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# **The** **MODERN BOY**

EVERY SATURDAY.  
Week Ending December 2nd, 1933.

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2<sup>d</sup>.



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# KEN KING'S JOY-RIDE!

Ashore in Tahiti, the Boy Trader of the South Seas bumps into Mr. Jam again—in more ways than one!



## A Swindling Rascal!

**H**ONK! Honk! Kit Hudson, the mate of Ken King's ketch, the Dawn, was enjoying life. On the shore road of Tahiti, outside the town of Papeete, it was necessary to sound the motor-horn pretty frequently. Brown infants wandered on the road, chickens and pigs were innumerable, natives sauntered in cheery disregard of traffic. Hudson made it roar from sheer exuberance of spirits.

King of the Islands, sitting by his shipmate's side in the car, smiled. A motor trip was a novelty to the boy trader of the Pacific, and he enjoyed the novelty. Kit Hudson revelled in it. It was pure joy to him to be handling an engine again. The only fault he had to find with the ketch Dawn was that it was a windjammer, lacking the clank of machinery and the smell of petrol.

In the harbour of Papeete lay the Dawn, moored to one of the old cannons half sunk in the quay. Danny, the cooky-boy, was the only man on board; the Hiva-Oa crew were on shore leave, mingling with the crowd in the market-place. Koko, the brown-skinned boatswain, was in the car with his white masters. Perhaps it was a treat for Koko, but he did not look as if he enjoyed it hugely. Koko was not used to anything that went on wheels. He knew that the car got along by some sort of white man's magic, and he knew that there must be a very powerful devil hidden in the bonnet. He was prepared to face this, or anything else, in company with his white master, but his brown face was very grave, and rather apprehensive.

Half a dozen brown infants scattered from the road, and laughed, and threw flowers at the car as it passed. Ken glanced round at Koko, and smiled at the expression on the brown face of the boatswain.

"You likee, you feller Koko?" he asked.

"Yes, sar!" said Koko. "Me likee all thing, along white master belong me."

For some distance from Papeete, the shell road was smooth. Farther on it was rather in need of repair. The car rocked across the shallow sandy bed of a stream, and Koko clutched hold, his dark eyes rolling. King of the Islands laughed.

"You likee better walk about foot belong you, Koko?" he said.

"Yes, sar," Koko confessed. "Me no savvy this feller packet, sar! Me likee plenty too much walk about, foot belong me."

"Heave to, Kit!" said Ken. "You feller Koko, you savvy what place we go—along Tapenoo, along see feller beachcomber, name belong him Billy. Follow on, then, foot belong you."

Hudson halted the car, and the boatswain of the Dawn stepped out, with evident relief. The car shot on-

By

## Charles Hamilton

ward again, leaving the brown-skinned boatswain to walk. In a much happier frame of mind, Koko swung onward on foot, and the car was out of his sight in a few moments.

"Is there a speed limit on Tahiti, Kit?" asked King of the Islands, as the car rocked on.

"Never heard of one," Hudson grinned. "Do you want to get out and walk, like Koko?"

"I reckon I like to see a clear course ahead," said Ken. "But you're steering, and I leave it to you."

Hudson was rather letting himself go. He was in exuberant spirits, in the pleasure of handling a car again. There were few cars in the Islands, hardly any in the islands which were on Ken King's regular beat. Hudson was making the most of his opportunities on Tahiti.

"Son and grandson of pigs!" the fat man panted. "You cause me to fall with enormous concussion in wet and muddy places!"

"My sainted Sam!" exclaimed Ken suddenly. "Look out!"

The car rocked round a high bluff, and came suddenly on a man walking in the middle of the road. He was an enormously fat man, with the olive face of an Indian half-caste, looking as if he were on the point of bursting through his white ducks, with a gorgeous crimson cummerbund wound round his extensive waist. The shipmates had seen him before.

It was Mr. Jam, the pearl-trader whom they had picked up at sea after the hurricane, and landed at Papeete. As Mr. Jam had turned out to be a dealer in "cultured" pearls, and had nearly succeeded in selling some of his rascally stock-in-trade to the shipmates on the Dawn, he had been kicked off the ketch without ceremony. Still, Ken had no desire to terminate his existence suddenly on the coast road of Tahiti, and he yelled to Hudson as the car came sweeping round the sharp bend.

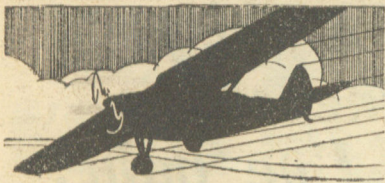
**B**UT Hudson was looking out! He jammed on the brakes, and the car swerved to avoid the fat Oriental. Mr. Jam stood transfixed for a second as the car came rushing down. Then, with an activity remarkable in so fat a man, he hopped to the roadside. In his haste, he missed his footing in one of the many gullies, and went headlong. There was a thud and a roar as the pearl-trader landed in the shallow gully, where there was a foot of water. Water and sand splashed up as he landed.

"Hold on!" gasped Ken. "The man's fallen—"

"I reckon he can pick himself up again," answered Hudson. "No need to waste time on that swindling rascal." He drove on. "He would

(Continued on page 28)





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The Modern Boy

### Ken King's Joy-Ride!

(Continued from page 26)

have done us out of fifty pounds on the Dawn, if Koko hadn't spotted that his pearls were duds."

"Ay, but stop, all the same, and let's see if he's hurt."

"That's all right—I know he is."

King of the Islands laughed, but he caught Hudson's arm.

"Hold on, I tell you! Belay it, you ass!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" said Hudson, with a shrug of the shoulders, and drew the car to a halt. King of the Islands jumped down and ran back to the pearl-trader. Mr. Jam was crawling from the gully. One of the innumerable streams from the Tahiti hills meandered through that roadside gully, and Mr. Jam was wet. His white ducks and his crimson cummerbund were drenched and smothered with sand and mud; his olive face was convulsed with fury.

He gasped and spluttered for breath as he scrambled back to the road, and King of the Islands, reaching him, gave him a helping hand. The pearl-trader, instead of accepting his help, struck his hand savagely aside.

"You unmannerly swab!" Ken exclaimed. He was strongly tempted to knock the fat man back into the gully. Mr. Jam scrambled out, and stood panting for breath, dripping with water and mud and sand. His black eyes blazed at the boy trader.

"You!" he panted. "Son and grandson of pigs, you cause me to fall with enormous concussion in wet and muddy places, by which I am rendered excessively damp with the extreme of damage and unlimited discomfort."

King of the Islands laughed—he could not help it. The contrast between Mr. Jam's foaming rage and his extraordinary English was too much for his gravity. But that laugh gave the finishing touch to Mr. Jam's fury. Spitting like a cat with rage, he hurled himself at the boy trader.

Ken staggered under the unexpected blow. The next moment his fist, as hard as iron, shot out like a hammer, and the fat man went spinning backwards as if he had been shot. There was a crash and a splash as Mr. Jam landed on his back in the gully again.

Leaving him there, King of the Islands walked back to the car, with a flushed face. Hudson greeted him with a grin. "Hop in, old bean," he said. Ken sat down again, and the car ran on. Mr. Jam, squelching water and mud, clambered breathlessly out of the gully once more, and stood spitting with rage and shaking his fist after the car as it whizzed on to Tapenoo.

#### The Beachcomber's Hut.

**B**ILLY THE BEACHCOMBER sat in the doorless doorway of his hut, blinking with bleared eyes out into the brilliant sunshine of Tahiti. His face was coppered by the tropic sun, his hair and beard were a rugged tangle. He was dressed in a ragged cotton shirt, and a pair of ancient duck trousers cut short at the knee for coolness. The hut stood in a ravine of the hills, facing the lagoon,

and so Billy had a view of a wide stretch of beach, the lagoon beyond it, and beyond that the great barrier reef and the boundless Pacific.

But Billy was not looking at the shining lagoon, the surf creaming on the barrier reef, or the boundless blue of the heavens. He was looking into a gourd that had contained "kava," and was now empty—and as dry as Billy himself. He flung it aside with a weary grunt. He picked up a bunch of bananas, and munched. Food—all that he needed—grew round his door. Long years of loafing and slothful idleness had made the wretched derelict of the beaches incapable of working even to obtain the liquor for which his soul craved.

Lonely as the place was, many miles from Papeete, Billy could see the traffic that passed on the coast road from the door of his hut. Every now and then, a patrolling gendarme would come along on the road, cast a suspicious eye up the narrow, rocky ravine at the beachcomber's hut, and shrug his shoulders.

Billy was not in good odour with the authorities on Tahiti, and he had a lingering dread of being collared some day and deported from the island, and dumped down on some other beach. Which was all the more probable because when he obtained money by any means he would spend it at Yellow Charley's place in Papeete, and a shindy would generally follow.

Indeed, Billy would have been behind the bars in Papeete at the present moment but for the arrival of the Dawn. Having cracked a "Chink's" head in a row at Yellow Charley's, Billy had been in flight from a gendarme, when a ketch came sailing into the lagoon. Billy had swum off to the ketch, and King of the Islands, taking pity on the hapless wretch, had paid his fine of a hundred francs when he landed him, and Billy had been free to crawl back to his den in that cleft of the Tahiti mountains.

And Ken had told him that he would come along and see him at his hut as soon as he could spare time from his business in the port—and Billy was eagerly expecting that visit. Billy, like so many loafers of the Pacific beaches, knew where to lay his hand on a fortune—or fancied that he did! King of the Islands was willing to give him a hearing—without, of course, expecting to hear a word of truth.

Looking down from the ravine, Billy had seen a car rush past on the shore road, and though he had only a glimpse of it, he had recognised Ken King and Kit Hudson in it. He had had no time to hail the car—it was gone in a flash along the road to Tapenoo. They knew that his hut was somewhere near the native village, and it would not take them long to learn, at Tapenoo, where to find him.

Evidently the expected visit was to take place this bright morning, and it occurred to Billy that, in the circumstances, he might for once wash in the rock-pool near his door, and trim his shaggy beard, in honour of the occasion. But he was too lacking in energy to stir, and he sat in his

(Continued on page 30)



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**Ken King's Joy-Ride!**

(Continued from page 28)

doorway munching bananas, and waiting to hear the sound of the car coming back along the lagoon.

A fat man in white ducks, rather dingy with mud, came in sight on the road, stopped, and stared up the ravine. Billy blinked at him and recognised the half-caste pearl-trader whom he had seen on the ketch.

Mr. Jam stood for some moments, shading his eyes from the sun and staring. Then, to Billy's surprise, he came panting up the steep track in the ravine from the road. Farther up, the ravine was blocked by inaccessible rocks—there was no way through to anywhere.

He watched the fat man curiously as he came panting up the stony track. The hut was a good hundred yards from the road, and the way was steep. The fat man gasped and panted as he came, and when he reached the hut, he sank down on to a rock a few feet from the beachcomber to recover his breath. The derelict stared at him stolidly. He did not know what the pearl-trader wanted, and did not care.

"Excessive heat is productive of considerable fatigue," remarked Mr. Jam, in the amazing English of the educated native of India. "Indubitably you recall meeting with this Mr. Jam on estimable ketch, yess? In speech with King of the Islands, you make reference to Tunaviva."

The beachcomber eyed him suspiciously under his shaggy brows. He had told King of the Islands that there was a "fortune" to be picked up on Tunaviva, one of the almost unknown outlying islands of the Society group, of which Tahiti was the largest. Evidently the half-caste pearl-trader was interested.

"What about it?" muttered Billy. "Tunaviva," said Mr. Jam, "is uninhabited island where there are no peoples, white or native. On Tunaviva there is nothing! Yet you tell the estimable captain that there is fortune on Tunaviva. That is a statement of enormous inexactitude."

"And you've come here to pick up the yarn?" jeered Billy. "You won't hear a word from me!"

"On Tunaviva there is nothing," repeated Mr. Jam. "Doubtless it is a beachcomber's tale of treasure that you would tell to the estimable captain, and you will ask him, perhaps, for a hundred francs. Yess?"

"Find out!" grunted the beachcomber.

"But I have some inquisitive curiosity on this subject," said the pearl-trader. "I desire to know all that you can tell me, and what is the reason for your egregious statement to honourable captain of ketch," said Mr. Jam. "You will speak with con-

siderable freedom, and enlighten me in all aspects, for in otherwise case you are one dead man!"

Mr. Jam's fat hand fumbled in his ducks, and reappeared with a revolver in it. He raised the weapon, and aimed it at the startled face of the beachcomber.

Billy made a movement to rise, but the voice of the pearl-trader stopped him.

"Remain incessantly in same places!" said Mr. Jam. "Movement will cause sudden death to approximate!"

From round the high rocks at the opening of the ravine, towards the beach, came the honking of a car. Billy started as he heard it, wondering if it meant that the shipmates of the Dawn were coming along from Tapenoo. Mr. Jam shifted his position a little, so that his back was to the beach road, and anyone passing there could not see that he was holding the revolver aimed at the beachcomber.

Honk, honk, honk! The sound of the car could be heard, but it did not come in sight at the end of the ravine. The sound ceased. Evidently the car had come to a halt, still out of sight beyond the high rocks.

"You will proceed to instantaneous speech!" said Mr. Jam, in a low voice of concentrated ferocity, and the trigger moved under the pressure of a fat finger. "You will disburse total knowledge of subject!"

Billy, with a sudden and unexpected movement, rolled backwards into the hut and disappeared behind the flimsy pandanus walls.

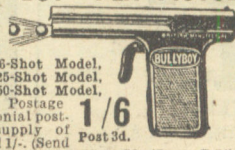
Bang! The revolver roared, and the bullet missed the beachcomber by a foot or more. Mr. Jam, panting, plunged into the doorway, finger on trigger, to fire again. But the outcast of Tahiti had not lost a second. He plunged headlong through the back wall of the hut, the flimsy pandanus-leaf not stopping him for a moment. In desperate haste he scrambled among the rough rocks behind the hut, hunting cover.

Panting with rage, the pearl-trader followed him through the torn gap in the wall, firing a second shot as he glimpsed the tattered figure among the rocks. This time the ball went closer, tearing a tuft of rugged beard from Billy's tanned cheek. The beachcomber gave a yell, and scrambled away among the rocks, the fat olive-skinned man scrambling furiously after him, loosing off shots as he scrambled!

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