

The
HURRICANE
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CROUCHED miserably in the long grass, Kalputa, the Melanesian woman, loosened her blue wrapper at the throat and removed it carefully back over her shoulder. The blood had stopped running from the deep wound above the armpit, and her shoulder was beginning to swell.

Hurriedly she broke leaves from the yellow bush beside her, squeezed them into a thick pad and laid it on the wound, tying it with long strips of cloth torn from the hem of her skirt. Then she let her young head fall on her knees, moaning in a cold, frightened way.

Her big melancholy eyes did not look at the sun as it rose over the tall green coconut -palms above the beach nor at the smoke which curled thin and blue from under the deep thatched roofs beyond the canefields; but she went on moaning and wailing, her voice full of terror. It was not until the bronze sea-hawks, hovering and veering above the calm blue sea in front of her, noisily resumed their fishing that she lifted her head and looked back at the place

she was fleeing.

On the outer edge of the canefields and but a short distance above the surf-beaten beach she saw the trading station. It was a tiny bungalow with stilty legs and a low white oblong roof. Through the paw-paw trees behind the station she saw the long-legged houses of the Fijians, and the villagers moving about their daily tasks.

When she again turned her eyes to the trading station, Kalputa saw Captain Barker, the only American trader on Flenga Island, crash across the palm-thatched veranda and around to the grove of paw-paw trees, brandishing a long knife. He was over six feet, and wide across the chest. Kalputa knew that he was looking for her, and she sprang to her feet and fled toward the gray-green forest on the far end of the island.

Because of the pain in her shoulder she had found the way difficult the minute she left the station. Many times during the long chill-hour that comes just before dawn she had crouched among the thick tufts of cane-grass or beneath a yam bush, her head

falling on her knees, too full of-pain to go on.

Always, as she crouched in a small blue heap, a vague sort of fear came over her. For she could not help wondering what her people, to whom she was fleeing, would say and do to her when she told them that after enduring Captain Barker's abuse for two years she had at last revolted and run away.

Of all the people in her home village she feared most Old Lu the sorcerer. It was he who, for five sticks of traders' tobacco, had brought about her marriage with Captain Barker the day the captain walked down the white coral gravel of the village street, looking for a wife. Never did a Flenga Island woman revolt and run away when a white man abused her; always she submitted to her fate and said nothing. But not so with Kalputa.

At one time she had been happy with Captain Barker. That was after he had sold his schooner and stocked a trading station on the island, with her as his wife and go-between or agent among the natives.

She watched the business grow in its fair way; wore blood-red hibiscus blossoms in her black hair, and a pearl-shell necklace to delight him; and gleefully clapped her tiny bronze hands when, at night on the veranda in the silver moonlight, he talked of taking her to Sydney some time and from there up to the States "to show her the world."

Her man-child came toward the end of that period. He lived only four weeks. They buried the thin little brown baby in the grove of paw-paw trees in the rear of the station.

One night before the rainy season set in, Captain Barker came through the lone grove and found Kalputa there, crying in the blue-gray twilight. He had been

drinking, and immediately he broke into a paroxysm of rage, striking her in the face with his iron-hard fist. Then all her love for him went out like a candle in the wind.

After that life in the trading station changed.. More than once Kalputa thought of running away—of going back either to the mission house at Suva, where she had studied for seven months, or to her people who lived in the village around by the forest. But she had endured Captain Barker until the night before.

When he insisted upon her drinking French rum with him, she said that rum made her sick and she wanted no more of it. Then he grew ugly and, in the struggle that followed, slashed her above the armpit with His Canario knife. She lay on the floor in the store-room until just before dawn.

And now, no matter what the consequences might be, she would not go back to him—not even if he came after her. She was positive of that.

The hush of noon was on all the village when Kalputa limped into the main street which lay beneath the burning sun like a wide river of white fire. On the edge of the village she stopped in front of a thatched-roof house built high in the air on long thin piles and looked about her.

It was the lonely hour; of Flenga Island. There was not a sign of life. The villagers were either asleep in their brown houses or at rest in the shade of the forest. In the giant coconut-palms on either side of the street the leaves hung motionless. The native dogs slept in the dark shadows beneath the house; and the tame parrots and cockatoos had ceased their screaming in the windows and disappeared to drowse under the eaves.

No sounds came from the forest, while beneath the implacable sky the sea dazzled like a mirror. And in the tall white sails of the three schooners lying far out in

the lagoon there was not a breath of wind.

AS KALPUTA turned to the verandaless house of her people, her face was all eyes and fear. She entered the glaring sandy yard and stopped at the foot of the bamboo ladder which reached to the low doorway of the house.

The next instant, afraid of what her people might say and do to her, she moved away, then stopped suddenly as she saw almost at the end of the street one house that was higher than any of the others. Above its door were carved birds and sharks, and on the very top of the roof was a skull whiter than the belly of a fish.

Kalputa knew that this was the house in which Old Lu the sorcerer lived, and it frightened her so, that she hastily turned back to the house of her people. She climbed the ladder and crawled in through the low doorway.

There was light enough in the house for Kalputa to look about her. At the first glance she saw that her people were not there. As she crawled across the flimsy flooring of palm-sheath and sat with her slender back to the wall, she told herself that they were, in all probability, at rest with the other villagers in the cool shade of the forest. She turned the pad on the wound above the armpit. Then she looked slowly about the lonely room.

The place was high and almost empty. Behind her was a window partly covered with overhanging thatch, through which a soft light filtered. There was also a window beside the door. On the floor lay mats and big wooden sleeping pillows, and on the walls hung war spears and shields of a faraway time. A white cockatoo, looking ghostly in the dim light, drowsed on a beam above Kalputa.

Kalputa fastened her eyes on it for a minute or more, then lowered them to the

doorway and saw hanging above the arch a tightly netted white string bag. It was half full and almost bursting. Her brown, bosom heaving, she crawled across the floor and looked at the bag scrutinizingly. She touched it lightly with the tip of her tiny finger. Instantly something leaped in the bag, violently twisting itself over and over. Kalputa's eyes rounded with horror, and she sucked her lips against her teeth.

She dragged herself back to the wall. With her face pressed in her thin arms, she lay on the floor, sobbing piteously and shivering in every limb, like a fallen palm-leaf. She knew now that she was doomed—that, try as hard as she might, she could not run away from the “touch of death” in the bag as she had from Captain Barker. For the bag was a sorcerer's, and there was in the village but one person to whom it belonged.

Kalputa wished that she had hidden in the canefields or among the mangrove trees on the edge of the swamp until night. Then she could have crept down to the jetty and paddled across the lagoon to one of the trading schooners. She knew that she would not have found it difficult to hide among the copra and the bundles of sugarcane until the schooner reached Suva.

Presently she began to wonder if she could run away from the “touch of death” in the bag. Maybe she had been wrong in thinking that she could not, she told herself. The next moment she asked a question: Why couldn't some sort of harm befall the “touch of death” and the one to whom it belonged?

But she remembered with a start that when noon came with its scorching white heat Old Lu the sorcerer carefully hung the charm-bag in the house he was nearest and went to bathe in the tar-black bottomless pool in the forest. She felt that Old Lu would be returning for the bag at

any minute.

As she crawled to her feet and parted the overhanging thatch on the window, Kalputa heard the island waken from its midday nap. On the edge of the forest a cockatoo screeched, screeched, screeched. The men, women and little children returning from the bush chattered in a faint chorus. A dog stirring out from shelter somewhere down the village street barked. The leaves in the palm-tree heads rustled dryly. And....

Kalputa heard a sound different from all the others. It made her drop to her hands and knees, afraid and shivering all over. Some one was scuttling up the ladder.

The next second Old Lu the sorcerer bolted in through the low door, like a rat. He was a small wiry old man with skin as brown and tough as leather and all shining with coconut-oil. His mouth was long and deep like a frog's and his sparse black hair was twisted into a mat on the very top of his head. Except for a scarlet loin-cloth, he wore no clothes. Crushed tightly in one long black-nailed claw was some betel-nut he had brought from the forest.

Kalputa, trembling with fear, watched him reach for the charm-bag. He squatted on a mat and opened the bag, tumbling the contents on to the floor.

Instantly the "touch of death" sprang almost to the ceiling and buried its mouth hungrily in the white breast of the sleeping cockatoo. The bird gave a wild screech and fluttered dizzily in a circle. Then it fell to the floor, breathing through its bill. In another minute it was dead.

With white jaws open, the "touch of death" came down among the quartz crystals, bits of carved wood, lizards' tails and odd-shaped stones; then leaped again. It was a thick black snake with yellow rings extending half-way up its back.

Kalputa screamed.

"Ooo!" exclaimed Old Lu the sorcerer, snatching up the reptile and dropping, it into the bag. "Ooo! Ooo!"

He turned his black sparks of eyes and saw Kalputa crouching fearfully beneath the window. He recognized her immediately and broke into an ugly grin.

"Kalputa 'ere?" he asked in pidgin English, his voice growing loud and brassy. "What Kalputa wantum? Cap'n Barker 'ere?"

He frowned at her from under his sullen brow and slipped a clawful of betel-nut into his frog-mouth.

Kalputa made no answer, but watched Old Lu spit big mouthfuls of gory juice at a crack in the floor. Then she lowered her eyes to the charm-bag and saw a way of procuring his help.

"Kalputa go Suva tonight," she said, as she stared into the face of the sorcerer, rapidly constructing her daring scheme. "Capt'in Barker him have things at Suva. Him 'fraid boat capt'in no come bac' wi' things. Him say Kalputa, 'Kalputay go Suva tonight. Bling bac' flenty things.' Him say things to bling.

"Then him say, 'Kalputa, find Old Lu. Him give Kalputa two charm-stone out bag. Maybe all time water big an' boat turn down. Maybe shark behin' boat when boat turn down. Shark him eat Kalputa. Boat no turn down when Kalputa have two charm-stone.'"

She watched Old Lu cram another chew of betel-nut into his cheek, and heard him rattle the stones in the bag.

"Old Lu savvy? Two stone!" Kalputa was certain that she would succeed in getting the charm-stones. "Capt'n Barker him give Old Lu flerity salt an' tobac'o. Savvy? Two stone, flenty salt an' tobac'o!"

For a minute or more Old Lu did not reply. He remembered painfully that

while trying one morning at the station to get two more handfuls of salt before he would enter into a certain deal Captain Barker had kicked him off the veranda.

He was more than doubtful about the proposition now before him, and wanted to say "No savvee," but the thought of salt and tobacco was too good to relinquish from his mind for even a minute, especially when Captain Barker's wife assured him that they were his for two charm-stones.

"Old Lu sawee," he said at last, working two small white stones out of the bag. Then he scuttled across the floor.

"Two stone, flenty salt an' tobac'o!"

With a piece of burned wood he drew a dark circle on the floor, and laid the stones in the center of it. He crawled to the opposite side of the circle, whispering mysteriously in Melanesian. Then he erased the circle, picked up the stones he had charmed and turned to hand them to Kalputa who had watched the weird performance, breathlessly.

SUDDENLY his face grew very dark, and he shot such a look of hate at Kalputa that she drew into the corner and crouched very low. He dropped the stones back into the bag, then turned his head to listen. Some one was treading heavily through the tinkling gravel of the village street. The next moment Old Lu was down the ladder into the yard.

When Kalputa crawled to the window beside the doorway and looked over the edge of it, she saw Captain Barker standing in the center of the white street with Old Lu the sorcerer. At the sight of Captain Barker she felt repulsion and fear, and wanted to turn away—to drag herself back into the corner and hide in the deep shadow. But she continued to watch him.

His shirt and wrinkled white ducks were covered with dust, and his leather-tanned face was perspiring. As he looked angrily first at the house and then at the forest behind the village, his eyes glittered like polished dark blue marbles.

His arms were not folded across his wide chest as was his habit of standing when talking to any one, but they hung at the sides of his huge body, their heavy fists doubled to strike Old Lu at any instant. He looked menacingly at the sorcerer, his lower lip dropping until it exposed teeth as white as a dog's.

Kalputa saw Old Lu gesticulating wildly. He waved his hands in a queer sort of a way and pointed momentarily to the farther end of the forest. His voice was loud enough for Kalputa to hear it.

"Kalputa no com' 'ere in mornin'. Kalputa go 'way to forest." Old Lu moved to one side of the street. "Old Lu savvee place Kalputa hide in forest. Cap'n Barker, give Old Lu ten stick tobac'o an' flenty salt. Then Old Lu show Cap'n Barker place Kalputa hide."

Kalputa listened for Captain Barker's reply. It was a quick glance at the houses on either side of the street, she saw. The next instant, as though determined to search every house, Captain Barker walked into the yard and stopped at the foot of the ladder.

Breathing heavily, Kalputa saw Captain Barker begin climbing the ladder. She now knew that she was doomed—that there was no way of escape. And, like an animal at bay, she was prepared to fight against going back to the trading station.

Suddenly she heard a fearful crash. She looked hurriedly and saw Captain Barker's heavy bulk spilling across the sand. The lower portion of the frail-ladder had given away with him.

Captain Barker did not attempt to

climb the ladder again, but hurried into the street, swearing in the language of a salt-water captain. He surveyed the houses once more, and noted leaning against each one a ladder as flimsy as the one which had just broken with him.

Kalputa heard Old Lu the sorcerer interrupt Captain Barker.

“Kalputa hide in forest,” said Old Lu.

“Old Lu show Cap’n Barker place Kalputa hide. First give Old Lu ten stick’ tobac’o an’ flenty salt.”

Captain Barker regarded the sorcerer for a moment, and looked again at the houses with their frail ladders. Then he motioned Old Lu to follow him back to the trading station.

Her brown bosom heaving with relief, Kalputa watched them pass out of the village and strike across the canefields. She kept her eyes on them until they disappeared. Then she climbed down the ladder and hid in the deep-shadow pool beneath the house.

When sundown came to the island, with the smoke of the pleasant supper fires curling thin and blue above the deep thatched roofs of the village, Kalputa was still hiding beneath the house, waiting for night to come when all the island would be scarcely visible. It was very warm beneath the lonely house, and the wound above Kalputa’s armpit pained again.

Her people had not yet returned to the house. Neither had Old Lu the sorcerer nor Captain Barker. As she looked across the lagoon at a trading schooner which would sail early the next-morning, Kalputa told herself that Old Lu was either demanding more salt and tobacco or was leading Captain Barker cunningly about the forest before bringing him back to the village. Suddenly she gave a low shocked cry.

A purl of wind, black and ominous, was hurling itself in from the wide expanse of the open sea. It drove straight across the lagoon into the village. Other puffs of wind followed, each one being stronger than the preceding. The sky turned lead-colored, then storm-black. The sea broke into a sickening swell, its spiteful waves-snapping and biting at the lip of the beach.

In the lagoon the three schooners took off their light sails and shortened down to storm canvas. Suddenly, with a hiss like the “touch of death,” the rain came, blotting out the canefields and the lagoon until they were a dark smear.

“Squall!” cried Kalputa. She groped under the house, listening to the crash of the rain on the roof. She heard it beat down the big leaves of the palm-trees in front of the houses and, with the wind continuing to grow harder, fling the drinking-coconuts angrily to the ground. “Squall all night maybe!” Kalputa exclaimed, groping farther under the house.

Within half an hour the squall was a monstrous screaming thing. It was impossible for Kalputa to hear the roar of the menacing surf; but between the lightning sheets which illuminated the island she saw the tremendous insane waves pounding upon the beach.

The wind frightened her most. She never dreamed that it could blow so hard. It blew from all parts of the island at the same time, she thought. It shook and tore on the long-legged house of her people, appalling her until she threw her thin arms about one of the house piles and clung in the dark, shivering in every limb. It screamed through the palm-tree heads and on across the fields, beating the long stalks of sugar-cane to the ground. There was nothing she could compare this wind with.

No longer was it a squall. It was a hurricane.

Kalputa now knew that Captain Barker had refused to give the salt and tobacco to Old Lu the sorcerer and that Old Lu in his anger had let loose the “touch of death.” She also knew that the “touch of death” had called to the hurricane god.

Kalputa tried hard to think what to do, but the wind nearly maddened her.

Suddenly the house gave a wild lurch. The next moment the roof went crashing through the wet air. Kalputa sprang to her feet and ran staggering into the street.

The village was illuminated with lightning and the villagers were tumbling fearfully out of their houses. The wind caught some of them and whirled them away like tufts of cane-grass. Those who were quick enough climbed into the palm-trees. They tied themselves securely among the big leaves with long pieces of rope.

Many of the villagers were on the ground, holding to the bases of the trees and panting for breath. On either side of the street several houses had been torn from their foundations and whirled away.

Kalputa could snatch only one look with her wide-open frightened eyes. The next instant some one crashed into her, knocking her down. With great effort she buried her hands deeply in the coral gravel and clung with her face close to the ground, fighting to hold her own.

Her eyes smarted and the wind almost strangled her. Her ears drummed so that she did not hear the crash of the trees and the wails of human despair about her.

Suddenly she lost her hold. When she again tried to bury her hands in the gravel, she felt a native writhing and squirming beside her. In one of his hands were several pieces of rope.

Kalputa snatched the ropes and sprawled, across the street toward the base of a coconut-tree. She clung there until the

wind went down for several minutes. Then she clasped the trunk of the tree with her hands, pressed the soles of her feet against the bark and, being a Melanesian woman, perilously began to walk up the tree. At the top she tied herself securely among the windage.

When the wind again hit her tree, the tree did not sway or bend backward and forward, but stood almost stationary, vibrating like a piece of wire. The vibration made Kalputa dizzy, then sick. She expected the tree to snap at any moment. A tree across the street had just gone that way, throwing its occupants, two men and a woman, to the ground like ripe coconuts. Few trees could stand the strain of that hurricane very long.

Late that night, the wind was unbelievable. It was a screaming fury. Kalputa’s tree was loosening at the roots. There was no telling how much longer it could stand the strain.

When the rain again struck the village, Kalputa thought that the wind had dipped up all the water in the lagoon and hurled it across the canefields. The rain hit her back and shoulders like leaden pellets.

The tree swayed perilously as one of the roots tore loose. Kalputa doubled her body at the waist and clung tighter to the beaten-down leaves, sobbing. Again she wished something terrible would happen to the “touch of death” and Old Lu the sorcerer. For she was weakening like the tree. Her strength was running from her faster than she had ever imagined it could.

It was the wind that was exhausting her. She could not endure its unceasing impact much longer.

And the rain ... It would be a night-long tumbling, wall of water. It would sink to the very roots of the tree and tear them to pieces. Surely her tree would fall in a few minutes.

But the tree did not fall. By midnight the hurricane lay with its backbone broken. Only a stiff breeze was blowing. The water wall lay crumbled in the village and the canefields. Except for the harsh animal-like groans of the villagers and the low crying of the sea, all was quiet.

Kalputa stirred uneasily among the leaves. She was weak, and weary. Both body and brain ached. She began to cry, then stopped suddenly to see if she was hurt. Her arm and shoulder were swollen considerably from the wound above the armpit. As she listened to the sounds of grief about her, she felt very lonely. Once she thought of Captain Barker, wondering what the hurricane had done to him and the trading station and the village in the rear of it. She quickly dismissed him from her mind.

Presently she began to think of some one else. It was not about the "touch of death" or Old Lu the sorcerer. She was thinking of her thin little brown baby all alone in the grove of paw-paw trees in the rear of the station. She wished she could go to him. Again she started to cry.

Soon the breeze went down. Everything became dead calm. The stars came out. They looked like big pearls pinned to a piece of blue cloth. Somewhere down the street a dog splashed in the water, howling mournfully. Kalputa dropped her head to her arms until the first shimmer of dawn crept up over the island.

When she climbed down from the tree, she looked about her bewildered. The rain-filled street was cluttered with corpses. Some of the bodies lay half in the water and half out, battered and broken. Not a house was standing. Even the house of Old Lu, with all of its sorcery, was gone.

Some of the house piles remained upright, with natives clinging to them, wet

and miserable. There was but little wreckage of the houses. The fingers of the wind had hurled practically all of it in to the canefields or down upon the beach where it was sucked into the lagoon by the undertow. But one palm-tree out of every ten was spared. Two of these were wrecks, their windages shorn and their long trunks split half-way down.

THE sun was not yet up over the island when Kalputa found herself on the edge of a flooded field, looking for a way down to the jetty. The field was draining slowly. It would be several hours, maybe evening, before the field would be passable.

She remembered suddenly that there was another way. There was one big obstacle in it, however; it would take her too close to the trading station.

Back by the forest a path ran around to the other side of the island. She could follow this until she was almost directly behind the trading station. Then by walking along the dry edges of the field which lay, perpendicular to the path she would reach the jetty.

Her chances of getting there were one out of a hundred. If Captain Barker or even any of the natives were to see her it would be absurd for her to think of reaching the mission house at Suva. After a short hesitation, she decided to take the risk.

It was while she was running along the dank, weedy path that she suddenly screamed and jumped into the low shrubbery of the forest. As her fear was dispelled, she parted the rain-wet leaves and looked at the native lying in the path.

His ugly brown body was battered into formless flesh, and his face was laid open to the bone.

For the first time since running away from Captain Barker Kalputa,

laughed. She laughed because the dead native, after digging and clawing with his raw bleeding hands to keep from being whirled away, had lost in his struggle against the "touch of death" and the hurricane. Then she fled with swallow-swiftness, laughing at Old Lu the sorcerer lying in the path behind her.

Presently she stopped laughing. She began wondering what had happened to Captain Barker. Did he, like Old Lu, also lie on the edge of the wind-torn forest? She desired to know definitely. Why she wanted to know she could not have explained if she had tried.

When she left the path, stepping warily along the dry edges of the field, the sun was climbing up over the leaves of the paw-paw trees, shooting green and gold lights through them. She looked toward the grove and saw that the hurricane had demolished the trading station.

All that remained of it was a section of a wall and apportion of the veranda. Almost nothing, was left of the village which had stood in the rear of the station, and only a few natives were alive. Most of the paw-paw trees had been blown away. As Kalputa was turning to go, she saw Captain Barker's huge body lying in the grove.

Intuitively she knew that Captain Barker had been injured. How badly hurt he was; she had no idea, but immediately wanted to know. If he was injured badly she need have no more fear of not succeeding in running away from Flenga Island that day, she assured herself. It was because of her desire to know definitely the extent of his injuries that she stood several minutes later looking at him.

Captain Barker lay on an improvised mat of palm leaves close to the grave of their little man-child, with a shattered bone protruding above the elbow

of his left arm. The blood was running from a gash on the side of his thick neck. His puffed slits of eyes were closed and his lips were partly open. He was breathing with the greatest difficulty.

Kalputa studied him uneasily, then shifted her eyes to the little grave. When she again looked at him, his eyes were wide open, staring up at her piteously. He could not speak.

Kalputa looked at the lagoon, scanning it hurriedly. Out where the cream-white spray was leaping on the circling run of coral four masts of a submerged schooner projected above the water. She saw nothing of the other vessels.

The next instant she did something which she did not wholly understand. She leaned over her husband and, with tears on her face, tenderly laid his broken arm across his chest. With a strip of her wind-torn skirt she bandaged his neck. Then she lowered her face until it was on his and kissed him. A moment later she gave a high metallic scream and fled down to the beach.

At the coral stone jetty she found a tiny outrigger canoe flung high up on the sand. She dragged it into the water, its outrigger keeping it upright. Then she looked about her for a paddle. She finally found one, a makeshift paddle, half buried in the sand; A few minutes later she began paddling toward the wide expanse of the open sea.

Crossing the lagoon was difficult. The water persisted in flinging the wreckage and corpses against the outrigger of the canoe. With the makeshift paddle she pushed away the wreckage. The blood sharks frightened her. They tore and devoured the corpses, causing her to breathe long prayers to her shark god. The handle of the paddle became loose several times. Each time she was compelled to stop

and rewrap the cord.

Then the white blaze of noon came. The heat was horrible. It scorched her back and shoulders. Her arm pained so badly that she had to change the pad on the wound. It was a long while before she finally shot out into the sea and drove the canoe toward Suva.

The sun was slipping behind the dark hill ranges when Kalputa climbed up on the damp green wharf at Suva and sped toward the tiny mission house standing in a clump of lemon bushes. On the cool palm-shaded verandas on either side of the long street Government officials and their families sat in loose white duck at little tables, eating their evening meal and laughing in low voices.

Kalputa ran swiftly, her breath coming in short broken gasps. She reached the mission house just as the vesper prayers were being said.

NIGHT had come again to Flenga Island. Except for the humming water on the coral reefs and the homeless wind beating in from the lonely sea, a dead calm was on all the island lying low and black like a whale asleep with its back out of the water. The yellow moon came up. It looked like a lamp in the hand of the hurricane god who was coming back to see all the damage he

and the "touch of death" had done.

Suddenly the island' calm was broken. Two long white objects shot into the lagoon and half-way across to the jetty. When they came to a stop, small boats began to skim shoreward.

A few minutes later the beach, was aswarm with people. Some of the men lugged big bundles of burying mats while others carried boxes and clothing. They followed a woman who ran swiftly ahead of them.

"Capt'in Barker! Me here!" cried Kalputa, rushing into the grove of paw-paw trees. "Me here!"

At the sound of her old watchword, "*Me here!*"—the watchword she had used in the trading station during the period they were so happy—Captain Barker opened his eyes and stared vaguely at her.

She leaned over him in the yellow moonlight and slipped her thin arm beneath his head, raising it until it rested on her breast.

The missionaries and the Government officials entered the grove.

"Capt'in Barker!" Kalputa's arm tightened about his huge back as a look of understanding came into his eyes. "Capt'in Barker, Kalputa bling two boat un' fienty help from Suva."