

SERIAL STORY

GHOST DETOUR

BY OREN ARNOLD

CHAPTER I

THE two girls were riding at an easy gallop. The breeze flipped a silken scarf out behind Christine's neck, like a knight's banner, and Roselee's blond curls were awry. But the girls didn't care. Nobody could see them; in fact, there wasn't another human being within 10 miles of them except for Roselee's family back at the ranch, and the cars that oo-o-o-o-omed here along the transcontinental highway. The reined in.

Roselee didn't bother to dismount. She just leaned down from the saddle and opened the big rural mail box from Warrior back. Warrior was huge—he made Roselee look even smaller than she was—but he was servile to her; he stood champing his bit.

"Letter from home, Christy," Roselee told her friend. "Here." "Thanks."

"One for me—let's read."

ROSELEE hooked a leg over her saddle horn for comfort. Hers was a business envelope but the return address excited her.

"Dear Miss Dale:

"This letter is to inform you that the directors of the Western Metals and Minerals Corporation voted yesterday to accept your offer of \$500 cash for the remains of the community once known as Goldcrest, Arizona. Deed to the property, which includes the mining claims and all buildings and other structures thereon, is included herewith, and receipt for your check is attached.

"Some of the directors were frankly curious to know what you, a young woman, expected to do with this so-called ghost town. President Felch was good enough to suggest that you might realize a modest return from wrecking the old buildings as scrap lumber, if you can open the road to the town again. Most of the buildings were in good condition when the place was finally abandoned in 1902.

"In that connection, our corporation files happen to show the combination of the old steel safe or vault in the Goldcrest Bank. No doubt it is valuable now, but here is the combination: 12-L42-RS-L3-RS.

Respectfully yours,
Charles L. Wilson,
Secretary, Western
M. & M. Corporation."

"Roselee Dale turned to her friend in high elation.

"Christine! It's come! I own Goldcrest! We can go ahead with our plans!"

"Yes! Here—read it! I—gee, honey, I wish—come on, let's ride over there right now! You won't mind being late for dinner, will you? Honest?"

Her guest didn't answer until she had finished reading. Then she turned in her saddle to look directly at the smaller girl, and to smile sweetly. The horses began moving again.

"Now listen, Roselee," Christine said, "are you serious about my part of this? I think it's a perfectly darling idea, but after all I'm an outsider. You needn't feel obligated to invite me in."

Roselee spoke earnestly. "Christy, we were pals all through university, weren't we? We got our degrees together recently, didn't we? We can still be partners. You can—we can adjust the money difference. You're in!"

Roselee spurred Warrior and turned him westward. Christine's horse followed. They stayed off the pavement of course, but they clung near to it. They read a road sign. An arrow pointing west said "BOULDER DAM, 94 MILES" and an arrow pointing east said "GRAND CANYON, 171 MILES." A smaller sign on a shield said this was "U. S. HIGHWAY 66" and the girls knew it was a main transcontinental route where tourist travel was heavy the year around.

"Since you've never been there I'll take you the longer way this time," Roselee explained. "I'll show you first where the old side road turned off this highway. It's barely visible, but it could be opened again. Just a few Joshua trees have grown up on it."

"I've never been in a ghost town," Christine called, spurring to keep alongside her friend. "Four miles, you said?"

"It's only two off the highway." "That shouldn't be hard on tourists."

"It's perfect!" Roselee declared. "Just enough to make them think they are roughing it—with a thrill at the end of the trail. See?"

"I'm thrilled in anticipation, Roselee. Let's—let's go see the old bank first, where the robbers were. Want to?"

"Okay. It has barred windows and—and you simply must visit the jail! It was carved from the side of a rock mountain. Cut out of rock. A real dungeon."

"Goodness!" Christine was impressed. They had to slow down because the going was rocky.

"It's picturesque!" declared Christine, referring to the wild landscape around them.

"It surely is!" Roselee said, thinking of Goldcrest. "It's a perfect ghost town if ever there was one."

That was true. The girls, Christine especially, were doubly im-

pressed when finally they came up the mountain gulch and rode down its one main street.

UNCONSCIOUSLY they began speaking in awed tones, as one might use in a cemetery. The place really was funeral. Homes

and stores were there, but vacant by the block. Roofs sagged. Glass was broken. Posts and planks had

cracked or split. Weeds and dead grass showed inside rooms, poking through rotted floors. A great ore dump loomed in the distance.

Nothing moved—save a jackrabbit that leaped away with startling suddenness and emphasized the deadness of the surroundings.

Dirt and dust were everywhere but the wooden forms were all visible so that the place was a movie set from a past century, yet was genuine, real. Many of the old store signs were still legible, after four or five decades.

An old buggy, broken; several wagon wheels; hitching rails; bottomless chairs; saloon bars; cracked mirrors; stoves; rusted bed springs; all of these were noted by the girls.

They had hitched their horses now and they walked up a ragged plank sidewalk, almost surely. Their own shadows slanted long and grotesque against the store fronts so as to seem alive in the waning sun. The hour was late and twilight already was hovering when they came to the bank that had been Goldcrest's center of commerce and trade.

"Let's just take a peek in before we have to go back," Christine said. "I think it's wonderful!"

They moved on tiptoe, pointing, talking, speculating, communing with the storied past. Both girls were flushed with excitement.

Because of the paragraph in the

letter, they pushed through a corridor to a dim back room and came to the back vault. It's massive steel door was rusty but intact. The vault, as with the jail, had been get back into the rock cliff of the canyon.

"Look—the vault door's closed!" exclaimed Roselee in surprise, pointing. "I wonder if it's locked?"

"You bet it's locked!" declared another voice—not Christine's! It was a masculine voice, not unlovely but nevertheless terrifying now. "I've been wondering if you came to open it."

(To Be Continued)

Much Concerned About Corsica



Wary of war clouds in European sky, Gen. Joseph Vuillemin, French air chief, made rigid inspection of defenses on Mediterranean island of Corsica, admitted objective of Italian aims.

FLAPPER FANNY

By Sylvia



"Yes, I see the resemblance. In a few years, his grandfather's going to look exactly like him."

EARTH'S SATELLITE

HORIZONTAL

1 Lunar heavenly body.

5 It is seen at

9 It revolves from — to east.

12 Alligator.

14 To aver.

16 Fixed practice.

17 Nominal.

19 Call for help.

21 Otherwise.

23 Elector.

24 Bill of fare.

25 Go on (music).

26 To observe.

28 Lava.

29 Noun ending.

30 Praying figure.

32 Ascot.

34 Note in scale.

36 Half an em.

37 Tanning pot.

39 Father.

41 Portion of a curved line.

43 Print measure.

44 Twenty-four hours.

45 Provided.

47 Whirlwind.

48 Cotton cloth.

50 Ozone.

53 Ringlet.

55 Various —

58 Carmine.

59 Short sleep.

60 Feast deer.

61 Beasts' home.

63 Diplomatic agreement.

64 Marine fish.

Answer to Previous Puzzle

18 Musical note.

20 On its — are many depressions (pl.).

22 Domestic slave.

24 Kind of spice.

27 And.

28 While.

31 Work of genius.

33 Data.

35 Sprite.

38 Divert.

39 Evident.

40 One that pities.

42 Divests of bark.

44 To fish.

46 Away.

49 Discourteous.

50 Venomous snake.

51 Pronoun.

52 To free.

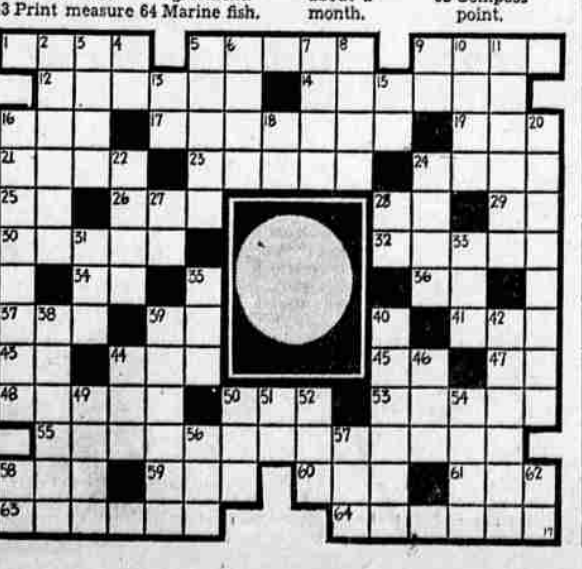
54 Finishes.

56 Beam.

57 To pull along.

58 Right.

62 Compass point.



OUT OUR WAY BY J. R. WILLIAMS



RED RYDER



LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



WASH TUBBS



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



ALLEY OOP



OUR BOARDING HOUSE With MAJOR HOOPLE



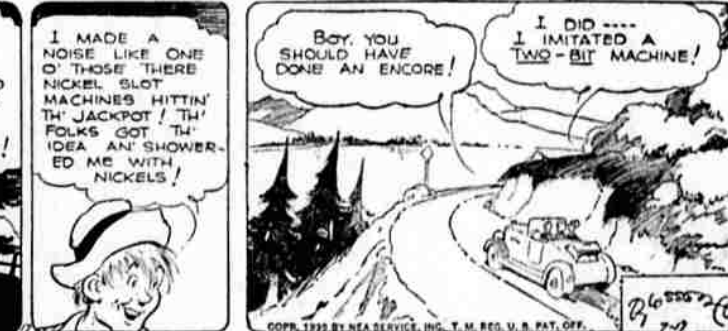
BY FRED HARMAN



BY HAROLD GRAY



BY BLOSSER



BY CRANE



BY MARTIN



BY V. T. HAMLIN

