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# CHIEF of the WAI-WAI

## No Friendly Grin.

**K**ING OF THE ISLANDS stepped ashore at Wai-Wai without the slightest suspicion that trouble awaited him on that little coral atoll in the Pacific. Wai-Wai was off the boy trader's usual beat. It was a tiny atoll—merely a ring of soil surrounding a shining lagoon—with a reef passage too narrow and tortuous for any vessel larger than a whaleboat to enter.

Of trade there was little, and no white man had ever thought it worth while to settle there. Occasionally there was a ton or two of copra to be picked up, and a schooner or ketch would anchor outside the reef and send in a boat loaded with trade goods to barter with the brown-skinned, good-tempered Polynesian natives.

Trouble on Wai-Wai had never been heard of. On the rare occasions when a white man's ship came the natives were only too glad to see it and to barter what little spare produce they had in return for gay printed calicos and tomahawks and musical-boxes.

Only once before had Ken King touched at the island in his ketch Dawn, and then the old chief had received him with all the hospitality that Wai-Wai could afford.

A few bags of copra and pearl-shell were not worth the three or four days' sail required to run down to the island from Sua, and in the ordinary way of trade Ken would not have raised Wai-Wai at all. But at Sua he had heard a rumour that made the visit worth while.

It was rumoured that the natives of Wai-Wai had made a discovery of pearls in their lagoon. There was a story that a Wai-Wai "boy" had run across in a sailing canoe with a big pearl to sell. If that story was well founded, it was likely that a good many traders would soon be dropping in at the hitherto disregarded atoll.

King of the Islands considered that he might as well be first in the field, and Kit Hudson, the Australian mate of the Dawn, fully agreed.

Leaving Hudson in charge of the ketch outside the reef, Ken entered the lagoon in the whaleboat, with Koko and Lompo at the oars. There were not more than a hundred inhabitants on the atoll, and as the whaleboat pulled for the beach most of them seemed to be on view.

They crowded down to the shore, staring at the approaching boat and cackling with excitement. There was nothing new in that, however. A ship in the offing always caused excitement on the seldom-visited atoll.

The whaleboat grounded on the shelving sand, and King of the Islands stepped ashore, never dreaming for a moment of what awaited him.

"You feller boy stop along boat!" he said, as he stepped on the sand.

"Yes, sar!" said Lompo. But Koko, the brown-skinned boatswain of the Dawn, stared curiously at the crowd of natives on the beach. "Me no likee, sar!" he said abruptly.

"What thing you no likee, Koko?" Ken glanced round at him.

"Me no likee look along face belong Wai-Wai feller, sar!" answered Koko. "Plenty good feller stop along Wai-Wai," Ken laughed. "Big feller Chief Ka'ka plenty good feller along me."

Koko looked dubious. Something in the excited faces of the natives of Wai-Wai had made him vaguely uneasy. But he said no more.

Leaving the two Kanakas with the boat, Ken walked up the beach. Natives gathered round him in a crowd. They marched with him up the beach, increasing in numbers as they proceeded towards the straggles of grass houses under the palms.

Some of them were grinning; others, Ken could not help noticing, had dark looks.

Something unusual, it was fairly clear, had stirred up Wai-Wai, apart from the arrival of a white man's ship. The discovery of pearls in the lagoon might have been the cause.

That pearls were at least being sought for, Ken had evidence before he set foot on the sand. The smell of rotting shell had been wafted on the wind across the lagoon. Whether the natives had found pearls or not, it was certain that they were rotting out oysters in search of them.

The crowd thickened more and more round the boy trader, leaving his way open before him, but clustering thickly behind. Here and there, to his surprise, Ken detected the gleam of a spear.

**H**E halted. It began to dawn on him that Koko's uneasiness was perhaps not without foundation. Wai-Wai was a peaceful island, and the natives always went unarmed. But spears were in evidence now, and he could not help seeing that the natives clustered thickly behind him, as if to cut off his retreat to his boat.

As he halted the excited cackle burst out more loudly than ever, and two or three natives jostled against him to urge him on.

Ken walked on again. His revolver was buckled to his belt—not because he had supposed that it would be needed on Wai-Wai, but because it was his custom never to land unarmed among natives. He was glad of it now.

But he did not touch the weapon. The prospect of fighting his way back to the whaleboat through a swarm of

natives was not one that appealed to him. Neither could he yet believe that it was necessary. It was growing clear that trouble impended, but, whatever it was, he hoped that it would be cleared up when he saw the friendly old chief, Ka'ka.

Ka'ka was not to be seen, but the jostling crowd were urging him towards the chief's house. Ken was getting rather anxious to see the fat and friendly old Polynesian who ruled on Wai-Wai.

The farther he advanced from the beach the more openly hostile grew the looks of the natives. Shark's-tooth knives, as well as spears, glimmered round him now. Angry and mocking looks were cast at him. It seemed that the character of the sunny-natured natives of Wai-Wai had changed utterly since his last visit.

He stopped at the doorway of the chief's house. A pandanus screen was pulled aside to disclose the figure of the chief—a fat native in a loin-cloth, decorated with strings of cartridge-clips round his podgy neck, tobacco-pipes in his ears, and a large brass ring in his nose.

**B**UT the fat face of Ka'ka did not wear the friendly grin that Ken had expected to see. His dark brow was knitted, and his black eyes glinted. He did not salute the boy trader, but stared at him grimly and derisively.

"What name you come along Wai-Wai, you white feller?" he asked rudely.

Ken compressed his lips. He liked insolence from a native no more than any other white skipper in the Pacific. But he was desirous of avoiding trouble on the island if he could.

"Me come along Wai-Wai trade along Ka'ka," he answered. "What name you no likee see this white feller master along island belong you?"

"Me savvy plenty too much what name you come along this place!" jeered Ka'ka. "All same other feller white master, me savvy, steal pearl belong Ka'ka! Me savvy plenty too much altogether!"

King of the Islands started. Apparently he was not the first white trader to call at Wai-Wai since the discovery of pearls in the lagoon. It seemed that another white man had come before him—after the pearls and not in the way of fair trade.

He began to understand. There was nothing surprising in some ruffianly South Seas skipper having dropped in at the island to get hold of the pearls by the strong hand. Ken knew plenty of skippers who were capable of it—Barney Hall, Black Furley, Peter Parsons, of Lukwe, and a dozen others. But if that was



There is a sensational find of pearls on a lonely South Seas island. King of the Islands goes there for peaceable trade—and nearly finds himself in the native cooking-pot!



The old chief rapped out an order. Ken was seized, and his arms bound down to his sides.



what had happened, it had happened very unfortunately for King of the Islands.

The unthinking savages were not likely to distinguish between one white man and another. If one white man had come as a robber, it was enough to set the whole island seething with hostility towards all white men.

King of the Islands realised that some South Seas ruffian had set a hornets' nest buzzing for him. Round him the crowded natives jostled and murmured and cackled. Spears and shark's-tooth knives glistened. Brawny brown hands were ready to seize him at a sign from the chief.

"Me come along this island trade along Ka'ka," he said. "This feller good feller along Ka'ka."

"White feller plenty bad feller along Kanaka feller!" said the chief. "Shoot Kanaka feller along gun, steal feller pearl belong him. Me savvy!" He made a sign.

Ken's hand was already on the butt of his revolver. But there was no chance for him. Hands grasped him on all sides, the weapon was torn away as soon as it was drawn, and King of the Islands, struggling fiercely, went down under a heap of grasping, panting natives.

Ka'ka, grinning, rapped out an order in his own tongue. Tapa cords were run round the boy trader, binding his arms down to his sides. In the midst of a shouting crowd he was led away from the chief's house and pitched headlong into a palm-pole hut.

He stumbled over a bound figure that lay on the earthen floor and fell. The pandanus screen that formed the door dropped into place behind him, shutting off the brilliant sunshine and leaving him in darkness.

**"We're Done!"**

"HANG you, you scum!" snarled a voice from the darkness as the boy trader sprawled on the earthen floor.

King of the Islands staggered to his feet. The sudden change from the

blinding sunshine to deep dusk dazzled him, and for the moment he could see nothing.

The growling voice came from the bound figure over which he had stumbled as he was flung into the hut. Evidently there was already a prisoner there, and a white man.

From the darkness two gleaming eyes glared at Ken, and as his eyes grew more accustomed to the gloom, Ken made out a burly figure struggling to a sitting position. His fellow-prisoner was a white man, though burnt by the sun almost as dark as a native—a powerfully built man, with a rugged, bearded face. His arms, like Ken's, were bound to his sides with knotted cords.

Ken peered at him. For the first few moments the interior of the hut had seemed as black as the inside of a hat from contrast with the sunlight without. But there were chinks of light in the walls and the pandanus door, and Ken was soon able to make out his surroundings. His eyes fixed on the bearded face that glared at him in the dusk.

"Barney Hall!" he exclaimed. "King of the Islands! You here, too!" Barney Hall, the ruffianly trader of Tonga, stared at him. Something like a grin passed over his rugged face.

"You!" he repeated. "By gum! This is a new lay for you, Ken King! You after the pearls, too, by gum!" He gave a harsh laugh. "You won't get the pearls! They've got you like they've got me. We're both for the cooking-oven, Ken King! That's all we're booked to get on Wai-Wai!"

Ken made no answer. It was long since he had met Barney Hall, and they had met as enemies. And evidently it was the ruffian of Tonga whose lawless attempt to seize the pearls on Wai-Wai had turned the natives into savage enemies of all white men who came to the island.

The boy trader made an effort to wrench his arms loose. It was in

vain. There were fathoms of tapa cord wound round him, securely knotted. He was a helpless prisoner. He ceased the futile attempt at last, his muscles almost cracking under the strain, the sweat standing in large drops on his forehead.

Barney Hall, watching him, gave a sneering laugh.

"You won't get loose, King of the Islands! The niggers have taken care of that! I've been here twenty-four hours, and I guess I know how they tie a knot—hang them!"

**W**ITHOUT heeding, Ken turned to the door of the hut. It was a narrow doorway, covered by the screen of pandanus. Outside a native squatted, a spear across his knees. As Ken stirred the pandanus screen the Wai-Wai native lifted the spear and made a thrust with it.

Ken leaped back from the door as the spear-point came through, narrowly missing him. He caught his breath. It was death to attempt to leave the hut. The native on guard had his orders from the chief.

Ken did not approach the door again. He stepped to one of the slits in the front wall, which faced the beach and the lagoon.

His heart was heavy with anxiety for the Kanakas he had left in the boat. If they had time to push off and escape in the boat, there was help to be expected from Kit Hudson. But a sound of yelling and shouting from the beach told him how unlikely it was. Neither was it likely that Koko would flee in the boat, leaving his little white master a prisoner.

Through the slit in the wall Ken stared across at the beach and the shining lagoon beyond. A struggling crowd on the sand met his eyes. A dozen or more natives were clinging to the brawny boatswain of the Dawn, half-way up the beach, like hounds to a stag.

## Chief of the Wai-Wai

Farther on Ken could see the whale-boat, lying tenantless on the sand on the margin of the lagoon. Lompo was standing near the boat, in the hands of several natives, a prisoner.

Ken could guess that Koko had seen what had happened to him, and had started to run up the beach to his help. Now he was struggling desperately in the grasp of a crowd of Wai-Wai boys—seized long before he could reach his master.

Overwhelming as his enemies were, the giant boatswain of the Dawn was keeping them busy. Five or six natives sprawled on the sand, felled by his mighty blows. A dozen more, grabbing him wherever they could get a hold, could hardly drag him down.

Koko was putting up a terrific struggle, but the boy trader feared every moment to see a spear or a knife deal death to the brave Kanaka. It was a relief to him when the struggle ceased, and Koko, overwhelmed by numbers, was borne down and his arms bound.

Panting, streaming with perspiration, exhausted by the fierce struggle, Koko was led up the beach by a cackling crowd, followed by more natives with Lompo. They were thrust into another hut near at hand and disappeared from the sight of King of the Islands.

**A** NUMBER of the natives returned to the whaleboat and dragged it up the beach. King of the Islands breathed hard. Far across the outer reef he could see the tall spars of the Dawn outlined against the cloudless blue of the sky. But it was unlikely that Kit Hudson, if he was watching the island, had seen the happenings on the beach—the distance was too great.

Sooner or later he would learn what had happened, but whether he could help his shipmate was a problem.

On board the ketch were Hudson, Tomoo, Kolulo, Lufu, and Danny the cooky-boy. If they landed, armed with rifles, no doubt they would be a formidable party for the natives to handle with their primitive weapons. But the Dawn had only one boat and that was in the hands of the natives. And by no possibility could the ketch wind a way through the shallow, tortuous reef passage.

King of the Islands realised very clearly that he was in a tight corner. And the cause of it, the man who had stirred up this hornets' nest for him, sat scowling within a yard of him. Ken's eyes turned grimly on the trader of Tonga.

"What have you been doing on Wai-Wai, Hall?" he snapped.

"What you reckoned to do, I fancy!" grunted Hall. "I came here after the pearls, same as you did."

"I came to trade for pearls!" said Ken sharply.

"More fool you!" sneered Hall. "I reckon I'd have traded—at my own price. I've taken pearls off niggers before now for a fathom of coloured cloth or a tin axe from Birmingham—with a gun in my hand to back up

the bargain. I've no fancy for letting niggers grow rich."

"You've made a pretty mess of it with your trading methods!" snapped King of the Islands. "Your gun doesn't seem to have carried through the bargain this time."

"They got me," said the trader of Tonga sullenly. "It's a peaceful island—I never reckoned on a fistful of trouble. I ran my lugger down to Wai-Wai, and came ashore in a canoe. I had to leave the lugger outside the reef. You didn't see it when you came?"

"No!"

"I reckoned not! Them Tonga boys ran fast enough when they found the niggers had got me!" growled Hall. "I reckoned they went all out before the wind, as soon as they knew I'd hit trouble."

"Likely enough! There was no lugger in the offing when we raised the island in my ketch."

"Maybe your mate will be able to help!" said Hall eagerly. "We ain't friends, King of the Islands, but a white man has got to stand by another in a scrape like this. What about your mate?"

"They've got our only boat!"

"That tears it!" said Hall savagely. "We're done."

"We're done—through your rotten rascality!" said King of the Islands bitterly. "You came here to rob the natives, and you've set them against all white men. I suppose you fancied you could walk rough-shod over a bunch of peaceful natives."

"I've done it before!" growled Hall. "I've landed in the Solomons, with a couple of hundred cannibals round me who'd have given their fathers and mothers to get my head off me. They never got it! I reckoned I had a clear course on Wai-Wai. And, by gum, I'd have made them all crawl at my feet if I'd had half a chance. I reckon I'd run an island like this with one hand tied—and a gun in the other."

"Looks like it!" snapped Ken.

"They got me by surprise," snarled Hall. "I'd talked to Ka'ka, told him what I wanted, and gave him the choice between handing over the pearls or having his fat carcass riddled with bullets. While I had the gun in my hand not a nigger dared lift a finger. I reckon they knew me. But that fat old swab double-crossed me." He gritted his teeth.

"That fat old nigger took me to his house and pointed out a heap of pearls, in a trade box that he keeps under his sleeping-mat," he went on. "And at that very minute, me off my guard, a crowd of them jumped me. I had time for just one shot before they had me down, and that shot only took an ear off a nigger. The scum!"

Barney Hall was satisfied with his own trading methods, and had no idea of changing them if he escaped alive from his present peril. Those methods had landed him within measurable distance of the cooking-oven and, unfortunately, had landed King of the Islands along with him. As the long hot day wore away it was borne in upon the mind of the boy trader how little likely it was that he would

ever tread again the deck of the Dawn.

## Heart-breaking Work.

**K**A'KA, clinking with necklaces of cartridge-clips and coral beads, stopped before the palm-pole hut. A grinning native drew the pandanus-leaf door aside, and the chief of the Wai-Wai stared in at the prisoners.

Sunset was red on the Pacific and on the lagoon. Long shadows of the tall palms fell across the beach. In the palm-pole hut it was hot and stifling. King of the Islands lay on the earth, his face clouded with gloomy thought.

The hours that had passed since he had been made a prisoner had only made him realise the hopelessness of the situation. Kit Hudson could not help him, unless by a miracle. And until sunset Hudson was not likely even to suspect that any mischance had befallen him. But when he suspected, when he knew, what could he do?

Barney Hall, sick of inaction, was tramping to and fro within the narrow limits of the hut, his eyes burning. He glared savagely at the chief of the Wai-Wai, as the bright red sunset streamed in at the opened doorway.

Ken did not stir, only looking up quietly at the fat old chief. He was dry with thirst, and he hoped, for a moment, that the natives had come to bring water.

But Ka'ka came with empty hands. He had no gentle treatment to waste on white men whom he regarded as robbers.

"By gum," snarled Barney Hall, "if I had my hands loose, I'd twist that fat neck of yours."

"Hand belong you no loose!" Ka'ka grinned. "No can!"

"Give us water, you black scum!" hissed Barney.

"No give water, no give food, along feller thief!" answered Ka'ka coolly.

"Feller white man shoot ear belong Ta'oka, gun belong him. Feller white man plenty too much bad feller."

"I wish it had gone through his head, or yours!" snarled Barney.

Bound and imprisoned as he was, the ruffian was not daunted. There was pride of race even in the lawless free-booter of Tonga, and he would have disdain to show the white feather.

"You likum kill-dead this big feller chief!" grinned Ka'ka. "No can! This big feller chief he kill-dead you white man."

Barney Hall drew a quick breath. Even his stubborn heart felt a chill at the thought of the cooking-oven.

"You comey along this island stealee pearl!" said Ka'ka. "You shoot feller boy along gun, my word. All pearl along Wai-Wai belong me. No belong white feller thief!"

"I did not come here to steal your pearls, Ka'ka," said King of the Islands quietly. "I came to trade."

"Plenty easy talk!" the island chief sneered. "You no make big fool along this feller. All white man samee. One comey, two comey, all samee—me savvy. Plaps more white man comey along Wai-Wai. All samee. Kill-dead along us feller."



# The Nelson Stamps

By DOUGLAS ARMSTRONG

who will answer Free, by Post, any stamp queries sent to the Editor, MODERN BOY

Ken made no rejoinder. It was useless to attempt to make the savage understand that his objects had been very different from Barney Hall's.

Hall's attempt to seize the pearls by violence had made Ka'ka distrustful of all white men. He judged them all by the same measure.

"You stop along this place!" said Ka'ka. "Big feast comey plenty soon, makee kai-kai along you feller. S'pose more white man comey, makee kai-kai along that feller, my word! Makee kai-kai along all feller white man comey along Wai-Wai. Feller pearl stop along me."

He made a sign to one of the natives, a man whose ear had been gashed by a bullet—evidently the victim of Hall's hasty shot. The native stepped into the hut and bent over King of the Islands to examine his bonds. Then he paid the same attention to Barney Hall.

Ka'ka's visit was apparently intended to make sure that the prisoners were safe for the night.

Barney Hall drew back a heavy foot, as if with the intention of kicking as Ta'oka approached him. But he relinquished that idea. Behind the chief was a crowd of armed natives, and the Tonga trader was aware that he would have been speared on the spot.

He ground his teeth, and stood unresisting. Ta'oka examined the cords that secured his brawny arms, and was satisfied.

"You feller white master sleep along hut!" said Ka'ka derisively. "You tinkee along makee kai-kai!"

THE chief turned away with his followers. The pandanus screen dropped into place in the doorway, shutting out the sunset. Outside, a native squatted as before, with his spear across his knees.

The sun dipped beyond the reef. Darkness rushed over the lagoon and the island. Ken, with his eye to a slit in the wall of palm-poles and plaited grasses, saw a glimmer of starlight on the lagoon. But the tall spars of the ketch had vanished from sight.

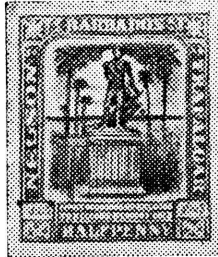
What was Kit Hudson thinking of his prolonged absence? What could he do? Swim ashore, defiant of sharks, and share the fate of his shipmate?

The boy trader cast a bitter look at his ruffianly fellow-prisoner. But for the Tonga trader and his lawless brutality, Ken might have traded peacefully with the natives and returned to his ketch by this time. In the circumstances, it was difficult to blame the islanders for their hostility. The blame lay at Barney Hall's door.

The sullen eyes of the freebooter smouldered at him in the gloom. From the beach came a sound of tinkling ukuleles and the pattering of dancing feet. Under the stars a crowd of natives, clinking with coral necklaces, glimmering with the scarlet blossoms of hibiscus, were making merry.

But the sounds died away at last. The natives had gone to their grass houses, and slumber reigned on Wai-Wai.

A STAMP album is probably the last place in which one would look for Nelson relics—because there were no postage stamps in Nelson's days, nor for thirty-five years after his death. But some newly issued stamps from the British West Indian island of Antigua are associated with one of his last and most famous exploits.



A Barbados issue, showing monument erected to Lord Nelson's memory in the public square of Bridgetown, the capital.

There is one other set of British Colonial stamps which forms a link with Nelson and his times. It also hails from one of our West Indian islands—that of Barbados—and was originally intended to commemorate the centenary of the Battle of Trafalgar, in October, 1905, but the printers could not get it finished in time, so the stamps did not finally appear until six months after the date of the anniversary.

In the centre of each stamp is illustrated what is claimed to be the first monument erected to Nelson's Memory, 1813, which stands in the public square at Bridgetown, the capital. On either side are the words "NELSON" and "TRAFALGAR," and at the foot the dates "1805—1905."

The Nelson stamps of Barbados are very popular with collectors, and have risen in value considerably during the last few years. Historically they are one of the most interesting commemorative series of the British Empire.



In honour of one of Nelson's last and most famous exploits.

"King of the Islands!" The sullen muttering voice of Barney Hall broke the dismal silence in the hut.

Ken had thrown himself on the floor once more, though not to sleep. He made no reply to the freebooter.

"You're not sleeping, I reckon!" growled Barney Hall. "Do you want to dream of the cooking-oven?"

"Belay it!" snapped Ken. "You've landed me in this, you swab, and the less you say, the better!"

"You listen, ear belong you!" said Hall, dropping unconsciously into the lingo which he was accustomed to talk to the Tonga boys who manned his lugger.

"I've no wish to listen to you!" "They're keeping us for their feast-day," went on Hall, unheeding. "I don't know when that is, but I reckon it ain't far off! There'll be a big jamboree, with all the island gathered and a devil-doctor doing his stunts, and us in the middle of the picture!"

"I know that!"

"Your mate can't help us—he can't get ashore without a boat. If he tries swimming, the sharks will get him—they're as thick round Wai-Wai as wool on the head of a Solomon

Islander! Anyhow, the niggers would handle him. We've got to help ourselves—now it's dark, and those scum are asleep!"

"If you've got any idea of getting loose, cough it up!" Ken sat up. "I'll take any chance that offers. But the hut's watched, and it's no good running on a spear with bound hands!"

"There's no chance for a man alone!" muttered Hall huskily. "But there's two of us now. You've got a good set of teeth in your head. Try them on these knots! Get my hands loose, and I'll handle that nigger outside fast enough. He won't give a squeal when I get my grip on his neck. Then I'll get you loose, we'll get your Kanakas out of the next hut, get the whaleboat, and get away."

"Not so easy!" said Ken. "But if there's a chance, we'll try it on, Barney Hall. Roll over here!"

"It's a chance. Anyhow, anything's better than sitting down and thinking of the cooking-oven!" muttered Hall. "They're supposed to have chucked cannibalism on this island, but you heard what Ka'ka said. There's goin' to be long-pig at their feast, and we're the long-pig!"

## Chief of the Wai-Wai

Barney Hall rolled over for King of the Islands to get at the cords knotted behind him. The boy trader bent over him, and started with his teeth on the tight knots in the tapa.

There were several knots drawn hard and tight, and at the first attempt it seemed hopeless. But Ken King's teeth were strong, and he was determined.

Not only for his own sake, but for the sake of his comrades, Ken was ready to strain every nerve. Lompo and the faithful Koko would share his fate, whatever it was, and Kit Hudson was certain to make some desperate attempt to land on Wai-Wai. And if he swam ashore, the chances were a hundred to one that he would never get through the sharks alive. Little more than that thought was needed to urge the boy trader to desperate efforts.

Outside the hut the native was crooning an island song in drowsy tones. Inside, Ken laboured with his teeth on Barney Hall's bonds. His jaws ached, the sweat ran down his face, and his teeth felt as if they were loosened in the gums. It was heart-breaking work, and many times Ken had to stop to rest, almost groaning with fatigue. But the knots were loosening.

"By gum!" breathed Barney Hall at last. "It's going, King of the Islands—I can feel it going! Keep it up!"

Ken did not answer. He was numbed, and could hardly have spoken. But he resumed the aching task, though the strained muscles of his jaws would hardly stir.

The knots dragged loose at last, the tight cord sagged, and the Tonga trader drew his hands free.

### The Shark's-Tooth Knife!

**K**ING OF THE ISLANDS lay back on the earthen floor utterly exhausted. He breathed in jerks, his jaws numbed, his teeth aching. But he had freed his fellow-prisoner. Barney Hall was on his

feet, chafing his hands and wrists and arms, stiff and sore from the binding cords. It was a long time before the burly freebooter was ready for action.

Ken did not heed him for the time. But when the trader of Tonga made a movement towards the doorway, Ken whispered:

"Let me loose, Barney Hall!"

The burly trader looked down at him, his deep-set eyes smouldering strangely in the gloom.

"I reckon I'll get that nigger first—he may hear something!" he breathed. "I reckon I'll put him to sleep with one crack now that I've got the use of my hands!"

"Look here, get me loose!"

"I'm getting the nigger first! Quiet!"

As Hall was free, and Ken still a tightly bound prisoner, the Tonga trader had the deciding voice in the matter. He moved softly towards the pandanus screen that closed the doorway. There were slits in it through which he could peer out into the starlight.

Outside, the watching native was awake, his spear across his knees. But his eyes were turned towards the starlit lagoon, and he hummed one of the interminable native songs in a low croon. He was on the watch, but obviously not expecting any outbreak from the prisoners' hut.

Hall grinned savagely. Burly and heavy as he was, he could move cautiously and quickly. And his life was in the balance now. One swift thrust of the spear would have laid him dead on the ground had the Wai-Wai boy taken the alarm in time.

Suddenly, swiftly, the Tonga trader jerked the pandanus aside and leaped on the native. One crashing blow from a heavy fist that was hard as iron and the native spun over on the earth. He uttered no cry. The terrible blow had stunned him instantly.

Hall, breathing hard, bent over him. The man was senseless. For a moment the ruffian's hand strayed to the fallen spear. But such a deed

was needless. Leaving the spear where it lay, he dragged the senseless native into the hut and swiftly bound him hand and foot with the cords from his own limbs. He jammed a strip torn from the native's loin-cloth into his mouth to gag him and fastened it there with a twist of the cord.

"Safe, I reckon!" muttered Hall.

"Now!" breathed Ken.

"Wait. I'm seeing if the coast's clear," muttered Barney. He stepped out of the hut. Ken heard his stealthy, cautious footfalls for a moment or two. Then there was silence.

The boy trader waited. He was impatient, and he was getting angry. Minute followed minute, and Hall did not return.

"Barney Hall!" called Ken softly. He dared not call aloud, for the native huts were not far away. There was no answer. Hall seemed to be gone.

**T**HE boy trader waited and listened. But there was no sound of Hall returning. He could not have been discovered by the natives—there would have been an outbreak of noise and an immediate visit to the hut to ascertain whether the other prisoner was safe. What did it mean?

Ken gritted his teeth at the thought that the Tonga trader, free himself, was deserting him. Why had he not freed King of the Islands at once? Ken's mind was full of suspicion now.

Yet it seemed unlikely that Hall could be deserting him—to escape by himself in the whaleboat. If his intention was to escape to the ketch standing off the reef, he could hardly go on board and tell Hudson that he had left King of the Islands a prisoner, deserted. And what else could he intend?

Escape to the open sea in the whaleboat on his own? That was a course full of danger, and Ken could see no motive for it. Doubtless a hardy sailorman like Barney Hall could get to safety in the whaleboat unaided. But why take the risk, when it was only a matter of minutes to release Ken and the Kanakas, and there was a safe refuge on the ketch?

Ken was perplexed. It looked as if Hall had deliberately deserted him. Yet if that was the case, the man was acting against his own interests, so far as Ken could see.

But one thing was certain—whether by accident or design, Hall was gone, and was not returning. Something—his own intention or something else—was keeping him away.

King of the Islands moved to the doorway and looked out. In the dim starlight he made out the irregular straggle of native houses. He stared towards the hut where Koko and Lompo had been imprisoned, with the thought that Hall might have gone there first. But Hall was not to be seen. Outside that hut was a palm-tree, and against the palm-tree Ken made out a native leaning back as he sat, evidently a guard over the Kanakas. The man's back was to him, and if he was awake it was clear that he had taken no alarm.

Down the starlit beach he could

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make out the dim shape of the whale-boat, left where the natives had drawn it up on the sand. Hall was not there. Nothing was stirring.

Hall was not gone, for the whale-boat was untouched, and he could hardly have gone in a canoe. The canoes were dragged into the canoe-house at night, and there were sleepers in the canoe-house. He could not have taken such an unnecessary risk.

The man seemed to have vanished mysteriously into space since he had crept away from King of the Islands. It was useless to attempt to solve the mystery, and useless to wait for help from Barney Hall. But Ken was not so helpless now as Hall believed.

He crept back to the native whom Hall had left bound and gagged. The Wai-Wai boy was still unconscious. He could not have stirred or spoken had consciousness returned. Ken bent over him, and with his teeth gripped the haft of the shark's-

Kanakas, Ken had to deal with the man guarding them, but that was not difficult, now that he was free, with a weapon in his hand. But where was Hall? King of the Islands stood watching and listening.

In the silence a faint sound came to him from the direction of the chief's house. Instantly the truth rushed into Ken's mind. Hall was not gone yet—but he was going, and he was going alone. But not without the pearls stored under the chief's sleeping-mat. In deadly peril, with his life in the balance, the freebooter was not thinking of going without the booty for which he had come to Wai-Wai!

That faint, gurgling sound from the grass house of Ka'ka told Ken enough. Swift as a tiger-shark rushing on his prey, King of the Islands raced across to the hut.

#### Black and Blue!

**Y**OU black scum, I got you!" Barney Hall exclaimed, in a low, husky whisper. "You reckoned you'd handle me, you man-

and cautiously had the Tonga trader scouted round the hut to make sure that the chief was alone and that he slept. Escape was open to him, but he would not go without the chief's pearls. And in seeking them he well knew that his life hung on a thread.

But Fortune seemed to be favouring the freebooter. From Ka'ka, writhing in his deadly grasp, came only an agonised gurgle. Hall grinned down at him fiercely.

"I got you!" he hissed. "I got your pearls! Pearls belong you stop aloud sleeping-mat—what?"

Ka'ka made a sign of assent. He gurgled again faintly, his starting eyes making a dumb appeal to Hall.

Releasing his left hand from the chief's throat, Hall groped under the sleeping-mat. He drew out the box, jerked the lid open, and grinned at the sight of more than fifty pearls in it, glimmering in the dimness of the hut.

"By gum!" he muttered. "You done well on Wai-Wai! You reckoned you was keeping them pearls, when Barney Hall was after them!"



"Ken, old man!" Hudson grasped his shipmate's hand and wrung it, just as the Tonga trader was flung on board by the grinning Kanakas.

tooth knife stuck in his girdle. He jerked the knife loose.

The tapa cord, wound round and round the boy trader, fastened his arms down to his sides. Only his hands were loose, below the windings of the cord. His right hand grasped the handle of the knife.

Twisting his wrist till the bones almost cracked, he sawed at the cord with the razor-keen edge of the knife.

It was difficult work, but once the razor-like edge was on the cord it parted like pack-thread. A few minutes and he was free.

He stepped from the hut. The spear dropped by the native was gone. Hall must have picked it up as he went, to use as a weapon if needed. Ken kept the shark's-tooth knife in his hand.

He stood for some moments irresolute, mystified by Hall's strange disappearance. The native under the palm-tree, a dozen yards away, did not turn his head. To release the

eating dog, did you? You reckoned you'd make kai-kai of Barney Hall! You scum, with a gun in my hand I'd run your island for you, and make every pig of you crawl on his knees. I got you, and the pearls, too!"

Ka'ka, chief of the Wai-Wai, stared up dumbly at the savage, dark face bending over him, in sheer terror.

He could not speak. Two strong and sinewy hands gripped his fat brown throat, choking back any cry he tried to utter. The chief, fat as he was, was no weakling. But he was as an infant in the grasp of the herculean ruffian from Tonga.

Barney Hall's heavy knee was on him, pinning him down on his sleeping-mat. Barney Hall's grip was on his throat. Amazingly the Tonga trader had turned the tables on the chief of the Wai-Wai. His tribesmen were within call, but he could not summon them. His life was in the hands of the Tonga trader.

That savage grip on his throat had awakened him from slumber. Long

The hapless chief gurgled again. The ruffian's sinewy right hand gripped his throat, barely allowing him to breathe.

"Now I want my gun!" muttered Hall. "You savvy? What place feller gun belong me he stop?"

Ka'ka made a gesture. On a mat in a corner of the hut lay two revolvers, one taken from Hall, the other from King of the Islands. Hall peered into the gloom, and discerned the weapons. He gave a nod.

"That lets you out!" he said. "I reckon I done with you! But you ain't chirping to the other niggers after I'm gone. You ain't the nigger that'll make kai-kai of a white man after this!"

One last gurgle came from Ka'ka as both the sinewy hands choked him. There was no mercy in the fierce face that glared down at him. A minute more—less than a minute—and the end of all things would have come for Ka'ka.

But the pandanus screen at the

## Chief of the Wai-Wai

doorway was torn away, and starlight streamed into the chief's hut. An active figure leaped like a fleeting shadow, and Barney Hall gave a gasp of enraged amazement as he was dragged off the man he was choking.

"You dog!" panted Ken King, and crashed Hall senseless on the earth.

"Me savvy," Ka'ka gurgled. "You good feller along this chief! You save life belong this feller!"

King of the Islands picked up the box of pearls and handed it to the island chief.

Ka'ka staggered to his feet. Barney Hall would have killed him for the pearls. King of the Islands had saved his life, and left the pearls in his hands! That was plain enough even for the island chief.

"You feller King of the Islands," he gurgled. "You good feller along me. Me good feller along you! Me believe you good feller, plenty too much altogether! This big feller chief trade along you, too much good friend."

"You come along this feller, talk good feller talk along Wai-Wai boy," King of the Islands smiled. With Barney Hall's revolver in his pocket and his own weapon in his hand, Ken left the chief's hut with Ka'ka. They crossed to the hut where Lompo and Koko were imprisoned, and the watching native outside stared at them.

Ka'ka gave him an order in his own tongue, and he entered the hut. A few moments later Lompo and the boatswain emerged, free.

The natives were awakening now and peering out of the grass houses. Ka'ka proceeded to "sing out" to his tribesmen "good feller talk," and lowering looks and glistening spears vanished. Friendly relations had been established, and King of the Islands and his Kanakas were free to take the whaleboat and go.

Only one dispute remained. Ka'ka keenly desired to "Kai-kai" Barney Hall, which was not perhaps surprising. But villain as the Tonga trader was, King of the Islands could not leave a white man to the vengeance of the natives.

He willingly agreed, however, to "plenty too much lawyer-cane," and with that Ka'ka was content.

Barney Hall came to his senses in the hands of the natives. And in the midst of a cackling, grinning throng he was beaten with a heavy cane till he almost lost his senses again.

Then he was tossed, groaning, into the whaleboat, and King of the Islands steered for the reef.

KIT HUDSON stared at the whaleboat as it glided from the reef towards the ketch, and gasped with relief.

"Ken, old man!" Hudson grasped his shipmate's hand and wrung it as he stepped on board the Dawn. "Ken, I've been frightfully anxious. If you hadn't turned up by sun-up I was going to risk the sharks and swim ashore. What—" He broke off, staring at Barney Hall. The Tonga trader was flung on board by the

Kanakas like a sack of copra, and Lompo and Koko followed him from the boat.

King of the Islands told Hudson all that had happened to him in a few words.

"Pity you didn't leave the swab to the niggers!" growled Hudson.

"You don't mean that, old man!"

Ken smiled. "And I fancy he won't forget in a hurry the lawyer-cane they gave him. If he isn't black and blue all over he must have a hide like a turtle. Put him in irons, Koko."

The next day there was trade on the beach of Wai-Wai. Ka'ka, fat and friendly, was beaming with good-nature and keenness. And the islanders, in the way of the children of the South, had forgotten that they had ever been hostile.

Trade was good on Wai-Wai for the first time in the history of that little atoll. All sorts of trade-goods were landed from the ketch in the whaleboat and sold for pearls. And when King of the Islands sailed, in his strong-box he carried pearls that showed a handsome profit on the trip.

Barney Hall, kicked ashore at the next island, was left to hunt for his lost lugger and his Tonga boys—with little prospect of finding them. Barney certainly had profited little by his trip to Wai-Wai. But the shipmates of the Dawn had plenty of reason to be satisfied with their visit to the island which at first had received them like a hornets' nest!

*(There's another topping King of the Islands adventure in next Monday's MODERN BOY!)*

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