

DARK JUNGLES

BY JOHN C. FLEMING & LOIS EBY

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LILA'S PLOT

CHAPTER XXII

SUNSET was bathing the estanda clearing in a crimson mist when Lila, Barry and Renaldo came out of the jungle. A chattering flock of parakeets beat noisy wings in sudden flight.

Barry's hand closed on Lila's arm.

"Technicolor, uh?" he whispered. He stood watching the brilliant scene and Renaldo paused beside him. A muffled fury and desperation caught up Lila. Would the fools never get back to the house? But she forced herself to stand quietly.

"It's what gets you about jungle country," Barry said. "You never know what mad whim nature will be throwing next."

"No," Renaldo smiled. "You only know it will be sudden—and vigorous."

They moved on finally, and crossed the clearing.

Allison greeted them from the veranda. In the sunset glow, she was a misty vision in her full-skirted evening gown of sheerest tulle. Lila could have killed her.

"We're having a party!" cried Allison gaily.

"A party?" said Barry. "What for?"

"It's Renaldo's birthday," Allison sent the Spaniard a mischievous smile. "Cook told me. She said father always had her bake a cake for him. So we're having one tonight."

The handsome Renaldo for once lost his savor faire. He stuttered in his confusion. "You—you shouldn't have gone to that trouble!" But he was pleased.

"It's been a rather strenuous day—" Lila began with controlled anger. "Couldn't we postpone—" Renaldo looked sharply disappointed.

Allison cried, "Oh, you can't postpone a birthday party!"

And Barry chimed in, "I think it'll be jolly."

Lila swept in to her room. If it weren't that she wanted Barry even more than she wanted to get her hands on that yellow-haired vixen! she thought savagely. A shower took away some of the fatigue from her aching body, but she was still in no humor for a party. It didn't help her mood, either, to have Allison offer to lend her an evening gown to make a change from the one she had been wearing each night.

"This will do nicely," she murmured, slipping the dark satin over her head. But she seethed furiously as she snapped it up and fastened her diamond clips at her ears and breast. She was sick of the dress—almost as sick of it as she was of this place. Something must happen soon. She couldn't carry on this ridiculous masquerade much longer—not even for Barry Fielding. If he thought more of this awful country and this blonde than he did of her—

But she went out to the living room looking tall and regal and serene.

SLIM, dark Renaldo, in spotless whites, was a handsome gallant, and Barry, with his broad shoulders, his clean-cut features, his engaging grin, looked the spirit of conviviality.

Over the shining, hand-hewn mahogany table they toasted Renaldo, the candlelight gleaming on their copper cups of wine.

"I wish for you many, many happy years on the plantation," Allison cried.

Renaldo's black eyes held a sudden gleam as they met Allison's across the table. His voice was low, vibrant with tense questioning.

"May I hope the same for you?" he said.

Barry glanced sharply at the girl. She ignored the significant tone and went on smiling warmly and blithely at Renaldo. "Thank you," she murmured. "It's not exactly the way you welcomed me, is it, Barry?"

"It is not," said Barry. And the three of them laughed with deep amusement. "In fact," Barry added, grinning, "Renaldo and I had a pact to get you on the next boat back."

"It wasn't nice of you," Allison declared. "I don't like trickery."

"Neither do I," said Barry with sudden fervor.

Allison's eyes met Lila's for the briefest instant, their laughter definitely mocking.

One delicate, rich course followed another. As the lighted cake was carried in, an Indian played his marimba in the moonlit living room, the wailing native melody weaving through their laughter. Through the low, wide windows, the dark figures of natives could be seen drifting at a respectful distance from the Big House for a glimpse of the gala scene.

Barry smiled across at Lila. "With company like this, darling," he cried, "it won't matter if the quicksilver mines keep us down here for years!"

"Not Lila," Lila echoed with a sharp laugh. She turned to Renaldo. "When will the chicle be ready to send to the coast?" she asked.

RENALDO turned to her, a gleam of proud satisfaction in his dark eyes. "In about three

days," he said. "Then we shall begin packing the mules." Drawn out of interest, he began a description of the process of sending chicle to the States. He strolled with her out onto the veranda still deep in his subject. When he had finished, he lit his pipe.

"Fascinating, isn't it?" he said. Lila blew a wreath of smoke and answered steadily. "No. It's completely boring to me."

The Spaniard stared at her till his lighted match burned his fingers. She regarded him with cynical humor, as she burst out in sudden venom. "I hate the whole stupid business! I hate this miserable excuse for existence down here!"

"Then why," Renaldo asked, "do you stay here?"

"Because Barry won't go home," she said. "And I won't go without him."

Renaldo's black eyes sharpened. "You're afraid of his attacks of fever perhaps?" he said softly.

She met his gaze for a long minute. Then she said bluntly, "I am afraid of Allison Topping."

With a glow of satisfaction she saw apprehension leap into the Spaniard's eyes. "I thought you might help me get Barry back to the States," she said quietly.

She felt easier. She had not misjudged the handsome Renaldo. He was in love with Allison. He would give a great deal to be rid of Barry at this moment.

"But Barry is determined to complete the mine negotiations with the Quiches," he frowned.

"If the Quiches proved—too unfriendly," Lila murmured cryptically, "because of his first encounter with them, Barry would see he was only hurting the company's cause, and would go back with me."

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



A SWARM OF BEES MAY WEIGH TEN POUNDS, YET IT IS SUPPORTED ONLY BY THE TINY HOOKS ON THE FEET OF THE INSECTS.

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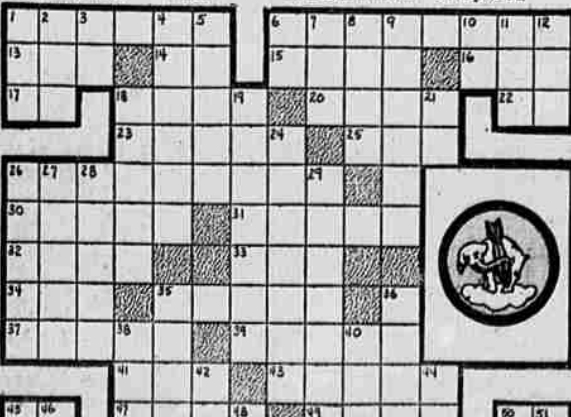


HUMAN BEINGS CANNOT EXIST AT ALTITUDES HIGHER THAN 23,000 FEET WITHOUT ARTIFICIAL OXYGEN.

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NAVAL AVIATION UNIT INSIGNE

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for horizontal and vertical words.



Answers to crossword puzzle clues.

"But I don't believe they will," Renaldo's low voice objected. "Then surely—he could be given a strong impression of unfriendliness. . . . Her black eyes held the Spaniard hypnotically as she murmured on. (To Be Continued)

More clothes and cloth are provided for mankind by cotton than by all the world's other textiles combined.

First diamond ever discovered encased in a meteorite was found by G. A. Koenig in Arizona's Canyon Diablo.



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You go to the Credit Office just once to get a book full of coupons. . . . then you spend the coupons just like cash all through the store.

GET YOURS TODAY AT YOUR SEARS CREDIT OFFICE

Out Our Way

By J. R. Williams



WHY MOTHERS GET GRAY

Our Boarding House

With Major Hoople



RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL PAPA =

HOLD EVERYTHING!



My girl sure is romantic—calls me her knight in shining armor!

Red Ryder



Red Ryder

By Fred Harmon



By Fred Harmon

SCRAP-BAG APRON IS VERY NEW AND GAY



7528 by Alice Brooks

Freckles and His Friends



By Blosser

By Blosser



By Blosser

Wash Tubbs



By Crane

By Crane



By Crane

Boots and Her Buddies



By V. T. Hamlin

By V. T. Hamlin



By V. T. Hamlin

Allep Oop



By Martin

By Martin



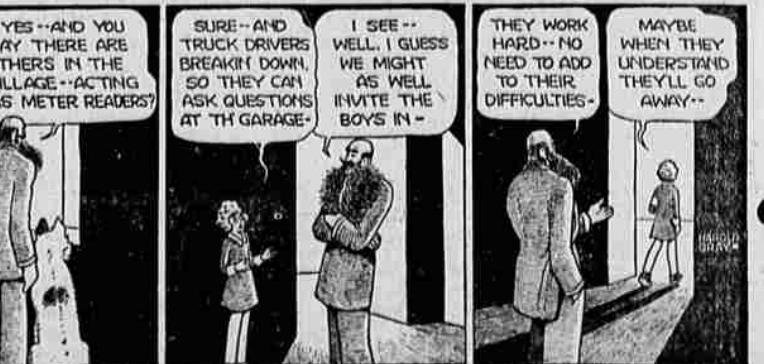
By Martin

Little Orphan Annie



By Harold Gray

By Harold Gray



By Harold Gray