

HOUSE OF SHADOWS

by Ida R. Gleason

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CHAPTER I

IT was a week after her father's funeral. Claire Fosdick stood in the luxuriously furnished library and looked about her with a shudder. Almost as though she half expected some menacing horror to reach out from the familiar shadows and clutch her. Then she jerked herself together with an effort. Over there, by his favorite lamp, his body had been found, slumped forward in an unnatural, twisted position. She could see it yet, though she had tried to forget. The death certificate had said heart trouble, and there had been no autopsy. Nick Baum had managed that for her. But always in the back of Claire's mind would be the question—why had her father died so unexpectedly? He had seemed as well as usual when she bade him goodnight and left him chatting with Nick. And Nick had said that when he left at 11 o'clock Mr. Fosdick walked to the door with him and seemed in the best of spirits. Yet he was gone, and now Claire was alone with the wreck of the family fortune. This city house and the mountain property were about all that was left, and she knew only too well that Nick Baum had claims on both. Her father's words came back to her.

"We must pay Nick by this time next month, Daughter."

"But, Daddy," she had exclaimed. "Surely Nick will—"

"You don't understand, child. Nick has been more than lenient. I couldn't ask him to extend the time again. We've got to find the money somehow."

But how? Warily Claire inventoried again her chances of supplying a large sum of money in a limited space of time. Trained for nothing but a society life, lacking money that seemed as far distant as the snow-capped mountain peaks, what could she do?

As though in answer to her problem, the door behind her opened and a tall young man came eagerly toward her and took both her cold hands in his.

"Nick! I—I didn't know you were here. I didn't hear you come in."

"Because I came through the garden. Cut across from the garage. The maid opened the French window for me. Are you glad to see me, Claire?"

He kissed her fingers as he spoke, then stood looking down at her, his flashing dark eyes admiring every line of her. "You're prettier every time I see you."

THE girl freed her hands with an uneasy little gesture. "Of course I'm always glad to see you, Nick," she answered. "You've been awfully good to me. I don't know how I could have gone through everything without you, but—"

She jarred back against a small table, crashing a delicate Dresden figure to the floor. It lay shattered into bits. She gazed down at it dazedly. It was like her own world—the world that had always been so beautiful and safe. Smashed into broken pieces.

"But what, Claire?" he persisted. "You know I'm crazy about you and want you to marry me. Why won't you say you will? You're the loveliest girl I've ever known—and the coldest. Can't you like me a little, dearest?"

Claire looked regretfully at him. Certainly he seemed everything a girl could desire, as he stood there pleading with her. Handsome, young and ardent. Yes, she was a fool, yet—

"I do like you a lot, Nick." Her voice was sincere. "I like you but—oh, don't ask me now. I don't know—I'm—I'm so uncertain about everything. I'm going up to the mountain house for a few days. Maybe when I come back—maybe later, Nick, dear—please!"

With a choked sob she turned and ran out into the hall and upstairs to her own room. Crumpling in a heap before her dressing table, she pressed small, clenched fists to her cheeks. "I can't—I just can't! I must find some other way out." The words ended in tears.

"Claire, honey!" An elderly maid's startled face appeared around an open closet door. She hurried to the girl and put her arms about her.

"Tell Hannah all about it now, child." She smoothed Claire's rumpled curls as she had done years before when she was nurse to the motherless little girl. "Any one been pestering you?" She poked her cap to a belligerent angle, her seamed, weather-beaten face glaring defiance.

Claire laughed shakily. Drawing Hannah's head down, she kissed her. "Don't frown so fiercely, old dear. Anyone would think you were still fighting Apaches out on your ranch in the early days. Some scrapper you, aren't you?"

HANNAH nodded. "You said it, honey. I am when anyone goes tryin' to drop a loop over you if you ain't willin'. Go on now, tell me. Is it that Baum fellow again?"

"Yes," Claire answered slowly. "He's awfully nice and he loves me, but—"

"But you don't want to marry him," Hannah finished the sentence for her. "Well then, you don't have to."

"But I know Daddy hoped I would, Hannah. Nick was very close to him, had even loaned him a lot of money, and we can't pay it back."

"Listen, child," Hannah broke in. "Your father was the best man in the world, bar none, but just because he was so darn good himself, he was a mere babe in arms when it came to some other things. Now you've got your own life to live, and he's gone. It's all boss bein' tied up by dead folks' wishes. Nobody oughter try to

run the affairs o' the living from the grave. How about tryin' to unearth that blasted jewel your Uncle Lyman said he hid in the house in the mountains? Wouldn't that help, Claire?"

"I was just thinking of that, Hannah," Claire looked up eagerly. "Oh, if I could only find it! But we've gone over every inch of the place hundreds of times. Daddy had about decided it was just Uncle Lyman's delirium when he was dying. You know he spoke of it again, but couldn't tell us where it was. But if there really was a jewel, and I could find it, everything would be all right. I could pay Nick and—"

"Then your father didn't know whether he got all your uncle's jewels or not?"

"We've never been sure, Hannah. You know Uncle had some wonderful stories. He was an authority on such things and bought them all over the world on his various travels. But he was always boasting about his 'Jewel of the Rockies,' as he called it. He spoke of it again as he lay dying, and that we must never let the place go out of our possession. But after we looked and looked without finding anything, we weren't sure whether it was just a fancy or not. You know Uncle was dreadfully eccentric."

(To Be Continued)

The average working woman, according to a survey made by the Y. W. C. A., spends 73 hours in sleep, 1 hour 22 minutes in personal care, 1 hour 47 minutes eating, 7 hours 12 minutes in work, 1 hour 29 minutes in transportation, and 4 hours 16 minutes in leisure.

Officials of the first American railway, in the 1830s, feared to assume responsibility for carrying mail for the government, and took what officials thought was a daring step when they put on night trains to speed the mail.

A telegraph post for the telegraph office, a trunk for the baggage office, and a big question mark for inquiries are pictorial signs in use at Parkston quay, Harwich, Eng. The symbols were selected because they are internationally understood.

Clocks run faster in high altitudes than in low, for in low altitudes the diminished gravity slows up the pendulum swing. Near the equator, the gravity pull is less than anywhere on earth.

The famous cathedral of Milan, Italy, has been entirely hand carved in miniature, after more than three years of steady work. The model contains 1797 separate pieces of wood.

Red Flag Unfurled On French Ship



Seamen on some 50 ships in Marseilles harbor signaled their strike for a 40-hour week by raising the red flag of Communism and disregarding orders of officers to lower the offending banner. Above the red flag floats below the French tricolor from the stern of the S. S. Ramiz.

Flapper Fannie Says



A bang-up argument follows explosive words.

OUT OUR WAY



BY J. R. WILLIAMS OUR BOARDING HOUSE



MYRA NORTH, SPECIAL NURSE



BY THOMPSON AND COLL



LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE



BY HAROLD GRAY



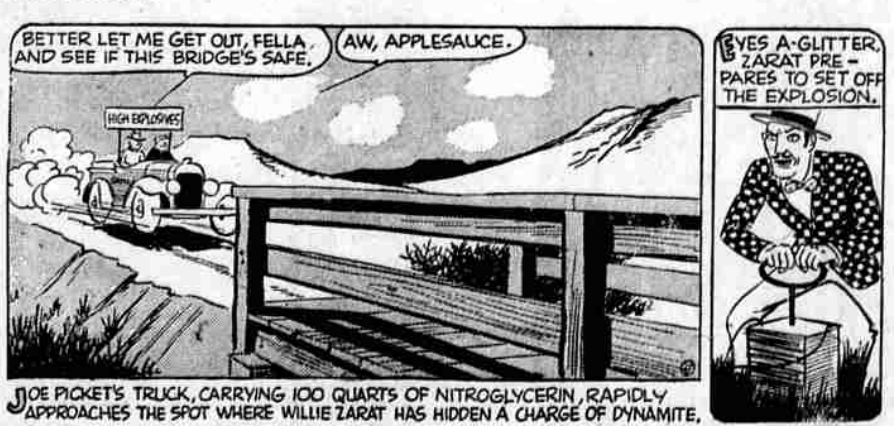
FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



BY BLOSSER



WASH TUBBS



BY CRANE



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



BY MARTIN

