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STORIES BY FLYING-OFFICER JOHNS and ALFRED EDGAR

MODERN BOY

EVERY
2
SATURDAY



Mid-air Peril for Scotty—see **THE HIDDEN EAR!**

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, unable to make himself known and nip in the bud the trouble that's brewing between the Shipmates of the Dawn

A Faintly Calling Voice!

A SHOUT came from the dark sea, hardly heard in the boom of the canvas and the whistle of the wind through the rigging of the Dawn. But King of the Islands heard it, and in a moment he was leaning over the rail, staring across the shadowed waters.

With her headlights gleaming, the ketch was making five knots on her way to Mu'a. Ken King had been standing by Koko, the boatswain, at the wheel, when that distant shout came faintly through the night.

It was the mate's watch below, but Kit Hudson was still on deck. He was pacing the deck, every now and then glancing at Pedro Prado, the pearl-buyer, who sat in a madeira chair. His glances were far from pleasant, but the little Portuguese half-caste did not appear to notice them. He was either asleep, or affected to be. Hudson looked round as Ken rushed to the side, stared across the dark sea, and shouted:

"Ahoy!"

Hudson joined him in a moment.

"What—" he began.

"It was a shout! Listen!"

Skipper and mate bent their ears to listen. But no sound but the wind came across the rolling waters.

"Ahoy!" shouted King of the Islands again. But no answer came back.

There was no light on the sea—no sign of a craft. It was not from another vessel that the Dawn had been hailed. The ketch was in lonely waters. She had turned from her course, from Suta to Mu'a, to call at Ku'u, the "Island of the Wolf," to land Pedro Prado there to buy pearls. Ku'u was out of the track of trade. The Island of the Wolf had been dropped astern at sunset, and Mu'a was still far distant.

"Koko, you hear feller sing out, along sea, ear belong you?" Ken called to the boatswain.

"Yessar," answered Koko. "Me hear, sar, ear belong me. White feller sing out along sea!"

"You savvy that feller white feller?" asked Hudson, with a grin. He doubted whether there was a "feller" at all.

"Yessar!" said Koko. "Me savvy voice belong white feller!"

King of the Islands took the lantern from the mizzen and waved it to and fro over the rail, and shouted again.

But no voice answered from the sea. "We're passing him," said King of the Islands. "Take the lantern, Kit; we shall have to go about."

"If you're sure—" said Hudson doubtfully.

"I'm sure, old man! If there's a man adrift, we're not leaving him to it, white man or native!"

"Hardly," agreed Hudson. "But—well, go ahead!"

If there was some castaway afloat on the dark waters, passed by the ketch in the night, it must have brought joy and relief to his heart when the ketch went about and his eyes caught the gleam of her headlights again.

"Keep the lantern going, Kit! You see anything, Koko, eye belong you?"

"No, sar! Tinkee hear, ear belong me," said the boatswain, with bent head. "That feller stop along starboard, sar!" He gave the wheel a turn.

Koko's brown ears were as keen as his dark eyes. Some sound had reached him, unheard by the shipmates. But he was right, for a few moments later, a faintly calling voice was heard.

The Dawn hove to, and the Hiva-Oa boys rushed to lower the whaleboat. There was no doubt now that a man, unseen in the darkness, was afloat on the sea, either swimming, or clinging to some fragment of wreckage. The ketch was near him, and Ken did

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not want to risk running him down in the dark. The whaleboat dropped to the water, and Ken jumped into it. Kolulo and Tomoo took the oars, and Lompo steered; and Ken, standing up in the bows, waved a lantern.

The Kanakas tugged at the oars. Ken, holding up the lantern, watched the sea with searching eyes.

"Ahoy, shipmate!" he shouted.

"Help!"

The boy trader's keen eyes picked up an object that bobbed on the waves. It was a wrecked and capsized canoe, still floating, to which a man was clinging. As the whaleboat drew nearer, Ken made out a white face in the gleam of the lantern—that of a man almost at his last gasp. A few moments more, and his grasp was on the castaway.

The colourless face looked up at him—that of a young man, hardly a few years older than the boy trader—normally handsome, but now ghastly and drawn. King of the Islands grasped him to draw him into the whaleboat, and there was a faint cry. He realised that the man was not only wrecked, but hurt. Gently he lifted him in, and laid him down. One glance showed him that the man was alone with the canoe.

"Washy-washy along ketch!" said the boy trader.

"You're hurt?" asked Ken, bending over the man in the whaleboat.

"My leg!" came a faint voice. "I got a knock when the canoe was run down!" There was a faint groan. Then the low voice went on: "I saw your lights, passing. You heard me call?"

"Thank goodness I did!" said Ken. "We'll have you on board in a couple of shakes. Lie still!"

Kit Hudson looked down over the side as the whaleboat pulled in.

"You've got him?"

"Ay, ay! Get the ladder down, and send Koko—he's hurt—he'll have to be carried!"

Five minutes later, the shipwrecked man, now unconscious, was in Ken's bunk, and the ketch had resumed her course for Mu'a.

Hudson Wants to Know!

KIT HUDSON looked at the tall palms nodding on the island of Mu'a with a knitted brow. Bright sunlight streamed down on the Pacific. King of the Islands had gone below to the rescued man. Hudson was not thinking of him. The mate was very glad that the shipwrecked man had been saved from the sea, but other thoughts were occupying his mind, and his brow grew darker and darker as the ketch made Mu'a.

At Mu'a, Pedro Prado was to go ashore, and every look that Hudson gave the wizened old pearl-buyer was grim.

Prado avoided meeting his eyes. He rolled incense cigarettes and smoked them, and watched Mu'a rising from the sea with anxious eyes. Clearly he was eager to get ashore off King of the Islands' ketch. He was quite well aware of the hostile thoughts in Hudson's mind.

King of the Islands came back to the deck; his sunburnt face was grave.

"How is he?" asked Hudson. He had to make an effort to detach his thoughts from what was in his own mind.

"Pretty bad," answered Ken. "He hasn't come to yet. His leg's pretty bad, and he must have had a tough time in the water."

"Bones broken?"

"Not so bad as that, thank goodness! But a mass of bruises. He won't be standing for a good many days yet. I wonder who he is, and what the dickens he was doing alone in a canoe in lonely waters. Some craft must have run down his canoe in the dark and left him without sighting him, I suppose. He's had about as narrow an escape as a man could have. But the queerest thing is that he seems to have some sort of connection with that old scoundrel at Ku'u."

"O Lobo!" exclaimed Hudson. "The Wolf!"

"That's it! He hasn't come to; but he has been muttering, and I caught the word 'O Lobo.'"

"If he's any connection of that old villain—" growled Hudson.

"He looks decent enough; and he's no Portuguese, either. I dare say he will explain when he comes to. I've been wondering what we're going to do with him."

"He can land at Mu'a."

"Yes; but he's pretty bad, and there's nobody at Mu'a to take him in hand. Anyhow, I hope he'll come to during the day. We can't turn the Dawn into a hospital-ship, but we can't leave a white man on the beach."

Hudson nodded, but his thoughts were elsewhere. Ken, following his glance, saw it rest grimly on old Prado, and smiled faintly.

"Still shirty with Prado, old man?" he asked.

"If he wasn't on our own deck I'd take him by his skinny neck and crack his head against the mainmast till he coughed up what I want him to tell me!" growled the mate.

"Poor old Prado!" Ken laughed. "He's about forty years older than you are, Kit, and not so romantic. He goes to the Island of the Wolf to buy pearls, and he doesn't want to risk his trade by talking about O Lobo's affairs." King of the Islands laughed again. "Old Prado's thinking about profits, Kit; not about rescuing damsels in distress from lonely islands."

Hudson grunted and made no reply.

"Well, we shan't see Ku'u again in a hurry," said Ken and gave his attention to the reef as the Dawn headed into the lagoon of Mu'a.

When the anchor went down in the lagoon the whaleboat was lowered to take Pedro Prado ashore. The old pearl-buyer had fairly forced the shipmates into taking him to the Island of the Wolf, but he was eager enough now to get off Ken King's ship.

King of the Islands intended to go ashore with Prado, but he was a little surprised when Kit Hudson stepped into the boat. However, he said nothing.

Prado, old as he was, was as active as a monkey, and he was the first to hop out of the boat.

"Tankee too much!" said the old half-caste; and, as Ken nodded and smiled, he walked off quickly up the beach.

"Coming up to the trader's, Kit?" asked King of the Islands.

"No; I'll stretch my legs along the beach."

Ken went up towards the trader's house; Kit Hudson went in the direction taken by Pedro Prado.

Prado was walking quickly, but the mate speedily overtook him. The pearl-buyer glanced round, and his little beady eyes twinkled with something like alarm at the sight of the hefty young Australian bearing down on him. Pedro was a man of business, certainly not of action, and the mate of the Dawn could have picked him up with one hand and tossed him away like a bag of copra. He looked at the moment as if powerfully tempted to do it.

Pedro hastened his steps, but a grasp on his skinny shoulder brought him to a halt. He faced round at the mate of the Dawn.

"What you wantee along me, senhor?" he muttered.

"We're not on the Dawn now, Prado!" snapped Hudson. "Understand that? On the Dawn I could not handle you; here, I'll twist your skinny neck if you don't tell me every word of what happened on Ku'u!"

Pedro Prado caught his breath. It was plain enough that he dreaded to talk of the affairs of O Lobo, the strange old man who had been a slave trader in the old days, and who now led a strange and solitary life on the lonely island of Ku'u. It was not only regard for his business dealings with the old Portuguese, but fear for his own skin, that kept him silent.

"Listen to me, Prado!" said Hudson. "I told you I watched you through the binoculars when you went ashore at Ku'u. I saw the girl speak to you in the veranda of that old wolf's bungalow. I saw her face—What are you grinning at, you old thief?"

Prado's uneasy, greasy face relaxed into a grin for a moment. Beauty—even beauty in distress—had little appeal for the dry, dusty old pearl-buyer; but he could guess that it had more effect on a young sailorman.

"I saw her face," went on Hudson, "and I

saw that she was frightened—terribly frightened. Isn't that true?"

Prado shrugged his shoulders.

"She was making some appeal to you. What was it? I've heard that she's as good as a prisoner on that island, and the old scoundrel will never allow a white man to see her or speak to her. It's said that the island is hers if she had her rights. What did she ask you?"

Prado was silent.

"Did she ask you for help to get away from Ku'u?" snapped Hudson.

"Nao, nao!" muttered Pedro.

"Then what?"

The half-caste was silent again. Hudson's grip tightened on his shoulder, and he gave a yelp.

"If you were not an old man, Pedro, I'd knock seven bells out of you, and ask you again afterwards!" said the mate. "But you've got to answer!"

"It was nothing. She ask news of the Islands—" Prado broke off, with a yelp of pain, as Hudson shook him savagely. He sagged like a bag of bones in the mate's powerful grip. "Senhor, take away hand belong you!" he gasped. "It is not safe to talk of the affairs of O Lobo; he is a terrible man! Do you not know when he fired on you because you pulled into his lagoon? He would have shot the whole boat's crew if you had lingered. A terrible man—"

"What did the girl ask you?"

Kit was unwilling to use his strength in handling an old man like Pedro, but he was going to know. Whatever appeal the girl had made, Prado had disregarded it—Hudson had watched his greasy old face and read only uneasiness for himself in it. He was going to know what it was.

"It is not as you think," panted Prado at last. "You are one young fool, Senhor Hudson—you tinkee too much along pretty face belong that feller Mary."

Hudson coloured angrily. It was true that he had been struck by the beauty of the mysterious girl, but it was her terror and distress that had moved him most.

"Tell me what she asked!" he snapped.

"If it were something that you dare not do, another man may dare."

"That feller Mary wantee this feller takee message," said Prado. "No askee take away from Ku'u. Nao!"

"A message!" repeated Hudson. "And you refused?"

"I am a pearl-buyer," said old Prado stolidly. "I do business with O Lobo. I interfere not in his affairs. Even for telling you so much he would twist me the neck if he savvy."

"Your neck'll be twisted now if you don't make it clearer! Give me the girl's message and I'll see that it is taken. A message to someone on another island, do you mean?"

"On Suta!" answered Prado unwillingly.

"Suta—that we pulled out of yesterday morning! Oh!" Hudson knitted his brows, and again the old pearl-buyer's wizened face relaxed in a grin.

"You put back along Suta?" he sneered. "King of the Islands he lose some more days on his trip!"

"What was the message? I'll see it delivered somehow," said Hudson savagely. "Tell me what it was."

"Danger!" said old Prado.

"Danger?" repeated Hudson.

"Sim! That English word! The minha senhora speakee along me along Portuguese, but she savvy English—her mother was English." Old Prado checked himself at once. "That is the message."

"And to whom?"

"Feller stop along Suta, name belong him Valentine—Deek Valentine," said Pedro Prado reluctantly. "My word! S'pose O Lobo savvy me talk, I do no more business along Ku'u."

"Dick Valentine?" repeated Hudson. "A trader?"

"No savvy." Old Prado chuckled. "You tinkee along pretty face belong that feller Mary! That feller Mary tinkee along Deek Valentine!"

Hudson gave him a scowl.

"Is that all?" he snapped.

"That is altogether all," said Pedro. "O Lobo comey back along she speak—you savvy,

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along you watchee along glass. Me no savvy that feller Mary give me message! Me plenty too much fright along O Lobo."

"Oh, pull out, you old worm!" grunted Hudson, and he turned his back on Pedro and strode back to the beach.

"Go Your Own Way!"

"WE'VE got the wind!" said King of the Islands, and his face was cheery and satisfied. "That's luck, at any rate. We can tow out before the sun's gone, Kit, and make up for lost time."

The mate gave his shipmate almost a furtive look as he opened his lips and closed them again without speaking.

Ken did not notice his preoccupation for the moment. Standing on the beach, under the sinking sun, he was watching the whaleboat pull, laden, to the Dawn. The boy trader had picked up cargo. But he was chiefly pleased at getting through before sundown and being able to tow out and pick up the wind outside the reef.

The whistle of the wind from the south was pleasant to Ken's ears. It meant that, once out of the lagoon, he would be able to run northward under full sail, making perhaps nine knots. Which was very satisfactory to a skipper who had been losing time on a trip.

"We're in luck, old man," went on Ken. "We may raise Alua on time yet."

Hudson gave him another sidelong look. The cloud on his brow deepened, but he did not speak. Ken looked at him at last.

"Anything up, old chap?" he asked. "We've got the wind we want—"

"Hang the wind!" muttered Hudson irritably. Ken welcomed the south wind; Hudson would have been relieved by a gale from the north!

Ken stared at him blankly. "I'd better tell you!" muttered Hudson. And in a few curt sentences he told what he had dragged out of Pedro Prado.

King of the Islands listened quietly. "A queer tale," he said, when the mate was silent. "Sounds to me a bit like leg-pulling; Prado is a sly old fox."

Hudson started.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed. "Well, Prado was unwilling to tell you anything of what happened on Ku'u," answered Ken. "He's scared out of his wits of O Lobo. You've made him tell you something, and this is it! It may or may not be true—"

"It's true! I tell you I saw the girl's face when she was speaking to him," said Hudson. "You—you don't feel like putting back to Suta?"

"Putting back to Suta!" said Ken blankly. "It might take us a week to beat back to Suta against this wind! What the dickens do you mean?"

Hudson's face set.

"I mean that I'm not a money-grubbing, calculating old swab like Prado," he answered. "That message has got to be delivered."

Ken breathed hard.

"I hope I'm not a money-grubbing, calculating swab, either," he said quietly. "But I'm a trader, and so are you, Kit. We've got dates to keep! Ten to one Prado was pulling your leg, to get shut of you. Have you ever heard of this man Dick Valentine on Suta?"

"No!" grunted Hudson. "I'd never been to Suta till we touched there the other day. How should I know anything about him?"

"Neither do I—nor, I suspect, does Prado!" rapped Ken. "He was telling the tale to get away from you—and small blame to him, if you had the old fellow by the neck! I know he'd tell you nothing about O Lobo's affairs, if he could help it. Have a little sense! Every beach on the Pacific knows that that old buccaneer fires on any man who lands without his leave—he fired on our boat, though it only went in to land the man who came to buy his pearls. How could Valentine, if he exists at all, get in touch with O Lobo's granddaughter? He couldn't land on Ku'u without having his brains blown out by that

old sea-thief, or being kai-kai'd by the Ysabel boys. It's all bunk!"

Hudson looked dogged. He had seen what Ken had not seen, the look on the face of the girl when she made her appeal to the old pearl-buyer. He was convinced that the story was true; though he could not be surprised that Ken did not share his opinion.

"Have a little sense, old chap!" said Ken. "I'm sorry enough for a girl shut up on a lonely island with a grandfather like that old pirate but we can't barge into family affairs. This man Valentine, if there is such a man, may be some South Sea scallawag, for all we know, and the old chap quite right in barring him."

"I want to find Valentine at Suta and deliver the girl's message," said Hudson stubbornly. "I believe it—whether you do or not. I can't ask you to lose the wind—"

"I should think not!" exclaimed King of the Islands.

"I've got to deliver that message!"

Hudson's face was set and stubborn. It was seldom that the shipmates disagreed; but Ken had seen that look on Hudson's face before, and knew what it meant.

It was hard for him to control his rising anger. A fantastic tale told by a lying old rascal only anxious to get away—a wild-goose chase—that was how Ken looked at it. And Hudson was thinking of beating back for weary days to a port where they had no further business; missing dates and missing cargo! A South Sea trader had his duty to do, and his bread to earn—with this romantic fancy in his head, Hudson seemed to have forgotten that. It was not easy for Ken to choke down an angry answer.

There was a long silence. King of the Islands broke it abruptly.

"Here's the boat! Have a little sense, Kit!"

"You're pulling out for Alua?"

"Yes!" came Ken's answer, short and sharp.

"I can't expect anything else," said Hudson slowly. "But I've got to make Suta, Ken. I told Prado I should deliver that message—"

"Hang Prado! I've no doubt he's laughing at you being fool enough to believe a word of his yarn," broke out King of the Islands angrily. "You're mate of the Dawn, Kit Hudson—not a wandering knight-errant of the South Seas. Here's the boat!"

"I'm going to deliver that message."

Ken King set his lips.

"How, if you sail in the Dawn?"

"I can't sail in the Dawn if you're running for Alua. I'll have to pick up a canoe here, with a native crew to paddle me—"

Hudson drew a deep breath. "I can rejoin you later, if you want me. If—if you don't—and I shan't blame you—let's part friends, Ken."

King of the Islands looked at him in silence. He had seldom felt so intensely angry.

"A pretty face seen through the binoculars and this!" he said. "You utter ass, Kit Hudson!"

Hudson's face set and he turned away.

"Hold on!" said Ken quietly. "We've sailed too long together and been through too much to quarrel now, Kit. Go your own way, if you're fool enough. And when you've done playing the fool, join up on the Dawn again. You'll pick her up somewhere in the islands sooner or later."

The whaleboat carried King of the Islands back to the ketch, without his mate!

Something Like a Surprise!

DANNY, the cooky-boy, came out of the companion, stared round, and padded on his bare brown feet across the deck to his white master.

Ken did not glance at him. He was standing by the taffrail, his eyes on the beach. All was ready for the ketch to pull out of the lagoon. Ken's gaze was fixed on a figure on the white beach—that of Kit Hudson, engaged in talk with a group of brown men standing by the canoes beached on the shelving sand. As he watched, some of the natives began to drag a canoe down to the water.

Hudson was losing no time. Evidently he

meant what he had said. The "pretty face belong feller Mary" seemed to have bewitched him. Ken felt the parting, whether Hudson did or not. He knew that he would miss his shipmate sorely. And he was angry and impatient. The crew were waiting, but he had not yet given orders to lift the anchor.

"Feller Hudson no come along Dawn, sar?" Koko ventured.

"Feller Hudson stop along Mu'a, along he big-feller fool!" said King of the Islands. "Up hook, Koko! We're wasting time." He glanced at the cooky-boy. "No talkie now, Danny!"

"Feller white master along bunk, sar—"

"What?" Ken, with a new trouble on his mind, had forgotten the castaway.

"That feller white master he sit up, sar, speakee, mouth belong him," said Danny. "He wantee speakee along feller captain, sar."

The boy trader went down the companion into the cabin. The door of the little state-room at the fore end was open, and he could see the castaway sitting up in the bunk. The young man's face was still very pale, but he was quite conscious now. His eyes fixed eagerly on Ken's as the boy trader came into the state-room. Ken gave the man in the bunk a nod and a smile as he crossed to the bunk.

"Glad to see you're on the mend," he said, "but you're booked for that bunk for some time to come, I'm afraid. Your leg's pretty badly hurt."

"I know!" The pale face twitched with pain. "Are you putting me ashore, Captain King?"

"We're pulling out to-day!" explained Ken. "I was just going to get the hook up. If you'd rather go ashore and take your chance I'll hang on and send you in a boat. But you'd be better off here, and I'm more than willing—"

"Are you making Suta?"

"Suta!" repeated Ken. "No—I'm making north for Alua."

"Then I reckon I'll ask you to put me on the beach! I've got to take my chance—I can't go far from Ku'u."

"The Island of the Wolf?" said Ken, with a very curious look at the man in the bunk. "You know the island?"

"None better: I was making Ku'u when some fool ran me down in the dark. I hate to give you more trouble, Captain King—but I've got to make Ku'u."

Ken's face was grave.

"If you know Ku'u," he said, "you know it's a good place to keep away from. My boat was fired on there yesterday, when I called. If you make Ku'u, you're a dead man."

"I must!"

"You're in no state to make Ku'u, or Suta, either," said King of the Islands. "Do you belong to Suta?"

"Yes; I've a plantation there. My name's Valentine—Dick Valentine."

"Wha-a-a-!" Ken King jumped almost clear of the state-room floor, and gazed at him blankly. "You—your name's Dick Valentine?" he stuttered. "You're telling me that you're Dick Valentine—of Suta?"

"You've heard my name?"

King of the Islands did not reply. He stared at the man from the sea! Dick Valentine, the man to whom the mysterious girl had sent the message that old Prado dared not carry—the man whom Kit Hudson was going to Suta to seek—was on board the Dawn!

Ken turned and ran out of the state-room, leaving the man in the bunk staring. He cut across to the companion, and rushed up to the deck. Kit Hudson was already in the canoe, pushing out into the lagoon. But King of the Islands had something to tell him before the mate of the Dawn pulled out in the frail craft on the long trip to Suta—in search of Dick Valentine, the man from the sea!

Next Week: THE WORD WAS "DANGER!"