

## Voyage to Cocos Island

(continued from last issue)

"And don't forget the party hats!" added Sam, with a dopey grin. He and Freebie packed the necessary items for a day-long hike through the steaming jungle, and set off after an early lunch. It turned out to be no easy task fording through the rushing stream, and the pair had to slash through the branches of low-lying trees, which grew on the banks of the creek. The rivulet followed a winding course, which soon took our heroes out of sight of the seashore. Its slope got lower as it picked up speed, and the duo found more footroom on the rocky banks. A plague of mosquitoes, flies and less familiar insects swarmed around Sam and Freebie, although they both had sprayed themselves with insect repellent.

"We're probably the first human beings they've seen in years," remarked Freebie, as he slashed at the vermin with his machete.

"Too bad they don't sell 'Deep-Jungle Off!'" quipped Sam.

Soon the creek began to level off, and the duo breathed a sigh of relief. Then a thundering sound began, in the distance. The hikers rounded a bend to find themselves face to face with a waterfall.

"Looks like the end of the road," said Freebie, as they started up the towering cliff down which the water cascaded.

Back at the beach, Maria watched her companions disappear up the creek, and then sat down on the beach to make her own plans for the day. She decided to follow the beach until she got to Wafer Bay, where one of the treasures might be hidden. If she had timed it right, she could get back before her two friends. With this in mind, she rowed back to boat to retrieve a map of the island. Examining it, she found it to be just a short distance to the bay. She locked up the boat and set out, wearing a sun hat, sunglasses and sandals, along with a bright pink T-shirt and hot pants. In

case she found a nice sandy beach on which to improve her tan, or a shallow cove in which to swim, Maria had brought along her bikini, a beach towel and a bottle of combination suntan lotion and shark repellent.

It was an easy stroll from the shore across from "The Beach Bum" to the mouth of the harbour. From there, Maria had to tiptoe her way between the jagged rocks and boulders on the beach at the foot of the cliff which guarded one side of the bay. Fortunately, the tide was receding, and left enough room for her to skirt the edge of the cliff, which rose almost perpendicularly to a height of over a hundred feet. Soon the beach turned from boulders to gravel, enabling Maria to travel more easily. The coastline wove in and out, following the rough lines of the cliff, as it alternately protruded and receded. A light breeze blew in from across the water, cooling the sultry air, and bringing back thoughts of Key West to Maria. Momentarily, her mind was carried on the breeze to her childhood home, just a block away from where Hemingway used to draw on his inspiration. Then her mind was brought back to the present by a stone-crab (cousin to the famed rock rock-lobster), which pinched her on the toe. She screamed, and then gave the creature a kick. Farther on she found a veritable ecosystem of life on the seashore. Several styles of seaweed grew in abundance, and countless seagulls wheeled overhead, occasionally swooping down to snatch a fish from the ocean. Here and there were saltwater pools, containing microcosms of sea life, including seahorses, spiny sea urchins, and tiny, tropical fish. It was like looking into a series of open aquariums. As Maria admired this seascape, she scarcely noticed that she had reached her destination. Having rounded one jagged protrusion of rock, she found herself on the

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