

# RED HAIR AND BLUE SEA



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### CHAPTER XIII

Burke had spoken of the brown man's arrest.

Meanwhile, Olive had tired of his enforced bath.

Slowly Olive began to move down-stream. Scarcely did the leaves that hid his head seem to stir as they skirted the bank, blending with the leaves of the background. Past Sentry No. 1, past No. 2. Finally a friendly turn of the course and he could rise, dripping, and run for the suspected mangrove trail.

Trotting through the mud, he had neared the outlandish village. Then, hearing his name, he stopped, whirled around, encountered one Tarak, a member of Ponape Burke's crew. Tarak, smiling affably, emerged from the thicket and the two shook hands.

Olive slipped into that house from land's end. He crouched, the central support hiding his face. A glance showed the tide was moving out. He could not await reinforcements.

Opposite, Palmyra still leaned against the post, Martin behind her, the seated natives in front.

Then Olive, staking all on Burke's absorption, stroiled out from shelter, crouched brazenly into the eyes of the startled sentry, entered that side of the prison house where the natives grouped. Unobtrusively, he dropped among them.

Neither the girl nor her guard noted his coming. A native noise or less meant nothing.

But as Palmyra waited, with downcast gaze, her fingers working aimlessly at the hat and veil the old woman had brought along, she became gradually aware that of the brown hands on the mats before her, one wore a pattern of tattoo that eyes focused into interest. And then, astonishingly, she beheld on the wrist a certain amount of five toes.

A glad cry rose to her lips. But she suppressed it, arose from her seat, the excitement forcing these. Her own salvation, this man's life, depended on her caution.

The brown man opened his mouth and spoke aloud in the native tongue, quick to Martin.

Olive's expression was that of forced politeness. But, though he had seemed to address the white man, he had not done so. What he had said was this:

"Men of the village of Tanna, look here into me. The high body Palmyra shall be saved. I speak the way."

Olive was continuing in the tones of courtesy, looking at Martin but speaking direct to the villagers. In a sentence he appealed to their sympathy, to their fear of the Japanese. Then, without alteration of voice or manner, he added for the interpreter: "Make words, make words unto him. Anything that shall mean nothing and have a pleasant sound."

The interpreter had got the idea, but came a flood of compliment to which the white man made a crude response, condescendingly amiable.

And so, under the very nose of the unsuspecting Martin, almost within hearing of Burke, Olive worked out his attack.

And Ponape Burke himself gave the signal. Spitting on the ground, he called across to his man: "Ahoy, ahoy, there! Haven't thou done better than get the prison out yet? Give a hand the moment a ship has these signs to make the natives bring."

His lieutenant's response came from the kitchen. Martin coughed by his side, took them to their seats where the Japanese. The words must emerge from under the taller trees.

For perhaps forty seconds both men were absorbed.

Then Martin, still seated, his shoulder against the girl's support, lowered his glasses, turned his head to speak to her.

But Palmyra was gone!

At Burke's order, the crew, loading rifles, began to go through the thatches. Fortunately for Olive, Ponape remained in the open, bawling out commands and imprecations. The search, unsystematic, was still sincere, for, though some of the brown seamen grinned behind the white men's backs, none would have dared pass the girl by. Yet the quest covered the islet without result.

It was when Ponape Burke had stopped, completely at a loss, that a messenger came running from the Lupe-a-Noa. The schooner could not be got out. Diving, the natives had found under her nose two of the long hexagonal rocks from the ancient wall.

He would have been aghast to know that John Thurston had discovered the vessel; had reached her before the working party and while her watchman was irresponsibly absent; had, in the brief interval afforded, made good use of his engineering skill. With a block and tackle and a light spar from the schooner, Thurston, in a few minutes, had undone a labor at which slaves must have sweated for days. He had tumbled two of the stones off the wall into the canal. The Pigeon would not fly again, until the month's highest tides came to lift her over.

A figure broke from among the men, went bounding along the path toward the outer point, carrying in its arms a heavy burden.

Burke uttered a cackle of triumph.

For, as this figure ran, there was visible over its shoulder a white straw hat, a blue veil fluttered into view and, below, Ponape saw the folds of a plaid raincoat.

As he ran, however, he struck his foot against a tree root, staggered, the burden was hurled from his arms to the ground. But he did not pause. Two of the sailors, flanking along the beach, sprang upon him, others joined on. A struggle, and he was held.

Ponape Burke turned a savage face from this greasy pork to the man who had tricked him—his prisoner. Then an oath and a laugh struggled for simultaneous expression. For there, bloody, desperate, stood the brown man Olive.

The white man's features were contorted. "Where is she?" he demanded.

Olive clamped his lips shut.

It had been Burke's sudden descent upon the four houses which precipitated catastrophe. The villagers, grown overconfident, had thought he would not look there again. Olive, having seen the messenger from the Pigeon of Noah, had assumed erroneously that the schooner was ready; that Ponape, seizing the girl now, could sail at once. In desperation, the brown man had snatched up the hat, veil and raincoat, thrown these about the pig-cooked to send to the feast down the coast.

Running toward the water end of the islet he had hoped to draw off Burke and the crew, so the villagers could rush Palmyra shoreward to safety. He would hold the pursuit by carrying the pig into the sea; perhaps himself escape if Ponape feared the sound of firing. But, one missed, and he had been caught before there was time to get the girl away.

Hence it was that she, herself, peering furtively out, saw Olive run to the main tree, his wrists bound behind him.

She saw the master in vehement demand for her surrender. Olive shake his head in defiance.

The villagers, crowding round Burke's guards, waited in consternation.

Ponape turned to them. "If you could save this man's life, speak."

But Olive, with an unflinching, beseeching silence.

They would have been glad to have the white woman off their hands and Olive free. The Japanese could not get much from their yielding to force. They wished to yield—but the will of this one being held them fast.

Unnoticed, a boy had wormed in to the crowd, a bit of paper folded in his hand. His purpose was to toss the note so Ponape should get it, yet not know whence it came. But the arch blindfold. As the message left his fingers, Burke saw. The white man snatched up the paper, unfolded it. "Your sacred word to free Olive unharmed (also the others), and I give myself up. He shall not die for me. If you promise, call loudly—yes."

Burke uttered a cry of victory, whirling toward that point from where he conceived the note to have come, he put his hands to his mouth and shouted: "No, no, No!"

Then he entered the boy by the wrist. "Show me where."

His revolver revealed the messenger's path to cry.

Under the muzzle of the big weapon the archin quailed. He was appalled at Burke's anger. And he saw that his own people wavered. At last, therefore, he raised a trembling finger, pointed toward a group of thatches.

The boy haltingly brought Ponape Burke to a hut. "In there," he whispered.

Burke sprang under, dragged his guide with him. The house had been searched before. It was empty now.

The man's scrutiny took in every detail. Then he turned and the boy was in real danger. Savage irritation had all but overborne any sense of consequence.

Suddenly Burke's eyes opened wide, he leaped to the center of the house, stared up at the bundles of stiff bark cloth, gave one prod with the revolver.

From within there came a gasp of pain.

Palmyra Tree had lost the bitter fight. Ponape Burke at last had won.

"Y'shall see Olive hanged," he said. "And then, whether or no, y'shall go to Tanna."

He dragged her toward the tree, the native following, tongues a-clicking against teeth, the traitorous boy ahead, self-important, unscourged by any sense of guilt.

At the tree Olive stood, among uneasy guards, hands bound behind him, feet loosely tied, noosing hemp drawn taut across its limb.

Look at him—yer rope round his neck? Burke reproached. "Waiting, poor sucker, for y'tset him free. This here kanaka was good enough to die for you. But when it comes yer turn?" He laughed with brutal insinuation.

She could scarcely form the sounds. But at last she gasped out: "Let—him—go."

Olive knew not the words but he knew their meaning. "Never!" he cried. "Tell her—tell her she shall not give herself for me."

At this moment, however, there rose from the outskirts of the crowd a startled warning. "Zapaneé, Zapaneé, he come!"

Burke, with an oath, snatched up

his binoculars. Three boats from the Okayama were already close. Rifles bristled.

Whither the others ran, Ponape Burke was carried only a step, or two by the animal instinct of self-preservation. Then he stopped, started on, turned back.

Horror sat upon that visage; ludicrous, yet doubly intense by the very inadequacy of its expression.

He snatched for the revolver. He could battle for her. Yes, kill half a dozen of those Japs. But—to what avail? Fighting or no, he'd lost her.

"I can't go on without you," he burst forth, "and they won't let me go with you. But if I can't live, I can die—with you."

He broke into the old laugh.

The boats, as one frantic glance told his victim, were still too far to quit. The natives all had fled. Only Olive remained, bound hand and foot, the rope from the house arcing across the limb above.

Olive was writhing to sunder the snail cords which bound his arms.

Olive—blood dripping from his wrists torn in his struggle—hurled himself against the madman. The concussion of his bulk threw Ponape back. The bullet which would have pierced Palmyra's brain flew harmlessly into space.

The islander by a supreme effort snapped his bindings. He seized the other. He crushed his master to him like a scuffle.

But the hand that held the revolver was yet, for the moment, free. It flamed, the muzzle pressed against Olive's side. The hand, gripped convulsively, forced the hammer up toward its fatal blow.

But now, astonishingly, all movement ceased.

Firing from a distance, someone had dropped Ponape Burke through his evil heart.

But, ah, the steel bullet had not stopped its work performed. It had crashed in through the body of the horrible beast man, who thought for naught.

The girl shrieked out, fell fainting.

And then, as these things lay, there came a sound of hoofs, and a muddy, foam-flecked horse charged up the village path with John Thurston.

He sprang from his saddle, flung aside the rein, caught the unconscious girl up in his arms.

When Palmyra Tree at last opened her eyes, she gazed up at John Thurston for a bewildered moment.

Side by side two bodies lay.

Palmyra snatched herself back from John as if his touch had burned. "And it was you," she cried, rigid in horror, "you who fired? Oh, she wailed, "I cannot, cannot bear that it should have been you—you who killed Olive!"

"But, oh, no, no, lady," the surgeon interrupted in eager reassurance. "This native man is not dead."

She looked at that form in shuddering question.

"Bullet knocked him out a little," explained the officer, "but it hit nothing to make this big man trouble. He will be something like when the prize fighter gets knocked to sleep on the jaw."

At his first sentence, Palmyra's lips had parted in a gasp of relief. Now, in the reaction, she wavered, closed her eyes dizzily, put out toward Thurston a groping hand.

John caught her to him once more, to uphold her. His heart was a flutter with the knowledge that that pathetic hand gripping had been for him. With her face upturned to his, peering close, Thurston, in that great yearning so long denied, could not resist, would, despite the grinning audience, have kissed her again and again.

But Commander Sakamoto, of an ever tactful race, was quick with a rebuke. But the real reason—the voice vibrated with feeling—"It is then Olive, who saved me for me, who made it possible for me to re-

### NOTICE OF TRUSTEE'S SALE

By virtue of the power of sale contained in a certain deed of trust executed to the undersigned trustee by T. M. Greer and wife, Addie Greer, on the 25th day of April, 1925, to secure the payment of the sum of \$1,500.00 to the Watauga Building & Loan Association of Watauga County, N. C., the payment of which sum was assumed by T. H. Shull and default having been made on the payments as provided in said deed of trust I will on Monday, May 21, 1928, at the courthouse door of Watauga county between the hours of 10 a. m. and 2 p. m. to satisfy said deed of trust, interest and cost, sell to the highest bidder for cash the following described real estate, to-wit:

Beginning on a stone on the edge of the right of way of the railroad and runs south 49 degrees west with the dirt road 11 poles to a stone; thence north 49 degrees east 11 poles to a stone on the edge of the right of way of the railroad; thence south 39 degrees east 8 poles to the beginning, containing one-half acre, more or less.

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This 19th day of April, 1928. W. H. GRAUG, Trustee. Brown & Bingham, Attorneys.

command which forced his unwilling men to the right about; then chased the giggling villagers home with the sword of a samurai.

A burial detail had carried Ponape Burke forever away. Ponape who had staked all—and lost all.

"And when," demanded John of Palmyra on the third day after, "and when shall the wedding be?"

"The wedding," ordained this girl, "must take place before we leave this island. I insist, for one thing, despite your protest, because I think I should always may be a little afraid to realize my own true love; that then Olive can be your—can be your best man."

And so it was that Olive, commonly called Olive, who speaks no language known to civilized man, who eats fat pork with his fingers, and anoints himself copiously with scented coconut oil and aromatic, stood up with John Thurston, the embodiment of civilization at its

best. Thurston could not see the best man a stick pin for Olive, whom it ever wears a shirt.

But he could see that the islander got Ponape Burke's swift schooner, the Lupe-a-Noa, trusted for the brown man's protection by the American mission and the Japanese navy, and manned by an already eager and worshipping crew.

THE END

Ink Hog Incoq

"Do you know the author of these scurrilous reminiscences?" "No; I fancy he's just an ink hog who prefers to remain incoq."

The Inevitable

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