

# Voyage to Cocos Island

By ALAN DOERKSON

"Huh! You don't scare me one bit," Cal Igula snorted. "But just for interest's sake, I'll tell you jerks what's goin' down." He couldn't have got their attention faster if he had pulled out a hand-grenade. "First of all, I suppose you know who I am?" They nodded. "Well, in a couple of days the whole world is gonna know. You know why? Cause me and few hundred leftist guerrillas are going to take over the Panama Canal." He paused for dramatic effect. He got it. Maria's jaw dropped a foot and a half, Sam raised an eyebrow and Freebie growled, "You'll never get away with it!"

"Sez who?" chuckled the son-of-a-rifle. "You think you three can stand up to the roughnecks I'm working for? Ha!"

"What makes you think they'll find you here?" asked Sam, complacently.

"What do you mean? They know where my... his words trailed off as he turned to stare at the shattered remnants of his hut. "You kids'll pay for this!" he snarled.

"That's fine with us, we'll be rich by the time your friends get here" opined Maria. Igula's face turned pale.

"You haven't found..." he glanced towards the opposite side of the clearing, where the path continued to wind its way into the jungle.

"Not yet, but we thought you might be able to help us out..." chimed in Freebie.

"Never!" snapped the prisoner.

"Oh well, I guess we'll have to leave you here and look ourselves," sighed Maria. "And I thought you were a real man."

The trio started to saunter off into the distance, but no response was evoked from Cal Igula, so they stopped in the middle of the clearing.

"Looks like this ain't working," remarked Maira. "What do we do now?"

"Someone's got to keep an eye on that dude while the others find the treasure(s)," Sam suggested. They both looked at Freebie.

"Why me?" he asked. "Because you're the perfect man for the job," confided Sam. "You've got rhythm, grace and debonaire but you won't let

that get in the way of roughing up a suspect in order to get a few clues."

"So long sucker" added Maria, concisely. She smiled and gave him a parting wave.

"Here," said Sam, as he handed his machete to Freebie. "It comes in handy on the odd occasion."

"This certainly qualifies," commented Freebie as he bid his friends adieu. As they crossed the clearing and disappeared up the path, he twirled the blade like a pistol and did some shadow-fencing.

"Cut it out, I can't stand sliced ham," muttered Igula appropriately.

Sam and Maria proceeded along the path until they were out of sight of the clearing. Then Sam unzipped his knapsack and drew out the mercenary's map. He spread it out on the ground and examined it carefully.

"This looks like the way to go," he told Maria, indicating the route with his finger. "You got it?"

But Maria had disappeared. Sam parted the leafy branches to one side of the path, and saw in a flash what had happened.

"Do you mind?" spat out an indignant Maria. "I'm changing back into my clothes!"

Sam blushed and turned away. In a moment, they set off again. The path wound back toward the stream, and began to get quite steep, as the duo approached the summit of the peak in the centre of the island. The vegetation began to thin, but the ground got steadily rockier and more treacherous. Suddenly, Maria tripped. Sam caught her before she fell.

"Are you alright?" he asked.

"Yeah, sure, but I think I twisted my ankle."

"Great! Here, just put your arm around my shoulders and lean on me."

"You think this will work?" asked Maria.

"No, but it's fun," Shrewd Sam replied. "And it sure beats the heck out of carrying you."

"Hey, that's no way to talk to somebody on a diet!" Maria complained.

"What's this? Not another new diet."

"That's right. I haven't eaten anything decent since we left Key West."

"Well, what do you know. I've been dieting too, and I didn't even notice it," Sam exclaimed in wonder.

They continued, more slowly, up the path until Maria had to stop. They sat down on a boulder next to the path and took swigs from a canteen of water. The atmosphere had gotten very hot and muggy by this time, which combined with the steep slope to severely tax the energy of the pair. Then they reached the end of the path. It ended quite abruptly, in fact, at the edge of a pile of rubble.

"Oh, no! There must have been a landslide," lamented Maria. The fallen rock blocked a narrow passage through two sheer precipices of unbroken rock.

"There must be another way through here," insisted Sam. "Let's take a look-see."

They back-tracked a bit and began to search for another route. Sam had just sat down to recheck the map, when he heard a splash.

"Guess what?" called out Maria.

"You've found the stream," Sam hazarded.

"Better yet. I've found the cave!" Maria exulted.

In an instant, Sam had joined her on the bank of the creek. Just beside where Maria stood, the creek gushed forth from the side of the cliff. Around it was the gaping entrance to a cave.

"Well, what are we waiting for?" said Sam, as he stepped into the cavern.

There was a ledge with enough space to walk on on one side of the stream, so the duo crept into the darkness and edged their way along the ledge. Sam drew out a flashlight from his back-pack to provide a guiding light.

Back at the clearing, Freebie was grilling the mercenary unscrupulously.

"You say you're from Reno, Nevada?"

"That's right," replied Igula. "It's a nice place to visit...you know how it is. The thrill wears off pretty soon."

"Yeah, I know," Freebie sympathized. "I always thought that living in Florida would be like paradise, but now every palm tree looks the same to me, and I've had my fill of sunburns. By the way, just did you get in to your particular line of work?"

"Well, it all started back when I was a kid, and my dad used to tell me stories of how he'd worked for the

secret service during the war, in Europe. I sounded exciting, but that was all over, and you know how hard it is to get into the CIA these days, or to become an international spy."

"It's quite an exclusive club," agreed Freebie. "I've always been a big fan of James Bond myself..."

"Get serious. I'm talking about the real undercover agents, not some two-dimensional, comic-strip character. You ever heard of Carlos?"

"THE Carlos?" Freebie invoked the name of the well-known international terrorist.

"Yeah, he's a good friend of mine," went on Igula, unabashed. "In fact, I shouldn't tell you this, but he's working with me on this canal job." He made it sound as if he were referring to a weekend excavation job.

"C'mon!" refuted Freeb. continued page 17

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