

BLOND GODDESS

A New Serial by Herbert Jensen

Chapter 22 THE THREAT

"Easy, Greene old man," cautioned Frank.

"I'd like to write his obituary," snarled the mild Mr. Greene.

Ahkin's voice spoke, flat with finality. "She dies with the others!"

Greene was breathing rapidly. He turned to Frank. "I didn't get all that. What did he say?"

Ortega had spoken to them in English. Frank did not believe that the high-priest understood the language. Yet he must have understood the substance of what Don Raoul had told them because his threat against Janice had tied in with their discussion.

He muttered to Greene, "I'll tell you later. Ortega, listen to me: You're a white man. This native here is mad. You can see it in his eyes. You got her into this—never mind us—get Janice out of this, or by God, if it's the last thing I do I'll get you. Got you, hear me! I know a way!"

Ortega smiled uncertainly. "The girl will be all right," he said in English. "Ahkin is bluffing."

Again the priest spoke in level tones. "She has eaten, with these men, the food of the Gods. She has sinned. Yum Chac will not accept her alive as a bride; he will take her dead as food."

Ortega's face paled slightly. "No," he said. "We did not agree upon that."

Graham muttered in English. "The man is mad, I tell you!"

The high-priest's glance examined Ortega coldly.

"Senor Ortega," he said softly in his sturring Spanish. "Has it occurred to you that your usefulness in this matter is ended? In fact, I am wondering about your future worth to us."

"What do you mean?" Don Raoul moistened his lips.

"Yesterday a runner from Merida told me that the revolution has ended, unsuccessfully. There is a reward offered by the new Governor for your capture."

"I do not care for the money offered," he continued contemptuously. "but it seems that your services have no value to us now." Ahkin's voice became brittle. "Take care, man. Can-a-hot is a thirsty God, and your heart would be as acceptable as those of these others."

Ortega stepped back into the shadows. As the group filed out of the doorway, his big figure seemed queerly shrunken.

Greene mopped his forehead.

"W-h-e-w!" he exclaimed. "I'm wringing wet. I wonder if I've got fever. Between that big slob Ortega making me hot, and that wicked-looking priest giving me the chills, I shouldn't wonder. What all went on? I didn't get half of it."

Frank considered. He wondered if he should tell Janice's press-agent all the implications. The little fellow had proved his courage. He was a little ashamed of his former annoyance with him in Hollywood.

Hollywood! Low remote it seemed. He decided to explain the situation to Greene in every aspect. Two heads were needed to pool every scrap of information that might be of possible value to them in their extremity.

While Greene was excited, the chance of his flying off the handle must be taken. He said in as light a tone as he could muster:

"Got your notebook, Greene? This is the hottest stuff you've ever heard."

Greene signed. "I wish I had it at that, only—" He studied the bars of the window. "—Myberg probably wouldn't let me use it if I could."

Despite himself Frank smiled slightly. The little press agent's obsession labeled him an artist.

He spoke to Greene primarily to inform him of the circumstances and also to piece together and clarify the bits of information that were swirling in his own mind.

"We're in a bad spot, Greene," he began. "I'm amazed at just about everything I've seen and heard. The people on the coast call these interior Indians salvadores. Unconquered fellows."

"But they've always been reported as a friendly, ignorant lot so long as they were let alone. Occasionally they drift to the coast with blocks of chicle—chewing gum—and

haven't gained any particular reputation for ferocity.

"Did you notice some of them were nearly white? The old Spanish strain is persistent. That guard, for instance, that brought the water had ruddy hair."

"Some of them have come into the cities and have been absorbed by the modern way of living. A fellow told me once that some, even, have gone to the States to be educated, but like our own Indians, they generally drift back to the jungle and lapse into the old ways."

"It just shows you what dynamite will do if somebody provides a fuse to touch it off. This Ahkin for instance. He was the same one I saw run away from the automobile the night Spin Winslow and I caught up with Janice. By the way, why wasn't Spin along on this trip?"

"His arm was still on the fritz," Greene explained. "He may come later. I dunno. Too late to do us any good."

"You've read up on the archeology business. When the Spaniards arrived in this country the natives were sacrificing, they say, twenty thousand young men and women a year in Mexico City alone on their altars."

"Something like that is evidently going on here."

"Pleasant," muttered Greene. "I read where they took them to a cliff brink and threw them off." His lips were a little pale. "I don't like high places. I've never been in an airplane in my life."

"This Ahkin—Ahkin is evidently a little, not a name—" continued Frank, "is doubtlessly the dynamite fuse in this locality. He must be quite a man. The jungle is all cleaned up and the old temples reconstructed better than the Peabody people have done at Chichen Itza. But did you notice his eyes? He's mad. Mad as a—"

"Yeah. What-a-man," interrupted Greene wearily. "Supposing we catch some shut-eye? They going to hurt Janice?"

Frank turned his head into the shadow.

"I thought so," said little Mr. Greene. "Listen Frank, and remember this: You did a foolish thing on the temple top the other night. If you got a break—any kind of a break—forget me. Forget me, will you? Take Janice and get the hell out of this place! Good night. I'm going to sleep and think about having our throats cut. Pleasant dreams."

GRAHAME slept fitfully, his rest hurried by fantastic visions. His shoulder wound had begun to heal and it itched excruciatingly. As the moon sailed higher it threw its beams against their prison. The rays filtered through the two openings in the walls above him. He heard Greene toying.

Finally he must have slept a little. He came awake alert but with body motionless. Some sound, he could have sworn, had broken his rest. Greene was breathing deeply but with the regularity of the slumberer.

He placed his feet upon the floor, and with eyelids widened, strove to pierce with his gaze the darkness that blanketed their cell except for the two silver patches of moonlight, that stabbing through the window, sprawled one upon the wall, one upon the floor.

Across the moon-patch on the floor, gridironed with the shadows of the window bars, a faint gray tracery seemed to wriggle toward him.

In an instant he was upon his feet and stepped softly toward the center of the cell. His toes touched an object; he stopped and picked it up. It was a stone, the size of a large walnut. Tied to it was a strong white cord that lay along the floor to the wall, then up and out of the window opening!

He tugged gently upon it. Immediately there was an answering double pull! He drew the cord toward him without further resistance, watching the window. There was a flicker of white at the sill, and with a faint plop, a paper, rolled like a scroll, fell at his feet.

His fingers trembled slightly as he untied the string that secured it. He unrolled the paper and found that it was a message of some kind penciled in Spanish. He held it to the faint light. It was addressed to himself, beginning with the elaborate salutation of Spanish punctilio, "May estimado señor, y mi amigo Don Francisco Graham."

It was signed Juan Piedra—the lad who by this time, had he escaped the search parties, should have been well upon his way to the coast!

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A plan of escape emerges, tomorrow.

CRATER LAKE HAS NO PLACE IN NEW GEOGRAPHIC DATA

For several years past, southern Oregon has been engaged in a great battle—to keep Crater Lake in this section, despite the magazine accounts of its location in northern California, any place else writers choose to establish the beautiful body of water.

But while residents here were zealously thinking the battle won, with Crater Lake really located north of the California state line, where it has been made a national park, the United States geographic board publishes a voluminous report of over eight hundred pages, and completely omits any mention of the lake.

Of all the United States territory, one Crater Lake is described as follows: "Southwestern part of Annette Island, midway between Tamas mountain and the shore of Pelice strait, lat. 55 degrees, 03 minutes N. Long. 131 degrees, 23 minutes W. southeastern Alaska."

A copy of the handbook has been received by Supervisor Karl L. Jannouch of the Rogue River National forest, and in it are listed decisions of the board on 25,000 names appearing on the maps. Origin of the various names is also included in the report.

The geographic board, which has been serving as national arbiter in matters relating to geographic names since 1890, has given careful study to pronunciations and spellings.

PIONEER DAUGHTER MARKS 75TH YEAR

Mrs. Emma Foster, who lives on Salting street in the Laurelhurst district, celebrated her 75th birthday February 9. She was born that many years ago in Portland the daughter of William L. Toney, famous pioneer and Indian fighter of the McMinnville district, where he resided for 77 years before death ended his adventures, when he was 97 years of age.

Mrs. Foster was one of 11 children born to her parents, six of whom died in infancy or childhood. Her pioneer father was known throughout the west as farmer, boatman and Indian fighter. He was a veteran of the Cayuse Indian war.

Mrs. Foster has lived in Medford for the past five years.

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THE WORLD AT ITS WORST



SMATTER POP



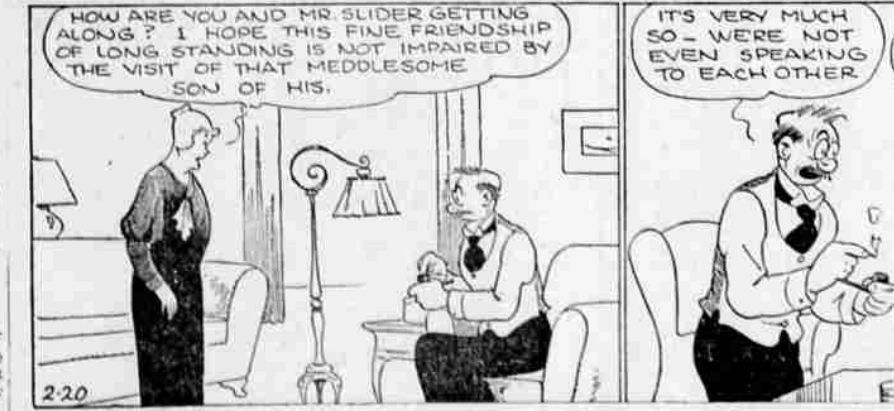
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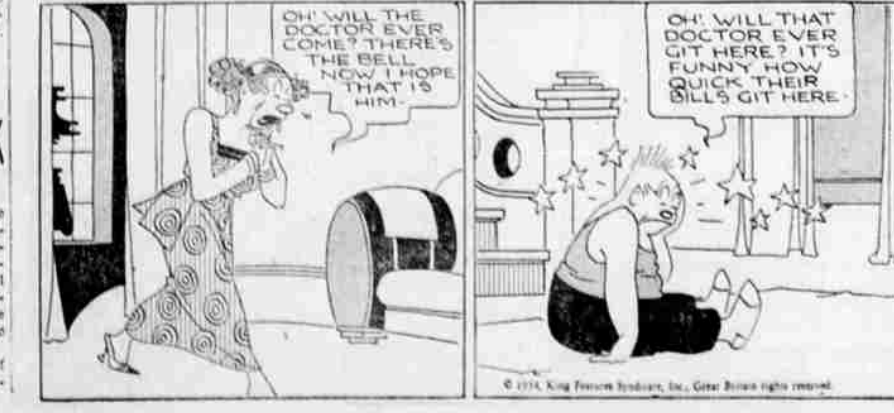
BOUND TO WIN—At The Warehouse!



THE NEBB



BRINGING UP FATHER



ACTIVE CONCLAVE TO BE HELD HERE

The 1934 annual convention of the Active Club International is practically assured for Medford. Glen L. Fabrick, president of the local Active Club, reported today following his return yesterday from Seattle, where he attended a district meeting of the organization Saturday and Sunday. He was accompanied by William McAllister, international board member Chester Huxford, local vice-president, and Kenneth Dennman, local secretary.

Mr. Fabrick reported a successful meeting in the Puget Sound city where the session was held as a preliminary to the annual 1934 convention at Spokane in a short time. The Medford delegation received encour-

BANKING DEPARTMENT HANDLING HUGE TASK

SALEM, Feb. 20.—(AP)—The state banking department is handling liquidation assets of more than \$8,000,000. A. A. Schramm said here today. He was preparing his annual report which would show the progress made in liquidations, which he said were slow because of economic conditions.

The department has supervision of 60 banks, of which nine are operating on a restricted basis.