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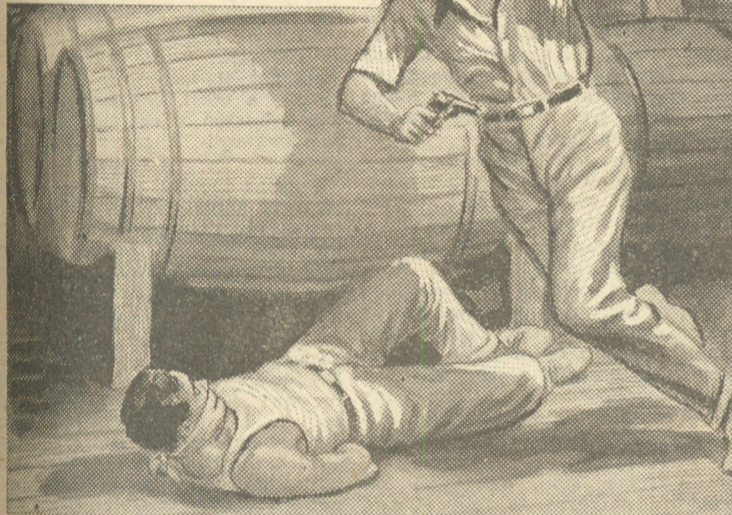
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HOT TIME for a "SAUSAGE"!—See centre pages

Complete THE GRINNING PIRATE!



As Hudson, spellbound, stared down at the boy skipper, a figure leaped from the darkness like a tiger and struck out at the mate of the Dawn.

The South Seas is full of staggering surprises—and there are plenty of them in this thrill-filled story of KING OF THE ISLANDS

by

CHARLES HAMILTON

Panic in the Pacific!

"KEN!" Kit Hudson, the mate of the Dawn, shouted hoarsely.

"Ken! King of the Islands! Ken!" His voice rang through the ketch Dawn from stern to stern. But there came no answer to his call.

Standing in the cabin, in the glimmer of the swinging lamp, Kit Hudson stared about him, amazed, as he shouted the name of his shipmate. From the deck came a jabber of native voices. In the bright moonlight the Hiva-Oa crew had gathered in a terrified group, listening to Hudson's voice shouting below. Even Koko, the brown-skinned boatswain of the Dawn, shared the terror of the native crew.

"Aie! Aie!" he moaned. "Little white master no stop. He no stop any more altogether! Eye belong this feller no see little white master any more! Aie! Aie!"

Lufu and Kolulo and Tomoo babbled together, in the native dialect of Hiva-Oa. The brown hands of Lompo, the steersman, trembled on the spokes of the wheel. Danny, the cooky-boy, crept out of his galley, his fat brown face almost grey.

"Debble he stop!" muttered Danny. "Debble he stop along this ship! Debble he makee kai-kai along white master!"

From below came Hudson's shouting voice: "Ken! King of the Islands! In Heaven's name where are you?" The mate of the Dawn stared about him. He tramped into the little state-room forward, where King of the Islands had gone to his bunk at eight bells. Ken King's bunk was empty. He was not in the state-room. He was not

in the cabin. He was not in the lazarette aft. Where, in the name of all that was mysterious, was he?

He had not come on deck. It seemed that he had vanished into thin air. Hudson felt the perspiration thick on his brow. Was it possible, after all, that the superstitious Kanakas were right, and the doubting white man wrong, and that the ketch was haunted by an evil spirit? In his amazement and consternation, Hudson could almost have believed so.

He shouted again, almost frantically. Then, with a white face, the mate of the Dawn came tramping up the companion to the deck. The scared eyes of the Kanakas fixed on him as he emerged into the moonlight. Lompo, forgetful of his duty in his terror, had left the wheel and joined the terrified group. The ketch was yawing, unregarded by the crew.

"Aai! Aie!" Koko was wailing. "Debble makee kai-kai along little white master! Aie! Aie!"

"You lubberly swab!" roared Hudson. "Get to the wheel!"

Koko obeyed, and his brown hands grasped the spokes. But it was clear that Koko cared little what happened to the ketch, now that he had lost his white master. The native crew cared less. Lompo muttered to the others, and there was a rush to the whaleboat to lower it. In their terror of the haunting "aitoo" that had, apparently, made away with the skipper during his watch below, the Kanakas were ready to abandon the Dawn and flee in the boat on the wide Pacific. It was fortunate that the mate of the Dawn had returned to the deck at that moment.

"You feller boy, you no touch boat,

hand belong you!" roared Hudson savagely. Heedless of him, the Kanakas were swinging the boat outboard, when Hudson rushed at them, hitting out right and left with both fists. It was no time for gentle measures. Whatever had happened to King of the Islands—and it was a mystery that utterly confounded his shipmate—the crew had to be kept from deserting. There were loud howls from the brown boys as the stalwart Australian hit out. Lompo went headlong, rolling into the scuppers—Tomoo sprawled after him—Lufu and Kolulo dodged away barely in time. Danny skipped back to his galley yelling.

"You plenty bad feller boy!" roared Hudson. "You stop along deck, my word! You go along boat, this feller knock seven bells outer you!" But discipline had dropped like a cloak from the usually obedient Kanakas. In their terror of the aitoo, they had lost their fear of the white masters. Lompo scrambled up, his eyes rolling, and grasped a belaying-pin.

"This feller no stop!" he panted. "No stop along ship along debble he stop! All this feller dead feller s'pose stop along aitoo! This feller go along boat altogether too quick."

"This feller go along boat!" gasped

The Grinning Pirate!

Kolulo. "White master stop along debble, s'pose white master he likee; Kanaka feller no stop."

Hudson gritted his teeth as the mutinous crew gathered for a rush. "You plenty big fool, feller cap'n he stop! He stop along this feller ship."

"What place that feller stop?" demanded Lufu. Hudson could not answer that question. Unless King of the Islands had taken leave of his senses, and squeezed through a port-hole and dropped into the sea, he was still on board the Dawn. But where he was, Hudson knew no more than the native crew.

"He no stop!" said Tomoo, with chattering teeth. "He go finish along aitoo."

"He go finish altogether!" babbled Danny. "This feller savvy! Eye belong me, see feller debble along hold, all samee me say! That feller debble makee kai-kai along cap'n! Makee kai-kai along us feller, s'pose stop along ship!"

"Stand back!" roared Hudson. His voice, and the glint of his eyes, daunted the Kanakas, and they hung back from the rush. "Koko!" he snapped. "You plenty fool! You wantee run along sea, along common Kanaka he run!"

"No, sar! This feller no wantee run! King of the Islands go finish along debble—this feller Koko go finish all samee! No wantee stop, along feller white master no stop!"

"Take a bight on the wheel, and stand by me!" growled Hudson. He was sorry at that moment that his revolver was not in his pocket. It looked as if he might need it. But on board Ken King's ketch there had never been trouble with the crew before. Neither the skipper nor the mate had ever needed a "gun" to back up orders.

KOKO lashed the wheel, and picked out a belaying-pin. Fully believing that his "little white master" was gone from him for ever, life had lost its savour for the faithful Koko. He had no mind to flee in the boat with the fear-stricken crew. Yet there was not the slightest doubt in his mind that the ketch was haunted by a "debble," and that every man on board was doomed.

If the Kanakas had doubted before that Danny had seen the eyes of a "debble" gleaming in the dark of the hold, they would not have doubted now. The vanishing of King of the Islands was a proof. But Koko, though firmly believing that his hours were numbered, was ready to back up the white master who remained, so long as life lasted. Even in his grief and despair he did not forget that he was "no common Kanaka."

Five men were facing two—and the five were in wild panic. It looked as though a furious struggle must come. Hudson and Koko stood between the panic-stricken Kanakas and the whaleboat. But the Hiva-Oa boys paused in doubt as the mighty

form of Koko was ranged beside that of the mate.

There was a squeal from Danny: "Us feller go along boat! Debble he comee along deck, makee kai-kai along us feller!" The suggestion that the hidden "debble" might emerge on deck brought a howl of fear from the Kanakas. In Koko's hand the belaying-pin shook. Hudson lashed out with his fist, and the cooky-boy went spinning along the deck.

"You feller boy, you hear, ear belong you!" shouted the mate of the Dawn. "Feller King of the Islands stop along this ship! S'pose he no stop, you go along boat all samee you wantee go. Two-three minute, me findee that feller."

"No tinkee, sar!" panted Lompo. "You stop along deck, you see, eye belong you!" snapped Hudson. "Me tell you stop along ship, savvy?"

That was a safe offer. The native crew muttered assent, all eyes turning fearfully towards the companion doorway. Certainly had some grizzly figure appeared there, as the crew feared, nothing could have stopped their rush to escape. But whatever had so mysteriously happened to King of the Islands, the mate of the Dawn was not likely to believe that it was due to a "debble."

"Us feller stop, s'pose no see debble, eye belong us feller!" said Kolulo through his chattering teeth.

Hudson was glad enough of the truce; he was feverishly anxious to solve the mystery of his shipmate's disappearance.

"You stop along boat, Koko!" he rapped. "S'pose any feller touch boat, you kill that feller too much along belaying-pin." And Hudson, leaving it at that, tramped down the companion again—and his first action was to get his revolver from the state-room. The native crew watched him go, with rolling, frightened eyes. The reckless white man had gone to measure strength with the "debble" that haunted the ketch, and the brown boys had little doubt that he had gone to the same fate as King of the Islands, whatever that mysterious fate was. They watched and waited in an anguish of terror.

"It's Death, Ken King!"

KING OF THE ISLANDS lay in darkness in the hold under the lazarette. He could not see the deck above him, or the water-casks that were chocked on their sides, or the enemy that held him in a savage grip. But he could feel that fierce grip and the keen edge of the knife that was pressed to his throat. Helpless, at the mercy of his enemy he lay, and only by the hissing voice that came from the gloom did he know that that unseen enemy was Dandy Peter Parsons, the sea-lawyer of Lukwe.

The slim, dapper sea-lawyer would have crumpled in the boy trader's grasp in a fair fight. But the knife was at Ken's throat, and, enraged as he was, he forbore to struggle. He had been trapped in the hold of his

own ship—and Dandy Peter, the stowaway of the Dawn, had the upper hand!

He heard the panting of the man he could not see. There was silence for a minute, then the sea-lawyer's voice came.

"You're down and out, King of the Islands! Keep a bight on your jawing tackle! If your mate or your crew find you here, they won't find you alive. If you knew I was here, I reckon you were a fool to come down alone looking for me!"

"I never knew you were here, you swab!" said Ken. "The Kanakas have got it into their heads that there's a devil haunting the ship, and I figured it out that there was a stowaway! I never thought of you!"

Parsons laughed again. He could imagine Ken's feelings when, hunting in the hold under the lazarette for some slinking, scared stowaway, Ken had found himself in the grip of the most desperate rascal in the South Seas.

"You might have guessed," said Parsons. "I heard Barney Hall when he boarded you yesterday—looking for me! He reckoned I was on this hooker. I heard him say he'd looked for me at Lalinge, and found that I'd left the same day that your ketch pulled out. But Barney Hall never guessed that I was stowed away on the Dawn!" He laughed again.

Ken gritted his teeth. Even now he could not begin to guess at Dandy Peter's object or motive. But now that he knew that the sea-lawyer had been on board since the Dawn had pulled out of Lalinge, all the strange happenings of the voyage were explained. Danny, the cooky-boy, had seen, as he fancied, the gleaming eyes of a "debble" watching him in the hold when he went down for water—and but for his superstition he might have discovered the stowaway.

And the pilfering on the ketch, which had been put down to Danny—Ken knew who was the pilferer now. It was the stowaway—seeking food, perhaps firearms. But the knowledge came too late, and the boy trader was in the desperate stowaway's grasp. He clenched his hands hard. Even with the keen steel pressing on his throat, it was difficult to keep from driving his fists at the mocking face hidden in the darkness over him.

"Keep quiet!" Dandy Peter seemed to read his thoughts. "It's death, Ken King—I'm a desperate man!"

"You've got me!" Ken controlled his rage, and spoke quietly. "But if harm comes to me at your hands, Peter Parsons, my mate will shoot you like a dog!"

"I'm not reckoning on giving him the chance! He won't miss you just yet—I reckon he won't expect to see you on deck till four bells!"

"But what's your game?" Ken was as puzzled and mystified as he was enraged. It seemed to him that the blackguard of Lukwe must have taken leave of his senses. "I don't get you, Parsons! You could have picked up a passage from Lalinge

without stowing yourself away on a ketch. You must have had a filthy time in this den with the bilge. And now I've found you, did you fancy I should pitch you overboard? I don't want you on my ship—but I'd have given you a passage and rations to the next island after finding you here. You know that!"

"That's not what I want!" The sea-lawyer's voice came low and cool. "When I talked to you at Lalinge, King of the Islands, I asked you to go in with me—to pick up Grant Blake, the Sydney millionaire, who's lost on an unknown reef somewhere in the Pacific. My cutter's a wreck—I'm down and out—I want a man with a ship to go in with me. You refused!"

"I'd refuse again! I'll have no truck with you!" growled King of the Islands. "If you've really got news of the missing Sydney millionaire, you've only got to make it known. There's a reward of five thousand pounds out for the man who picks him up, and you'd easily get a steamer skipper to see you through—if you're telling the truth!"

"It's the truth! It got out before I left Lukwe—you know that from Barney Hall. I've got a clue to the castaway—I've got it certain that Grant Blake never went down in the old Mindanao—he's living on a lonely reef, watching the sea for a sail! I'm not saying I can put my finger on the reef—it's got to be hunted for. I want a ship and a crew to hunt for it!"

KEN stared up in the darkness at the unseen man. It seemed to him that there was truth in Dandy Peter's voice, yet it only made the mystery of his actions deeper.

"Say it's true," he said, "any skipper would go in with you if you put your cards on the table—and told what you know. Five thousand pounds isn't to be picked up every day!"

"Five thousand pounds—for finding a man worth millions! Ten times as much wouldn't be too much!" said Parsons scornfully. "Grant Blake will make better terms than that after a year of Robinson Crusoe on a reef!"

"I reckoned you had something up your sleeve!" said Ken, between his teeth. "That's it, then—you want to find the man, and make him pay through the nose to be taken off the reef!"

"I'm in this game to make my fortune—I never was a philanthropist!" answered Parsons coolly. "I'd have made my fortune in pearls at Aya-na if you hadn't butted in and queered the game. You owe me something, King of the Islands!"

"I owe you the hiding of your life for handling me like this—and you'll get it when I get loose!"

"You're not loose yet! Keep still, you fool! I'm making you the same offer that I made you at Lalinge. I'll sail with you—and I'll stand you a fair share of Grant Blake's ransom. Is it a go?" The sharp edge pressed harder on the boy trader's throat.

"If I were swab enough to join in

such a game"—Ken's voice was bitter with scorn—"do you think I believe you'd play me fair? You may stick Grant Blake, if you find him, for half his fortune—and he's the richest man in the Pacific! And you'd tip me over the side on a dark night sooner than share!"

"I'll steer a plain course with you!" said Dandy Peter. "If I'd sailed with you from Lalinge to pick up Grant Blake, I'd have got rid of you and your mate from the ketch sooner or later. Now you know! You refused my offer—you're no better off! I'm on your ship—and you're in my hands. I'd have marooned you somehow where you could do me no harm—and I'll maroon you yet!"

"So that's the game!" Ken laughed scornfully. "You've stowed yourself away here to try to steal my ship?"

"You've got it!" said Parsons coolly.

"Get on with it, then! As soon as Hudson misses me, he will root through the ketch from stem to stern till he finds me. I pity you then!"

"I reckon you can keep your pity for your mate, if he finds me here in the dark with a knife in my hand," said Dandy Peter coolly. "You haven't had much luck, King of the Islands. I was going to keep out of sight till we were in more lonely waters, but you've forced my hand by finding me here. Put your hands together, Ken King—I'm going to take a light on your wrists."

Ken's hands were clenched convulsively. What had mystified him was clear now—terribly clear! Parsons had a clue to the missing millionaire. Had the reckless ruffian

still been in possession of his cutter and crew Ken would have seen nothing of him. But the rascal of Lukwe was down and out—right on the rocks. He wanted a ship and crew—and such a game as he now contemplated could not have been played on a steamer or any big ship. That was why he had selected the Dawn—that, and his old, bitter enmity for King of the Islands.

He had stowed himself away on the ketch with the deliberate intention of seizing the ship at sea—it was all clear now. Desperate and reckless as Dandy Peter was well known to be, this was perhaps the most desperate and reckless scheme of his whole wild and lawless life. Yet he had a chance—a sporting chance, at least. Ken had played into his hands unconsciously; he, at least, was no longer able to stand in the desperado's way.

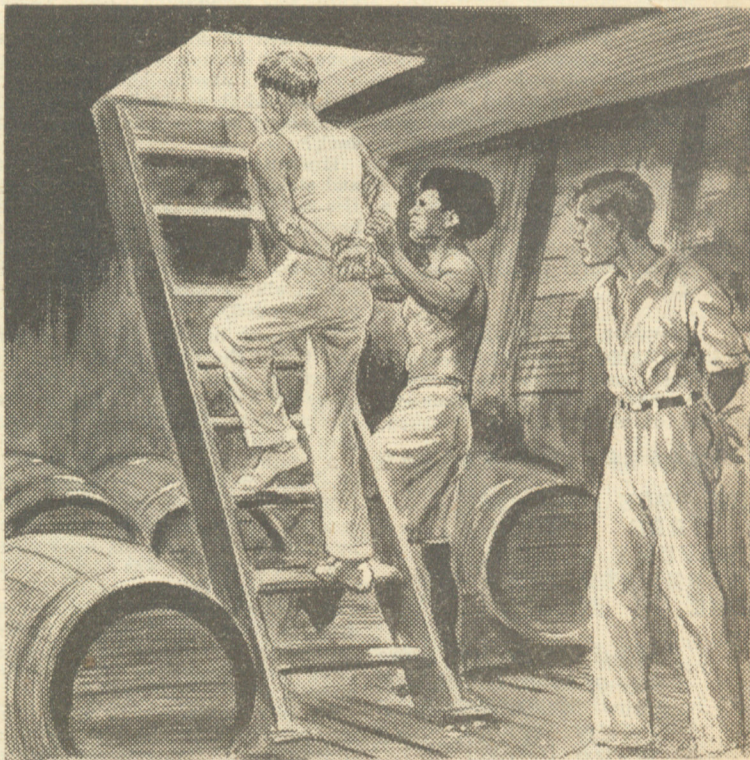
And Kit Hudson suspected nothing as yet—and the Kanakas were in a state of terror in their belief of a haunting devil on board. King of the Islands trembled with rage. But for the knife at his throat—As he made a convulsive movement the keen edge almost penetrated his skin. The low, hissing voice came from the blackness:

"If you will have it!"

Ken was still again! It was instant death to struggle! That would not save his ship! A man's life would not stand between Dandy Peter and a fortune—an enemy's life!

"Put your hands together! I've got a cord here. King of the Islands, you're a dead man if you kick!"

The Lukwe man's left hand groped for Ken's wrists—his right held the knife hard at the boy trader's throat



"You comey along cabin, sar!" faltered Danny, and helped the shipmates up the short ladder.

The Grinning Pirate

Ken's wrists were drawn together and a loop passed over them. It was drawn taut and knotted by the sea-lawyer's nimble fingers. It was that or death—and a turn of fortune was coming! King of the Islands did not believe that the sea-lawyer would succeed in his desperate design—he had the mate of the Dawn to deal with yet. Gritting his teeth, Ken felt his wrists securely knotted together.

A hand groped over his face. A lump of crumpled tapa was driven into his mouth, half choking him. Then the knife was withdrawn, and the sea-lawyer used both hands. Ken felt a string of tapa passed round his head and knotted, binding the gag in place. Then the groping hands went over him again, and tapa cords bound his ankles together. He heard Dandy Peter pant in the darkness:

"That fixes you, King of the Islands! I reckon you won't raise an alarm now. Count yourself lucky that you're still alive, you swab!"

Again the hands groped. Ken heard the sea-lawyer mutter savagely as he groped for a revolver in the hip-pocket. There was none there; and Ken was deeply thankful for it. He realised that, save for the knife, Parsons was unarmed, and had hoped to find a revolver on the boy trader. But Ken had not thought of arming himself when he descended into the hold to look for a stowaway. He was glad of it now. Parsons gritted his teeth. If Kit Hudson searched the ship for his comrade, as it was certain that he must do sooner or later, it was fairly sure that he would come weapon in hand. Dandy Peter had won the first move in the game!

He moved away in the darkness; Ken was left lying, bound hand and foot, gagged, silent, helpless. In black and bitter rage he lay, listening. At four bells he would be missed—perhaps sooner. Hudson would root through the ketch from end to end in search of him. And he would come armed—surely he would come armed!

In the lazarette above there was a sound of footsteps, followed by the creaking of the trapdoor as it opened. And Ken's heart thumped as he heard it.

Hudson Goes Down!

KIT HUDSON gripped his revolver and came into the dusky lazarette, where trade goods and supplies of all kinds were stacked,

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leaving little space. But the floor space was clear round the trapdoor. Faintly from the deck the Australian could hear the frightened cackle of the Kanakas. Below there was no sound but the wash of the waves on the teak ribs of the Dawn. Where was King of the Islands?

There was only the hold left unsearched. For what imaginable reason Ken could have gone down into the hold after midnight, and why he should be dumb while his comrade hailed him, was a mystery. But if he was on the ketch, he was in the hold—and there Kit Hudson determined to search. That Ken, sleepless, had heard the hidden stowaway stirring and gone to investigate, Hudson, of course, did not know. He only knew that his shipmate had vanished, and that unless he had gone overboard he must have gone down among the water-casks.

Hudson lifted the trap and flung it back. Blackness lay below, and he stared down, seeing nothing.

"Ken!" he shouted.

The booming echo of his voice in the hollows answered him.

King of the Islands heard—but could not answer. Another heard—but was careful to make no sound. But of that other Hudson knew and suspected nothing. Not for a second had he dreamed of the presence of a hidden stowaway on board—it was unthinkable; and even had he thought of it, he could have imagined no reason why a stowaway should seek or dare to harm the skipper of the Dawn.

"Ken—Ken, old man! If you're there, answer me!" shouted Hudson.

He stood staring into the gloom, puzzled. Something like an explanation of the strange mystery glimmered in his mind. Had Ken gone down because of Danny's tale of a "debble" in the hold, seeking to find out what might have scared the cooky-boy; and had he fallen in the dark?

Hudson lighted a hurricane lamp and stepped down through the hatch. His revolver was gripped in his right hand. He had no hint of a human foe in the darkness, no belief in the "debble" of the Kanakas, but he instinctively gripped his six-shooter as he descended.

He stood among the water-casks and threw the light about him, then moved on, searching. In the confined space he had to bend his head, and except where his light fell the blackness was like pitch.

A faint brushing sound of a stealthy movement reached him from behind, and he spun round, startled. Unconsciously as he turned he straightened, and his head struck the deck above. It was a slight blow, but with his nerves already taut it gave him a shock, and he started and dropped the lamp. Instantly he bent to recover it—and, as he bent, something that flashed in the lamplight whizzed over him.

He heard a sharp ping as it struck into woodwork beyond him. It was a thrown knife! It was stooping for the lamp that had saved him from the missile—it would have struck him a

second earlier. It had barely missed him as he stooped. In dazed amazement he realised that he had an enemy to deal with, and in the same flashing moment he knew what must have happened to Ken. If there was a hidden foe in the darkness of the hold, all was explained. And the thrown knife told him so.

Crack! In the close space the report of the revolver roared like thunder, as Hudson fired in the direction whence the knife had come. He heard a sharp cry. Either his bullet had hit, or it had gone close. There was a stealthy scuttling sound in the blackness. Hudson panted.

He caught up the hurricane lamp, which still burned, with his left hand, and the finger of his right was on the trigger of the revolver. With blazing eyes, he tramped towards his unseen enemy. The thrown knife hinted that it was a native—though he knew there were white men in the islands who had learned that deadly trick from the Kanakas. White man or black, Hudson hunted him with savage rage in his eyes, ready to drive a bullet through him at sight.

WHAT had happened to his shipmate? He was there—he must be there; and if he was silent, did it mean that he had fallen a victim to the knife that had so narrowly missed the mate of the Dawn? With rage and vengeance in his heart, Hudson hunted his unseen enemy. He stumbled over something that lay among the casks, and gave a cry.

"Ken!" The light of the hurricane-lamp gleamed on an upturned face—the face of his shipmate—silent. For one terrible instant, Hudson believed that it was the body of a murdered man that he had stumbled on, and he cried out hoarsely in horror. But the light gleamed on living eyes, gleaming back, and he saw that Ken was struggling madly with the gag that was fastened in his mouth.

It was only for an instant that Hudson was off his guard. But that instant was enough for the desperate man whose life was now at stake, who knew that he would be shot down like a dog if the mate of the Dawn hunted him out. Dandy Peter had lost his knife—he had only his bare hands against the six-shooter in Hudson's grip—and it was neck or nothing.

As Hudson, for one terrible moment spellbound with horror, stared down at King of the Islands, a lithe figure leaped from the darkness like a tiger, and Dandy Peter's clenched fist lashed out and struck the mate of the Dawn.

Hudson pitched over like a log. But as he fell by the side of his bound shipmate, he twisted round and pulled trigger, and the roar of the revolver boomed again through the ketch. Hurried as the shot was, it grazed the sea-lawyer as he scrambled at Hudson like a cat, whipping a strip of skin from his cheek.

Heedless of the burning sting of the bullet, Dandy Peter threw himself on the mate of the Dawn, striking out madly with clenched fist, and the blow drove Hudson's head against the orlop-deck, half-stunning him. With

his senses reeling, the mate of the Dawn fired again, but the shot went wide. The next moment the revolver was wrenched from his hand, reversed in Dandy Peter's grasp, and the heavy metal butt came crashing on Kit Hudson's head.

A thousand sparks seemed to dance before the eyes of the mate of the Dawn. As his senses fled, he saw the white, desperate, evil face of the sea-lawyer of Lukwe—the face of a demon in the glimmer of the hurricane-lamp—and he knew who had struck him down. But he knew no more, as he sank senseless by the side of his ship-mate.

Dandy Peter Takes Control.

"AIE! Aie!" groaned Koko, the brown boatswain, who stood leaning on the whaleboat, and the belaying-pin dropped from his hand. The five Hiva-Oa boys gabbled with fear. Thrice, from the depths of the ketch, had come the roar of the white master's revolver—the last report followed by a deadly silence. With ghastly faces, the Kanakas looked at one another. The white master had gone below, regardless of the aitoo that haunted the ketch, and he had found—what?

The white man's weapon was useless against an intangible foe! Koko wiped the sweat from his brow with the back of a brown, trembling hand, and groaned. In deadly fear, the Kanakas listened for some further sound.

But for a long time there was silence. Spellbound with terror, the crew of the Dawn had forgotten even their thought of escaping from the ketch in the whaleboat. They stood rooted to the deck.

But they woke to life at a sound below of something living. That was enough for the terrified Hiva-Oa boys. Without a word, but with concerted action, they leaped at the boat. Koko made no attempt to stop them now. Not the faintest doubt was in his mind that both the white masters had fallen victims to the haunting aitoo on board the Dawn—and that it was the dread Thing that was stirring in the cabin now. Lompo pushed him aside from the boat, and he made no resistance.

The Kanakas swung out the boat, loosed the falls, and dropped it to the Pacific in such clumsy haste that it shipped water. Madly they flung themselves into the boat and fended off with the oars. Of the madness of fleeing in an open boat on the boundless Pacific, without food or water, they thought nothing—to food or water they gave not a single thought. Only one frantic desire was in their minds—to get away from the doomed ship. But even in that moment of insane panic, Lompo called to Koko.

"You feller Koko, you comey along boat, along us feller!"

"You jump along boat!" shrieked Danny, as he drove an oar at the Dawn to push clear.

"This feller Koko stop along ship," answered Koko, in a trembling voice. "Little white master go finish, this feller go finish all samee little white master!"

"You comey!" yelled Kolulo. "You

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go finish along aitoo, s'pose you stop along ship! Brain belong you no walk about any more, you feller Koko!"

A moment more, and it was too late for Koko to jump, if he had wanted to jump. The whaleboat rocked away on the sea, and the Kanakas shoved out the oars in frantic haste and pulled clear. They stared back, as they pulled, at the giant figure of Koko, a bronze statue in the brilliant moonlight. He did not heed them.

Escape was not in his thoughts. Life had no attraction for the faithful Koko, now that his little white master was, as he believed, "finish." But his heart almost died within him at a sound on the companion. It was a footstep—but it was not the step of his white master, or the mate of the Dawn! The Thing was coming!

Death had no terrors for Koko—but he crouched back against the rail, paralysed with horror, his dark eyes starting from his head as he watched the companion, whence in a moment more the Thing would emerge. It emerged—and Koko doubted the evidence of his senses.

It was a slim, lithe, dapper figure that stepped out on deck, clad in ducks that had once been neat and natty, but were now crumpled and soiled and foul with bilge. The hard, evil face, stubbly with the growth of several days' beard, was the face of Dandy Peter of Lukwe—a face that Koko knew only too well. And in the sea-lawyer's hand was gripped the revolver he had taken from the senseless mate of the Dawn.

Dandy Peter was armed now—and prepared to make his last bid for the mastery of the ship. With a firearm in his hand, he had no fear of any number of Kanakas. An evil grin wrinkled his face at the sight of Koko's staring eyes. He stepped towards the Kanaka boatswain, half-raising the revolver.

Koko drew a long breath. For a moment, his brain seemed to spin in the shock of surprise. But the truth came clear to him quickly enough at the sight of Dandy Peter. It was not an aitoo that haunted the ketch—it was a human foe—it was the old enemy of King of the Islands! How he was there, why he was there, Koko had not the remotest understanding. But he was there—and the terror of the supernatural vanished from the boatswain of the Dawn.

His eyes blazed, his lips were drawn back in a snarl, his white teeth flashing in the moonlight. He drew himself from the rail, half-crouching for a spring.

"You feller Koko, you savvy me plenty!" grinned Parsons. "This feller skipper along this ship—you savvy? You—"

Koko came at him like a tiger. If the sinewy brown hands had closed on him now, a plunge into the Pacific would have been the end of Dandy Peter's lawless career. But Dandy Peter watched him coolly as he sprang. It was only because he wanted a crew to work the ketch that he did not drive a bullet through the

The Grinning Pirate!

giant boatswain and stretch him dead or disabled on the deck.

He gripped the revolver by the barrel, and met the leaping Kanaka with a crashing blow from the heavy metal butt. It was a blow that would have cracked the skull of a white man like an egg-shell. It flung Koko backwards, and he rolled on the deck, stunned. Parsons spurned him with his foot.

He turned from the still form of the boatswain. With savage eyes, he stared about the deck, amazed by the absence of the crew. He had expected to find all the Kanakas on deck. But in a moment he noted that the whale-boat was gone, and his gaze turned seaward—on the crew in the boat, pulling away as if for their lives.

He spat out an exclamation. The crew were running—if they escaped him, he was master of a ship without a crew! With success in his grasp, he was left to the mercy of wind and wave. Not if Dandy Peter could help it!

He leaped on the teak rail, holding on to a guy-rope with his left hand, brandishing the revolver in his right, and yelling fiercely to the boat's crew.

"You feller boy! You stop along ship! You comey back along ship! You hear me, ear belong you!"

IN sheer amazement, the Hiva-Oa boys ceased to pull. With staring, starting eyes, they gazed at the lithe figure. All the crew knew Dandy Peter by sight.

"Feller Parsons!" babbled Danny. "You hear me, ear belong you!" roared Parsons. "You washy-washy along ship, plenty too quick, along you no wantee feller gun shoot along you feller."

There was a babble in the boat. The Kanakas were still easily within pistol-shot, and in the brilliant moon, the Pacific was almost as light as by day. The desperate rascal standing on the rail of the Dawn could have picked off every man there, one after another, with perfect ease.

And there was no doubt that he would shoot if he was not obeyed. Well the brown-skinned seamen knew the reputation of Dandy Peter of Lukwe, but they hung on their oars in amazement and terror. The sight of Dandy Peter on the ketch utterly astounded the Kanakas. They stared at him with almost unbelieving eyes.

Crack! A bullet from the revolver skimmed over the boat. Dandy Peter did not intend it to hit—he needed a crew! But he was reckless, as usual. The bullet passed between Danny and Kolulo, narrowly missing both, and there was a squeal of terror from the cooky-boy. "You no shoot along this feller!" roared Danny.

Parsons brandished the smoking revolver. "You feller boy washy-washy along ship!" he shouted. "S'pose you no washy-washy, you plenty dead feller!" The warning bullet was enough for the Kanakas. The boat came round, and pulled

closer to the ketch. But it did not close in. Lompo stood up to speak.

"You white master Parsons!" he stammered. "You no shootee along this feller. All this feller good feller along you, sar! All this feller plenty too much fright comey along ketch, along debble he stop."

Parsons stared at him blankly for a moment. Then he burst into a roar of laughter. "You lubberly swabs!" he bawled. "You tinkee feller debble stop along this hooker?"

"Yes, sar, feller debble he stop!" babbled Kolulo. "That feller debble make kai-kai along King of the Islands, along feller Hudson. Us feller plenty too much fright along that feller debble, sar."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Parsons. "You cowardly scum! Feller debble he no stop—this feller stop! No feller debble—this feller Parsons! You savvy?"

The Kanakas stared at him from the boat. It was not easy for them to change their fixed ideas on the subject, but slowly into their fuzzy brains the truth forced itself. And with a realisation of the truth their terrors left them. They feared the dapper desperado of Lukwe, but not as they feared the mysterious, unseen spirits of the air. The living enemy had no such terror for them as the unreal enemy conjured up by their superstitious imaginings.

They rested on their oars, staring at the grinning Parsons. He gave them a few minutes to think it over. He did not want to shoot if he could help it. But he soon lost patience. The revolver was aimed at the boat, and Dandy Peter's eyes glinted over it.

"Washy-washy along ketch!" he barked. "My word, you feller no jump to orders, along me sing out, you kill-dead close up! Washy-washy, you scum!"

Slowly the Hiva-Oa boys pulled in under the rail. Their terror of the supernatural was gone, to be replaced by a lesser, but very real, fear of the Lukwe desperado. Under the threatening revolver they clambered on board, and the whaleboat was swung up to the davits at Parsons' sharp order. The Kanakas looked at Koko, stirring feebly and groaning on the deck.

"That feller Koko plenty kill, along butt belong gun belong me," Parsons snarled. "S'pose you no jump along orders, you kill all samee feller Koko, you savvy? This feller Cap'n Parsons he cap'n along this hooker."

"Feller King of the Islands cap'n along this hooker, sar!" ventured Lompo. Dandy Peter did not answer him in words. He lashed out with his fist, and Lompo went spinning along the deck, to crash into the scuppers. There was an alarmed cackle from the rest of the crew, and they backed away.

"You talk good feller talk along me!" roared Parsons. "You scum, you savvy this fellow cap'n along this hooker?"

"Yes, sar!" gasped Kolulo. "Us feller savvy plenty you cap'n along

this hooker, sar! Us feller good feller along you, sar."

Peter Parsons of Lukwe had won his desperate game!

The Whip Hand!

"PIRACY!" muttered King of the Islands. "Piracy on the high seas!" He had bitten away the gag at last, and had the use of his voice. "Piracy!"

Hudson pressed his hands to his aching forehead. His wrists were bound together, like those of his shipmate. Sunrise was on the Pacific, glimmering through the skylight into the cabin. The shipmates of the Dawn were still in the hold, but the trap above them was open, and a glimmer of light came down from the lazarette.

Kit sat leaning back against a cask, his face white under its tan, a thin red trickle oozing under his dark hair. His head ached terribly, though he had long since recovered his senses to find himself a bound and helpless prisoner.

King of the Islands lay where Dandy Peter had left him, too tightly bound even to assume a sitting posture. It seemed to him ages that he had lain there, in the dimness and the reek of bilge. But bodily discomfort was almost forgotten in his intense rage.

Fortune had proved the seafarer's friend; wild and desperate as Dandy Peter's game was, he had won it. Against all chances, he had got the upper hand of the mate of the Dawn—and Hudson was a prisoner like his skipper. In the Kanakas they could have little hope. The Hiva-Oa boys were loyal to their white master; but a white man with a gun in his hand could drive any native crew. Only in Koko, perhaps, they had a lingering hope. But that hope died away as the minutes crawled by, and the dismal night gave place to sunny dawn.

If anything could have added to the deep rage of King of the Islands, it was this contemptuous disregard on the part of his enemy. It seemed as if Parsons had forgotten him. He lay unheeded there, while the night wore away.

From the motion of the ship he knew that the course was changed. It was certain that Dandy Peter would get away, as fast as he could, from the islands where the Dawn was known. Only in the wide sea could he hope to escape the consequences of his reckless rascality.

It was piracy on the high seas—and Dandy Peter was risking his neck. A desperate gambler to the finger-tips, he was staking his life against a fortune.

What had happened on deck, the shipmates did not know—except that the ketch was now in the Lukwe skipper's hands. They could hear the rattle of blocks, the swing of the boom; the Dawn was under full sail, and speeding on her new course. They had heard one shot on deck during the night. It was the shot Dandy

(Continued on page 30)

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The Grinning Pirate!

(Continued from page 10)

Peter had fired at the boat; but there was a deep dread in Ken's heart that the faithful Koko had fallen.

Nobody came below. Dandy Peter was not likely to give the crew a chance of getting at the white masters and releasing them. It was not till after sunrise that the shipmates heard footsteps in the cabin over the hold. It was not the soft padding of a naked foot, so they knew that it must be Dandy Peter who was there, and they expected to see his handsome, evil face grinning down at them from the lazarette.

But he did not appear—though for a long time they heard him moving about. He had taken Ken's keys before he left him, and the boy trader could guess that he was going through locked receptacles in the state-room now—looking, most likely, for firearms. Common prudence would cause him to make sure that all the firearms on the ketch were in his own possession. When, at last, he looked down from the lazarette, it was a changed Dandy Peter that the shipmates saw. He was washed and shaved, and clad in a suit of spotless ducks belonging to Ken. The grimy stowaway had completely disappeared. Peter Parsons was the clean, neat dandy again, and there was a grin on his face as he looked down and hailed the prisoners in the hold: "Ahoy! King of the Islands!"

"Ahoy, you piratical swab!" answered King of the Islands. "You will hang for this at Fiji!"

"Who knows?" Dandy Peter laughed. "It's a gamble, and I reckon I'm going to win. I've got your crew feeding from my hand, Ken King! Only your boatswain's given trouble, and he's tied to the mast—and will stay tied till he's ready to jump to orders. And you won't give me any trouble, I reckon."

"I'll give you all I can, you pirate and thief!"

"That won't be a lot." Dandy Peter turned his head, and called up to the deck. "You feller Danny! You comey along this place."

Danny came running down. Obviously Parsons had told the truth—he had the native crew feeding from his hand. Danny was cringing as he came padding into the lazarette. All the crew knew now that the skipper and mate were prisoners in the hold, at the mercy of the sea-lawyer who had seized the ship. Danny peered down into the dusky alley between the chocked water-casks.

"You go along hold!" snapped Parsons. "You bring feller skipper, feller mate along cabin! Takee away rope along leg he stop; no takee rope along hand he stop. Eye belong me watch you plenty too much. Takee feller lamp along you."

"Yes, sar!" stammered Danny. The fat cooky-boy descended into the hold. Parsons had no desire to enter that murky den again. He watched the cooky-boy, revolver in hand. If Danny had thought of attempting to help his white masters, the watching

eyes and the ready revolver above would have banished that idea.

The cooky-boy released Ken's legs from the tapa cord, so that he could walk, and helped him to his feet. Ken did not speak, but he gave the cooky-boy a look that Danny understood. If he could have got his hands loose, the boy trader would have tried the most desperate chance. But Danny dared not risk it. And Ken could hardly blame him, for the Lukwe sea-lawyer was watching like a cat, his finger on the trigger.

"You comey along cabin, sar!" faltered Danny.

With their legs free, but their hands still tightly bound, Ken and Kit moved along to the steep steps. Danny helped them up it from below, and they emerged into the lazarette. Dandy Peter made a gesture, and they passed on silently into the cabin. At another gesture from the sea-lawyer, Danny scuttled up to the deck again and vanished.

White-faced, savage-eyed, the shipmates of the Dawn faced the sea-lawyer. Parsons slipped the revolver back into his hip-pocket, selected a cigarette from a case he had looted from the cargo, and lighted it.

"My win, King of the Islands!" he said. "I've got you where I want you—and I'm keeping you there! I'd let you loose—but I reckon you'd give me too much trouble if I did."

"I'm going to maroon you—where you won't be picked up in a hurry—and keep your ship and crew till I raise the reef where Grant Blake's to be found. Till then you're prisoners—so long as you take it quietly. But"—the sea-lawyer's smile vanished, and his eyes gleamed like cold steel—"give me trouble, and you go over the side! I'm not sticking at trifles in a game like this."

Then he turned on his heel and tramped up the companion to the deck. His eyes were wary as he emerged into the bright sunshine, and his revolver was in his hand again. But it was not needed.

Koko, with a lump on his head, was bound to the mizzen. His eyes fixed on Dandy Peter when he came in sight, and spoke volumes of hate and vengeance. But he could not stir a limb. The Lukwe sea-lawyer hardly glanced at him. Lompo was at the wheel, steering the course set him by the new skipper of the Dawn. Kolulo and Lufu and Tomoo were on deck; and all the Kanakas eyed Dandy Peter with fear. He glanced at the binnacle and smiled grimly. Lompo was steering his course as carefully as if he were still under the orders of King of the Islands.

Dandy Peter grinned as he lighted another cigarette. He had won the game—he had a ship and a crew, and was sailing to pick up a fortune!

Well, now, the Boy Skipper and his Australian chum ARE in a hole, aren't they? What's going to happen next? That's all told in Next Saturday's spanking story. BE SURE YOU DON'T MISS IT!