

BLOND GODDESS

A New Serial

by Herbert Jensen

SYNOPSIS: Frank Graham, the explorer, is taking a desperate chance to save his three companions who are being held in a cave. He is floating down the underground river in Yucatan, trying to reach the coast before the rainy season fills the valley in which the party is imprisoned. Janice Kent the movie star he loves, is one of the party, as is Bill Langton, the famous aviator. And there is also the high priest of a savage tribe, dangerously injured, but not moribund.

Chapter 44 THE PLUNGE

SWIFTER plunged the current. The cavern seemed wider, but the roof was lower. A down-projecting stalactite struck his head. Half stunned, he struggled to keep his hands above his head to guard against a repetition.

He was thrown against wall projections, and sucked away into the greedy current. He became dazed with an ever-increasing dizziness. It was an effort to breathe with the spray lashing his face.

His arms ached with the effort of upholding them. He put his elbows upon the top of his life-jacket and clasped his hands above his head. He realized that, he was growing weak with the buffeting.

But the minutes, he knew, were rolling into precious hours. Soon he hoped to be spawed into the daylight—into the quiet waters of some mangrove-fringed lagoon that joined the sea.

Gray daylight showed above him! He was being shot downstream between creeping living walls. But half-conscious, he realized that although he was in the main channel the width of it was diminishing.

The stream was branching variously. A danger lay in that. Sucked into one of the branches he might be forced into a swamp from which he might not be able to extricate himself.

He must keep to the main channel at all costs! Only the main channel would have water-force enough to have cut through the swamps to the sea.

Suddenly he shouted with hope. Ahead, glimpsed on either side of a futing spire of rock that thrust upward from the seething water about it, were low grass-covered banks backed with palmetto and mangroves. Further on was a turquoise blue sea!

Frank's nostrils twitched with the tang of beach kelp rotting in the sun. That flaming disc burst, as he looked, through a layer of clouds lying low above the horizon. It was nearing sunset.

As the current twisted him toward the divided channel, he felt a tugging at his legs, an inexorable suction that pulled his feet away from the surface current while the buoyancy of the life-belt tended to float it toward the peaceful lagoon.

Subconsciously he struggled a little as if the attempt could relieve his legs of some clinging, unseen menace. The suction pulled harder.

Sudden realization swept him. The underground river discharged here at sea level; but also it plunged into the hidden chasm that could have no outlet except in the floor under that glittering, turquoise sea ahead!

Frantic now, he flailed his arms. He kicked and thrashed with his legs. Striving to free himself of the life-belt so that he could tatten himself on the surface and swim to the safety that was now just a few yards away, he found that the fiber knots were swollen beyond loosening.

The breath gasped in his lungs. Deeper the suction pulled him. He was spun about in the inflexible grip of a whirlpool.

Lower he sank. He clawed for a support that was denied him. Down he was dragged into a vortex. He felt the waters closing about his head.

Gasping for a last despairing breath, he was shot down into a great funnel. A crashing and roaring sound filled his ears. His body was hammered and flailed against the rough sides of this terrible aqueduct. His lungs were on fire—they were bursting.

There was a blinding flash on the mirror behind his eyes.

Then the darkness of oblivion.

JANICE KENT walked slowly back to the little clearing where their ever-burning fire smoked amid its rocky bed. She seated herself upon the backing and stared apathetically at the glowing embers.

Something had gone dead within her—something that in dying had left a void that yet was capable of aching. Her mind was too confused for analysis but that very confusion released a swarm of queer mental

figures that seemed to gesticulate at her mockingly.

She had told the man she loved that she loved him, and he had, upon the telling, pressed her away from him and was gone, perhaps, to his death. This was incredible because she knew, instinctively, that this man loved her.

Was a man's love different than a woman's? All her life she had avoided what was called falling in love as a matter of expediency—a measure of safety against an emotion that she felt would demolish a career and a position in it that she had worked so hard to achieve.

She knew her avoidance was not based upon repugnance, but on timidity. She had played too many roles wherein the woman gave all for love not to appreciate that there was a sound basis of fact for this instinct.

During the weeks that Frank and she had been companions, she came to a fuller appreciation of the enormous timidity that had held her that night in Hollywood when Frank had asked her to marry him.

She had struck him, gripped with that instinct that is as old as Eve which causes the female to flee before the advancing male. She had paid for that unreasoning gesture since with many a heartache.

Was man's love different than woman's? How could Frank have left, loving her, without some word for her alone? "Billy will explain why I'm going—" Then he was gone—like that last night in Hollywood.

She was scarcely conscious that Billy Langton stood before her. Gently he bent forward and took one of her hands in his own.

"He'll be back, Janice. Frank is resourceful. Why, he's got as many lives as a—!" He broke off slightly confused as if he realized the implication of his words. But the import of his phrasing was lost upon the girl.

"He left me, Billy. He left me without a word." Tears welling uncontrollably dimmed her sight.

"Because he loves you, Janice."

ATHIN mist began to fall; it glistened on the shrubbery about them. The tall palms appeared to droop, as if in cringing expectation of a heavier downpour. Janice hunched her shoulders in a slight shudder.

"It's so dreary today. . . . Billy, if he loved me he would have taken me with him."

"Nonsense!" Langton attempted to make his tone brusque. "What sort of a man would Frank be, if he made you share a risk like that? Any man would have done the same. . . ."

Janice nodded her head in dull agreement. "Any man, perhaps, Billy, but not a woman—"

Langton smiled slightly. He drew the girl to her feet. "Come, Janice, let's go inside. The rain is going to soak us. The raft's finished and I've stacked some balsam in the shack. We can work on the life-belts inside."

A distant rumble sounded. The noise of the rain increased to a steady drumming on nearby leaves.

They passed through the shack into the cave. At the entrance a small fire was burning. Frank had made it that morning. Again Janice's eyes misted; a tightness grew about her throat that was impossible to relieve.

She cooked a little food and served it in the crude utensils that Frank had devised for them. She put bits of venison into her mouth and chewed mechanically; it was an effort to swallow. A tear ran down her cheek and splashed on the back of her hand.

Later she attended to the ahku. The high-priest stared at her curiously, she thought. She opened to detect a mocking glint in his eyes. Despite his helplessness there seemed to be an indefinable air of triumph about him—a subtle sense of success.

Her mind was too dull to speculate upon this. Days of association with him had made her immune to the constant hate in his eyes; that this mad priest's hate should increase or wane was a matter of indifference to her.

They worked on the three life-belts until far into the evening. The downpour outside made a continuous sound that seemed to flatten her eardrums. The very air within this closed place was tangibly depressing.

Finally she took down from a peg a tattered khaki coat—it was Frank's—and took it to the cot he had made for her—his things stretched across a framework and covered with skins and soft grasses.

Janice falls into the grip of a new horror, tomorrow.

INSTITUTIONS OF OREGON CROWDED BOARD INFORMED

SALEM, March 6.—(AP)—The busiest session of the state board of control in recent months was held here today at which time authorizations affecting virtually every state institution and purchase of more than \$250,000 worth of material for the state highway commission was approved.

A report of the state flax industry during the present administration showing reduction of deficit at the penitentiary institution and increase in balance on hand of about \$170,000 was given by William Einzig, secretary of the board, at the conclusion of which Governor Julius Meier said "You are stealing the thunder of my second address to the people next Saturday night."

Institutional heads, present at the session, reported, virtually without exception, an increase in population taxing all institutions, and an increase in the price of food materials. Indications were the 1935 legislature would be called upon to appropriate funds for additional buildings and facilities for the increasing population.

Warrants Called. SALEM, March 6.—(AP)—A call was issued today by the state treasurer, for warrants marked not paid for want of funds, dated from December 21 to January 4, inclusive, and amounting to \$338,410.

HUSBAND SLAYS FOUR WITH AXE, SUICIDES

LAURENS, S. C. March 6.—(AP)—J. L. Rush, 50, killed his wife and three daughters today and then burned their home around his own body. At a coroner's inquest mangled evidence indicated Rush killed his wife and daughters with an axe and then shot himself after setting the home afire, officials announced.

The dead were: Rush, his wife Cynthia, 45, and Helen 16, Ruth, 13, and Ruby, 11.

All kinds of legal blanks for sale, for rent, no hunting, no trespassing and other cards for sale at Commercial Printing Dept. of Mail Tribune.

Phone 542 We will haul away your refuse. City Sanitary Service.

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

GIVE IT A WHIRL by Hatlo

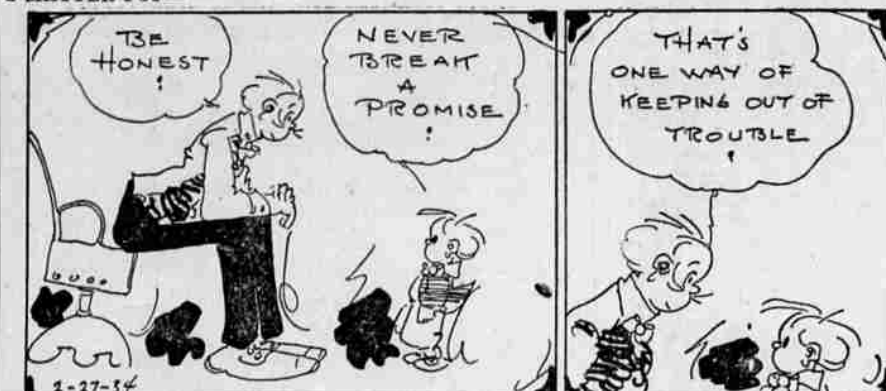


SUBURBAN HEIGHTS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



S'MATTER POP



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Wilkins Makes Another Enemy!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—What Was Happening



THE NEBBS—The Salve



BRINGING UP FATHER



LIPMAN WOLFE FOUNDER DIES

PORTLAND, March 6.—(AP)—Adolphe Wolfe, 45, founder of Lipman, Wolfe & Co., large department store here, died at his home here Sunday. He had been ill since November.

Mr. Wolfe remained active in the management of the store almost until his death, though the firm was sold to the National Department Stores, Inc. in 1928. A resident of Portland for 34 years, Mr. Wolfe was president of Temple Beth Israel for a score of years, a 32nd degree Mason, a Shriner, past-president of B'nai B'rith center, a member of the German Aid society, vice-president of the local executive board of the Boy Scouts, a charter member and director of the Lewis and Clark exposition here in 1905, in addition to many other fraternal and civic offices.

NORTHWEST PWA PLANS FAR AHEAD

PORTLAND, Ore., March 6.—(AP)—More than 400 delegates from Washington, Idaho, Montana and Oregon attended the opening session of the Pacific Northwest Regional Planning Conference here today, determined to evolve a definite program to put more men to work on PWA projects in the region.

The group will plan for a decade ahead for further work in line with President Roosevelt's re-employment program. Marsenal N. Dana, regional PWA advisor, presided at the meeting which will continue through tomorrow and Wednesday.

By C. M. Payne



By Hal Forrest



By Edwin Albert



By Sol Hess



By George McManus

