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Chapter 9

Jerry and Skipper shared the long afternoon-watch together, the latter being guilty of recurrent chuckles and exclamations such as: "Gott-fer-dang, Jerry, believe me, you're some fighter and all dog"; or, "You're a proper man's dog, you are, a lion dog. I bet the lion don't live that could get your goat."

And Jerry, understanding none of the words, with the exception of his own name, nevertheless knew that the sounds made by Skipper were broad of praise and warm of love. And when Skipper stooped and rubbed his ears, or received a rose-kiss on extended fingers, or caught him up in his arms, Jerry's heart was nigh to bursting. For what greater ecstasy can be the portion of any creature than that it be loved by a god? This was just precisely Jerry's ecstasy. This was a god, a tangible, real, three-dimensional god, who went about and ruled his world in a loin-cloth and on two bare legs, and who loved him with crooning noises in throat and mouth and with two wide-spread arms that folded him in.

At four o'clock, measuring a glance at the afternoon sun and gauging the speed of the Arangi through the water in relation to the closeness of Su'u, Van Horn went below and roughly shook the mate awake. Until both returned, Jerry held the deck alone. But for the fact that the white-gods were there below and were certain to be back at any moment, not many moments would Jerry have held the deck, for every lessened mile between the return boys and Malaita contributed a rising of their spirits, and under the imminence of their old-time independence, Lerumie, as an instance of many of them, with strong gustatory sensations and a positive drooling at the mouth, regarded Jerry in terms of food and vengeance that were identical.

Flat-hauled on the crisp breeze, the Arangi closed in rapidly with the land. Jerry peered through the barbed wire, sniffing the air, Skipper beside him and giving orders to the mate and helmsman. The heap of trade-boxes was now unlashd, and the boys began opening and shutting them. What gave them particular delight was the ringing of the bell with which each box was equipped and which rang whenever a lid was raised. Their pleasure in the toy-like contrivance was that of children, and each went back again and again to unlock his own box and make the bell ring.

Fifteen of the boys were to be landed at Su'u and with wild gesticulations and cries they began to recognize and point out the infinitesimal details of the landfall of the only spot they had known on earth prior to the day, three years before, when they had been sold into slavery by their fathers, uncles, and chiefs.

A narrow neck of water, scarcely a hundred yards across, gave entrance to a long and tiny bay. The shore was massed with mangroves and dense, tropical vegetation. There was no sign of houses nor of human occupancy, although Van Horn, staring at the dense jungle so close at hand, knew as a matter of course that scores, and perhaps hundreds, of pairs of human eyes were looking at him.

"Smell 'm, Jerry, smell 'm," he encouraged.

And Jerry's hair bristled as he barked at the mangrove wall, for truly his keen scent informed him of lurking niggers.

"If I could smell like him," the captain said to the mate, "there wouldn't be any risk at all of my ever losing my head."

But Borckman made no reply and sullenly went about his work. There was little wind in the bay, and the Arangi slowly forged in and dropped anchor in thirty fathoms. So steep was the slope of the harbour bed from the beach that even in such excessive depth the Arangi's stern swung in within a hundred feet of the mangroves.

Van Horn continued to cast anxious glances at the wooded shore. For Su'u had an evil name. Since the schooner Fair Hathaway, recruiting labour for the Queensland plantations, had been captured by the natives and all hands slain fifteen years before, no vessel, with the exception of the Arangi, had dared to venture into Su'u. And most white men condemned Van Horn's recklessness for so venturing.

Far up the mountains, that towered many thousands of feet into the trade-wind clouds, arose many signal smokes that advertised the coming of the vessel. Far and near, the Arangi's presence was known; yet from the jungle so near at hand only shrieks of parrots and chatterings of cockatoos could be heard.

The whaleboat, manned with six of the boat's crew, was drawn alongside, and the fifteen Su'u boys and their boxes were loaded in. Under the canvas flaps along the thwarts, ready to hand for the rowers, were laid five of the Lee-Enfields. On deck, another of the boat's crew, rifle in hand, guarded the remaining weapons. Borckman had brought up his own rifle to be ready for instant use. Van Horn's rifle lay handy in the stern sheets where he stood near Tambi, who steered with a long sweep. Jerry raised a low whine and yearned over the rail after Skipper, who yielded and lifted him down.

The place of danger was in the boat; for there was little likelihood, at this particular time, of a rising of the return boys on the Arangi. Being of Somo, No-ola, Langa-Langa, and far Malu they were in wholesome fear, did they lose the protection of their white masters, of being eaten by the Su'u folk, just as the Su'u boys would have feared being eaten by the Somo and Langa-Langa and No-ola folk.

What increased the danger of the boat was the absence of a covering boat. The invariable custom of the larger recruiting vessels was to send two boats on any shore errand. While one landed on the beach, the other lay off a short distance to cover the retreat of the shore party, if trouble broke out. Too small to carry one boat on deck, the Arangi could not conveniently tow two astern; so Van Horn, who was the most daring of the recruiters, lacked this essential safeguard.

Tambi, under Van Horn's low-uttered commands, steered a parallel course along the shore. Where the mangroves ceased, and where high ground and a beaten runway came down to the water's edge, Van Horn motioned the rowers to back water and lay on their oars. High palms and lofty, wide-branched trees rose above the jungle at this spot, and the runway showed like the entrance of a tunnel into the dense, green wall of tropical vegetation.

Van Horn, regarding the shore for some sign of life, lighted a cigar and put one hand to the waist-line of his loin-cloth to reassure himself of the presence of the stick of dynamite that was tucked between the loin-cloth and his skin. The lighted cigar was for the purpose, if emergency arose, of igniting the fuse of the dynamite. And the fuse was so short, with its end split to accommodate the inserted head of a safety match, that between the time of touching it off with the live cigar to the time of the explosion not more than three seconds could elapse. This required quick cool work on Van Horn's part, in case need arose. In three seconds he would have to light the fuse and throw the sputtering stick with directed aim to its objective. However, he did not expect to use it, and had it ready merely as a precautionary measure.

Five minutes passed, and the silence of the shore remained profound. Jerry sniffed Skipper's bare leg as if to assure him that he was beside him no matter what threatened from the hostile silence of the land, then stood up with his forepaws on the gunwale and continued to sniff eagerly and audibly, to prick his neck hair, and to utter low growls.

"They're there, all right," Skipper confided to him; and Jerry, with a sideward glance of smiling eyes, with a bobbing of his tail and a quick love-flattening of his ears, turned his nose shoreward again and resumed his reading of the jungle tale that was wafted to him on the light fans of the stifling and almost stagnant air.

"Hey!" Van Horn suddenly shouted. "Hey, you fella boy stick 'm head out belong you!"

As if in a transformation scene, the apparently tenantless jungle spawned into life. On the instant a hundred stark savages appeared. They broke forth everywhere from the vegetation. All were armed, some with Snider rifles and ancient horse pistols, others with bows and arrows, with long throwing spears, with war-clubs, and with long-handled tomahawks. In a flash, one of them leaped into the sunlight in the open space where runway and water met. Save for decorations, he was naked as Adam before the Fall. A solitary white feather uprose from his kinky, glossy, black hair. A polished bodkin of white petrified shell, with sharp-pointed ends, thrust through a hole in the partition of his nostrils, extended five inches across his face. About his neck, from a cord of twisted coconut sennit, hung an ivory-white necklace of wild-boar's tusks. A garter of white cowrie shells encircled one leg just below the knee. A flaming scarlet flower was coquettishly stuck over one ear, and through a hole in the other ear was threaded a pig's tail so recently severed that it still bled.

As this dandy of Melanesia leaped into the sunshine, the Snider rifle in his hands came into position, aimed from his hip, the generous muzzle bearing directly on Van Horn. No less quick was Van Horn. With equal speed he had snatched his rifle and brought it to bear from his hip. So they stood and faced each other, death in their finger-tips, forty feet apart. The million years between barbarism and civilization also yawned between them across that narrow gulf of forty feet. The hardest thing for modern, evolved man to do is to forget his ancient training. Easiest of all things is it for him to forget his modernity and slip back across time to the howling ages. A lie in the teeth, a blow in the face, a love-thrust of jealousy to the heart, in a fraction of an instant can turn a twentieth-century philosopher into an ape-like arboreal pounding his chest, gnashing his teeth, and seeing red.

So Van Horn. But with a difference. He straddled time. He was at one and the same instant all modern, all imminently primitive, capable of fighting in redness of tooth and claw, desirous of remaining modern for as long as he could with his will master the study of ebon black of skin and dazzling white of decoration that confronted him.

A long ten seconds of silence endured. Even Jerry, he knew not why, stilled the growl in his throat. Five score of head-hunting cannibals on the fringe of the jungle, fifteen Su'u return blacks in the boat, seven black boat's crew, and a solitary white man with a cigar in his mouth, a rifle at his hip, and an Irish terrier bristling against his bare calf, kept the solemn pact of those ten seconds, and no one of them knew or guessed what the outcome would be.

One of the return boys, in the bow of the whaleboat, made the peace sign with his palm extended outward and weaponless, and began to chirp in the unknown Su'u dialect. Van Horn held his aim and waited. The dandy lowered his Snider, and breath came more easily to the chests of all who composed the picture.

"Me good fella boy," the dandy piped, half bird-like and half elf.

"You big fella fool too much," Van Horn retorted harshly, dropping his gun into the stern-sheets, motioning to rowers and steersman to turn the boat around, and puffing his cigar as carelessly casual as if, the moment before, life and death had not been the debate.

"My word," he went on with fine irritable assumption. "What name you stick 'm gun along me? Me no kai-kai (eat) along you. Me kai-kai along you, stomach belong me walk about. You kai-kai along me, stomach belong you walk about. You no like 'm kai-kai Su'u boy belong along you? Su'u boy belong you all the same brother along you. Long time before, three monsoon before, me speak 'm true speak. Me say three monsoon boy come back. My word, three monsoon finish, boy stop along me come back."

By this time the boat had swung around, reversing bow and stern, Van Horn pivoting so as to face the Snider-armed dandy. At another signal from Van Horn the rowers backed water and forced the boat, stern in, up to the solid ground of the runway. And each rower, his oar in position in case of attack, privily felt under the canvas flap to make sure of the exact location of his concealed Lee-Enfield.

"All right boy belong you walk about?" Van Horn queried of the dandy, who signified the affirmative in the Solomon Islands fashion by half-closing his eyes and nodding his head upward, in a queer, perky way:

"No kai-kai 'm Su'u fella boy suppose walk about along you?"

"No fear," the dandy answered. "Suppose 'm Su'u fella boy, all right. Suppose 'm no fella Su'u boy, my word, big trouble. Ishikola, big fella black marster along this place, him talk 'm me talk along you. Him say any amount bad fella boy stop 'm along bush. Him say big fella white marster no walk about. Him say jolly good big fella white marster stop 'm along ship."

Van Horn nodded in an off-hand way, as if the information were of little value, although he knew that for this time Su'u would furnish him no fresh recruits. One at a time, compelling the others to remain in their places, he directed the return boys astern and ashore. It was Solomon Islands tactics. Crowding was dangerous. Never could the blacks be risked to confusion in numbers. And Van Horn, smoking his cigar in lordly indifferent fashion, kept his apparently uninterested eyes glued to each boy who made his way aft, box on shoulder, and stepped out on the land. One by one they disappeared into the runway tunnel, and when the last was ashore he ordered the boat back to the ship.

"Nothing doing here this trip," he told the mate. "We'll up hook and out in the morning."

The quick tropic twilight swiftly blent day and darkness. Overhead all stars were out. No faintest breath of air moved over the water, and the humid heat beaded the faces and bodies of both men with profuse sweat. They ate their deck-spread supper languidly and ever and anon used their forearms to wipe the stinging sweat from their eyes.

"Why a man should come to the Solomons--beastly hole," the mate complained.

"Or stay on," the captain rejoined.

"I'm too rotten with fever," the mate grumbled. "I'd die if I left. Remember, I tried it two years ago. It takes the cold weather to bring out the fever. I arrived in Sydney on my back. They had to take me to hospital in an ambulance. I got worse and worse. The doctors told me the only thing to do was to head back where I got the fever. If I did I might live a long time. If I hung on in Sydney it meant a quick finish. They packed me on board in another ambulance. And that's all I saw of Australia for my holiday. I don't want to stay in the Solomons. It's plain hell. But I got to, or croak."

He rolled, at a rough estimate, thirty grains of quinine in a cigarette paper, regarded the result sourly for a moment, then swallowed it at a gulp. This reminded Van Horn,

who reached for the bottle and took a similar dose.

"Better put up a covering cloth," he suggested.

Borckman directed several of the boat's crew in the rigging up of a thin tarpaulin, like a curtain along the shore side of the Arangi. This was a precaution against any bushwhacking bullet from the mangroves only a hundred feet away.

Van Horn sent Tambi below to bring up the small phonograph and run off the dozen or so scratchy, screechy records that had already been under the needle a thousand times. Between records, Van Horn recollected the girl, and had her haled out of her dark hole in the lazarette to listen to the music. She obeyed in fear, apprehensive that her time had come. She looked dumbly at the big fella white master, her eyes large with fright; nor did the trembling of her body cease for a long time after he had made her lie down. The phonograph meant nothing to her. She knew only fear--fear of this terrible white man that she was certain was destined to eat her.

Jerry left the caressing hand of Skipper for a moment to go over and sniff her. This was an act of duty. He was identifying her once again. No matter what happened, no matter what months or years might elapse, he would know her again and for ever know her again. He returned to the free hand of Skipper that resumed its caressing. The other hand held the cigar which he was smoking.

The wet sultry heat grew more oppressive. The air was nauseous with the dank mucky odour that cooked out of the mangrove swamp. Rowelled by the squeaky music to recollection of old-world ports and places, Borckman lay on his face on the hot planking, beat a tattoo with his naked toes, and gutturally muttered an unending monologue of curses. But Van Horn, with Jerry panting under his hand, placidly and philosophically continued to smoke, lighting a fresh cigar when the first gave out.

He roused abruptly at the faint wash of paddles which he was the first on board to hear. In fact, it was Jerry's low growl and neck-rippling of hair that had keyed Van Horn to hear. Pulling the stick of dynamite out from the twist of his loin cloth and glancing at the cigar to be certain it was alight, he rose to his feet with leisurely swiftness and with leisurely swiftness gained the rail.

"What name belong you?" was his challenge to the dark.

"Me fella Ishikola," came the answer in the quavering falsetto of age.

Van Horn, before speaking again, loosened his automatic pistol half out of its holster, and slipped the holster around from his hip till it rested on his groin conveniently close to his hand.

"How many fella boy stop along you?" he demanded.

"One fella ten-boy altogether he stop," came the aged voice.

"Come alongside then." Without turning his head, his right hand unconsciously dropping close to the butt of the automatic, Van Horn commanded: "You fella Tambi. Fetch 'm lantern. No fetch 'm this place. Fetch 'm aft along mizzen rigging and look sharp eye belong you."

Tambi obeyed, exposing the lantern twenty feet away from where his captain stood. This gave Van Horn the advantage over the approaching canoe-men, for the lantern, suspended through the barbed wire across the rail and well down, would clearly illuminate the occupants of the canoe while he was left in semi-darkness and shadow.

"Washee-washeel!" he urged peremptorily, while those in the invisible canoe still hesitated.

Came the sound of paddles, and, next, emerging into the lantern's area of light, the high, black bow of a war canoe, curved like a gondola, inlaid with silvery-glistening mother-of-pearl; the long lean length of the canoe which was without outrigger; the shining eyes and the black-shining bodies of the stark blacks who knelt in the bottom and paddled; Ishikola, the old chief, squatting amidships and not paddling, an unlighted, empty-bowled, short-stemmed clay pipe upside-down between his toothless gums; and, in the stern, as coxswain, the dandy, all nakedness of blackness, all whiteness of decoration, save for the pig's tail in one ear and the scarlet hibiscus that still flamed over the other ear.

Less than ten blacks had been known to rush a blackbirder officered by no more than two white men, and Van Horn's hand closed on the butt of his automatic, although he did not pull it clear of the holster, and although, with his left hand, he directed the cigar to his mouth and puffed it lively alight.

"Hello, Ishikola, you blooming old blighter," was Van Horn's greeting to the old chief, as the dandy, with a pry of his steering-paddle against the side of the canoe and part under its bottom, brought the dug-out broadside-on to the Arangi so that the sides of both crafts touched.

Ishikola smiled upward in the lantern light. He smiled with his right eye, which was all he had, the left having been destroyed by an arrow in a youthful jungle-skirmish.

"My word!" he greeted back. "Long time you no stop eye belong me."

Van Horn joked him in understandable terms about the latest wives he had added to his harem and what price he had paid for them in pigs.

"My word," he concluded, "you rich fella too much together."

"Me like 'm come on board gammon along you," Ishikola meekly suggested.

"My word, night he stop," the captain objected, then added, as a concession against the known rule that visitors were not permitted aboard after nightfall: "You come on board, boy stop 'm along boat."

Van Horn gallantly helped the old man to clamber to the rail, straddle the barbed wire, and gain the deck. Ishikola was a dirty old savage. One of his tambos (tambo being beche-de-mer and Melanesian for "taboo") was that water unavoidable must never touch his skin. He who lived by the salt sea, in a land of tropic downpour, religiously shunned contact with water. He never went swimming or wading, and always fled to shelter from a shower. Not that this was true of the rest of his tribe. It was the peculiar tambo laid upon him by the devil-devil doctors. Other tribesmen the devil-devil doctors tabooed against eating shark, or handling turtle, or contacting with crocodiles or the fossil remains of crocodiles, or from ever being smirched by the profanity of a woman's touch or of a woman's shadow cast across the path.

So Ishikola, whose tambo was water, was crusted with the filth of years. He was sealed like a leper, and, weazen-faced and age-shrunken, he hobbled horribly from an ancient spear-thrust to the thigh that twisted his torso droopingly out of the vertical. But his one eye gleamed brightly and wickedly, and Van Horn knew that it observed as much as did both his own eyes.

Van Horn shook hands with him--an honour he accorded only chiefs-- and motioned him to squat down on deck on his hams close to the fear-struck girl, who began trembling again at recollection of having once heard Ishikola offer five twenties of drinking coconuts for the meat of her for a dinner.

Jerry needs must sniff, for future identification purposes, this graceless, limping, naked, one-eyed old man. And, when he had sniffed and registered the particular odour, Jerry must growl intimidatingly and win a quick eye-glance of approval from Skipper.

"My word, good fella kai-kai dog," said Ishikola. "Me give 'm half- fathom shell money that fella dog."

For a mere puppy this offer was generous, because half a fathom of shell-money, strung on a thread of twisted coconut fibres, was equivalent in cash to half a sovereign in English currency, to two dollars and a half in American, or, in live-pig currency, to half of a fair-sized fat pig.

"One fathom shell-money that fella dog," Van Horn countered, in his heart knowing that he would not sell Jerry for a hundred fathoms, or for any fabulous price from any black, but in his head offering so small a price over par as not to arouse suspicion among the blacks as to how highly he really valued the golden-coated son of Bidy and Terrence.

Ishikola next averred that the girl had grown much thinner, and that he, as a practical judge of meat, did not feel justified this time in bidding more than three twenty-strings of drinking coconuts.

After these amenities, the white master and the black talked of many things, the one bluffing with the white-man's superiority of intellect and knowledge, the other feeling and guessing, primitive statesman that he was, in an effort to ascertain the balance of human and political forces that bore upon his Su'u territory, ten miles square, bounded by the sea and by landward lines of an inter-tribal warfare that was older than the oldest Su'u myth. Eternally, heads had been taken and bodies eaten, now on one side, now on the other, by the temporarily victorious tribes. The boundaries had remained the same. Ishikola, in crude beche-de-mer, tried to learn the Solomon Islands general situation in relation to Su'u, and Van Horn was not above playing the unfair diplomatic game as it is unfairly played in all the chancelleries of the world powers.

"My word," Van Horn concluded; "you bad fella too much along this place. Too many heads you fella take; too much kai-kai long pig along you." (Long pig, meaning barbecued human flesh.)

"What name, long time black fella belong Su'u take 'm heads, kai-kai along long pig?" Ishikola countered.

"My word," Van Horn came back, "too much along this place. Bime by, close up, big fella warship stop 'm along Su'u, knock seven balls outa Su'u."

"What name him big fella warship stop 'm along Solomons?" Ishikola demanded.

"Big fella Cambrian, him fella name belong ship," Van Horn lied, too well aware that no British cruiser had been in the Solomons for the past two years.

The conversation was becoming rather a farcical dissertation upon the relations that should obtain between states, irrespective of size, when it was broken off by a cry from Tambi, who, with another lantern hanging overside at the end of his arm had made a discovery.

"Skipper, gun he stop along canoe!" was his cry.

Van Horn, with a leap, was at the rail and peering down over the barbed wire. Ishikola, despite his twisted body, was only seconds behind him.

"What name that fella gun stop 'm along bottom?" Van Horn indignantly demanded.

The dandy, in the stern, with a careless look upward, tried with his foot to shove over the green leaves so as to cover the out-jutting butts of several rifles, but made the matter worse by exposing them more fully. He bent to rake the leaves over with his hand, but sat swiftly upright when Van Horn roared at him:

"Stand clear! Keep 'm fella hand belong you long way big bit!"

Van Horn turned on Ishikola, and simulated wrath which he did not feel against the ancient and ever-recurrent trick.

"What name you come alongside, gun he stop along canoe belong you?" he demanded.

The old salt-water chief rolled his one eye and blinked a fair simulation of stupidity and innocence.

"My word, me cross along you too much," Van Horn continued. "Ishikola, you plenty bad fella boy. You get 'm to hell overside."

The old fellow limped across the deck with more agility than he had displayed coming aboard, straddled the barbed wire without assistance, and without assistance dropped into the canoe, cleverly receiving his weight on his uninjured leg. He blinked up for forgiveness and in reassertion of innocence. Van Horn turned his face aside to hide a grin, and then grinned outright when the old rascal, showing his empty pipe, wheedled up:

"Suppose 'm five stick tobacco you give 'm along me?"

While Borckman went below for the tobacco, Van Horn orated to Ishikola on the sacred solemnity of truth and promises. Next, he leaned across the barbed wire and handed down the five sticks of tobacco.

"My word," he threatened. "Somo day, Ishikola, I finish along you altogether. You no good friend stop along salt-water. You big fool stop along bush."

When Ishikola attempted protest, he shut him off with, "My word, you gammon along me too much."

Still the canoe lingered. The dandy's toe strayed privily to feel out the butts of the Sniders under the green leaves, and Ishikola was loth to depart.

"Washee-washee!" Van Horn cried with imperative suddenness.

The paddlers, without command from chief or dandy, involuntarily obeyed, and with deep, strong strokes sent the canoe into the encircling darkness. Just as quickly Van Horn changed his position on deck to the tune of a dozen yards, so that no hazarded bullet might reach him. He crouched low and listened to the wash of paddles fade away in the distance.

"All right, you fella Tambi," he ordered quietly. "Make 'm music he fella walk about."

And while "Red Wing" screeched its cheap and pretty rhythm, he reclined elbow on deck, smoked his cigar, and gathered Jerry into caressing inclosure.

As he smoked he watched the abrupt misting of the stars by a rain-squall that made to windward or to where windward might vaguely be configured. While he gauged the minutes ere he must order Tambi below with the phonograph and records, he noted the bush-girl gazing at him in dumb fear. He nodded consent with half-closed eyes and up-tilting face, clinching his consent with a wave of hand toward the companionway. She obeyed as a beaten dog, spirit-broken, might have obeyed, dragging herself to her feet, trembling afresh, and with backward glances of her perpetual terror of the big white master that she was convinced would some day eat her. In such fashion, stabbing Van Horn to the heart because of his inability to convey his kindness to her across the abyss of the ages that separated them, she slunk away to the companionway and crawled down it feet-first like some enormous, large-headed worm.

After he had sent Tambi to follow her with the precious phonograph, Van Horn continued to smoke on while the sharp, needle-like spray of the rain impacted soothingly on his heated body.

Only for five minutes did the rain descend. Then, as the stars drifted back in the sky, the smell of steam seemed to stench forth from deck and mangrove swamp, and the suffocating heat wrapped all about.

Van Horn knew better, but ill health, save for fever, had never concerned him; so he did not bother for a blanket to shelter him.

"Yours the first watch," he told Borckman. "I'll have her under way in the morning, before I call you."

He tucked his head on the biceps of his right arm, with the hollow of the left snuggling Jerry in against his chest, and dozed off to sleep.

And thus adventuring, white men and indigenus black men from day to day lived life in the Solomons, bickering and trafficking, the whites striving to maintain their heads on their shoulders, the blacks striving, no less single-heartedly, to remove the whites' heads from their shoulders and at the same time to keep their own anatomies intact.

And Jerry, who knew only the world of Meringe Lagoon, learning that these new worlds of the ship Arangi and of the island of Malaita were essentially the same, regarded the perpetual game between the white and the black with some slight sort of understanding.