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The Gates of Morning

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BOOK I

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CHAPTER I—THE CANOE BUILDER

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Dick standing on a ledge of coral cast his eyes to the South.

Behind him the breakers of the outer sea thundered and the spindrift scattered on the wind; before him stretched an ocean calm as a lake, infinite, blue, and flown about by the fishing gulls—the lagoon of Karolin.

Clipped by its forty-mile ring of coral this great pond was a sea in itself, a sea of storm in heavy winds, a lake of azure, in light airs—and it was his—he who had landed here only yesterday.

Women, children, youths, all the tribe to be seen busy along the beach in the blazing sun, fishing with nets, playing their games or working on the paraka patches, all were his people. His were the canoes drawn up on the sand and his the empty houses where the war canoes had once rested on their rollers.

Then as he cast his eyes from the lagoon to the canoe houses his brow contracted, and, turning his back to the lagoon he stood facing the breakers on the outer beach and the northern sea. Away there, beyond the sea line, invisible, lay Palm Tree, an island beautiful as a dream, yet swarming with devils.

Little Tari the son of Le Taioi the net maker, sitting on the coral close by, looked up at him. Tari knew little of life, but he knew that all the men of Karolin swept away by war had left the women and the boys and the children like himself defenceless and without a man or leader.

Then, yesterday, from the northern sea in a strange boat and with Katafa, the girl who had been blown to sea years ago when out fishing, this strange new figure had come, sent by the gods, so the women said, to be their chief and ruler.

The child knew nothing of whom the gods might be nor did he care, alone now with this wonderful new person, and out of earshot of his mother, he put the question direct with all the simplicity of childhood.

“Taori,” said little Tari, “who are you?” (*é kamina tai*)

Could Dick have answered, would the child have understood the strange words of the strange story Dick might have told him? “Tari, I come of people beyond the world you know. My name is Dick Lestrange, and when I was smaller than you, Tari, I was left alone with an old sailor man on that island you call Marua (Palm Tree), which lies beyond sight fifty miles to the north. There we lived and there I grew to

be a boy and Kearney, that was his name, taught me to fish and spear fish, and he made for me things to play with, little ships unlike the canoes of the islands. And then, Tari, one day long ago came Katafa, the girl who was blown away from here in a storm. She lived with us till Kearney died and then we two were alone. She taught me her language, which is the language of Karolin. She named me Taori; we loved one another and might have lived forever at Marua had not a great ship come there filled with bad men, men from the eastern islands of Melanesia. They came to cut the trees. Then they rose and killed the white men with them and burned the ship and in our boat we escaped from them, taking with us everything we loved, even the little ships, and steering for Karolin, we came, led by the lagoon light in the sky."

But he could not tell Tari this, or at least all of it, for the very name of Dick had passed from his memory, that and the language he had spoken as a child; Kearney, the sailor who had brought him up, was all but forgotten, all but lost sight of in the luminous haze that was his past.

The past, for men long shipwrecked and alone, becomes blurred and fogged, for Dick it began only with the coming of Katafa to Marua, behind and beyond that all was forgotten as though consumed in the great blaze of tropic light that bathed the island and the sea, the storms that swept the coconut groves, the mists of the rainy seasons. Kearney would have been quite forgotten but for the little ships he had made as playthings for the boy—who was now a man.

He looked down at the questioning child. "I am Taori, Tari tatu, why do you ask?"

"I do not know," said the child. "I ask as I breathe but no big folk—madyana—will ever answer the questions of Tari— Ai, the fish!" His facile mind had already dropped the subject, attracted by the cries of some children, hauling in a net, and he rose and trotted away.

Dick turned his gaze again to the north. The question of the child had stirred his mind and he saw again the schooner that had put in to Palm Tree only to be burned by the Melanesian hands, he saw again Katafa and himself as they made their escape in the old dinghy that Kearney had taught him to handle as a boy. He saw their landing on this beach, yesterday, and the women and children swarming round him, he the man whom they considered sent by the gods to be their chief and leader.

Then as he gazed towards the north the memory of the men from whom he had escaped with the girl stained the beauty of sea and sky.

There was no immediate fear of the men who had taken possession of Palm Tree; the men of Palm Tree had no canoes, but they would build

canoes—surely they would build canoes, and as surely they would see the far mirror blaze of Karolin lagoon in the sky, just as he had seen it, and they would come. It might be a very long time yet, but they would come.

Dick was an all but blook, a kanaka, a savage, and yet the white man was there. He could think forward, he could think round a subject and he could imagine.

That was why he had sent a canoe that morning across to the southern beach to fetch Aioma, Palia and Tafata, three old men, too old for war, but expert canoe-builders, that was why when gazing at the tribe in full congregation, his eyes had brightened to the fact that nearly a hundred of the youths were ripening to war age, but under all, lighting and animating his mind, raising daring to eagle heights, lay his passion for Katafa, his other self more dear to him than self, threatened, ever so vaguely, yet still threatened.

War canoes! Did he intend fighting any invaders in the lagoon or as they drew towards shore, or did he vaguely intend to be the attacker, destroying the danger at its source before it could develop? Who knows?

A hand fell upon his shoulder and turning, he found himself face to face with Katafa, a lock of her dark hair escaped from the thread of elastic vine that bound it, blew right back on the breeze like an eagle's feather, and her eyes, luminous and dark instead of meeting his, were fixed towards the point where he had been gazing—the due-north sea line.

"Look!" said Katafa.

At big intervals and in certain conditions of weather Palm Tree, though far behind the sea line, became visible from Karolin through mirage. Last evening they had seen it and now again it was beginning to live, to bloom, to come to life, a mysterious stain low down in the southern sky, a dull spot in the sea dazzle, that deepened by degrees and hardened till as if sketched in by some unseen painter, the island showed beautiful as a dream, diaphanous, yet vivid.

With her hand upon his shoulder they stood without speaking, their minds untutored, knowing nothing of mirage, their eyes fixed on the place from which they had escaped and which was rising now so strangely beyond the far sea line as if to gaze at them.

They saw again the horde of savages on the beach, figures monstrous as the forms in a nightmare, they felt again the wind that filled the sail as the dinghy raced for safety and the open sea, and again they heard the yells of the Melanesians mad with rum stolen from the schooner they had brought in, and which they had burnt. And

there, there before them lay the scene of the Tragedy, that lovely picture which showed nothing of the demons that still inhabited it.

Then as Dick gazed on this loveliness, which was yet a threat and a warning, his nostrils expanded and his eyes grew dark with hate. They had threatened him—that was nothing, they had threatened Katafa, that was everything—and they still threatened her.

Some day they would come. The vision of Palm Tree seemed to repeat what instinct told him. They would build canoes and seeing the lagoon mirror-light in the sky, they would come. They had no women, those men, and here were women, and instinct half whispered to him that just as he had been drawn to Katafa, so would these men be drawn to the women of Karolin. They would scan the horizon in search of some island whose tribe might be raided of its women and seeing the lagoon light they would come.

Ah, if he had known, danger lay not only to the north, but wherever greed or desire or hatred might roam on that azure sea, not only amongst savages, but the wolves of civilization.

To Dick there was no world beyond the world of water that ringed the two islands; no Europe, no America, no history but the history of his short life as the life of Katafa, and yet even in that life, short as it was, he had learned to dread men and he had envisaged the foundation of all history—man's instinct for war, rapine and destruction.

Then gradually the vision of Palm Tree began to fade and pass, suddenly it vanished like a light blown out and as they turned from the sea to the lagoon, Katafa pointed across the lagoon water to a canoe approaching from the southern beach.

It was the canoe Dick has sent for the canoe builders and, leaving the coral, they came down to the white sand of the inner beach to meet it.

CHAPTER II—THE REVOLT OF THE OLD MEN

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Two women were in it, and as they drove it ashore beaching it with the outrigger a-tilt, Dick, followed by Katafa, approached, and resting his hand on the mast stays attached to the outrigger gratings, he turned to the women, who, springing out, stood, paddles in hand, looking from him to Katafa.

"And the builders?" asked he, "where are they?"

The shorter woman clucked her tongue and turned her face away towards the lagoon, the taller one looked Dick straight in the face.

“They will not come,” said she. “They say Uta Matu alone was their king and he is dead, also they say they are too old. ‘A mataya ayana’—they are feeble and near past the fishing, even in the quiet water.”

The shorter woman choked as if over a laugh, then she turned straight to Dick.

“They will not come, Taori, all else is talk.”

She was right. The express order had gone to them to cross over and they refused; they would not acknowledge the newcomer as their chief, all else was talk.

Several villagers, seeing the canoe beaching, had run up and were listening, more were coming along. Already the subject was under whispered discussion amongst the group by the canoe, whilst Dick, his foot resting on the slightly tilted outrigger, stood, his eyes fixed on the sennit binding of the outrigger pole as if studying it profoundly.

The blaze of anger that had come into his eyes on hearing the news had passed; anger had given place to thought.

This was no ordinary business. Dick had never heard the word “revolt,” nor the word “authority,” but he could think quite well without them. The only men who could direct the building of the big war canoes refused to work, and from the tone and looks of the women who brought the message, he saw quite clearly that if something were not done to bring the canoe-builders to heel, his power to make the natives do things would be gone.

Dick never wasted much time in thought. He turned from the canoe, raced up to the house where the little ships were carefully stored and came racing back with a fish spear.

Then, calling to the women, he helped to run the canoe out, sprang on board and helped to raise the mat sail to the wind coming in from the break.

“I will soon return,” he cried to Katafa, his voice borne across the sparkling water on a slant of the wind; then the women crouched down to ballast the canoe, and with the steering paddle in his hand he steered.

The canoe that had brought Katafa drifting to Palm Tree years ago had been the first South Sea island craft that the boy had seen. The fascination of it had remained with him. This canoe was bigger, broader of beam and the long skate-shaped piece of wood that formed the outrigger was connected with it not by outrigger poles but by a bridge.

Dick, as he steered, took in every little detail, the rattans of the grating, the way the mast stays were fixed to the grating and how the mast itself was stepped, the outrigger and the curve of its ends, the mat sail and the way it was fastened to the yard.

Though he had never steered a canoe before, the sea-craft inborn in him carried him through, and the women crouching and watching and noting every detail saw nothing indicative of indecision.

Now there are two ways in which one may upset a canoe of this sort by bad handling, one is to let the outrigger leave the water and tilt too high in the air, the other is to let the outrigger dip too deep in the water.

Dick seemed to know, and as they crossed the big lift of sea coming in with the flood from the break, he avoided both dangers.

The beach where the remnants of the southern tribe lived, was exactly opposite to the beach of the northern tribe, and as both beaches were close to the break in the reef, the distance from one to the other was little over a mile. Then as they drew close, Dick could see more distinctly the few remaining huts under the shelter of a grove of Jack-fruit trees; beyond the Jack-fruit stood pandanus palms bending lagoonward, and three tall coconut palms sharp against the white up-flaring horizon.

As the canoe beached, Dick saw the rebels. They were seated on the sand close to the most easterly of the huts, seated in the shadow of the Jack-fruit leaves; three old men seated, two with their knees up and one tailor fashion, whilst close to them by the edge of a little pool lay a girl.

As Dick drew near followed by the taller of the boat women, the girl, who had been gazing into the waters of the pool, looked up.

She was Le Moan, granddaughter of Le Juan, the witch woman of Karolin now dead and gone to meet judgment for the destruction she had caused. Le Moan was only fourteen. She had heard of the coming of the new ruler to Karolin and of his bringing with him Katafa, the girl long thought to be dead. She had heard the order given to her grandfather Aioma that morning to come at once to the northern beach as the new chief required canoes to be built, and she had heard the old man's refusal. Le Moan had wondered what this new chief might be like. The monstrous great figure of Uta Matu, last king of Karolin, had come up in memory at the word "chief," and now, as the canoe was hauled up and the women cried out "He comes," she saw Dick.

Dick with the sun on his face and on his red-gold hair, Dick naked and honey-coloured, lithe as a panther and straight as a stabbing spear. Dick with his eyes fixed on the three old men of Karolin who had turned their heads to gaze on Dick.

Le Moan drew in her breath, then she seemed to cease breathing as the vision approached, passed her without a word and stood facing Aioma, the eldest and the greatest of the canoe-builders.

Le Moan was only fourteen, yet she was tall almost as Katafa, she was not a true Polynesian; though her mother had been a native of Karolin, her father, a sailor from a Spanish ship destroyed years ago by Uta Matu, had given the girl European characteristics so strong that she stood apart from the other islanders as a pine might stand amongst palm trees.

She was beautiful, with a dark beauty just beginning to unfold from the bud and she was strange as the sea depths themselves. Sometimes seated alone beneath the towering Jack-fruits her head would poise as though she were listening, as though some voice were calling through the sound of the surf on the reef, some voice whose words she could not quite catch; and sometimes she would sit above the reef pools gazing deep down into the water, the crystal water where coralline growths bloomed and fish swam, but where she seemed to see more things than fish.

The sharp mixture of two utterly alien races sometimes produces strange results—it was almost at times as if Le Moan were confused by voices or visions from lands of ancestry worlds apart.

She would go with Aioma fishing, and with her on board, Aioma never dreaded losing sight of land, for Le Moan was a pathfinder.

Blindfold her on the coral and she would yet find her way on foot, take her beyond the sea-line and she would return like a homing pigeon. Like the pigeon she had the compass in her brain.

This was the only gift she had received from her mother, La Jennabon, who had received it from seafaring ancestors of the remote past.

Crouching by the well she saw now Dick standing before Aioma and she heard his voice.

"You are Aioma?" said Dick, who had singled the chief of the three out by instinct.

The three old men rose to their feet. The sight of the newcomer helped, but it was the singling out of Aioma with such success by one who had never seen him that produced the effect. Surely here was a chief.

"I am Aioma," replied the other. "What want you with me?"

"That which the woman had already told you," replied Dick, who hated waste of words or repeating himself.

"They told me of the new chief who had come to the northern beach —*e uma kaio tau*, and of how he had ordered canoes to be built," said Aioma, "and I said, 'I am too old, and Uta is dead, and I know no chief but Uta; also in the last war on that Island in the north all the men of Karolin fell and they have never returned, they nor their canoes.' So

what is the use of building more canoes when there are no men to fill them?”

“The men are growing,” said Dick.

“Ay, they are growing,” grumbled Aioma, “but it will be many moons before they are ready to take the paddle and the spear—and even so, where is the enemy? The sea is clear.”

“Aioma,” said Dick, “I have come from there,” pointing to the north; “the sea is not clear.”

“You have come from Marua (Palm Tree)?”

“I have come from Marua, where one day Katafa came, drifted from here in her canoe; there we lived till a little while ago when men landed, killing and breaking and burning—burning even the big canoe they had come in. Then Katafa and I set sail for Karolin, for Karolin called me to rule her people.”

“And the men who landed to kill and burn?” asked Aioma.

“They are still on Marua; they have no canoes but they will build them, and surely they will come.”

Neither of Aioma’s companions said a word whilst Aioma stood looking at the ground as if consulting it, then his eyes rose to Dick’s face. Age and war had made Aioma wise, he knew men and he knew Truth when he saw her.

“I will do your bidding, Taori,” said he quite simply, then he turned to the others, spoke some words to them, giving directions what to do till his return, and led the way to the canoe.

Le Moan, still crouching by the well, said nothing. Her eyes were fixed on Dick, this creature so new, so different from any one she had ever seen. Perhaps the race spirit was telling her that here was a being of her father’s race miraculously come to Karolin, perhaps she was held simply by the grace and youth of the newcomer—who knows?

Dick, as he turned, noticed her fully for the first time and as their eyes met, he paused, held by her gaze and the strangeness of her appearance, so different from that of the other natives. For a moment his mind seemed trapped, then as his eyes fell he passed on and taking the steering paddle pushed off, the wind from the reef-break filling the sail of the canoe.

Le Moan, rising and shading her eyes, stood watching as the sail grew less across the sparkling water, watching as the canoe rose and fell on the swell setting in from the break, watching as it reached the far white line of the northern beach where Katafa was waiting for the return of her lover.

CHAPTER III—THE LITTLE SHIPS

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The primitive canoe of the Pacific is a dugout—the trunk of a tree hollowed and shaped into the form of a boat, so narrow in proportion to its length as to be absolutely unstable but for the outrigger.

The outrigger, a long skate-shaped piece of wood fixed to port—always to port—by poles on a central bridge, is an apology to the sea for want of beam, and the sea accepts it—on conditions. But for the outrigger, no canoe of any size would dare the sea, but for it the islands would have been sealed as between themselves, war made impossible, and the drift of people between island and island and between island and continent.

Far away in the remote past some man once stood, the father of this daring invention; little dreaming of the vast consequences of the work to which he had put his hand.

Dick at the steering paddle saw a figure on the northern beach as they drew near. It was Katafa, waiting for him, the wind blowing her girdle of dracæna leaves and her hand sheltering her eyes against the sun. Standing just as Le Moan was standing on the southern beach sheltering her eyes and watching the canoe that carried the first man who had ever made her turn her head.

Some children were playing near Katafa and a fishing canoe was putting out near by, but he saw only Katafa.

"Katafa," said Aioma, who was crouched by the after outrigger pole. "It is she sure enough, and they said she was dead and that her ghost had returned bringing you with her, Taori, but the dead do not return. Katafa, she was the girl under the taboo of Taminan, the girl no man or woman might touch, and then one day she went fishing beyond the reef and a storm took her and she was drowned, so they said."

"She was not drowned," replied Dick. "The wind blew her to Marua where I was—I and another whose face I have near forgotten, Kearney, he was called, and he made canoes but not like these, then one day he went among the trees and did not return. Then the god Nan came to the island and after him the men of Karolin who fought together so that all were killed, and then came the bad men as I have told you and would have killed us but we left Marua in the night.... Look, there is the canoe we came in." He pointed to the dinghy hauled up on the beach.

"O he! Taori!" It was Katafa's voice hailing them from the shore, glad, sweet, clear as a bell, yet far-carrying as the voice of a gull.

As Dick sprang out on the sands he seized her in his arms; parted only a few hours, it seemed to them that they had been weeks apart.

In the old days, even before he was born, his mother Emmeline had never been at ease when separated from his father even by the

breadth of the lagoon, the demon that hints of mischance seemed always at her ear.

Dick seemed to have inherited with his power of love for Katafa, something of the dread of mischance for the beloved.

He embraced her, heedless of onlookers, though the only eyes to see were the eyes of the children and of Aioma who had eyes for nothing but the dinghy.

As soon as his foot touched sand, the canoe-builder made for it running like a boy, clapped his hand on the gunnel and then ran it over the planking.

The boats of the Spanish ship of long ago had been clinker-built and had been destroyed in the fight, but he had seen bits of them washed ashore on the southern beach. The dinghy was carvel-built and entire, a perfect specimen of eastern boat-building over which the canoe designer brooded forgetful of Dick and Katafa, the beach he stood on and the sun that lit it.

The idea of a boat built of planking and not hollowed out of a tree trunk had been presented to him by the charred and shattered fragments of the Spanish boats, but how to get planking and how to bend it to the form he desired was beyond his imagination and beyond his means. He saw vaguely that these boats of the papalagi were made somewhat after the fashion of a man, with a backbone and ribs and a covering for the ribs, he saw that by this means enough beam could be obtained to enable the builder to dispense with the outrigger—but then speed, where was there sign of speed in this thing squat and ugly?

In the early ages of the world in which Aioma still dwelt, ugliness had only two expressions, the lines that indicated want of speed and the lines that indicated want of strength.

Dick, though brown as the canoe-builder and almost to be mistaken for a true islander, was perhaps a million years younger than Aioma, just as the dinghy was a million years younger than the fishing canoe that had just brought him across the lagoon. In Dick, Aioma saw the lines that indicated speed and strength, nothing more—he was blind to the nobility of type expressed by that daring face, to the far sight of the eyes and the breadth of the brow; in the dinghy Aioma saw want of speed—he was blind to the nobility of type that made this bud the sister of a battleship, made it a vertebrate as against the dugout which has neither keel nor ribs.

Then Aioma, standing in the sun, a plain canoe-builder and workman in the sight of God and a critic as every true workman is, began to deride the dinghy, at first with chuckles deep down in his throat, then with a sound like the clacking of a hen, then with laughter long and loud and words of derision.

“Which end is which of this pig fish?” inquired Aioma of heaven and Dick, “and he who made her, how many more did he make like her?”

Dick, who had always connected the dinghy with Kearney, and who had a sort of faith that Kearney had made her just as he had made the little model ships, winced at the laughter of the old man. Perhaps it was the white man in him revolting at the derision of a savage over the works of the white man. However that may be, he turned and ran up the beach to the house of Uta Matu which he and Katafa had made their own. There in the shadow, on a hastily constructed shelf stood the little model ships he had so carefully salved from Palm Tree: the frigate, the schooner, the full-rigged ship and the whale man, the last thread connecting him with civilization; toys of the long ago, but no longer toys—fetiches from a world whose very language he had lost, a world of sun and tall trees where like a ghost in the sun dazzle moved a memory that was once a man—Kearney.

He took the schooner from its rest and coming out with it, ran to a great pool in the coral, calling Aioma to come and see what he who made the dinghy had also made.

The pool thirty feet long by twenty broad was ruffled by the breeze from the sea, it was clear as crystal, coral floored—and a trapped school of tiny fish no larger than needles, passed like a silver cloud here and there. Dick on his knees launched the schooner and Aioma standing bent with a hand on each knee watched her as she floated on an even keel. Then on the merry west wind with helm properly set and main boom guyed out she went sailing down the pool to the east where Katafa had run to receive her.

Aioma watched, then Dick running to the other end showed him how she could sail almost against the wind. Dick knew every stick and string of her, how to hoist and lower main and fore and how to set the head sails,—had you placed him on a real schooner, he could have worked her from his knowledge of the model, and Aioma watched vastly intrigued; then, taking a hand, he got on his knees and the great sun saw the builders of the future fleet of Karolin playing like children, whilst the little schooner on its imitation sea sailed from port to port, bowing to the ripples of the pool as the lost *Raratonga*, of which it was the model, had bowed to the swell of the great Pacific.

CHAPTER IV—THE GATES OF MORNING

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The break on the reef of Karolin faced due east. Like a harbour mouth it stood, the only entrance to the lagoon, and through it at ebb

and flood the sea raced dancing round the coral piers, pouring in and out swift as a river in spate.

When the sun rose he looked straight through the break, and the river of gold from him came level across the dancing waves of the outer sea, rose at the break, as a river rises to flood the coral piers and palms, passed through and spread on the quiet waters of the lagoon.

***Mayay amyana*—(the way—or the gates—of morning). Ages ago the name had been given to the break and the people who gave it were not speaking in the language of poetry, but of truth, for the one great thing that entered these gates was not the moon, now shrivelled, now full, now absent; nor the tides that altered in time and size; but the morning, eternal, changeless and triumphant.**

This great sea gate was more to the people of Karolin than a way of ingress and outgoing; it had a significance deep, almost religious, and based on the experiences of a thousand years, for it was the way to an outer world of which they knew little or nothing, and through it came not only the tides of the sea and the first light of the sun, but also whatever they knew or had known of the world beyond.

The Spanish ship had come in, strange beyond belief, and canoes from the Paumotus had brought war through it—trouble came through the gates of morning no less than joy, and all the dead who had died at sea had passed through them never to return.

To Le Moan just as to Aioma and the others, the sea gate of Karolin was a way and a mystery, a road, yet almost a temple.

But through the gates of morning came other things than ships and men.

Sometimes on a dead calm night and generally at full of moon Karolin lagoon would wake to the sound of thunder, thunder shaking the coral and rolling back in echoes from the far reef, not the thunder of nature, but the thunder of big guns as though fleets were at war on the outer sea.

Then if you came out on the beach you would see the shells bursting in the lagoon, columns of spray rising ghostlike and dissolving in the moonlight whilst the gulls, absolutely indifferent and roosting, stirred never a feather, and the pirate crabs, white as ivory, stood like carved things or went on their business undisturbed.

Natives waking from their sleep, if they woke at all, would turn on the other side and close their eyes again. It was only the *Matura*.

Whip rays twenty feet broad and four feet thick, a school of them at play, flinging themselves ten feet in the air and falling back in a litter of foam and with a concussion striking the lagoon floor and the reef; circling, pursuing one another in their monstrous play, they would keep the echoes rolling beneath the stars, till, as if at a given signal, silence

would fall and the great fleet put out to sea again bound for where no man could know.

Awakened from sleep one night, Dick came out on the beach with Katafa. Used to the *Matura* from childhood, she knew and told him, and standing there beside her he had to believe that all this thunder and disturbance was caused by fish.

It was his first real initiation into the wonders of Karolin and the possibilities of the lagoon water. Then, as time went on, in the intervals of the tree-felling, a business in which nearly all the women and boys took part, he would put out by himself to explore the depths and shallows of this great lake that was yet a sea in itself.

On the mind of Dick, almost unstained by the touch of civilization, yet vigorous and developed owing to his civilized ancestry, the world of Karolin exercised a fascination impossible to describe.

Sight, that bird of the soul, could roam here unchecked through the vast distances of sky or rest on a coral branch in the emerald shallows of sea, pursue the frigate mackerel in its rush or the frigate bird in its flight. Out on the lagoon he would crouch sometimes with the paddle across his knees, drifting, idle, without connected thought, environment pressing in upon him till his mind became part of the brilliancy of sea and sky, of the current drift and the wind that blew.

All to the west of a line drawn from mid-reef to mid-reef lay oyster beds, acres in extent and separated by great streaks of hard sand where the fish cast black shadows as they swam, and the crabs scuttered away from the drifting shadow of the canoe; near the northern beach, in ten-fathom water lay the Spanish ship of long ago, coral crusted, with the sea fans waving in the green and the mullet flitting in the shadow of her stern, a thing almost formless, yet with a trace of man's handiwork despite all the work of the coral builders, and still as death in a world where everything was adrift and moving, from the fish sharks that lurked in her shadows to the fucus blown as if by some submarine wind. But the strangest thing in this world of water was the circular current which the outflowing and incoming tides established in its centre, a lazy drift of not more than two knots which was yet sufficient to trap any floating thing and keep it prisoner till a storm broke the spell.

One day Dick ventured so far out that he lost sight of land. Sure of his sense of direction this did not trouble him; he kept on allured by clumps and masses of fucus torn loose by the last storm, and drifting with the current, weed alive with sea creatures, tiny crabs, ribbon fish and starry sea-growths brilliant with colour.

Then he put back. But an hour's paddling did not raise the reef; the current was just sufficient to turn the nose of the canoe and he was

moving in that fatal circle in which all blind things and things without sense of direction move.

It was noon and the position of the sun gave him no help; sunset or starlight would have put him all right but he had not to wait for these. Then away off beyond a great patch of floating kelp and on his port bow he suddenly saw a dark spot in the sea dazzle. It was a canoe.

Le Moan, as fearless as himself and with a far greater knowledge of these waters, had been fishing along the bank that ran like a spar from the southern beach straight out, shoaling the lagoon water to four fathoms and at some places three. The Karaka bank it was called, and in great storms the lagoon waves broke on it and it showed like a pillow of snow. In ordinary weather nothing marked it but a slight change of colour in the water indicating want of depth.

Away beyond the spur of the Karaka bank, Le Moan saw a canoe adrift and put towards it, guessing from its position and the fact that the paddle was not at work that it was in the grip of the central current.

As she drew near she saw that the canoe man was Taori. She hailed him and he told her that he had lost direction, then, telling him to follow, she put her canoe about and struck the water with the paddle. Though from the elevation of a canoe the horizon showed nothing of the girding reef, her instinct for direction told her exactly how they lay with regard to all the reef points. The marvellous compass in her brain that never failed, and could have steered a ship on the high seas as well as a canoe in Karolin lagoon, told her that the village on the north beach lay over there, and over there her home on the south beach, that the matamata trees lay in such a position and the great palm clump just there.

But as she steered she made not for the north beach where Dick had launched forth and where he lived, but for the south beach where her own home was situated. She said no word but steered, and presently Dick following her saw across the narrowing lagoon the far off Jack-fruit trees showing across the water. He knew them and that this was the south beach and anxious to get back to Katafa, he would have turned and made for the northern village where trees were also vaguely, visible, but he felt tired, the paddle was heavy in his hands—he wanted food and he was being led.

Just as the circular current of the lagoon had been sufficient to steer the canoe into a circular course, so was the leading of Le Moan sufficient to bring him to the south beach. A canoe was lying on the south beach and as Dick drew nearer he saw Palia and Tafuta, the two old men companions of Aioma and fellow craftsmen in the art of canoe building.

They were standing by the canoe, in which a woman was seated, and behind them stood the last habitable houses of the village, and behind the houses three coconut trees, hard against the dazzling pale blue of a sky that swept up to burning cobalt. Not a soul was to be seen on all that beach but the two old men.

Then came Le Moan's voice as she hailed them. "O he, Palia, where are the people, and what are you doing with that canoe?"

And Palia's voice answering.

"The word came after you put out this morning calling us to the northern beach for the building. We go. The rest have gone already in the big canoe that brought the word."

Dick at once knew. Aioma yesterday had declared the work far enough advanced to call in all hands including Palia and Tafuta, and the remaining people of the southern tribe.

"Then go," came Le Moan's voice as her canoe stranded on the shelving sand, "but leave me those things and a knife." She went to the canoe and took out some matting, a basket made of coconut sennit and a knife; as Dick brought his canoe ashore Palia and the others were putting off.

"You will follow us?" cried Palia as the paddles struck the water.

"Some time," replied Le Moan. She turned and began to build a fire to cook the fish she had caught and a breadfruit. Dick, seated on the sand with his knees up and his eyes following the far-off canoe, scarcely noticed her. She was one of the island girls, and though different from the others, of no account to him. An ordinary man would have been struck by her beauty, by her grace, and the fact that she was different from the others, but Katafa had blinded him to other women; it was as though she had put a charm round him, a ring rendering him inviolate to all female approach.

Le Moan, building the fire and preparing the fish and putting the breadfruit to bake, never glanced at him. He was there. The being who had in some extraordinary way suddenly become part of her life was there. This was no ordinary passion of a girl for a man, but something far more recondite and rare; perhaps something half evolved from the yearning of the civilization hidden in her for the civilization in him, perhaps the recognition of race, and that he and she were apart from the island people, those animals man and woman shaped, but destitute of the something that moved like a flame in her mind, lighting nothing —till now.

He was hers just as the sun was hers.

In this first dawn of a love that was to consume her being, she would have died rather than tell him by glance or word the something that filled her mind.

The smoke of the little cooking fire went up like the smoke of an altar.

Who knows but perhaps woman cooking for man was the first priest, the camp fire the first altar, man the first god, his food—the first burnt offering.

An hour later Dick fed, and rested, was pushing his canoe into the water helped by his worshipper.

Then she got into her canoe and accompanied him till the northern beach showed clear before them, the village, and to right of the village the great clump of matamatas, less by three than on the day she had sighted them last.

Here they parted company with the wave of a paddle, Le Moan returning to the desolation of the southern beach, Dick not knowing and not caring whither she went.

CHAPTER V—CIVILIZATION PEEPS IN

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Without looking back, she turned the nose of her canoe straight for the southern beach. To left of her as she paddled lay the sea gate where the tide was flooding round the coral and the breeze blowing the gulls like snowflakes against the blue; to right the limitless expanse of the lagoon; ahead the desolate beach, the ruined village and the wild tangle of pandanus trees, their limbs wide-spreading as the limbs of an elm, their fronds tossing like ill-kempt hair.

She hauled the light canoe above tide mark, then, turning to the right along the sands, she passed the trees and climbed the coral, standing for a moment facing the south and the empty sea. Then, turning, she gazed across the lagoon to where the far-away northern beach showed its trees above the water dazzle.

It was near full flood and the lagoon was brimming, the outer sea coming in great sheets of smoky blue, whirls of amethyst and streaks of cobalt between the piers of the break. Le Moan could hear the suck of the water through the gates as distinct from the sound of the breakers on the coral, beyond the sound of the breakers the voices of the gulls, beyond the gulls the silence reaching to the white trade clouds on the rim of the purple sea.

She was alone, but for the matter of that, she had always been alone, Aioma and the two old men and the women and children who formed the last remnant of the southern tribe had never been her companions; she had fished with them and helped in the cooking and

mat-making, talked with them, lived with them, yet in a way, dwelt apart.

It was the race difference, perhaps, or some bent of soul owing to the fusion of races in her that made her a being quite alone, relying on no one but herself—a creature apart, almost a spirit. She had the power to lose herself utterly when gazing down into clear water as on the day when Dick first saw her gazing into the pond by the trees. Great distances held her in the same way should she give herself over to them, and that strange flair for direction which she shared with the gulls was less perhaps instinctive than psychic, for the mind of Le Moan, eternally in touch with the wind, the sea, the sun and the stars, was clairvoyant to the coming of storm and the sea changes that brought the great tiger sharks into the lagoon, altered the course of the mullet or drove the palu far from the fishing banks to northward of the reef.

Having stood for a while gazing to the north, she came back towards the deserted houses and began to prepare herself some food; after that there were lines to be mended and oap to be cleared from the paraka patch and then came sunset and then the stars, and sleep deeper than the great depths beyond the palu bank.

Had Le Moan looked back across her past, she would have seen a succession of days coloured like the day just dead, brilliancy stretching away into years and opalled by rainy seasons and storms, nights when dreams were unhaunted by human form till to-night, when, towards dawn, a ghostly canoe man showed in the mirror of sleep paddling towards her across a shimmering lagoon.

Then as the dream broke up and the vision vanished, Le Moan awoke beneath the last of the stars, awoke suddenly with fear clutching at her heart and with eyes wide but still half-blinded with sleep.

She sat up. The dawn was breaking and the fishing gulls were putting out to sea; she could hear their voices through the sound of the breakers on the reef. Nothing more, yet she listened, listened with her eyes fixed on the great fan of light showing in the eastern sky against which the gulls showed like withered leaves tossed on the wind.

Nothing. The sea breeze stirred the leaves of the breadfruit and the branches of the pandamus palms and then fell flat, died out and changed to the first stirring of a land breeze, the highest flying gulls took colour and the ghostly lagoon took form.

The girl rising to her feet swept the lagoon water with her eyes. Nothing. Then, turning, she passed between the trees to the coral of the outer beach and there, out on the ghostly sea and touched by the light of dawn, she saw a ship.

Years after the destruction of the Spanish ship, which had happened before her birth, a whale man had put into the lagoon, cut wood, taken on water, been attacked by Uta Matu, the chief of Karolin, and escaped to the outer sea by a miracle.

Uta would have sent her to the bottom of the lagoon after the Spaniard, for in the depth of his ignorant but instinctive heart lay the knowledge that the black man's burden is the white man and that civilization to the savage means death.

Le Moan could still see as in a glass darkly the fight and the escape of the whale man, and here again was a ship, different in shape from the one of long ago, but arousing in her mind, from association, an instinct of antagonism and dread.

The ship, which had been standing off and on all night, was a schooner, and now as the great sun heaved himself higher and golden ripples broke the sea line, Le Moan watched her take fire, sail after sail catching the light till on the newborn blue of the sea a golden ship lay heaving to the swell, flown round by golden gulls, whose voices came chanting against the breeze like the voices of ghostly sailormen hauling in chorus.

Then as she altered her helm and the wind shivered out of her canvas, a boat was dropped, it ran up a sail and Le Moan, her eyes shaded against the risen sun, saw the boat heading for the break. She ran back amongst the trees and stood for a moment, her hand pressed against her forehead, her mind in confusion, with one idea only fixed and steadfast—Taori.

Here was danger, recollection backed instinct, the powerful instinct of a mind that could tell the north from the south without star or compass, the coming changes of weather, the movement of the fish shoals—the instinct that had awakened her with fear clutching at her heart.

Here was danger to Taori, and now as she stood her hand clasped on her forehead, came the recollection, not only of Uta Matu's fight against the whale man, but of Taori's words to Aioma about the bad men on Marua and the necessity of building the war canoes and of how the young men of Karolin would soon be ripe for war.

But the canoes were not built and the warriors were not ready, and here, suddenly from out of nowhere, had come this great canoe with sails spreading to the sky. Uta Matu and his warriors and fleet were vanished and Taori was unprepared. Then came the thought that the boat making for the break was like the pilot fish that scouts ahead of the tiger shark, it would come into the lagoon and if it found food worth devouring, the tiger shark would follow.

The village on the northern beach was invisible from the break, owing to the trees and the crafty way Uta Matu had set it amongst the trees. She remembered that.

Then her heart suddenly took flame. She would save Taori.

She left the trees and, taking the sand of the inner beach, she began running towards the break. She would attract the boat to her.

You have seen a bird attracting a man away from its nest, heedless of its own fate, thinking only of the thing it loved; just so Le Moan, facing the unknown, which was more terrible than the terrible, sought now to save the being she loved with the love that casts out fear.

She had not run a hundred yards when the boat entered the lagoon, heeling to the breeze and carried by the first of the flood, she flung up her arms to it, then she stood watching as it changed its course making straight towards her.

It was an ordinary ship's quarter boat, painted white, fitted with a mast and lug sail, and Le Moan as she stood watching paralysed and waiting for her fate, saw that she held four men, three kanakas, whose naked shoulders showed above the gunnel, and a huge man, black bearded and wearing a broad-brimmed white straw hat beneath which his face showed dark and terrible as the face of the King of Terrors.

He wore a shirt open at the throat and his shirt sleeves were rolled up showing arms white yet covered with black hair. As the boat grounded and the kanakas sprang out Le Moan scarcely saw them; her eyes were fixed on the great man now standing on the beach, Colin Peterson, no less, one of the last of the sandalwood traders, master and owner of the *Kermadec*—Black Peterson, terrible to look at, swift to strike when roused, yet a man with kindness in his heart and straightness in his soul.

Poor Le Moan, had she only known!

Peterson, sweeping his eyes over the empty and ruined houses and the desolate beach, fixed them on the girl, spoke to her in a tongue she did not understand and then called out:

"Sru!"

A kanaka stepped forward. He was a Paumotuan, a yellow man, and half Malanesian, fierce of face, frizzy headed and wearing a necklace of little shells. After a word with Peterson, he turned to Le Moan and spoke to her and she understood. The language of Karolin was the language of the Paumotas; those far-off islands in the distant days had raided and fought with Karolin, in days still further removed the first inhabitants of Karolin had drifted from the Paumotas but neither Le Moan nor Sru knew aught of this nor of the common ancestry which gave them power of speech.