

BLOND GODDESS

A New Serial by Herbert Jensen

SYNOPSIS: Frank Grahame, explorer, is sailing down the wild coast of Yucatan in the launch of Don Raul Ortega, who is, he suspects, the man who tried to kidnap his wife. He is sailing a few weeks before the Hollywood search for Bill Langton, aviator, who crashed months ago on the Yucatan coast. Frank has proposed to Janice and been refused. Ortega just has explained why he dodged a Mexican gunboat.

Chapter 18 QUARREL

ORTEGA glanced toward the firmly battened hatch. The young man laughed again. "I knew the gunboat was in these waters. I have a friend in the customs."

Grahame watched the vessel head toward the distant horizon. It occurred to him that Ortega's explanation was rather weak; also that he did not seem anxious whether Grahame believed it or not. The attitude of the big Mexican and his crew had been one of reserve the previous day; today it seemed that they felt toward him a new familiarity.

Perhaps Grahame's indifference toward Ortega's inference that there was good reason for his wanting to evade civilization had something to do with their affability. It did not perturb him at all. If Ortega's operations were illegal, they did not concern him, and it was none of his business.

At dusk they continued their journey. Once in the night Grahame was awakened by the stopping of the engine. For a half hour they rocked motionlessly on the sea as the lights of a steamer passed a mile or two distant, in the opposite direction. Grahame shrewdly suspected it was the gunboat patrolling back the way it had come.

The next day they rounded Cape Catoche and sailed south. They passed some low-lying islands, and once several miles to their left a fruit liner overtook them and steamed on. It looked like a white gull hovering at horizon-level.

The day was uneventful. The crew took turns at the wheel, and Grahame and Ortega sat on the deck house and smoked. Grahame asked the big man when they would be at the island and was answered that it would be tomorrow, in the afternoon perhaps. Ortega seemed to be pondering.

"I was thinking," he said, "that your island would not be the place you want to go. It would be safer on the mainland."

Grahame smiled. "You told me it was unsafe on the mainland."

"But I have been thinking. I could use you at my hacienda. It would be hard work, often. And you could make some money."

"I have plenty of money," he caught Ortega looking at him appraisingly. "Still a man can always use a more money."

Why not go with Ortega, he thought. After all, his idea was not to remain at the island, but to use it as a base at which he could make inquiries as to the mainland back of the coast.

Those that sailed along these barren beaches must be acquainted with many queer types that wanted nothing better than to go unrecognized and unquestioned.

"What is the interior like behind your place?" he asked.

Ortega shrugged his shoulders. "Nobody knows. No one has ever been there. Very dangerous."

Grahame made his decision. "I'll go with you to your hacienda," he said. "I won't promise to work for you, until I look it over. If I decide not to stay, I will pay you for my lodging and leave. All right?"

Ortega nodded and smiled a little as he looked at Grahame. "All right," he said.

Ahead of the launch a patch about a hundred yards in circumference showed yellow against the blue of the surrounding sea. Grahame thought it was a reef until the launch headed into it and stopped.

The crew threw canvas buckets overboard and hauled them in brimming with clear water.

Juan, the good-humored youngster, dipped a tin cup full and held it out to Grahame. "Fresca," he said. "It is fresh, drink."

Grahame drank. It was cool and fresh, decidedly below the temperature of the sea's surface. It had a slight taste of vegetation; Grahame thought it was very curious.

Ortega witnessed his amazement and offered an explanation. "There are many such along the coast here. It is the mouth of a stream that empties out from the land under the sea. It is like a well in the bottom of the sea. The men like to drink it because it is cooler than the water in the casks."

That night Grahame thought of Janice. It should have been that the distance that separated her from him would also tend to keep his thoughts of her equally far away. But it was not so. Her eyes, away by their long lashes, looked directly at him.

He would have liked to have reached out and touched her shining hair. It was senseless to think about it. Here he was down along the coast of Quintana Roo, trying to forget her.

Excitement, adventure, were the caustics to apply to the wound she had dealt him. There was something in that country beyond the dull shore line that outsiders were not supposed to see. He was going in to look.

Langton's plane, buffeted by the southern hurricane, might have crashed in there. It was not beyond reasonable theory. Quintana Roo contained thousands of square miles that had not been inhabited since the dim centuries when pagan priests caused tall pyramids to be erected to their bloody gods. The wreckage of Langton's plane might well be hidden in there.

There might be other things hidden. He was going in soon to see.

THE launch slid between the roots of mangroves that gripped the shores of a lagoon which was like a narrow river except that the water was salt. They chugged along until they were two or three miles inland from the coast, when the passage widened into a lake several hundred yards in circumference.

They edged inward toward a small wharf extending at water level several yards into the lake. The water's edge back of the wharf had been cleared and in the clearing were several flimsy buildings of palm-thatch. The launch was tied up at the wharf and the hatch unbattened.

Grahame helped with the unloading. As the first case slid from the deck to the pier he uttered an exclamation. The size and weight of the case was unmistakable.

Ortega and his two helpers paused to watch him.

"Someone is going hunting, I see," he remarked dryly.

Ortega's reply was equally ironic. "In this country," he said, "there is always hunting."

The unloading was accomplished without further comment. Grahame estimated that in the cargo there were cases containing at least two hundred rifles and a substantial amount of ammunition. Sufficient, certainly, to equip quite a little army, as numbers went in these countries.

He was puzzled, however, to know what a band of men bent on making trouble could do in this isolated part of Mexico. In the first place, the territory hereabouts was uninhabited according to all reports. Even if the man-power were available, it would be impractical for them to strike through the jungles to the nearest civilized state, which was Yucatan.

Furthermore, it would not be strategic to dominate Yucatan, since that state was isolated, more or less, from Mexico proper. Grahame knew enough of revolutions and their technique to appreciate that element. Why, then, this warlike equipment landed at this point?

Ortega brought up the subject that evening. "There are Indians in the interior here that wish equipment with which to defend themselves. I know what you are thinking. You think because you have heard rumors of revolution in Mexico, that these guns are for the revolutionists."

"It is not so. True, there is a revolution brewing just now—that is why I avoided the gunboat the other day. They are on the watch for smuggled arms and it would be embarrassing for me to be searched. But this cargo is to be used solely for defense. I have brought many such. I have been well paid."

"How do they pay you?"

"With gold," replied Ortega shortly, "and other goods. In the morning we will leave and go far south. I wish to pick up another cargo, and return to Progreso. When I return here, these cases will be gone and the payment will be in a place I know of."

"I would like to talk to these people, who come for your shipment."

Ortega's voice was harsh when he answered. "You cannot do that. Even I never see them—only one man, whom I meet south of here at Puerto Morelos. It is there I pick up my other cargo that I take to Progreso."

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Tomorrow, Frank meets a night attack.

SPEECH BY SNELL STIRS POLITICIANS

WASHINGTON, Feb. 3.—(AP)—Democratic chiefs today milled

over a new Republican move in the national political forum—a speech by Representative Snell of New York asserting a continuance of Herbert Hoover's regime would have been more beneficial than has the Roosevelt administration.

Some observers declared they heard a huzzing of the presidential bee when two leading Republicans with

in four days delivered essentially political speeches. Ogden Mills, Hoover administration treasury secretary and a chief political lieutenant in the 1932 campaign, told a Topeka, Kansas, crowd early in the week of his disagreement with many of President Roosevelt's moves. Snell, taking the floor yesterday as minority leader of the house, said he was "absolutely sure" Mr. Hoover

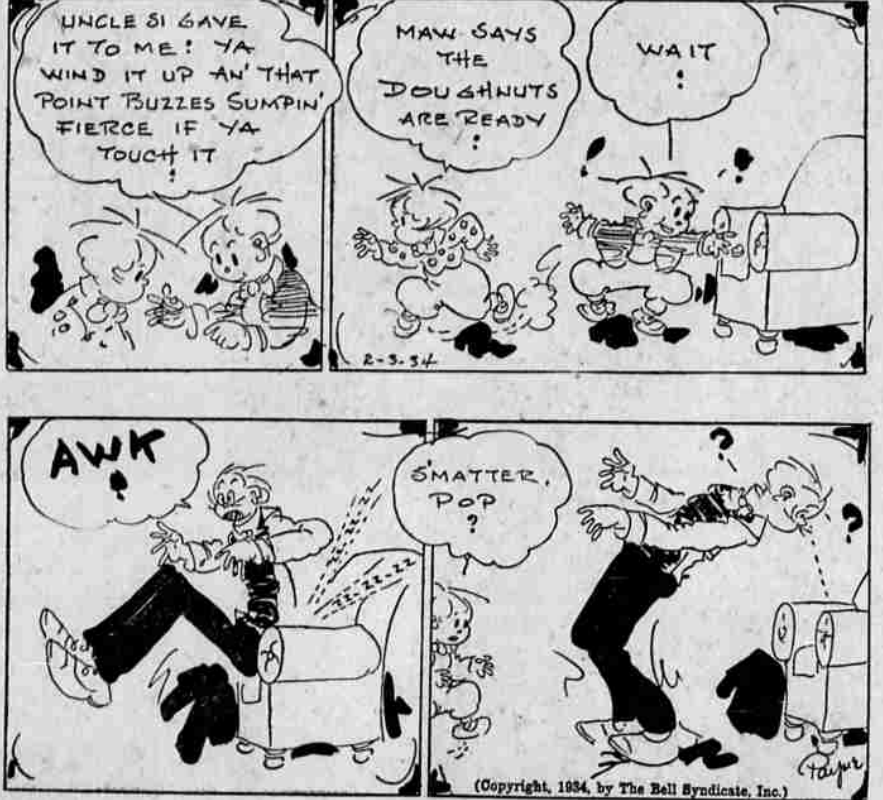
would have done a better job than Mr. Roosevelt. FUNDS APPROVED FOR WAR ON GRASSHOPPERS WASHINGTON, Feb. 3.—(AP)—Representative Lemcke (R., N. D.) said today the appropriations committee of the house had approved an appropriation of \$2,300,000 for grass-

hopper eradication in middle and northwest states. Lemcke said he understood the appropriation had the endorsement of the White House and Director of the Budget Douglas. Phone 542. We will haul away your refuse. City Sanitary Service. Broken windows glazed by Trowbridge Cabinet Works.

Tests by tractor manufacturers under guidance of the department of agriculture have shown that the use of alcohol as a motor fuel blend is practical mechanically but not economically as yet. An average of about \$3,300,000 is spent annually by North Carolina farmers to replace aged and decrepit mules and horses.

S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



THE FAMILY ALBUM—BUTTONED UP

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



TAILSPIN TOMMY—A Happy Reunion Interrupted!



BOUND TO WIN—The Empty Tomb!

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—Fond Mother

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



KMED Broadcast Schedule

- 12:30—News Flash, Mail Tribune.
- 12:30—Populistics.
- 1:00—Varieties.
- 1:30—Mrs. Mack, Demonstration Agent.
- 2:00—Classified Edition of Air.
- 3:00—Songs for Everyday.
- 3:30—KMED Program Review.
- 3:35—Dreaming the Walks Away.
- 4:00—Rhythmic Cocktail.
- 4:30—Masterworks Program.
- 5:00—Interlude.
- 5:15—Hilo Serenaders.
- 5:30—Popular Parade.
- 5:45—News Digest, Mail Tribune.
- 6:00—Medford Theatre Guide.
- 6:15—Al Piche's Sports and Fish Flash.
- 6:20—Dinner-dance Program.
- 6:30—A Kaluah Lullaby.
- 6:45—Ray and Andy.
- 7:00—Moderne.
- 7:30—Helen Belevue.
- 7:35 to 8:00—Traumeri.

In keeping with the times—Drugs and Toilettries at Cut Prices at JARMIN'S DRUG STORE.

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