koko's dismayed mind that it looked like the light of a hurricane lamp.

It reached the edge of the palm grove, a hundred yards from the spot where the Kanaka boatswain sat on the gunwale of the beached boat.

Then, after glimmering for a few moments from the trees, it was suddenly extinguished.

If it was the eye of an " aitoo," that eye was closed now. But Koko's superstitious terrors were almost gone by this time. He realised that the light was that of a hurricane lamp, carried to light the way through the darkness of the palm grove, and that it had been extinguished as soon as the bearer reached the beach, where the stars gave him sufficient light.

Against the darkness of the palms, the Kanaka's keen eyes could now pick out moving shadows. Faintly to his ears came the sound of heavy feet tramping on soft sand. The night wind brought a faint sound of a guttural voice to his listening ears.

He sat and watched.

The tramping feet in the gloom were crossing the sand to the sea, but not in a direct line towards the boat. Whoever was coming did not know that the *Dawn's* boat was there. It was not King of the Islands returning. His canvas shoes would not have caused that heavy tramping sound ; it was the tramp of thick sea-boots that came to Koko's listening ears. And King of the Islands would have

come direct to the boat, while the unseen man in the darkness was heading for the shore at a distance from it.

Kaio-lalulalonga watched, and wondered. Faint as was the glimmer of the stars, he made out a heavy bulky figure crossing his line of vision, from the palm grove towards the water's edge.

Following it came two other figures, carrying something between them that looked like a large sack in the gloom.

The two followers were natives, whose bare feet made hardly a sound on the sand as they followed the heavily tramping white man.

The three figures, with what they were carrying, reached the water's edge, at a distance of twenty yards or more from the spot where the *Dawn's* whaleboat was beached.

There the object that the two natives carried was laid down on the sand. What it was, Koko did not know.

In the silence that was broken only by the murmur of the surf in the channel, a sound of voices reached his ears.

And then suddenly, as if he had been electrified, Kaio-lalulalonga leaped from the gunwale of the boat, his eyes almost starting from his head as he stared towards the group on the shadowy beach.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER

KOKO'S K.O. PUNCH !

"Ach ! Where did you leave your canoe, mynheer ? "

The Dutchman bent over King of the Islands. His little glittering eyes scanned the white face of the boy trader. His harsh, heavy face was distorted by an evil grin.

King of the Islands looked up at the evil face, his heart beating hard.

His eyes gleamed with hope.

In the darkness, flung across the shoulders of the two Solomon Island boys, the boy trader had seen nothing, known only that he was carried away through the woods, behind the Dutchman with the lamp.

When they emerged on the beach he had little doubt that he was to be flung into the sea, and when he was laid on the sand, at the water's edge, he realised that his last hour had come.

But as the Dutchman bent over him and questioned him he understood. He had been carried back to the cove where he had landed—where the man of Lu would have landed, had not his canoe been run down. The Dutchman's question could mean nothing else.

Ken panted.

From the depths of utter despair, from the instant expectation of cruel death, he came back to hope—to life.

The Dutchman saw the change in his face, in the dim glimmer of the stars, without understanding it.

"Ach! You hear me?" he grunted. "You came from Lu in a canoe, mynheer. On this side you could only have landed in this cove—also I know from Nalasoo that this is where you are used to land. Ach! I do not choose to search in the darkness for your canoe. Where did you leave it?"

Ken's heart was beating too fast for him to speak for the moment. He knew where he was now—on the sands of the cove where he had landed. Somewhere in the darkness along the beach was the whaleboat of the *Dawn*, and Tomoo and the faithful Kaiolalulalonga. Out in the channel was the anchored ketch; but for a jutting cliff he could have seen her riding lights. And the Dutchman did not know. Believing that Ken was the man who had come alone from Lu in a canoe, he could not know.

The Dutchman's threatening voice growled again.

"Speak, you dog! Your canoe is beached somewhere along the cove. You came in a canoe, as you came before. Did you think that I should blow out your brains, and bury you on Ka'a? Ach! Do I not know that you have friends on Lu—especially the missionary—and we are not far enough from the High Commissioner at Fiji? Neen." He gave a hoarse chuckle. "Neen, neen! I have only one neck, my friend, and it is not destined to be stretched by an English rope."

Ken watched him, silent.

"Neen! Neen!" said Van Tromp, chuckling again. "Do you not understand yet, mynheer? My black boys will hold your head below the water—as long a time as you need—ach! Then the ropes will be removed from your limbs, mynheer. The morning tide will land you on the beach of Lu—drowned! Your canoe will float ashore with you, bottom up! Do you see, mynheer? This is a dangerous channel, between Lu and Ka'a—many a canoe has come to grief in it, especially at night! Yours will not be the first. But I must know where you have left your canoe—you have beached it somewhere in the darkness. Speak, before your neck is twisted to make you speak."

Ken drew a deep breath.

Had the man from Lu fallen into this demon's hands, as the Dutchman believed, the fiendish scheme would have been carried through without a hitch. When a drowned man, with no signs of violence, was washed ashore on Lu, with an overturned canoe, who was to suspect that anything had happened but one of the chances of the sea?

And the murderer would have been safe from justice. The Dutchman of Ka'a had calculated cunningly.

Ken's eyes flashed.

" Speak ! " growled Van Tromp savagely. " Where is the canoe ? I must set it adrift with you, mynheer. Speak, or——"

Ken gathered all his strength for a shout. That he intended to shout the Dutchman did not dream. So far as Van Tromp knew there were no ears to hear. But the shout came out with all the force of Ken's lungs, and it rang and echoed along the beach, and far across the darkness of Ka'a.

" Koko ! Help ! Save me, Koko ! Kaio-lalulalonga, ahoy ! King of the Islands calls you ! Help ! "

" Ach Gott ! Are you mad, then ? " gasped the astonished Dutchman. " Do you fancy there are ears on Ka'a to hear you ? Ach ! You are out of your senses with fear ! Nalasoo, twist this feller him neck till he

speakee along canoe—but leave no marks——"

" Koko ! Help ! "

There was a tramp of rushing feet on the sand. The two Solomon Island boys stared round in amazement.

Van Tromp spun round, amazed, enraged, grasping at the revolver in his hip-pocket. King of the Islands, struggling in his bonds, shouted again. But his call was not needed. Koko, electrified by the sudden sound of the voice of his little white master shouting for help, was racing to the spot. Van Tromp had a glimpse of a towering form in the gloom, of a fierce brown face from which two enraged eyes burned like fire—and then a giant fist crashed on him, and he went senseless to the sand.

Kaio-lalulalonga, with a yell of fury, turned on the Solomon Island boys. But they did not wait for his



Van Tromp had a glimpse of a fierce brown face from which two enraged eyes burned like fire—and then the giant fist of Koko crashed on him, and he went senseless to the ground.

attack. Yelling with consternation, Nalasoo and his companion tore away up the beach and vanished into the darkness.

Van Tromp lay motionless where he had fallen.

"Little white master!" panted Koko.

He was on his knees beside the bound boy trader. His knife slashed through the tapa cords.

King of the Islands leaped to his feet—a free man! In silence, his heart too full for words, he grasped the brown hand of the boatswain and wrung it.

• • •  
"Suffering cats!"

That was Kit Hudson's ejaculation when he was told on the deck of the *Dawn*. He thumped Kaio-lalulalonga energetically on the back, and the brown boatswain chuckled.

Otto Van Tromp, still insensible, lay in irons in the cabin of the *Dawn*. He was booked for Fiji, and trial for attempted murder. There was a bitter awakening for the Dutch planter of Ka'a when he came to his senses. But he was still lying like a log when Philip Grahame, in the state-room of the *Dawn*, opened his eyes in the morning light.

The *Dawn* was under way. King of the Islands had run the ketch out of the channel to the anchorage on the western side of Ka'a, in sight of the Van Tromp bungalow. The ketch was sailing into the anchorage under the rising sun when Philip's eyes opened, and through a porthole he had a glimpse of Ka'a and the bungalow on the high ground. He started up in the bunk, with throbbing head. He heard the cable run out, and as the ketch swung to her anchor, King of the Islands came down.

An hour later the man of Lu, with a bandaged head and a pale face, but a face that was very happy in

spite of its pallor, was going ashore in the whaleboat. He had told Ken the simple story—how he had landed one day on Ka'a, curious to see the mystery island, and had met Stella Van Tromp by chance in the palm woods, and how one meeting had followed another—kept carefully secret from the savage old Dutchman. That Stella was the heiress of Ka'a Philip did not know; he only knew that her surly, savage uncle kept her practically a prisoner on the island. Her fear of the brutal planter was so great that he had arranged to take her to Lu in the canoe, where they were to be married by the missionary, unknown to Otto Van Tromp till it was too late for him to intervene. He had not suspected that Van Tromp had made the discovery, and that he was going to his death when the ketch ran his canoe down in the darkness of the midway channel. That collision in the dark night had saved his life.

A pale-faced, sad-eyed girl was looking wearily from the bungalow as the whaleboat pulled ashore. But the sadness faded from Stella Van Tromp's face, and her eyes brightened, as she recognised the bandaged man. Philip Grahame leaped ashore and ran up the coral path to the bungalow.

From the deck of the *Dawn* King of the Islands watched them with a smile.

"That's the white woman of Ka'a, Kit," he said. "Not a myth, after all. She is owner of Ka'a—and young Grahame is a lucky dog. And I think we'll run the ketch across to Lu and fetch the missionary here—all's plain sailing now that we've got that scoundrel Van Tromp safe below in irons."

And when King of the Islands put to sea again, he left happiness behind him on Ka'a—once, but now no longer, Mystery Island.

THE END