

BLOND GODDESS A New Serial by Herbert Jensen

SYNOPSIS: Just before they are to be sacrificed to a heathen god in the Yucatan jungle by the chief of a jungle band, Frank Graham and Janice Kent escape in a plane. They crash however because Frank's wounds make him less conspicuous. While following an old Mayan road through the wilds they reach the end, and fall into a valley. They are exploring it, next morning when Janice discovers something startling.

Chapter 35 THE AHKIN

TO Frank on the opposite side of the stream it seemed that it took almost a physical effort for Janice to turn her eyes toward him. She put her foot upon the log and ran lightly across. "You might have slipped," remonstrated Frank as she stood beside him. Her glance met his. "What is it?" he said with quick concern. Her face held a curious expression. "That stump, Frank. That tree was chopped down, or gnawed." "Are you sure?"

At her nod he stepped past the withered leaves of the palm top and made the passage back to the other side. He examined the ends of the stump and log. Janice was right. They looked as if they had been cut by man with an incredibly dull axe. Frank rejoined the girl. His expression was thoughtful. He said, "Let's go on." He did not tell her that he had noticed another and more disturbing thing. A faint trail led away from the tree trunk through the soft ground. Jungle grass grows fast. The path was faint but discernible. That meant that the trail was being used at present!

They skirted the base of the small hill keeping within a few yards of the stream's edge. Suddenly Frank, ahead of the girl stopped. He sniffed the air. "I smell smoke," said Janice. "There must be people nearby. Oh Frank, perhaps—"

She brushed past him. "It's coming from over there. I see it now!" She began running. It was then that Frank realized that they were on a trail, doubtless the continuation of the one he'd seen on the other side of the palm-trunk bridge. He called out, "Stop, Janice! Wait! They may be—"

He saw the running girl halt suddenly. She gave a short scream and recoiled. Frank snapped out his machete and leaped forward. The path had given way to a small clearing. A grass, thatched roof but stood on the farther side. There was a small pile of rocks in the middle of which a fire burned. But lying beside the fire, his jet eyes gleaming coldly, on either side of his beaked nose, was the figure of the ahkin, high-priest of the bloody cult of the Bat!

JANICE whirled and ran down the back trail. For a moment Frank stood hesitating, swinging his machete, and staring at the eyes of living hate that burned in the dark face of the priest.

The man's head-dress was gone. His feathered ornamentation hung to him in damp bedraggled. The grisly hide of skin lay half over his extended legs. Deep in his wrecked costume, the man's murderous fanaticism clad him like a garment.

Frank heard Janice call from a distance. Warily he backed away. The ahkin made no move to follow. He lay, hating Frank with his eyes. He joined his companion at the stream's edge. She admitted, with nervous apology, that she'd lost her head.

"His eyes!" she exclaimed with a shudder. "They were like poison!" She put her hand to her heart. "I seemed to feel his glance here! Let's go back to our camp."

They hurried, stumbling through the vague trail they'd hacked that morning. Frank was busy with his thoughts. How had the ahkin survived that terrible fall? How had he come to this isolated spot.

A vague explanation was pressing into his consciousness—a reason remote and incredible. That stream, sliding swiftly through this little sunken valley—could it be that the pool of the cante beneath the pyramid connected with this valley?

Was this valley just another elongated cante—through which the stream ran too swiftly to dam into a pool? That would mean that this valley was a freak formation of nature—that the underground river, gnawing its way through the limestone had finally undermined its arched roof and caused the ground above to fall into the cavern below.

No wonder that the cliffs bounding the little valley were concave and showed no face upon which they might climb to the upper level. Frank followed close upon Janice's heels. He kept his machete bared in his hand.

They burst through the matted growth of vegetation into the grove of palm trees where their fire still smoldered. The girl uttered a sharp exclamation and stopped suddenly. A dim figure seemed to drift into the brush beyond the fire. Almost it seemed that it was shaped from the fire's smoke. Frank leaped forward. It was no figure of smoke. He heard the crash of shrubbery, the sound of a heavy body breasting the tangle.

He saw the bushes waving ahead of him. Plunging through in pursuit, Frank raised the heavy blade of his machete. If this were the ahkin, come by some secret trail to molest them, he was going to have a settlement now. To wait until dark would be suicidal with that fanatic loon.

He leaped a fallen log. Brush cracked ahead. Shrubbery tops waved; he caught a brief glimpse of a human hand raised to pull aside a bough.

Frank lunged. He heard a startled cry. The hand appeared again clenched about the handle of a club tipped with stone.

His machete flashed up. He chopped it forward. It clanged upon stone; his arm was numbed with the shock. A bough switching backward caught him across the eyes. The pain blinded him.

Human hands clawed at his throat. He reached forward and his arms encircled a body. He felt garments tear as he sought to tighten his hold. The creature—he could not see it—writhed and flopped in his grip.

A flat beat at his face and he tightened his arms. He felt a bearded face crushed against his own. He put up his hand and clamped it under the hairy chin.

"DAMN YOU! You murdering—!" His antagonist relaxed. Almost he fell forward upon him so sudden was the tactic. He opened his smarting eyes. A blond-bearded wild face opposed his own. Vivid blue eyes, wide with a fantastic amazement gleamed above the bronzed cheekbones. The bearded lips parted in an astonished, unbelieving smile.

"Frank Graham!" the man exclaimed. "Frank—"

Frank muttered, "Billy Langton!" He brought up his free hand and passed the fingers through his hair. The other said, "Take your paw off my throat, you hoodlum!"

Frank dropped his hands to his side. Langton swayed, and would have fallen but for Frank's instantly supporting arm. The man leaned against a tree trunk, breathing heavily, and looking unutterably weary.

"I'm sort of weak," he explained quietly. His smile flashed again. "And what brings you here, stranger? You always were a fool for busting in places. I might have brained you with that swipe I took." He glanced at the ground. "Ah... here it is. That club of mine is no plaything." He coughed. "Hello, you old jackass."

Langton's eyes were bright with tears. Frank understood. His own throat was too tight for utterance. His friend, whom he had thought dead months ago was alive. He swallowed but the lump persisted. He said gruffly:

"You damned ghost. I might have knocked your block off with that machete. Thought you were the ahkin."

"Oh... you found him? I dragged him out of the water this morning. He's harmless... now. Bad broken. How the devil he got—Did you?"

Frank interrupted him. "Tell you later. Tell you lots of things later. Let's get back to the clearing."

Janice met them at the edge of the little savannah. Frank smiled slightly as with their appearance she dropped a knotty stick. She looked at them anxiously as they approached her.

He said lightly, "Janice may I present an old friend." He introduced them quite formally.

She gave a little startled cry. "Langton!" Swiftly her glance surveyed him. Her eyes widened; they seemed to dim and soften and she took in each detail of his appearance. Impulsively she stepped forward.

Langton stood a little weary smile behind the blond mask of his beard. His eyes seemed haunted with a dull opaqueness behind the bright blue irises.

His right arm stood out from the shoulder at an odd angle; the hand seemed thin and wasted. One foot turned inward, the toe pointed to ward the instep of the other.

various sources," the letter said, "to the effect that there are many trucks operating without securing motor transportation permits and paying the proper ton-mile fee. "We would appreciate your immediate attention to these matters and the giving of proper instructions to the state police to the end that there be no violations of the motor vehicle act and that the state highway fund receive this necessary money for the maintenance of the system and the retirement of our debt."

CONDON MAN NAMED FARM AID SECRETARY

SPOKANE, Wash., Feb. 27.—(AP)—A. B. Robertson of Condon, Ore., today was appointed secretary and treasurer of the Regional Agricultural Credit Corporation of Spokane. Robertson formerly was assistant treasurer. He will assume office March 1.

Dance at Rogue Inn Saturday night, March 3.

FEDERAL AID FOR NATION'S SCHOOLS TOPIC AT SESSION

CLEVELAND, Feb. 27.—(AP)—The question of how much financial help the nation's schools may be able to get from the federal government was the prime subject of conversation today for thousands of school superintendents.

Sums as high as half a billion dollars were discussed informally by delegates to the convention of the National Education Association's department of superintendence, while in Washington the house committee prepared to start general hearings on a host of proposals for school aid.

A committee appointed by George F. Zook, United States commissioner of education, who is on the program of today's general session, has sponsored a bill calling for an appropriation of \$100,000,000.

Paul R. Mort, of teachers' college, Columbia University, an authority on school finance, said he believed \$400,000,000 would be necessary.

Superintendent Carroll R. Reed of Minneapolis, making an estimate of \$500,000,000, declared "when the road people can ask for somewhere over a billion, the schools certainly ought to have half that much. Federal aid of some sort is inevitable."

In keeping with the times—Drugs and Toiletries at Cut Prices at JARMIN'S DRUG STORE. Suits cleaned and pressed, 55c. Dresses 75c up. Tel. 535-31. Economy Cleaner, 1748 N. Riverside.

SMATTER POP—

UNCLE SI, I'VE GOTTA IDEA HOW I COULD HELP I TAKE THE PILL. IT SEEMS IT CAN'T BE DID! JUST HOLD IT OPEN AN' CLOSE YER EYES. IF YER GONNA JUST TOSS IT INTA MY MOUTH, THAT WONT BE ENOUGH OF A START.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Introducing—Gilbert Montague!

BETTY HAD JUST INTRODUCED SKETER TO MAMZELLE, WHO IS TO PLAY THE PART OF FIFI IN THE AERIAL FILM THRILLER "MIDNIGHT PATROL" WHEN GILBERT MONTAGUE, HERO OF THE MOTION PICTURE TO BE STAGED AT THREE DON'T SUDDELY CAME UP AND...

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The "Spider's" Orders!

THEY GOT "GIMME", MR. WEBB! QUICK, YOU FOOL, WHO GOT HIM? AT THE WAREHOUSE! A NEW WATCHMAN, SOME "MICK" SHOT HIM! "BUT" "GIMME" GOT THE "MICK", TOO! THEY'RE BOTH IN THE HOSPITAL NOW!

THE NEBBS—Parting Is Such Sweet Sorrow

MR. NEBB, I NEED FIVE-GALLON BOTTLES, AND BOXES FOR OUR DOZEN-QUART BOTTLES—HOW MANY SHALL I ORDER? WELL, DON'T YOU KNOW HOW MANY WE USE? ARE YOU A STRANGER HERE? BOTTLING DEPT. MR. NEBB, HERE'S A LETTER FROM MAXWELL AND BREZ AT ST. JOE—THEY WANT OUR AGENCY THERE—YOU KNOW THAT BILL SPENGLER ISNT DOING SUCH A GOOD JOB FOR US THERE...WHAT SHALL I ANSWER THEM?

BRINGING UP FATHER

OH, MAGGIE! TAKE OFF YOUR HAT WHEN YOU SPEAK TO ME. DID YOU HEAR WHAT I SAID? IF YOU DONT TAKE IT OFF I'LL KNOCK THE REST OF IT OFF. I GUESS YOU'LL HAVE TO—I CAME BACK TO TELL YOU THAT I USED GLUE INSTEAD OF HAIR TONIC THIS MORNIN' AN' I CANT GIT ME HAT OFF.

WORD TO START AT GUARD CAMP

ASTORIA, Ore., Feb. 27.—(AP)—Word was received today from Major General George A. White that work will start at once on additions to Camp Clatsop, near here, involving the expenditure of between \$40,000 and \$50,000. The camp is the summer encampment site of the Oregon National Guard.

GIVE IT A WHIRL—by Hatio

OH, THAT'S DIFFERENT! WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU WERE A LODGE BROTHER IN THE FIRST PLACE? YOU DONT NEED YOUR VALVES GROUND—TRY STANDARD GASOLINE WITH TETRAETHYL UNSURPASSED!

mer encampment site of the Oregon National Guard. The work will include construction of a large warehouse which can also be used as an assembly hall, five new bathhouses, additions to the sewage and electric wiring systems, and general repair of existing buildings. General White indicated efforts are being made to obtain an additional appropriation of \$80,000 for camp improvement. Phone 332, Reinking Trucking Co for Modern Fuel Oil deliveries.

THE WORLD AT ITS WORST

WHILE WAITING AT THE DESIGNATED CORNER FOR YOUR WIFE WHO WAS GOING TO DRIVE INTO TOWN TO MEET YOU AND GO TO THE MOVIES, YOU DISCOVER THE KEY OF THE CAR IN YOUR POCKET.

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

WHILE WAITING AT THE DESIGNATED CORNER FOR YOUR WIFE WHO WAS GOING TO DRIVE INTO TOWN TO MEET YOU AND GO TO THE MOVIES, YOU DISCOVER THE KEY OF THE CAR IN YOUR POCKET.

By C. M. Payne

UNCLE SI, I'VE GOTTA IDEA HOW I COULD HELP I TAKE THE PILL. IT SEEMS IT CAN'T BE DID! JUST HOLD IT OPEN AN' CLOSE YER EYES. IF YER GONNA JUST TOSS IT INTA MY MOUTH, THAT WONT BE ENOUGH OF A START. HEY! WELL, WHAT'S THA DELAY?

By Hal Forrest

OH—IT IS MIEUR MONTAGUE... YES, MAMZELLE, I AM READY TO GO OVER THE SCRIPT WITH YOU—IF YOU WILL ACCOMPANY ME TO MY... SO—THAT'S MISTER MONTAGUE, HEY? YES, SKETER, THAT IS THE BIG MASCULINE STAR OF "MIDNIGHT PATROL". DONT YOU THINK HE RESEMBLES TOMMY—SOMEWHAT? HE MIGHT—IF HE DIDN'T HAVE SUCH A LEAKY CHIN— AN'— DID YOU NOTICE— HIS EYES ARE SET TOO CLOSE— AN' BESIDES— HE MIGHT HAVE APPEARED PERFECTLY NORMAL TO YOU IF HE HADN'T INTERRUPTED YOUR LITTLE CONVERSATION WITH MAMZELLE L'VRILLE— NO?

By Edwin Alger

ARE THEY WISE? I'LL SAY THEY ARE! THE "MICK" CLAIMS "GIMME" TRIED TO PICK HIM OFF SO THAT OUR BUNCH— OUR BOY THE EXCITEMENT, COULD RAID THE SOUTH WAREHOUSE! THE JIG'S UP, "SPIDER"! NO, IT ISN'T GET THE BOAT READY!

By Sol Hess

MR. NEBB, I NEED FIVE-GALLON BOTTLES, AND BOXES FOR OUR DOZEN-QUART BOTTLES—HOW MANY SHALL I ORDER? WELL, DON'T YOU KNOW HOW MANY WE USE? ARE YOU A STRANGER HERE? BOTTLING DEPT. MR. NEBB, HERE'S A LETTER FROM MAXWELL AND BREZ AT ST. JOE—THEY WANT OUR AGENCY THERE—YOU KNOW THAT BILL SPENGLER ISNT DOING SUCH A GOOD JOB FOR US THERE...WHAT SHALL I ANSWER THEM? SHIPPI DEPT. WELL, I'M THROUGH HERE—I WOULDN'T SPEND ANOTHER DAY WITH THIS UNAPPRECIATIVE, SELF-CENTERED EGOTIST FOR THE WORLD'S SUPPLY OF PLATINUM AND GOLD—I HOPE WE BOTH LIVE LONG SO I CAN SPEND YEARS IN HATING HIM—NO ONE COULD GET RID OF MY KIND OF HATE IN A FEW YEARS.

By George McManus

OH, MAGGIE! TAKE OFF YOUR HAT WHEN YOU SPEAK TO ME. DID YOU HEAR WHAT I SAID? IF YOU DONT TAKE IT OFF I'LL KNOCK THE REST OF IT OFF. I GUESS YOU'LL HAVE TO—I CAME BACK TO TELL YOU THAT I USED GLUE INSTEAD OF HAIR TONIC THIS MORNIN' AN' I CANT GIT ME HAT OFF.

TRUCKS VIOLATING FEE LAW IS CLAIM

PORTLAND, Feb. 27.—(AP)—Leslie M. Scott, chairman of the state highway commission, today asked Charles M. Thomas, public utilities commissioner, to take direct action in enforcing the law regulating motor transport permits and mileage fees. "Due to non-enforcement of this act," Scott wrote, "the state highway fund probably lost \$200,000 the first six months of the operation of this law." "We feel certain," he continued, "that we are losing money at present through lack of proper enforcement." The highway commission is receiving numerous complaints from