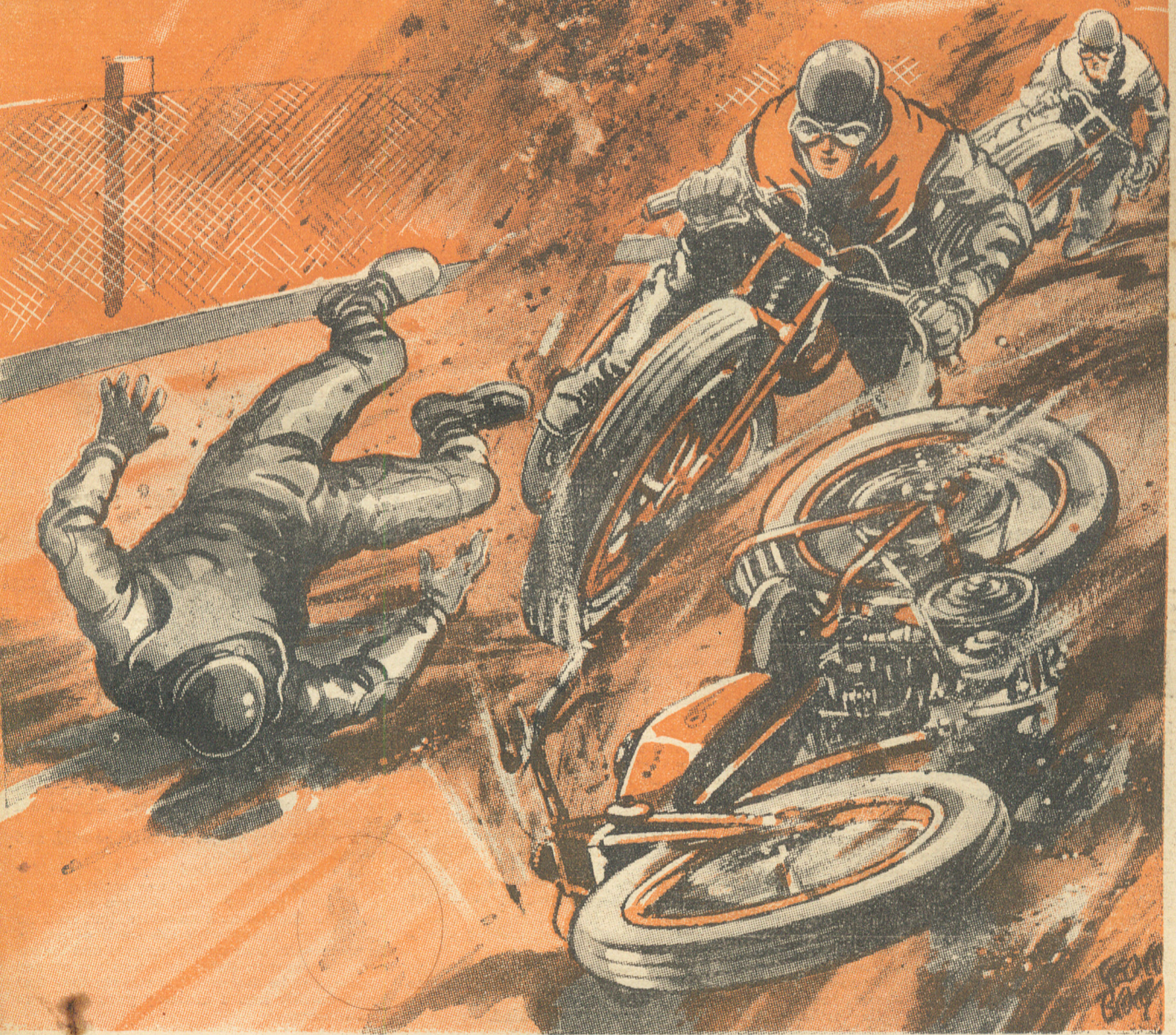


296 Drunk

AIR-ACE BIGGLES in WINGS OVER SPAIN!

MODERN BOY

EVERY
2
SATURDAY



Spills and Thrills from the **SCHOOLBOY CINDER SHIFTERS**

ISLAND of the WOLF



The shipmates of the Dawn fall foul of a mystery man of the Pacific—a man who shoots unauthorized visitors to his island on sight!

By
**CHARLES
HAMILTON**

Prado Comes Aboard!

KING OF THE ISLANDS was about to pull out of the lagoon at Suta. The anchor was up, when a canoe shot alongside with Pedro Prado in it, and the little wizened half-caste pearl buyer, active as a monkey, jumped at the rail, caught it, and swung himself on board. The ketch, already in motion, left the canoe astern—and Pedro, grinning and bowing, met the astonished stares of Ken King and his mate, Kit Hudson.

The Dawn carried no passengers, but unless King of the Islands put back to land him again, Prado was booked for the trip to the next port of call, which was Mua'a, seventy miles away. The little pearl buyer was an old acquaintance of King of the Islands, and Ken liked him a good deal, but he was far from pleased at his unexpected appearance on the deck of the ketch. There was no accommodation for passengers on the Dawn, and passengers were not wanted. But if Pedro was pressed to get to Mua'a, Ken was ready to stretch a point. So, after an astonished

stare, the boy trader gave his attention to getting through the reef.

But when the Dawn was out in the Pacific, and King of the Islands at more leisure, he gave Pedro his attention.

"What's this game, Prado?" he demanded.

"Buying pearls at Mua'a?" asked Kit Hudson. "Big bargain going, and you're anxious to get in before the crush?"

Pedro grinned and shook his dark head.

"Nao, nao!" he answered. He ran on in Portuguese till he remembered that the shipmates did not speak his language. Then, as he had as little English as they had Portuguese, he dropped into the *beche-de-mer*. "Stop along island belong O Lobo."

"This packet is for Mua'a!" said Ken grimly. He liked the little man, and he was willing to oblige him; but he was not willing to turn off his course for Pedro Prado, or any other man in the Pacific. It showed, indeed, considerable "neck" on the part of any man to ask a skipper to do so when he had dates to keep.

Neither had he any desire to sail anywhere near the Island of the Wolf. From what he had heard of that island, it was a good place to keep away from.

Pedro Prado waved apologetic hands. "You tinkee this too much check?" he asked.

Ken laughed. "Well, as you ask me, I do!" he admitted. "We're making Mua'a, Prado, and we've lost time on this trip already. Putting in at O Lobo's island means losing a day!"

"No put in," said Pedro. "S'pose you put in along O Lobo, that feller shoot along gun, plenty too quick. Ho no likee ship stop along island belong him, my word!"

"Then what the dickens do you mean?" asked Ken.

"Stand off along reef, along this feller put in along boat! One hour—two hour—make quick time! This feller pay along passage. After, comey back along Dawn, go along Mua'a all right!"

"And why aren't you making the trip in your whaleboat as usual?" asked Ken. It was Prado's custom to pass from island to island in a whaleboat with two or three native boys for a crew—trips sometimes of hundreds of miles.

"No can," said Pedro Prado ruefully. "Time before I go along whaleboat one man belong me walk about along island, that feller O Lobo make big feller shindy. Him say no comey any more altogether along whaleboat."

"But he won't be pleased to see this packet if he's so particular!"

"Stand off reef," said Pedro. "Me go alone along beach. Any feller go along this feller, that feller O Lobo shoot along gun."

"Nice man?" murmured Kit Hudson.

"But—" began Ken, frowning. "You makee island belong O Lobo too quick," said Pedro persuasively. "You stop one hour—two hour—you pick this feller up again—all right! Bom! You lose one, two, three feller hour. This feller pay!"

"There's three or four craft at Suta!" grunted Ken. "Any skipper would run you to the island if you paid him. What the dickens did you pick my packet for?"

Pedro grinned, showing a set of tobacco-stained teeth.

"Too much money stop along this feller, along buy pearl along O Lobo," he said. "No likee takee passage along any ship! When this feller see Dawn along lagoon, tinkee comey along Dawn, along good feller King

ISLAND OF THE WOLF

of the Islands. Plenty too much money all safe!"

Ken smiled, and Hudson chuckled. With a considerable sum of money on him, Pedro was rather particular about the ship he sailed in. It was a compliment to the skipper of the Dawn, though he would have been quite pleased to dispense with it.

He did not want to run fifteen miles out of his course, wait a couple of hours while the pearl buyer did his business, and then make Mua'a. But Pedro was on his hands now. So, though he was far from pleased, King of the Islands agreed.

"Well, your money's safe on this packet, and your pearls, too, when you buy them of that old buccaneer," he said. "We'll manage it. I reckon we shall make the island early in the afternoon with this wind!"

"Bom!" said Pedro, with great satisfaction. "Bom!"

Mysterious Ku'u!

THE island of the Wolf!" said Kit Hudson, and he stared curiously at the palms that rose from the blue Pacific.

The island of "O Lobo"—the Wolf—was the talk of the beaches from Nuka-hiva to Thursday Island. But the mate of the Dawn had never seen it before. It lay out of the usual track of trade, and O Lobo did not encourage visitors. Few men had seen O Lobo since he had settled down on the little island, and that was long before either Ken or his mate had sailed in the Pacific trade. But sailormen on passing craft had sometimes caught a glimpse of him, and he was described as old, wrinkled, with white hair, but as fierce-looking as in the old days when he had sailed as a slave trader, and his ship had been the terror of a hundred islands.

"That's it," said Ken. "I've seen the island once before, and that was when a gale drove me out of my course!"

"You've seen the old Portugee?"

"Never! Very few have seen him," answered King of the Islands. "He's said never to have left Ku'u—that's the name of his island—for twenty years or more. So far as I know, old Prado is the only man who ever lands there.

"They get pearl oysters in the lagoon, and O Lobo has about a dozen Ysabel boys on the island—they dive for him, work for him, and watch for strangers. It's said that they've kai-kai'ed more than one reckless sailorman who had gone to Ku'u from curiosity. Not true, very likely—but I shouldn't wonder!"

"How does he get stores to the island, if ships never call?"

"He sends a whaleboat to Suta once in three months. That's his only communication with the outside world—except Prado calling in for pearls twice a year."

"What a life!" said Hudson.

"He's got his reasons! It's fairly well known that he mixed a spot of piracy with slave-trading; if he set foot at Suva or Papeete or Apia, I don't fancy the old villain would get away again. But he's left alone in his old age on that lonely island."

"Old?" said Hudson. "I suppose he must be old, if he was in the black-birding trade."

"Seventy, at least."

"A man of seventy, running an island on his own, with black cannibals from the Solomon Islands!" Hudson whistled. "I'd like to give the old boy the once-over! What about stepping ashore with Prado?"

"Better not! He may fire on a stranger, as soon as look at him, by all accounts."

Hudson fixed his eyes on the little island on which the Dawn was now bearing down.

To look at, it was like a thousand other atolls in the Pacific—a circle of land, with a rugged coral reef on the outer circle, a lagoon within. The widest part of the land was under a mile, and in other places it was much narrower. Palm-trees clothed it thickly, with here and there bushes of hibiscus.

From the sea it looked uninhabited. The old Portuguese's house, and the huts of the Ysabel boys, were on the inner beach, hidden by the trees. Only in one spot was the circle

of the reef broken, and the passage was too narrow for a ship.

Even if Prado had not made the stipulation, it would have been necessary for Ken to stand off shore while the pearl buyer landed. In rough weather it would have been a dangerous shore; but the weather was fair; the Pacific was almost as calm as a lake.

Hudson's eyes were fixed very keenly on the mysterious island.

"You've heard, Ken," he said slowly, "of the beautiful girl of the island?"

"Ay, ay! I've heard O Lobo has a granddaughter, or a niece, or a grand-niece—beautiful, of course; no sailorman would leave that out!"

"You don't believe in the girl?"

"Hardly!"

"Me savvy, sar," said the voice of Koko, the boatswain.

"You savvy?" asked Hudson.

"Yessar! That feller Mary stop along Ku'u, plenty too much pretty face altogether," said Koko.

A "feller Mary," in the beche-de-mer, was a woman: "Mary" being the Kanaka name for all women, and "feller" a word without gender.

"You've seen her?" exclaimed Hudson, with keen interest; and King of the Islands was interested, too.

"Me see that feller, sar, eye belong me!" answered Koko. "Long time before, sar,

along me sail along Bully Samson, along brig belong him—long time before me savvy little white master belong me. Bully Samson stop along Ku'u, along he wantee water along brig belong him." Koko grinned. "Old feller Portugee no likee—he shoot along gun. Boat belong brig come back, along takee no water—no can! Old Portugee too much mad along us feller along boat, my word."

"And you saw the island beauty?" exclaimed Hudson.

"Me see that feller Mary, sar!" answered Koko. "That feller Mary walkee along beach; me see 'um, sar, eye belong me. Plenty too much pretty face belong that feller Mary."

Kit Hudson glanced round at Pedro Prado, sitting on the rail, watching the island drawing nearer.

"Here, Prado!" he called. "You've been at Ku'u a good many times, did you ever see the old bean's granddaughter?"

"No savvy!" said Prado.

"Did you see the girl on the island?"

"No savvy!"

"Can you tell me her name?"

"No savvy!" said Prado stolidly.

Hudson frowned and Ken laughed. Whether Pedro Prado knew anything or nothing, he did not intend to speak. Prado's wizened face wrinkled into a grin.

"O Lobo no likee talkee along thing belong him!" he said. "S'pose do business along O Lobo, keep mouth shut. Me no savvy nothing."

The Dawn glided on, nearer and nearer to the Island of the Wolf.

"Black feller stop!" said Koko. His keen eyes had picked out a black face, staring from the palms ashore. But even as he pointed, the face vanished, the black boy doubtless scurrying off to report to his master that a ship was in the offing.

Opposite the reef passage, and at a safe distance, the Dawn hove-to, and the boy trader gave orders for the whaleboat to be lowered.

Hudson stepped into the boat, with Kololo and Lompo, followed by the pearl buyer. And King of the Islands stood watching them as the boat pulled for the reef.

"Nao! Nao!" exclaimed Pedro Prado excitedly.

He grabbed Kit Hudson by the shoulder.

"Nao!" he squealed, in alarm. "Nao! Stop along reef! No go along lagoon! O Lobo too much mad along you, you go along lagoon! Nao!"

Lompo and Kololo, at the oars, looked at Hudson for a sign. He made none, and they pulled on into the reef channel. Prado was seething with alarm and excitement; Hudson, cool, with a cheery grin on his face. He was there to land the pearl buyer, and it was a natural proceeding to pull into the lagoon, and land him on the beach. That was what Hudson was going to do. He could hardly

help being curious about mysterious Ku'u. And he was curious, too, to see the fierce old ruffian who ruled Ku'u, and the girl.

"You land this feller along reef, walkee leg belong me!" howled Prado, plainly alarmed.

"Why not the beach inside?"

"That feller O Lobo plenty too mad along you come along lagoon along boat," squealed Prado. "He no likee nobody come along Ku'u, along see that feller Mary belong him. You savvy?"

"Regular old Bluebeard, what?" grinned Hudson. "Don't you worry, Prado—it's all right. Leave it to me."

But it was only too plain that Pedro Prado did worry. Hudson had no doubt that the story of O Lobo firing on strangers was a wild exaggeration—a wild tale of the beaches. He was ready to take the risk—if any. But the little pearl buyer fairly hopped in his excited alarm. He, at least, it was clear, believed all that he had heard of the ferocity of the one-time slave-trader and sea-thief.

The whaleboat glided on. Even for a whaleboat there was none too much sea room in the passage through the coral reef. But it was short, and in a few minutes the lagoon opened ahead. It was extensive, oval in shape, surrounded by a dazzling white beach, backed by innumerable nodding palms.

Hudson's eyes shot a swift glance over the calm blue waters, the shelving white beach, picking up a green-painted house with a long veranda in front, and steps down to the beach, and at a little distance from it a group of huts of palm-pole and pandanus-leaf. Even as he shot that rapid glance round Pedro Prado leapt from the boat, landing on a coral rock.

Standing on the rock, Prado pointed to the sea.

"You go!" he shouted. "You hear, ear belong you? Go along ketch—go along sea, altogether too quick. In two hour you come back along me!" Turning, he bounded away from rock to rock till he disappeared into the palms.

Hudson did not care, in the circumstances, to pull farther into the lagoon. But the whaleboat lay where it was, and the mate of the Dawn stood up and scanned Ku'u. If he hoped to catch a glimpse of the "feller Mary" he was disappointed. No one was to be seen in the veranda of the house, and on the beach were only two or three brawny black Ysabel boys, staring across at the boat. Neither was O Lobo himself to be seen.

A couple of minutes later the mate of the Dawn had reason to be glad that he had not pulled farther into the lagoon. From the palms, at a little distance, figures emerged, one a rather startling figure, on which Hudson's eyes fixed at once.

He could guess that this was O Lobo, the Wolf.

The man was of powerful frame, old, but straight as a cedar mast, unbent by years. His hair, beard, and moustache were thick, but white as the driven snow—massed like a lion's mane. His face, dark almost as a Kanaka's, was seamed and wrinkled, looking as if it were carved in mahogany. O Lobo—for there was no doubt that it was the old slave-trader—had a rifle under his arm. For a long moment he stared at the boat; then he clamped the rifle to his shoulder and opened fire.

Bang, bang, bang! roared the rifle, the fierce old ruffian pumping bullets right into the whaleboat.

Kololo and Lompo howled with alarm, both of them grazed by whizzing lead. They grabbed the oars in hot haste. Kit Hudson felt the hat spin on his head, struck by a bullet that carried away a lock of hair. It was almost incredible to him, but there was no doubt of it—the master of Ku'u was not firing to alarm, he was firing to hit.

The boat shot back into the reef channel. Bullets followed it, splashing in the water astern.

Lompo and Kololo pulled for their lives, for as the boat shot out into the sea the lion-like head of the old buccaneer was seen over the reef. He was tramping out on the coral, still loosing off bullets.

Kit Hudson's eyes flashed back at the man on the reef. Twice his hand went to his hip for his gun, but he did not draw it. He could have knocked O Lobo over easily enough with a revolver-shot, but he had not come to Ku'u

to shoot the master of the island. And he had to admit that he had been warned what to expect. Soon the boat was out of effective range, and the firing ceased.

What Hudson Saw

"YOU seem to have woken up the Wolf," said Ken King. "What was the trouble?"

Hudson took off his hat, glanced at the bullet-hole in it, and rubbed his head. He was half angry and half amused by his strange adventure on the forbidden island.

"That must have gone close," said Ken, glancing at the bullet-hole. "Is the man mad? What did he fire on you for?"

"My fault, after what Prado said," answered Hudson. "I pulled into the lagoon, and O Lobo turned up suddenly and loosed off his rifle. No harm done, luckily, but the old scoundrel meant business."

"For goodness' sake steer clear when you go to take Prado off," said Ken. "I wish I'd never agreed to stop here for him. That old swab must be cracked to fire on a ship's boat."

"I'd like to know what his game is!" grunted Hudson. "No harm in a boat pulling into the lagoon that I can see."

"No likee any feller see feller Mary belong him, sar," said Koko. "Plenty feller savvy he no likee. That feller Mary no stop along Ku'u s'posce get away along ship along sea. Me savvy."

"If that's so, somebody ought to give the poor girl a chance of pulling out," grunted Hudson. "What name you tinkee feller Mary no likee stop along Ku'u?"

"Plenty feller savvy," answered Koko. "That feller Mary too much fright along Portugee feller. Me hear, ear belong me, along Tahiti feller that feller island belong feller Mary, no belong O Lobo. Belong feller belong that feller Mary long time before."

King of the Islands smiled. He had heard that tale. It was only one of the hundred tales that were told of the mysterious island of Ku'u.

"A beautiful girl kept out of her inheritance by a dashed old pirate!" said Hudson. "Chance for a knight-errant, Ken."

"We're not knights-errant—we're South Sea traders!" laughed Ken. "And it's all bunk! I've heard that the island belonged to O Lobo's brother before he took possession—I never heard what became of the brother."

"An old ruffian so handy with a rifle might be able to explain what became of him!" growled Hudson. "If that's his brother's daughter, or granddaughter, Ken, the island's hers, not his. And that would account—" He broke off as Ken's grin widened, but he stood by the rail, watching the island.

The ketch had to wait a couple of hours for Pedro Prado to finish his business, and then send the whaleboat to take him off. Ken sat on the taffrail with a list of cargo to con over, but the mate continued to watch the island.

After a time he went below for his binoculars, and came back and focused them on Ku'u. With the help of the powerful glasses he could make out the house on the beach.

Toy-like, but plainly, he made out a figure seated in a Madeira chair in the veranda; that of Pedro Prado. Leaning against the rail was the man who had fired on him. The pearl buyer was doing his business with O Lobo—a matter of no interest to Hudson—and he was about to lower the glasses when O Lobo went into the house. Hardly had the old slave-trader disappeared when another figure came into the veranda from another door. Hudson gave a low exclamation, and Ken looked up.

"What's on?" he asked.

Hudson did not answer. He was watching, with breathless attention. The figure that had so suddenly appeared was that of a girl. He saw a graceful figure dressed in white, and glimpsed a beautiful face, with pale olive skin and large dark eyes. But it was not the girl's looks that chained Hudson's attention—it was her actions!

Her whole aspect was one of terror—terror strangely mingled with resolution. Pedro Prado half-rose from his chair at the sight of her. She stopped before him, and Hudson read appeal in the girl's face, and

dismay and uneasiness in that of Pedro Prado. He could see her lips moving—she was speaking hurriedly—the wizened old pearl buyer listening with obvious unwillingness.

Hudson hardly breathed. Every moment the girl glanced round, with terror that was only too evident, at the door by which O Lobo had gone into the house. The mate of the Dawn could read the whole story in what he saw. She had been watching for a chance to speak to Prado—had seized the opportunity when O Lobo left him, and she dreaded his return every moment, and she was making some wild and desperate appeal.

Prado's dismay and fear could be read in his face. The girl's appeal, whatever it was, was obviously unwelcome to him, and inspired him only with fear for himself and perhaps for his business on the island.

Hudson shared the girl's obvious fear of seeing O Lobo emerge from the house and find her in talk with the stranger. Suddenly the man reappeared, and Hudson saw the rage and fury that flashed into his savage old

Next Week's Programme

WINGS OVER SPAIN!

Clapped into prison, it seems that Biggles & Co. will have to surrender the secret despatch to regain their freedom. But Biggles won't hear of it. He's got other ideas—and they come off!

SPEED SLIDE

Another story of Dave and Con St. Clair, the School-boy Cinder Shifters, with Dave all-out in a race that means "make or break" for the chums.

MAN FROM THE SEA

He's the one man in the whole of the South Seas Kit Hudson wants to meet—but he's unconscious aboard the Dawn, unable to make himself known and nip in the bud the trouble that's brewing between Ken and Kit!

THE HIDDEN EAR

It's only a tiny microphone hidden under floorboards, but it leads to big things for Scotty and the man to whom it betrays the Black Eagles' secrets.

STANDISH AND THE SECRET SIGN

Colin learns the real meaning of the sign—takes part in the first step that is to lead to world-wide strife.

WAR BENEATH THE WAVES

The exploits of Britain's most famous submarine commander thrillingly retold.

face at sight of the girl in talk with the pearl buyer.

Hudson saw O Lobo stride across and grasp the girl by the arm, so roughly that she almost fell. The old ruffian raised a clenched hand, and it seemed to Hudson that he was about to strike her down. But Pedro Prado, stepping forward, laid a hand on the ruffian's arm—stopping the blow, if, indeed, O Lobo had intended one. The Wolf turned on the pearl buyer, and with an angry shove sent the little man toppling back into his chair. Then he turned to the girl again—but already she had disappeared. O Lobo turned to Prado—and they resumed the chaffering that had been interrupted.

Hudson watched—but there was no sign of the girl again. He lowered the glasses at last, his face grim with rage.

"Fool that I was not to give that old sea-thief as good as he gave!" he said, between his teeth. "By gum, Kit, I've a good mind to go ashore and handle him! A man who would lay hands on a girl—"

"What have you seen?" asked Ken. Hudson told him, the words coming savagely between his teeth. Ken's face grew graver

as he listened. He took the binoculars, and turned them on the distant bungalow, but nothing was to be seen there now; both O Lobo and his pearl buyer had left the veranda, and the place seemed deserted.

"Prado!" exclaimed Ken suddenly.

It was not yet time for the boat to be sent to pick up the pearl buyer, when a canoe shot out of the lagoon. In the canoe sat Pedro Prado and two powerful black Ysabel boys were paddling. Evidently O Lobo did not choose that a ship's boat should nose into his lagoon again.

Ken smiled faintly at the look on Hudson's face. Some vague idea had been in the mind of the mate of taking some kind of action when he went back for Prado. But whatever wild idea might have been in Hudson's mind, he had to abandon it.

The fuzzy-headed Solomon Island boys brought the canoe alongside, and Prado came on board. Immediately the canoe paddled away again for the reef passage.

King of the Islands was glad enough to get sail up and to set the ketch under way. Kit Hudson gave him several expressive looks—which he affected not to see. Whatever the mate might be thinking, Ken was intent on leaving Ku'u astern as soon as he could. Old Prado sat down, his leathery face thoughtful. Hudson stepped up to him as the Dawn glided away from the reef.

"What did the girl want?" asked Hudson abruptly.

Prado was quite unaware of what the mate had seen through the binoculars from the ketch.

"No savvy!" he said, staring at him. "The girl who spoke to you in the veranda of that old wolf's house!" snapped Hudson. "What was she asking you?"

"No savvy feller Mary along Ku'u," said Prado guardedly.

"I was watching you through the binoculars—I saw her speaking to you. What did she want? Was she asking you for help to get away from Ku'u?"

The old pearl buyer drew a deep breath. His trade was the beginning and end of all things to him, and he was careful to concern himself with no other man's affairs—least of all those of O Lobo. He shook his greasy old head.

"It was nothing," he answered. "That feller Mary ask about news of the islanders. Senhor O Lobo no likee her talk along me. It was nothing."

"That's a lie!" said Hudson grimly.

Pedro Prado shrugged his shoulders. He was not sensitive, and he did not mind being called a liar; but he was not going to talk. Hudson gave him a fierce look and turned away. The wind was filling the sails of the Dawn, and Ku'u was already sinking to the sea. Hudson looked back at the island, and looked at Ken.

"We're going, then?" he muttered. "What else can we do?" said King of the Islands. "What has old Prado told you?"

"Lies!" grunted Hudson. "Well, I'm sorry enough for the poor girl, shut up on that island with that savage old brute of a grandfather!" said Ken. "But what can we do, Kit?"

The mate of the Dawn shrugged his shoulders.

"We could go back and find out if she was in trouble," he said. "After all, so few people ever touch Ku'u that if she really wants help, we're her only chance."

"Prado may be a silent old scoundrel," Ken King answered briefly, "but if there was any real danger, I don't think he'd leave the girl there. No, Kit, best leave it as it is." He turned and looked back at the island.

Hudson did not reply for a long minute. "I suppose you're right!" he said at last.

The Dawn swept on, leaning to the wind, for Muna'a. In the sunset Ku'u dipped to the sea-rim and disappeared. But neither of the shipmates, though they did not know it, was finished with the Island of the Wolf.

Next Week :

MAN FROM THE SEA