

DEEP WATER ISLAND

by ALAN LEMAY

W-N-U-RELEASE

INSTALLMENT SEVEN

THE STORY SO FAR: Karen Waterson, convinced by her lawyer, John Colt, that she has a claim to the island estate of her grandfather, Garrett Waterson, has come to Honolulu to attempt getting the property. In an effort to find out something about the Wayne family, now in control of Alakoa, the island, she accepts a date to go sailing with Richard Wayne or Tonga Dick as he is known throughout the South Pacific. Against her wishes he takes her to Alakoa and there they find that James Wayne, Dick's uncle and manager of the property, is very ill. Dick attempts to work out a compromise settlement with Karen but she refuses. The first night of their visit James Wayne is found dead. Next day Karen and Dick start back for Honolulu. On the way Dick attempts to explain to Karen the Waynes' interest in the island.

Now continue with the story.



It's war then?
"There—there doesn't seem to be any other way."

Karen's next words were faintly contemptuous. "If you think that your brothers are capable of standing against such a man as John Colt—"

He shrugged impatiently. "Karen," he said, "I am the one that you are against now. Don't you know that?"

Karen faltered and her eyes dropped. But she said, "Yes; yes, of course. I suppose it always did have to come to that, in the end, didn't it?"

Suddenly Dick reached across the table and caught both her hands. "I don't want to go to war with you," he said. "I don't think you want to go to war with me. Do you?"

"It doesn't have to be war," Dick said. His voice had neither pride nor distance. "It can be anything you want to make it."

Suddenly he came to his feet, stepped around the little table; and though she sprang up he caught her in his arms. Her face pressed hard against his blue jacket, so that she smelled tobacco smoke, and salt spray. He spoke to her almost inaudibly through the sudden tumble of her hair.

"I don't want your island. I don't want anything on the face of the sea, except one thing. You know what that is. I want you."

Her arms went around him then, and she clung to him. "I don't want the island either, Dick . . ."

"If it brought you into the Pacific, I guess Alakoa served its turn."

"You—you'll have to see John Colt," Karen said. "Somehow you have to fix it all with him."

She felt the breath go out of him. "Colt!" he repeated. "In God's name, why Colt?"

"Everything he has left has gone into backing me. He's the only reason I'm here."

His arms loosened, then, so that she swayed away from him; and he held her shoulders between his two hands.

"You feel so definitely tied to John Colt as that?"

"I have to stand by him, now—even now," Karen said. "I couldn't possibly do anything else."

She saw his eyes harden, and disengaged herself from his hands.

"You hate John Colt so much?"

"My uncle would never have yielded one inch of Alakoa to John Colt," Tonga Dick said. He spoke slowly, but to Karen it must have seemed that his words carried an implacable finality. "Neither will I; and neither will my—brothers, while I live."

"I'm sorry," Karen said.

"You mean?"

"There's nothing more to be said."

"It's war, then?"

"There—there doesn't seem to be any other way."

"Karen—if there's anything I can say—"

She was in possession of herself again. "You might say," Karen told him, "you might say to the Chinese boy that I would like a cup of black coffee."

He turned away from her, shouting to the mess boy in a furious bellow that shook the lamps in their gymbals.

As he did so a great lift of the sea swung a porthole of the Holokai high above the water; and through the thick streaming glass Karen saw distant lights.

Honolulu was rising, coming to them across the black water.

Karen Waterson, deeply fatigued, did not talk to John Colt that night; and the brilliant but peculiarly soft sunlight of the Islands was flooding the lanai of her suite when she next awoke.

Looking at the sunlight on the clean rainbow water, it was hard to remember a lightless and uneasy sea with its long miles whispering under a black rain. Her memory of Tonga Dick Wayne, though, remained distinct, as sharply detailed as if he had been with her in the sunlight. She could almost see him standing there, tall and balanced, his sea cap slapped jauntily any old place on his head—grinning, of course, but with a glint of blue steel in his eyes narrowed against the brightness of the sea.

Later, eating breakfast on her own lanai, she was only half finished when John Colt tapped at the door, and was let in.

Colt paced morosely back and forth along the railing of the lanai while Karen sat down to finish her breakfast. "You look as if the sailing did you good," he complained.

"You've worried me half to death," he told her now. Unim-

pressed, Karen buttered a roll; and at this John Colt looked annoyed. "I should think," he said, "that you'd have enough consideration—"

"John," Karen said, "James Wayne is dead."

"Well—I know it. It's in the papers. And this is going to—"

"I," Karen said, "was on Alakoa when he died."

"You must have had a very lovely time."

"Interesting," Karen put in.

"Did you talk to James Wayne before he died?"

For a fraction of a moment Karen Waterson hesitated.

"No," she answered.

There was a long silence then, and Karen had a curious sense that time was rushing over them in long swells, as the green seas swept over the coral rocks.

"John," she said, "have you thought of compromise with the Waynes?"

"You talked with them?" he asked.

"No one but Tonga Dick. And it's impossible to learn anything from him until he's ready to have you know."

"Then—"

"I'm speaking from impressions—vague impressions," Karen admitted. "I don't pretend to call it intuition—but you can call it what you want to. I think we ought to consider, very carefully, some sort of compromise with the Waynes."

If John Colt had ever feared Tonga Dick, he forgot it now. "Your case is sound and justifiable in every way—Island law being what it is, and the Island precedents what they are. I wouldn't be here now, and you wouldn't be here, if I thought there was any loophole in your case."

"You don't want to think of compromise? Not any compromise at all?"

"The best possible thing for us is that the case be tried as it stands. The death of James Wayne, and the probate it implies, is a magnificent break—such a break as we could not have accomplished by our own efforts, nor hoped for. If ever anyone in the world had reason to play the cards as they lie, we have it now."

"I'm not so sure," Karen said.

"The whole estate will be tied up," Colt exclaimed. "Any attempt by the Waynes to conceal assets will be blown to hell now! Everything will go into probate, and we'll get the whole works, intact. And with James Wayne dead, those helpless nephews of his will drive their attorneys crazy. What a picture! They'll run in circles like sheep."

"One of them won't," Karen said.

"James Wayne was the only hard edge in the lot. He would have fought till he died; but he was the only one."

"There's one other," Karen said.

"Who?"

"Tonga Dick."

"That youngster? Rubbish!"

"You're going to find that Tonga Dick Wayne is the hardest one of them all," Karen prophesied; "and perhaps the most resourceful."

Colt shrugged. "You'll find he doesn't count at all."

What Karen said then was totally on impulse. She had not planned to say it, had not meant to say it; but somehow the words were unexpectedly drawn out of her lips by the tension that had come between them.

"John," Karen said, "suppose I married Dick Wayne?"

John Colt did not start, nor turn; he stood still, looking at the sea. But by his very immobility Karen knew that John Colt had met something which dropped him where he stood.

After a moment he swung his wide shoulders toward her. "You mean to say—?" John Colt started to ask "you mean to say—?" His question died away. He swung his shoulders again, and once more stood looking out at the sea.

Colt seemed composed again as he next spoke. "You're in love with this Tonga Dick?"

"I don't know," Karen said.

Colt was like a mountain; he was like the sea. Perhaps it was a terrible thing that a slender girl, weighing not more than one hundred and twenty pounds, could break up John Colt.

Suddenly Karen knew the reason. This man had never made love to her, not by a word, not by so much as the pressure of a hand. But now—nothing could have told Karen more definitely than this moment told her that Colt would rather lose Alakoa than lose her. John Colt was in love with her, completely and utterly, without recourse and without doubt.

"What is it," John Colt said, "that this man has?"

Karen couldn't answer him.

"Compromise," John Colt said queerly. "How could there be any compromise? If you weren't in the right—if you did not rightfully possess all this island—do you think I would have fooled with you?"

"What do you want me to do?"

"As far as I have anything to do with this," Colt said, "I'll never yield any Wayne one cent."

There was a finality in that; but instinctively Karen knew that it was not a finality that had anything to do with money. What had been a contest for an island had turned into a contest between two men for a girl. Neither one of them would be satisfied now with any settlement that would not be a complete shut-out for the other.

When she had comprehended that, Karen knew that she was in a trap. Perhaps already an unalterable obligation had committed her to something she had not foreseen.

CHAPTER VIII

Until now Karen Waterson had secretly looked forward to the first meeting of Tonga Dick Wayne and John Colt, as an event no sports-lover would wish to miss. Now, however, her mischievous spectator-interest was superseded by new elements. Not Alakoa, but Karen herself, had become the focus of disturbance; making her hope that she would be as far away as possible when the two should collide.

The inevitable meeting took place late that afternoon.

On the surface nothing could have seemed smoother or more casual. There was a tea dansant on the beach terrace of the hotel; Karen and John Colt sat at a table beside the dance floor. Neither of them saw Tonga Dick Wayne come strolling between the tables until he was standing there, beside Karen's chair.

Dick Wayne was wearing whites, which emphasized the depth of his tan; perhaps that was why he managed to look like the only true islander there in all that throng. He grinned down at them amiably from his considerable height.

"Hello, conspirators."

Karen said, "Hello, Dick." John Colt stood up automatically, but said nothing; there was no least change in his expression.

A miniature Filipino boy now came into evidence behind Dick Wayne; he was carrying a chair with which he must have followed Tonga Dick clear across the lanai through the crowd. Karen supposed that she would have to make the best of the thing, such as it was.

"Mr. Wayne, I'm not sure whether you've met Mr. Colt?"

"Not possibly the famous deep sea diver?" Dick asked.

"Much better known," Colt purred "as an inventive pastry cook."

"My mistake," Dick said.

Dick Wayne accepted a drink the Filipino boy handed him, and chuckled as he looked about him. "I see some Honolulu people here," he remarked. "Tomorrow it will be all over town that the Waynes' black sheep is very clubby with the enemy, and has probably sold out."

"Very amusing for you, I have no doubt," said John Colt.

"Yes," said Dick. "You look kind of sweet, Karen."

Colt made a movement in his chair as if he were about to rise.

"Don't go away," Dick said, not bothering to take his eyes from the dance floor. He sipped his drink reflectively, "I have news for you, Colt."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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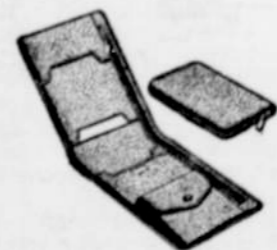
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