

# RED HAIR AND BLUE SEA



by  
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## What Happened Before

Palmyra Tree, aboard the yacht *Rainbow*, discovers a stowaway. She is disappointed in his mild appearance and tells him so. Obeying his command to glance at the door, she sees a huge, fierce, copper-hued man with a ten inch knife between his lips. The stowaway, Burke, and the brown man, Olive, go up on deck and tell stories of adventure which are not believed.

Palmyra decides she loves Vail. The night the engagement is announced the *Rainbow* hits a reef. John Thurston rescues both Van and Palmyra—but Palmyra thinks Van saved her.

A sail is sighted after three days on an island. It is Ponape Burke, the stowaway! Burke abducts Palmyra. Burke has to put her ashore on an island, as a Japanese man-of-war is sighted and it would be dangerous to have her aboard. Olive swims to the island joins Palmyra. She is in fear of the brown man.

Olive and Palmyra swim to another island, from which Palmyra secretly sends a note for aid. Burke's ship approaches the island.

## Now read on—

### CHAPTER VIII

She would have snatched her parasol to raise an additional sail, but now, to her astonishment, she found that Olive was not making sail, but taking it in.

Slowly the speck that was the Pigeon of Noah grew larger. One hardly believed so small a thing could threaten so much evil.

She understood now why Olive had not tried to run. Their hope depended, not on flight, but in lying unobserved.

As the topmasts had risen ever higher against the sky, so now they receded—and were gone.

It was now, in this last twelve hours that Palmyra had seen Olive for the first time handle a curious kite-frame affair of sticks, decked out with small yellow cowry shells. This frame she had noticed at her original inspection of the canoe, and since, when she was not too tired, too frightened, too miserable to think at all, she had wondered what it could be.

This contrivance which she had endowed with so much of mystery proved to be nothing more than the brown man's chart. Yet, even at that, it was still a mystery. Among the islanders it was forbidden except to the hereditary navigators, and among white men few had ever grasped its application; none, perhaps, had ever been able to read upon the ocean's surface its guides and warnings.

With such a frame of sticks, however, Olive, could he have made it plain to her, sailed from lagoon to lagoon across the trackless ocean in almost the assurance of a civilized mariner with chart, compass and sextant.

That night, she awoke to find herself, again, encircled by those great arms, held close against that copper breast. But no struggle now. It was land, land—thank God, land!

Was the island inhabited? She had seen no sign, and Olive appeared at ease. But, then, this was the ocean side of the atoll at night, abandoned to the ghosts. Anyone who saw her would think her a disembodied spirit. She shuddered. Was she now in truth more than the shadow of that girl who once had lived?

As the savage lay asleep, the knife sheath on his belt was uppermost. When the girl's eyes reopened they became fixed upon that blade. It was very close. Almost she could reach out and touch the handle. She thought of the other times she would have glimpsed him.

As she sat, her fingers went once and again experimentally toward the knife, and were withdrawn. The savage contrary to her expectations, did not awake to accuse her. She knew by now it really made no difference who had the knife.

The girl was thrilled, intimidated by her success. Olive had become so much the ogre that she had had the feeling it would be impossible, in the slightest degree, to thwart him. Yet here, by reaching out her hand, she had his precious knife!

She did not shudder at the thought as she had once before. Association had made a serious purpose no longer possible. She only glowed in a new sense of power, restoring her self-esteem, her good humor.

Quickly, however, this elation faded. In its place she found, to her surprise, a touch of guilt, as if she had been untrue to a trust. He had trusted her, and now, lying there in all his strength, he was like Samson. How had Delilah felt as the shears cut through the last of those locks? But Palmyra was not irrevocably

cably the Delilah, for she could restore the knife.

She was, indeed, leaning forward with that purpose, when the savage awoke. Panic stricken, the girl jerked back, not in fear of his anger, but in a guilty apprehension that, seeing the knife above him, he might think she attempted murder.

Unaware, the brown man sat up at once, looked at the heavens, his clock. Then he sprang to his feet, caught her up once more like a child, started for the canoe.

Palmyra wanted to give the knife back, but her arm was pinioned. She tried to bring it forward, felt the brown man's precautionary tightening of his hold, became again conscious of her grievance, jerked vigorously.

Olive was like a long-suffering parent. He did not know why she resisted, but he did know he could bundle her up close in his arms, with one broad hand across her mouth.

Sudden rage possessed the girl. She would not be treated so. She struggled with all her might. The knife impeded her and she flung it down.

The blade fell noiselessly. As it struck in the flooding moonlight it sent out one futile flash. But the savage, all unaware, marched on, holding the girl in vise-like grip.

When Olive had carried Palmyra thus unceremoniously down to their canoe, the sea was not long in reasserting its power. Her respite had been too brief for any real rally against the tyrant savage.

As the craft cut its way through the water, the girl was increasingly sorry for what she had done. Her act had not been deliberate, but afterwards, at the canoe, she had failed to call his attention to the empty sheath.

She was astonished now that so infallible a machine should not almost immediately have discovered the loss.

Not, however, until the hour for bananas and coconut did the square copper-hand go back after the blade. Then there appeared upon that face what was actually an expression—puzzled, startled, bereaved.

The queer brown-shot eyes fixed themselves upon her. For a moment there seemed a pained reproach in them, but he spoke no word. Instead, he stooped, and she saw with a gasp that he was drawing from its place a heavy stick.

The brown man picked up one of the coconuts, and cautioned her with those square hands, so expressive where his face was blank. Then he raised the nut and brought it down upon the sharpened point. The wood entered the green husk. With a sidewise prying motion that wrenched her hands, despite the supporting framework, he tore off a section of the husk. Again the nut came down upon the point, impaling itself, and in a moment the whole husk was removed.

After Olive had husked several of the nuts, he opened two by pecking them with the sharp end of a third, trepanning them as neatly as a surgeon.

The girl accepted food and drink humbly.

She would have struck her knife to the heart of this brown man—and he had meant only to give her food!

Her eyes filled. With a girlish impulse she thrust her hand into her dress and drew out the weapon. She would make amend.

There was something very sweet in the gesture, in the expression with which she offered the knife. But the savage accepted her surrender in the serene seeming unconsciousness of the Buddhas when their devotees lay before them gifts that may have meant months, perhaps years, of sacrifice.

In a new sense of trust, she turned quickly to him, her cheeks flushing, and spoke his name as nearly as she could in the way he liked: "O-lee-vay."

He looked up surprised. "O-lee-vay," she repeated — "Ja-lu-it!"

He did not comprehend. She tried the pronunciation with varying inflections. Then, perception.

The savage grinned, raised an arm and, cheerfully informative—pointed astern.

The girl caught her breath. "Oh, no, no!" she cried in panic. "You don't, don't understand. Ja-uit—Ja-lu-eet."

But all too plainly he did understand. And he was sailing directly away from her one chance of rescue.

As she stared unblinkingly across the seas the low black streamer of cloud unavoidably, in the intensity of her desire, suggested to her mind the smoke of a vessel racing to her aid.

The cloud, as is now and then the case, was not unlike the smudge from a funnel. And, in her fatigue, her helplessness, the very impossibility of the thing gave to this product of her imagination an extraordinary power.

She saw the steamer rising from the ocean. She climbed its ladder to the rail. And there, triumphant on its deck, she was safe!

And in that moment she knew she could not be hard on the brown man. She would not demand his punishment. Only a savage after all—no knight errant of the deep sea—his very savagery was his excuse. He had known no better, was not to be blamed. Yet he'd been kind to her and he had saved her from Burke.

At the parting she would thank him. She would load his canoe with gifts. Or, better still, though he'd carried her wife of her own port of refuge, she would give him passage to some island beyond reach of the murderous Ponape.

And then, suddenly, Palmyra Tree was back in the canoe, her heart beating to suffocation. For her dream was not a dream. The cloud was not a cloud. It was smoke, smoke! smoke! Her ship had come!

### CHAPTER IX

The Imperial Japanese Gunboat *Okayama*, upon a preceding day, had been steaming against the sea when

word came down to Commander Sakamoto that a sail had been sighted, apparently a raft with shipwrecked white men. The *Okayama* swung over so as to bring the odd float aboard. Soon Sakamoto, through his glasses, made out an American flag, union down.

"Send their officer aft," he instructed.

Presently John Thurston and Van Buren Rutger came striding along the deck. For Thurston and his crew, by the exercise of no small ingenuity, had got their crazy craft together again and were once more bravely under way.

Sakamoto, seeing he had to do with gentlemen, offered his hand in congratulation. "And I hope," he added when they were seated, "you, you, you left your peoples comfortable—on their desert island?"

Thurston sprang up. "My God, Captain," he cried, "you've heard from her? You've got her safe?"

The commander begged for an account of what had happened. But when they had reached the abduction, he himself jumped up, interrupting excitedly. There was a new look on his face, a look that had advanced through astonished incredulity into mortification and distress.

"Now I—understand," he cried. "Of her I—know only one thing. This Ponape—she is only in his hands."

"Thank God!" from Thurston.

But Sakamoto exclaimed. "No, no! It is—not good. It is bad Ponape has lost her because a kanaka, O-lee-vay, has taken her—for himself."

Sakamoto, in his cautious English, went on to explain. A large native craft had beaten out after the *Okayama*, signalling urgently. Aboard was an island pastor with one of his villagers, upon whose feeding roost—maintained for these man-of-war hawks the *Line* islanders sometimes used as a sort of carrier pigeon—a stray bird had alighted with a strange letter. Most imperative!

Commander Sakamoto spoke in sympathy. "It is very good thing," he said, "the bird stop wrong place with the letter, and spoil—the plan."

This letter says after Ponape had stole the high-chief lady, the native stole her a-gain from Ponape and, and now they . . . He groped longer than usual for the right expression. "And now they, they contend for her very big," he went on with satisfaction. "O-lee-vay's friend were to hurry with many-y boat and arms, Ponape being strong man, to certain island—and save him there so he shall, shall get away nice—with her for himself."

Palmyra's impulse on sighting this seeking ship—for it was the *Okayama*—was to whirl around and shout the joyful fact. In this moment all her new aversion for the brown man was forgotten. But, as she moved, the words froze upon her lips. They two, by this intervention, were no longer friends. From the steamer Olive would fly almost as quickly as from the Pigeon of Noah.

Aboard the Imperial Japanese Gunboat *Okayama* as it passed within arm's reach of the distracted girl and then steamed on, was the ship's company of the wrecked Yacht *Rainbow*. Gathered on the deck were all who best had loved Palmyra Tree in life. But though these swept the sea with their binoculars until eyes could stand no more, none ever knew.

Even as the girl made piteous attempt to cast a mirror's ray across the gulf, Commander Sakamoto was turning to John Thurston with fatal decision.

"My dear—mister," he said "That Ponape—he has caught the poor Miss Tree back a-gain—very sure. We got the bird letter and that ruin all the kanaka's chance. For him to reach this far unhelped, even if nobody makes some chase, would be on a—too much."

Wherefore, Sakamoto, put all to the wrong by Olive's strategy of stealth and deviousness, threw the *Okayama* northward and steamed forever out of the field of pursuit; never again to pass within sight of canoe or schooner; deserting the girl in that hour when white savage and brown closed in for possession of her body.

Palmyra's knowledge of their course was so vague that she had not known whether they sailed the *Sunrise* or the *Sunset* chain of the Marshalls.

Olive unexpectedly dived. There was one plop of his toes at the surface and then she saw his outreaching fingers clutch a stone at the bottom. He brought his feet down and moved, crouching, as if he were stooped on dry land, looking for something lost.

She could see as well as if there were no water. Olive was moving to one side now. The great clam was lying immediately behind him, its upper shell raised like a trap. She was momentarily uneasy, then laughed.

Suddenly, before she could realize it as she looked placidly on, he had shifted, stepped backwards. The trap snapped shut across his foot.

Instantly, the brown body was contorted. A gush of bubbles—silver globules streaming upward from his frantic cry. The girl uttered a shriek, covered her eyes.

Why, why had she not warned him! She'd known the danger.

But, as the girl lay, shuddering, something wet touched her arm. Recoiling with a gasp, she found herself looking into the dripping face of the brown man, which smiled pleasantly.

When she reopened her eyes she knew that she had fainted.

She looked at this creature, awed. He was alive, seemingly unharmed; rather pleased with himself and her astonishment.

He drew the knife she had given him and with a gesture or two made all plain. Olive had thrust the blade in between the valves of the clam's armor and severed the muscles that snapped these together.

Having explained, he rescued the coconut shell, which was bobbing away on the water, and prepared to dive anew. When she understood, the girl cried out in protest. "Oh, don't, don't try again. I, I cannot bear it!"

(Continued next week)

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