

Red Hair AND Blue Sea

By STANLEY P. OSBORN

The women, fearing Van might soon arrive, prepared to take their prisoner immediately away.

At first Palmyra thought this impossible.

But now she made a discovery. Though the thatch was so notoriously to the forefront as to seem above suspicion, the high wall of the police compound ended directly opposite, and turned inland, leaving between it and the bank wall of the trader's a three-foot lane. This path, she recollected being told, ran back for half a mile, a mere passageway between the wall and the mangrove swamp upon which she had looked down from her mission window.

And the mouth of that hidden path was no more than twenty feet distant. Until an alarm had been given the people would be unsuspecting. The French trader across the way had locked up his place and gone out to breakfast. The native passersby were coming in detached groups. Palmyra's captors need wait until no one was near. Then, closing round her, they could whisk her across, screening her with one or two of the ever-present umbrellas, raised either against a shower or the equatorial sun.

But almost at the moment of the sortie there came an interruption. One of the old women, stooping down to glance out, discovered the girl's father and mother and Constance Crawford approaching—already close. Panic ensued. If her captors had not been dangerous before, they certainly were now.

The prisoner would have screamed. Unconsciously, she extended her lungs to take in the necessary air. But, on the second, that fibre cord cut deep into her flesh.

Gasping, she was thrust under the mosquito net; thrown flat, head on bamboo pillow. Two of the hats followed her into the netting, sat pressed against her on either side. These snatched off her hat and veil, threw over her a covering.

Meanwhile the crone who had lured her here had taken a machete and seated herself on the patch of grass before the house.

Within the house, Palmyra's two guardians had begun a low-voiced singing. She perceived herself as a sick woman. These two kindly old souls sat inside the net to comfort her, while, before the hut, a third waited ready to answer solicitous inquiry. And any commotion of struggle which might catch the transient eye would be taken for a round of that massage which is the native's cure-all.

Her captors had taken impish advantage of that trait in human nature which causes man never really to look at a thing in plain sight.

She was intensely alert. At the slightest opportunity she meant to scream, to fight. Since her escape from Burke she herself had carried a small automatic pistol. At the first chance she'd use it.

Now, however, she saw Van Buren Rutger approaching, and sank back again. The others had not known. Van did know.

But just as the trio had strolled away and the newcomer almost reached the house, here, unexpectedly, was the man Martin. He ran up to Van. Excitedly he spoke.

"Say, mister. . . . Your lady friend. That red-headed girl."

Van drew back stiffly. "Miss Tree is in this house," he said.

Martin was vehement. No, that she wasn't! Outlaw natives had her

Hurrying her away.

Van stared, incredulous, yet alarmed.

"I got it straight," cried Martin. "There's twenty of 'em or more—all with guns. And they're running her for the Puellko Rocks."

The Rocks were a noticeable formation not far inland.

All Van's suspicions of the brown man burst forth in the one cry: "Olive!"

Palmyra, seeing, hearing, burned with contempt.

The stranger now took the initiative. "I'll warn the Japs," he said. "You run for the mission. Remember—the Puellko Rocks."

But at this moment here came John Thurston. He was jumping up to the wharf from a boat. At sight of him Van's face lighted with relief.

Instantly, Thurston began to throw off his white coat.

"Olive? Nonsense!"

"I tell you," Van affirmed shrilly, "she's in love with the damned kanaka and he, he's got her."

CHAPTER XII.

Thurston thrust Van aside impatiently. "The Puellko you say?" he demanded of the man Martin.

Across the road a horse stood saddled. Thurston ran to it, jerked the reins free, jumped into the saddle. The girl's father, returning at this moment, came running up.

"Rouse the beach," cried Thurston. "You, Van—the gunboat. Martin—the police. Tree—you to the mission. I'm for the Puellko."

He whirled his horse.

"Wait, wait, Thurston," implored the father. "Here, take my revolver."

"Rouse the beach and follow," came the answer, above the ring of hoofs.

For a moment the three stood, petrified, staring after him. Then they ran, in different directions to carry out his orders.

Scarcely had they gone than two native men burst from the narrow footway and crossed to the thatch. A few seconds later, with the old women, they had rushed Palmyra over the road and into the lane between the high blind wall and the salt-water marsh, where there were no eyes to see save those of the crabs that ran back and forth across the slime.

Van Rutger ran down the wharf, jumped into Thurston's boat and was pulled to the Okayama.

Commander Sakamoto turned to Van. "But my dear Mister," he said, "Somesing is—wrong. How can O-lee-lay have taken the young lady when O-lee-vay is locked up here safe aboard? But he satisfy me he is only afraid for young lady. He seems good. So I let him go, unless you, . . ."

Van was agast. "Absolutely, no!" he cried.

Sakamoto shrugged. "As you say," he conceded.

He gave an order and shortly the brown man appeared on deck.

Olive must have divined on whose demand he was held.

At sight of him Van's anomosity flamed up. The white man sprang forward. "What have you done with her?" he demanded. Then, turning to the interpreter: "What has he done with her?"

Olive seemed at a loss.

He shot forth a question, received his answer, burst into a flood of entreaty.

"He say," repeated the interpreter, "he say turn him loose. He savvy too much. Go look see. Find girl dan! too much quick."

The Japanese turned questioningly to Van.

"No!" cried the white man passionately. "No!"

The officer shrugged again.

If Palmyra herself had been there, she would have marvelled that Van could remain blind to the sincerity of Olive's purpose.

As for the islander, he must have adjudged the situation hopeless. With a final look of dumb pleading, he whirled, ducked past his unready and the clutching fingers of the others, and sprang over the starboard rail, foot first into the sea.

As Olive struck the brine Sakamoto leaped for the gangway and into his cutter, which happened to be alongside.

"Jab him with an oar," ordered the commander. But it is not so easy to jab with a long oar.

Olive made a judicious flout, dived back under the vicious thrust of the port oars, and splashed ashore. The sailors floundered close in wake.

Inland the main road from the beach was crowding in against the river. Soon the fugitive must cross one or the other in the open. He would be seen. He would be caught.

But. . . . Olive did not cross the road. He did not cross the river. Nor was he caught. Merely—he disappeared.

He had lain all the while, in the river, down among the crowding water plants, only his nose up for air.

Normally the water, clear as dew, would have revealed him. But rain, in the mountains, tropically copious, had raised the stream out of its banks. Stained it earthly brown, dotted its surface with moving leaf and branch.

Meanwhile, John Thurston, putting his horse to a run, had soon neared the Puellko Rocks.

A shoulder of basalt blocked the view ahead. He clambered up, had almost reached the top. Then, startlingly, the whistle of a bullet.

Thurston ducked behind a rock. "Meaning me?" he questioned.

He raised his head cautiously. Bang! A leaf cluster came fluttering, like a wounded bird, to his feet.

Across the road, opposite, a great alio tree dominated the bush behind it. From among its many trunks a wisp of white smoke had floated out.

John, in his effort to locate the enemy, risked standing up. A third bullet flattened itself against the rock. "Seems they are here, after all," he conceded.

Regaining his horse he had galloped back to the road, with this turning movement in view, when he encountered the girl's father and seven other men. These were an advance guard. Sailors from the gunboat were following in to scour the brush.

"The lava caves," the father cried excitedly. "High in the mountains, Thurston, inland of here. Unexplored, inaccessible; a terrible hiding place. My God, John, we've got to head 'em off from the caves."

Thurston told of the shooting. Thurston found what he sought—footprints.

Native men almost never wore shoes; then only shoes of cloth and rubber. But here, in the damp mould, someone had ascended toward the alio tree, descended—wearing leather.

Thurston examined the prints at length. Then, "If I'm any sort of Indian at all," he commented, "this was—Ponape Burke."

For a distance Thurston was able to ride. Then lava, clean washed, and three paths intersecting at the water.

It was well for Palmyra that she could not know what difficulties her lover had now to meet.

The bed of this stream, cast solid in one piece from nature's furnace, would have provided a test for the North Woods skill of any man. And in addition, Ponape Burke—if it were he—had taken pains to leave no mark.

Later, he found footprints again—shod and bare. Ahead large trees told of dry land.

Thurston advanced stealthily, rifle ready. The elevation took on an unusual form. He recognized it, to his surprise, as an artificial island; one of these ruined fortresses or tombs built by prehistoric conquerors on such islands as Kusale and Ponape.

Could the girl be imprisoned here? Opposite, there rose a twenty-foot wall of basaltic columnar blocks.

But it was not at this wall that John Thurston looked.

Lying under it, in what had been either the canal by which these long stones were floated in, or a dock for the praus or junks of the conquerors, was the schooner Lupe-a-Noa.

When Palmyra's captors hurried her into the footway they did not long continue in the dangerous direction of the Puellko. Shortly they turned into a path that branched out among the mangroves. This path would bring them circuitously back to the sea at a point just outside the

harbor entrance.

As the two men urged her along she knew she must soon confront Ponape Burke. Yet it was with a gasp that, at a turning, she saw the leaf wall move and the man's face come leering out.

"Well, Palmie," he tittered, "I come back 'get my kiss."

Her guards now for the first time releasing her hands, the girl snatched forth her pistol and leveled it at him.

He was dressed, absurdly, in the gala attire of the Rainbow, even to the cane. She had not ordered, "Hands up!" but he had obeyed that formula, stood thus grinning at her. Now, however, so suddenly she could not pull the trigger, he brought the flexible stick down with a whiplike cut across the back of her hand. The fingers, paralyzed, dropped the weapon.

An ugly light flashed into his eyes. "I ain't a-taking no chances this time," he explained.

As they moved forward again Ponape Burke became informative. Had been lying low here waiting an opportunity. This village was a good spot; not like the rest of the island—so dam' plous a kanaka wasn't supposed even to smoke. And from the point, a man could watch the Okayama at anchor or get away, quickly and unseen, to the hidden Lupe-a-Noa.

The one obstacle had been Olive. But they had discovered Van's anti-path; planned to get the islander out of the way through him. Graciously, Van had acted of his own accord.

For this work the man Martin had

been useful, being new to the beach, unknown.

At the sea front the native men lifted Palmyra and Ponape Burke and waded with them through the thigh-deep water to the islet.

At the end of the islet furthest from shore, Ponape Burke ordered his prisoner into the last thatch. She hesitated, gave the natives one despairing glance. She hated them for their curiosity, their complaisance.

She stooped, entered the house, sat upon a mat on the pebble floor, her back against one of the posts in the circle that upheld the eaves. Burke hurried away. The brown men were crowding into the opposite side of the hut. They dropped to stare, cross-legged, knee to knee, silent or whispering, those behind craning to look.

Martin came to take up the watch.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

RELIEF FROM CURSE

OF CONSTIPATION

A Battle Creek physician says, "Constipation is responsible for more misery than any other cause."

But immediate relief has been found. A tablet called Rexall Orderlies has been discovered. This tablet attracts water from the system into the lazy dry, evacuating bowel called the colon. The water loosens the dry food waste and causes a gentle, thorough, natural movement without forming a habit or ever increasing the dose.

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UPPER WILLAMETTE

Fifteen students graduate from the Pleasant Hill high school this year. They are: Vina Winfrey, Vida Winfrey, Doris Hyland, Vena Awbrey, Lucille Walker, Thelma McPeck, Belle Olson, Carl Linton, Gerald Kahler, Donald Kabler, Austin Mathews, Emery Hyland, Harold Humphrey, Paul Harden and Lyman Tinker. The baccalaureate address will be given Sunday night at the Pleasant Hill Christian church by Rev. W. A. Eikins. Commencement exercises will be Friday June 8 in the high school gymnasium.

On Thursday and Friday of this week the Juniors will give their annual play "Hold That Line Jimmy." Those who take part are Floyd Manney, Kenneth McKenzie, Harold D'Arcy, Darwin Baxter, Nina Dilley, Arah Neil Arnold, Lucille Larimer and Chrystal Baughman.

Several students and Prof. Kilpatrick worked all night Monday getting the Annual ready to be bound. They hope to have it ready Thursday or Friday of this week.

The daughters of Louis Circle are staying at the ranch of their uncle, Taylor Circle, and picking strawberries for Circle.

The Pleasant Hill picnic will be June 9.

FOUND—A Fountain Pen, was left in the church during graduation exercises. Owner may claim pen and pay for this adv. M-31

SPRINGFIELD FOLKS

By J. F. Ketels



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