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# The RANGER 2<sup>D</sup>



Skull of the Skies starts To-day!

# THE CHEERIO CASTAWAYS!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

## The Sleeping Beauty.



HERE'S that blithering Boche?" growled Ginger Rawlinson. "Shirking, as per usual!"

Fritz Splitz was not to be seen on the beach of Castaway Island. That was not surprising. Fritz was always missing when there was work to be done.

Jim Dainty and Dick Dawson, Ginger and Bacon and Bean, had been gathering tropical produce under the direction of their headmaster, Dr. Samuel Sparshott. There was an immense stack of coconuts, and bunches of bananas and plantains, and a heap of glowing oranges. That cargo had to be carried down the beach to the boat, and packed on board.

"The lazy lump of lard!" grunted Jim Dainty. "No good calling him—he would make it a point not to hear. Get going."

Heavy-laden, the juniors tramped down from the palm-grove, across the burning beach, to the margin of the wide bay that fronted the Atlantic. There floated the boat that had been captured from Ezra Sarson, the rascal who had scuttled the Spindrift. It floated close in to the shore, moored to a palm-pole planted in the sand.

Splashing the shallow water with their bare feet, and their trousers tucked up, the juniors carried their loads to the boat. Boots and shoes were reserved for special occasions—there was no renewing the supply of those useful articles on a solitary island inhabited only by the Grimslade castaways.

That morning Sammy Sparshott was going to run the boat across to the little rocky islet five miles out to sea, where Ezra Sarson had been marooned out of harm's way. What grew on that speck of rock and sand was barely sufficient to support life, and there was no doubt that Ezra had a hard time of it. But he could not be trusted on Castaway Island, and he had got what he had asked for!

Dr. Sparshott, however, occasionally made a trip to the rock with a boat-load of supplies, receiving only black and savage looks from the ruffian by way of thanks. Black looks did not affect Sammy in the least, only he was always careful to stick a loaded revolver in his belt when he started for Sarson's rock. He had left Ezra various tools and utensils that could be spared, and he was well aware that Ezra would have been glad of a chance to "get" him with a spade or a saucepan.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Jim Dainty suddenly, as the juniors came to the boat. "Listen to the band!"

Snore!

Fritz was discovered!

From the interior of the boat came the snore of the fat German. Evidently Fatty Fritz had hidden himself in the boat to keep out of his share of the work, and that snore indicated that he had gone to sleep there.

"My giddy goloshes!" growled Ginger. "I'll wake him up with a coconut on his fat head!"

"Hold on!" said Streaky Bacon. "Don't wake the sleeping beauty! Shove the stuff on him! Let him wake up on his own and find himself buried."

"Good egg!" chuckled Jim Dainty.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Ginger. "Good! Go it!"

Ginger's roar would have awakened any fellow but Fritz Splitz! But Fritz, when he was once



Sarson let out a yell of triumph as the earth gave way beneath Sammy's feet and he shot downwards.

asleep, was not easy to wake! He snored on regardless.

He was lying amidships, where the juniors had to stack the cargo. They proceeded to stack it. Gently they laid huge bunches of bananas and plantains over the sleeping beauty, till the rotund form of Fritz disappeared from sight.

Jim Dainty, grinning, up-ended a large basket over the fat face, to give Fritz space to breathe—he did not want to suffocate Fritz. Over the

## WHEN THE HEAD LOST HIS FEET!

basket more and more bunches were piled. Buried in plantains and bananas, with coconuts and oranges piled round him, Fritz was invisible, and even his snore was muffled by his coverings.

"That's the lot!" chortled Ginger. "My giddy goloshes! What a surprise for jolly old Fritz when he wakes up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Leaving the fat German buried, the grinning juniors carried the empty baskets up the beach. Dr. Sparshott was in the hut, loading the revolver he intended to take with him. The juniors' work being over, they rambled away up the stream, to catch fish for lunch.

It was later that Jim Dainty, glancing down to the beach, beheld a brown-patched sail dancing on the bay. Sitting astern in the boat, Dr. Sparshott had the sheet in his hand and one arm over the tiller. Sammy had started on his trip to the rock out at sea. Jim Dainty dropped his net and stood staring.

"Oh, my hat!" he exclaimed.

"What's up?" asked Dick Dawson.

"Sammy's gone!"

"Well, we knew he was going, fathead!"

"But Fritz—" gasped Jim.

"Oh, crikey!"

There was no sign of Fritz on the sunlit beach! It had not even occurred to the playful juniors that Fatty Fritz would remain asleep under the pile of tropical fruits when Sammy went aboard and ran the boat out into the bay. It occurred to them now!

"My giddy goloshes!" yelled Ginger. "Fritz has gone for a sail with Sammy—without knowing it!"

"And Sammy doesn't know, either!" gasped Sandy Bean. "My hat! Sammy will be waxy!"

"Let's hail Sammy!" said Jim Dainty, and he started running down to the beach. The other fellows dashed after him at top speed.

The juniors stood on the margin of the sea, waved their hands, and shouted. But there was nothing doing! The wind from the sea blew their shouting back, and not a sound of it reached Sammy. He saw them waving, for he released a hand and waved back for a moment, doubtless supposing that the juniors were waving good-bye. The boat danced on and became a speck on the blue, sunny waters.

## Trapped!

"BY the great horned toad!" muttered Ezra Sarson, between his clenched, tobacco-stained teeth.

Standing on the shore of the little rocky islet the Frisco ruffian watched a sail that danced and glanced on the sunlit sea. His stubby, bearded face expressed savage hostility, though he knew that Dr. Sparshott was coming with kind intent.

Life was hard enough on the rock for the ruffian who had been marooned there, but it had only served to increase his hatred of Sammy. Every day he watched the dark mass of Castaway Island in the distance to the west, and shook his brawny fist and muttered oaths. Yet when Sammy came, all his desperate schemes faded away—he dared not look the headmaster of Grimslade in the face, let alone tackle him.

But long weeks of scheming had had their result. This time he had laid a trap against Sammy's next visit, and hope and fear mingled in his look as he watched the approaching boat from behind a cluster of rugged rocks.

As usual, Sammy Sparshott came along in the boat. At all events he was alone so far as Sarson could see. Hidden every now and then by the brown sail, then coming into view again, he could see the stalwart figure of the Grimslade headmaster. Nothing else was to be seen in the boat, save the great stack of tropical produce that Sammy was bringing with him.

Sarson was not likely to guess—what Sammy

did not even suspect—that a fat German school-boy lay fast asleep under that fruity stack, his snore drowned by the wash of the waves and the croaking of mast and rope.

Dr. Sparshott ran the boat in to the sand at the foot of the rocks. He dropped the sail and stood looking for the maroon. Generally Ezra was in sight when Sammy came. This time he was not to be seen.

"Aho! Sarson! Aho!"

Only the echo of his shout answered Sammy. He stepped on a high rock and glanced about him. Lower the hidden ruffian crouched in his cover, his heart throbbing. He was well hidden, and the Grimslade headmaster's keen eyes did not pick him out.

Dr. Sparshott jumped down and strode up the path to the hut which Sarson had built in the centre of the islet. He noticed the sand that was strewn thickly on the path, a new thing since his last visit. That looked as if the idling outcast was beginning to bestir himself a little, and Sammy took it as a good sign.

But he was carefully on his guard as he strode up the path, and his hand was very near the butt of the revolver in his belt. He would not have been surprised to discover an ambush, or to hear the whizzing of a hurling rock.

But there was no sign of the marooned man. It crossed Sammy's mind that he might be ill, and lying in the hut. If that was the case, Sammy Sparshott was the man to do the best he could for him.

He tramped on and reached the door of the novel, made of broad plantain leaves pinned on a rough frame with thorns. Sammy lifted his hand to push it open, and at the same moment the earth beneath his feet gave way and he shot downwards!

From the distance, among the rocks, came a yell—a savage yell of triumph!

**In the Shadow of Death!**

**C**RASH! Sammy Sparshott struck the earth at the bottom of the pit with his feet, and rolled over. For a moment he lay dizzy and breathless. Then he leaped up, his eyes ablaze.

He had been trapped—trapped like a wild pig in the bush! Now he knew, in a flash, why the ruffian had been out of sight, why the path had been thickly sanded! The layer of sand hid the trap! In front of the doorway the rascal had dug that deep pit, with the very spade that Sammy had provided him with for cultivation; covered it with branches and leaves and screened it from sight with sand. As the natives trapped the wild pig in the bush, so had Ezra Sarson trapped the headmaster of Grimslade!

Dr. Sparshott set his teeth. He heard the triumphant yell of the Frisco tough; he heard the heavy footsteps running up the path. He jerked the revolver from his belt.

He was trapped—whether he would ever get out of that pit alive was a very doubtful question. Ezra had the boat—he could, if he liked, leave Sammy marooned in his place and run across to Castaway Island. And the juniors, taken by surprise by the sudden and unexpected arrival of their bitter foe—what would happen to them?

"By the great horned toad! I guess I got you, Sammy Sparshott!" came a yell from above.

Dr. Sparshott uttered no sound. If the ruffian believed that he was dead or disabled by the fall, and looked down—that was all that Sammy asked! His eyes burned over the uplifted revolver. Life or death for himself

weighed little, so long as he protected the boys in his charge from this deadly and relentless enemy.

"Say, you broke your neck, schoolmaster?" roared the triumphant ruffian.

Silence!

A ragged hat came over the edge of the pit. Crack! rang the revolver, and the bullet went through the hat. Had Sarson's head been in it he would have plunged headlong after his victim, with a bullet in his brain. But a howl of mocking laughter told that it was only a trick to draw the headmaster's fire, if he was still able to pull the trigger. The hat, lodged on a stick, was jerked back.

Sammy Sparshott ground his teeth. There was no chance! The ruffian was too wary for him.

"Say, I guess you can loose off all the lead you want!" yelled Ezra.

Dr. Sparshott had no hope now of hitting the ruffian above. But with the wind blowing strongly towards Castaway Island there was a bare chance that the schoolboys might hear a sound of the shooting, distant as the island was. And if they heard firing on the maroon's rock, they would know that there was trouble, and be put on their guard. It was the faintest of chances of warning them, but it was the only chance Sammy had!

Crack, crack, crack, crack, crack! rang the remaining five shots in the revolver, so swiftly that the reports were blended almost into one. Far and wide the firing rang and echoed, wafted far across the sea by the wind, though whether even an echo reached Castaway Island was very doubtful.

"Blaze away!" yelled Ezra, in jeering mockery. "Lose it off, schoolmaster! I calculate I ain't giving you a chance to throw lead at my cabeza, not by a jugful! Guess you're trapped in that pit, and there you stay, doggone you!"

"Sarson! Listen to me!" Dr. Sparshott spoke desperately. "I have spared your life more than once—I came here to-day to supply your needs! If you have any human feeling in your breast, do not harm the boys! Leave me to my fate—I ask nothing at your hands! But the boys—"

To save his life a hundred times over Sammy Sparshott would not have asked mercy. But for the sake of the boys he could put his pride in his pocket. But the appeal was in vain, as he knew that it would be when he made it.

Only a hoarse, mocking laugh answered him, followed by the sound of retreating footsteps! Ezra Sarson was gone—gone to seize the boat and sail across to the island!

Sammy groaned!

**A Narrow Escape for Fritz!**

**M**EIN gootness! Vat te tump!" gasped Fritz Splitz.

Fatty Fritz was awake!

He was not aware of what had awakened him, though it was, as a matter of fact, the rapid fire of Sammy's revolver, fired in the hope that the sound might reach Castaway Island on the wind. It had reached, at least, the fat ears of Friedrich von Splitz, and woke him from slumber. And the fat German, awakening under a pile of tropical fruits, gasped with amazement and alarm.

He had gone to sleep in the boat, he remembered that! Only the blue sky had been over him then. Now he was buried, and it seemed to the bewildered Fritz that he must be still dreaming!

Piles of banana bunches fell over as the terrified fat German strove to struggle up. His head went into the basket that Jim Dainty had up-ended over his fat face, and he struggled and wriggled out of the stack of tropical fruits with the basket still on his head.

He dragged it off and gasped for breath, staring round with his saucer-eyes, in utter bewilderment.

"Peasts and prutes and pounders!" gasped Fatty Fritz as it dawned on his podgy brain what must have happened.

Fritz stared round him. He realised that the playful juniors had buried him under the boat's load of fruit.

Slowly it dawned on him that this was Sarson's rock, and that the dark mass on the sea to the west was Castaway Island. He understood that he must have remained asleep while Sammy ran the boat out and made his trip across.

"Mein gootness!" gasped Fritz. "Sammy will be colosally vaxy mit me!"

A dingy, tattered figure came striding down among the rugged rocks to the little patch of sandy beach.

At the sight of it Fritz Splitz stared in alarm. For it was not Sammy—it was Ezra Sarson who was striding down to the boat.

Fritz Splitz's saucer-eyes almost popped from his fat face. The mere sight of the ruffian would have scared him, even in the presence of his headmaster. Now Sammy was not to be seen, though evidently he was on the islet. He would never have trusted the ruffian to come down to the boat unwatched!

Fritz Splitz knew, with a pang of deadly terror, that the marooned ruffian must somehow have got the upper hand of Sammy, and now he was coming to the boat!

Frozen with horror and fear, Fritz gazed at Ezra with starting eyes. He read the grin of savage triumph on the stubby, tanned face. But that grin vanished as Sarson sighted the fat schoolboy standing up in the boat, staring at him.

For a second Ezra hardly believed his eyes—he had been absolutely certain that Sammy had come alone, and he was utterly amazed and confounded by the unexpected sight of Fritz Splitz. But it was only for a split second that he stared, then he broke into a fierce run down the beach.

"Mein gootness!" stuttered Fritz Splitz. The sight of the desperado brundung down the beach towards him woke him to action.

He grabbed for his pocket knife and, without even thinking, acting only on the instinct of self-preservation, Fritz slashed at the painter and cut it through. Almost gabbling with terror, but knowing well that his life depended on a few seconds, the fat German grabbed up the nearest oar and shoved frantically at the rock to which the boat had been moored.

Terror gave him desperate strength. The boat shot away from the beach, spinning dizzily across the shining water. Ezra, running at breathless speed, reached the water's edge with the boat spinning away a dozen yards out of his reach.

He was too late! After all his scheming had captured Dr. Sparshott—but he had failed to secure possession of the boat.

Meanwhile Fritz, out on the open sea, rowed with every ounce of strength that remained in his fat limbs. Then he rolled, exhausted, in the bottom of the boat, and gave himself up for lost!

*(Sarson has captured Dr. Sparshott—but he finds it a difficult task to hold his prisoner when Jim Dainty and Co. storm to the rescue! Don't miss next week's thrilling story of the Grimslade castaways.)*

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