

BLOND GODDESS

A New Serial by Herbert Jensen

SYNOPSIS: Frank Graham has left Janice Kent the girl he loves, under the protection of his crippled cousin friend, Bill Langton, in a valley of the Yucatan jungle and is trying to find the sea down an underground river in time to save them from the rising flood that will drown them. The malicious high priest of a jungle tribe is imprisoned with them. Janice, mourning Frank's departure, is trying to forget Frank in sleep.

CHAPTER 45 CAPTURE

FOR hours, it seemed, she lay wide-eyed staring at the reflections from the fire that shifted over the uneven arch of the cave's roof. Finally she drifted into slumber...

She dreamed restlessly. A kaleidoscope of dream substance shuttled across her mind. Bits of her Hollywood life, fragments of her jungle experience pulsed in weird oscillation.

Frank's face was there, and Langton's, and that of poor Horatio Greene's mixed up oddly with that of the Mexican boy Juan.

She made again the trip up the side of the pyramid to the high-priest's house. She saw again the panoply of the ritual before the stone of sacrifice. She smelled the stoniness of copal incense, and heard the flat, dismal thudding of a hidden drum.

The face of the high priest came closer. Even in the dream the chill, inexorable fanaticism of his eyes seemed to shrink the membranes of her soul.

The arms of the guards and the lesser priests seized her. She felt her throat bursting in a scream. She struggled desperately.

Her eyes snapped wide. Curious shadows loomed between her and the rose fire reflections on the cavern roof. A smell of unwashed Indian bodies tingled her nostrils. She struggled to arise but she could not. She was held tightly to her cot.

She heard a voice shouting, charged with pain and despair. "Janice! ... Janice!"

Suddenly the cavern was filled with light. Torches flared.

The girl saw native faces about her. The crossed rows of cartridges upon their breasts. She realized that she was bound to her bed.

As he widened her bewildered eyes at the scene, the figure of Langton was brought forward between two brawny natives. He was bound—hand and foot—but his eyes flashed and his shoulders writhed in a paroxysm of futile effort.

"They've got us, Janice!" he breathed hoarsely. "That devil called them. I know. Helpless, yet he sent them his summons, waiting till Frank was gone or the rains came!"

She moistened her lips and stared bewildered from brown face to brown face. It was too strange, too direful for her to accept at once. She saw the ahkin's eyes observing her beyond the circle of faces. His expression was triumphant—indomitable.

As she caught his glance he muttered something to one of his attendants. Two men stepped beside him; they lifted him and carried him forward. He addressed the girl in rapid Spanish. She shook her head and turned appealingly to Langton.

But the tall blond white man's eyes showed his incomprehension. Turning to his Indian attendant, the high-priest spoke in the guttural dialect of the subvalados.

A space was cleared about the Indian. He pointed to Janice and shook his head; he repeated the gesture toward Langton again shaking his head. He pulled a lock of black hair away from his forehead and nodded.

"He means Frank," muttered Langton. "He's trying to tell us something about Frank."

Whereupon the man took an unmistakable posture. He allowed his body to sag. Slowly he knelt to the floor and stretched himself out upon it. He closed his eyes and let his mouth open.

There could be no doubt of the horrible import of his position. It told Janice as plainly as if Frank were lying before her that they wanted her to know that Frank was dead!

She cried out distractedly. "No, no! That isn't what he means! Billy, it can't be. How do they know? How could they know?"

Langton, misery in his haggard eyes, glanced sidelong at the high-priest. With the fascination of a bird for a snake's eyes, she followed Langton's glance.

Instantly as she met those obidian depths, the realization surged in her that this man had called to his people across miles of trackless jungle and had commanded them to this hidden valley.

What other powers did he possess? Since he could throw his will

over a distance, could it be that he owned also the power of divination? A little moan broke past her throat. She felt her knees growing weak. "Frank! she whispered. "Dear God... don't let it be!"

Swooning, she fell back upon the cot.

JANICE stared dry-eyed over a succession of flat roof tops toward the great central pyramid.

From the platform surmounting the vast edifice puffs of incense smoke gathered and disappeared as vagrant wind-eddies blew about the lofty corners of the head-priest's house.

Soon, she realized, she and Billy Langton would proceed slowly up those dizzying steps. Then stretched for agonizing moments on the sacrificial stone, flinching to the inexorable plunge of the knife, they would die, and their bodies be buried into the depths of the rain-choked cenote.

A snarling and coughing sounded from below the rim of the parapet that bounded the roof top that held their prisoner. She shuddered but stepped to the low wall and looked downward.

She knew what she would see but the seven jungle cats that roamed in the surrounding enclosure fascinated her.

They were jaguars. Little muscles bunched and writhed beneath their black-dappled tawny skins. They were restless—seemingly forever in motion. At night, as she lay in her room below, she could hear them above the drumming rain as they whined and quarreled, or fought over the scanty scraps of food thrown them by the guards.

They were given just enough to keep them strong, and hungry and ferocious. She rested her elbows on the stone and observed them. As if by some uncanny instinct they lifted their heads and looked at her.

Their yellow eyes gleamed, a white of crawling sounded in their throats; almost as one beast they flattened to the ground—only the tips of their tails moved.

An involuntary trembling rippled across her shoulders. Without locks or bars she was constrained to her prison. Remindful of a water moat about a castle in the days of chivalry, this was a moat of living, hungry jaguars.

It was nearly a week since she had been placed here. The soldiers of the ahkin had hauled them by means of ropes up the concave walls of the valley-cenote and had carried them back to the city.

Since then it had rained incessantly. She knew—the women detailed as her servants had told her in pantomime—that when the rain ceased she and Billy were to be taken to the pyramid top. There would be no escape this time.

Even could they get so far as the underground river, that avenue was closed by the rains that had charged the caverns with water. The jungle, soaked from the continuous down-fall, was impassable.

Had Frank got to the sea through the caverns—and her faith had rallied from the high-priest's intimation that he hadn't—it would take weeks for him to travel through the morass that lay between the coast and this hidden city.

HOPELESSLY she gazed about the roof. Today the rain had ceased. The sky was clear except for occasional sullen groups of clouds that hung in patches across the blue.

She was grateful for this day in the open, but prayed, nevertheless for rain. She and Billy would not be molested while it rained.

The roof was like a garden—a lovely, sinister garden.

Rare tropic shrubbery was placed cunningly about. Fine fabrics were draped over the simple furniture. Upon a central palm-shaded table a huge bowl of fruits and condiments was set.

Her clothing, which had been taken from her while she slept, had been replaced with an ankle-length robe of finest linen adorned at the throat and hem with the most exquisite colored embroidery she had ever seen.

She had no cause to complain about her comfort. She had been given everything she might desire—except freedom.

Wearied with her pacing, she sat finally upon a divan and watched the sun arc toward the west. It palated the pyramid with a brush daubed in gold.

As it sank lower the gold changed to rose, then deepened to red. The red darkened to the varnished sheen of fresh blood!

Tomorrow, Janice approaches the supreme sacrifice.

SOCIALISTS PLAN ANOTHER BLOW AT DOLLFUSS REGIME

By Wade Werner, (Associated Press Foreign Staff.)

VIENNA, March 7.—(AP)—Evidence that socialist resistance to the government of Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss has not yet been completely crushed appeared today when handbills were scattered urging workers:

"Hold fast! We will send more weapons. Only hold fast." Picards appeared also on the walls of the shell-torn Karl Marx apartment building, reading:

"We are coming back. You can depend on us." There is even talk of a new general strike. Radical leaders who have escaped being thrown into jail contend that many workers did not realize the destruction of Austrian socialism meant the destruction of their labor unions and the confiscation of their property.

"Now," said one of these leaders, "they realize it and when a new general strike is called they will act accordingly."

Whether in preparation for a socialist uprising or other dangers the Heimwehr, or fascist, home guard, continues its recruiting.

The proximity of the German and Italian borders to the Tyrol may be a contributing factor, but at any rate, patriotic organizations in this province have been rapidly transformed into armed auxiliary government forces.

Reports from the Italian border

STATE POLICE BOAST NEW PATROL CRUISER

PORTLAND, March 7.—(AP)—Launched without ceremony, the cruiser "Spikitt" today entered the service of the Oregon state police as a patrol boat.

The craft, originally a naval officer's gig, is 35 feet long, has a beam of nine feet, is powered with an engine of 100 horsepower and, it is said, can turn up a neat burst of speed when necessary.

ONE WOMAN KILLED TWO HURT IN BLAST

SEATTLE, March 7.—(AP)—One woman was killed and two women injured in a fire and explosion at the Hitt Fireworks company's plant here today.

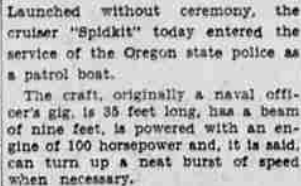
The woman was Mrs. Lillian McCrea, 35. The two injured are Mrs. James Smith and Mrs. Olive Vesilago. They were employees.

GIVE IT A WHIRL by Hatio

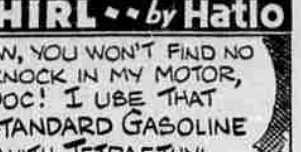


THE LIVING-ROOM FLOOR

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



PICKS UP JUNIOR'S AIRPLANE AND CRAYONS, TO GET LIVING ROOM READY FOR BUGS



GATHERS UP MORE OF HIS TOYS AND PUSHES HIS VELOCIPED OUT INTO CORNER OF HALL



JUNIOR APPEARS WANTING HIS CRAYONS. EXPLAINS THEY'RE PUT AWAY AND BEGINS GATHERING UP HIS BUILDING BLOCKS



RETURNS FROM DEN WITH THE LAST SCATTERED BLOCKS AND FINDS VELOCIPED BACK IN MIDDLE OF ROOM



PUSHS IT AWAY, TAKES A LAST LOOK AROUND AND SEES AIRPLANE WHICH SHE IS SURE SHE PUT AWAY BEFORE



CARRIES IT UPSTAIRS AND RETURNS TO FIND THAT JUNIOR HAS UN-EARTHED THE BUILDING BLOCKS AGAIN



EXPLAINS THAT GUESTS ARE COMING AND THAT SHE DOES MY WANT A SINGLE ONE OF HIS TOYS IN THE LIVING ROOM



GOES UP TO CHANGE, COMES DOWN TO RECEIVE GUESTS, DISCOVERING JUNIOR'S MITTENS, SWEATER AND ONE OVERSHOE IN MIDDLE OF LIVING-ROOM FLOOR

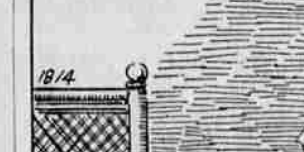
S'MATTER POP-



YOU ASK FOR ANOTHER BITE OF CAKE? WHAT HAPPENED TO THE ONE I JUST GAVE YOU?



I DROPPED IT?



YETH!



I ASKED YOU, WHERE DID YOU DROP IT?



AH-H-H, I-I-I-I-I IN MY MOUTH



WHERE DID YOU DROP IT?



I ASKED YOU, WHERE DID YOU DROP IT?



AND THE NEXT TIME YOU EVER LAY A HAND ON MISS BARNES I'LL PUT YOU AWAY FOR KEEPS



READER-PUT THIS LITTLE EPISODE DOWN IN YOUR NOTE BOOK RIGHT NOW-IT MAY AID YOU TO SOLVE A DEEP MYSTERY LATER ON



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TAILSPIN TOMMY—Tommy Puts Wilk In His Place!



KINDA WILD, EH?--WELL, I LIKE 'EM WILD!



TURN AROUND, WILKINS--I'VE GOT A PRESENT FOR YOU!



HERE IT IS!



AND THE NEXT TIME YOU EVER LAY A HAND ON MISS BARNES I'LL PUT YOU AWAY FOR KEEPS



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BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The Hurricane Warning



IF THEY HAD A BOAT THEY COULD LEAVE THIS ISLAND, COULD THEY?



AND THEY GOT AHEAD START ON US BY TRYING TO PLACE THE BLAME ON LUKE O'BRIEN HERE--



CANT WE GET AN AIRPLANE AN GO HUNTING FOR EM THAT WAY? WHAT I'M INTERESTED IN IS LOCATING BEN WEBSTER--THEY CAN'T BE FAR OFF WITH HIM--



WE COULD TRY THAT--



NO, WE CAN'T, CHIEF!



BOTH THE CHIEF OF POLICE AND BEZRA PARTON STOOD LIKE GRIEVEN IMAGES! LOOKS OF FEAR WERE ON THEIR FACES! FROM THE DISTANCE CAME THE BOOM OF A CANNON, SPACED AT REGULAR INTERVALS!



WHAT'S GOT INTO YOU?



PARTON, IT'S THE HURRICANE WARNING!



HEY! WAIT A MINUTE? WHAT ABOUT BEN WEBSTER?



O'BRIEN, A HURRICANE'S ON THE WAY, AND ITS EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF!

THE NEBBS—Appreciation



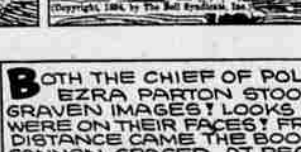
GOOD MORNING, MR. LOTT, I HOPE YOU'RE ENJOYING YOUR VISIT HERE



Wearied with her pacing, she sat finally upon a divan and watched the sun arc toward the west. It palated the pyramid with a brush daubed in gold.



As it sank lower the gold changed to rose, then deepened to red. The red darkened to the varnished sheen of fresh blood!



I CERTAINLY AM... YOUR HOTEL IS PERFECT... THE FOOD IS DELICIOUS AND THIS HEALTH-GIVING WATER JUST MAKES YOUR LEGS FEEL LIKE WHEN YOU'RE SITTING DOWN YOU'RE WASTING TIME



AND YOU HAVE ALL THE ATMOSPHERE OF HOME LIFE DUE TO YOUR MARVELOUS MANAGEMENT... WHEN YOU PULL A CHAIR UP TO YOUR TABLE YOU JUST FEEL LIKE SAYING... "WELL, IT'S NICE TO BE HOME AGAIN"



MOTHER IS WORRIED--LAST NIGHT A THIEF BROKE INTO THE PANTRY AND STOLE FIDOS DINNER--I HOPE HE SUFFERS FOR IT



I'M SO HUNGRY I COULD EAT A WOLF-- BUT I DON'T THINK A WOLF WOULD BE THIS TOUGH!



THAT LUNCH TASTED LIKE FRIED RAZOR-BLADES-- Oo!



WOW! I HAVEN'T BEEN THIS BAD SINCE NAGGIE USED THE PLASTER OF PARIS IN THE CAKE

