SERIAL STORY

GHOST DETOUR

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BY OREN ARNOLD

Yesterday: Christine and Roselee buy the ghost town, Goldcrest. They ride down its main street, walk into its old bank, find the safe locked. A strange voice says, "I've been wondering if you came to open it!"

CHAPTER II

A LOT of women in history have fainted—or feinted—for effect. They wanted to impress somebody with their frailty, which was stylish back in the buggy-and-bustle era.

But it is physically possible for thoroughly modern and self-reliant young women to faint in absolute reality, and Christine Palmer and Roselee Dale almost did so. Only their abounding curiosity, plus an inability to flee, caused them to remain standing. A long, freezing moment of terror elapsed even before they could scream! Finally they let out a concerted yell.

"Gosh!" said the man, himself startled now.

They saw his head then, a fine-looking head above the half wall of what had been a bank teller's cage.

"Say, I'm sorry!" he went on, affably. "I guess I scared the daylights out of you. I should have shown myself sooner."

"Who—who—who in the world—are you?" Roselee finally managed to speak, staring spellbound.

"I'm alive, and harmless!" he assured them, smiling and coming around the doorway to join them. "I admit I was snooping on you, though. I thought you would be somebody else."

He was a big fellow, bareheaded and in shirt sleeves, tieless with collar open. He had black hair, quite unghostly.

"D-did you—expect—somebody else?" Roselee pointed at him oddly. Christine could only swallow, and finally exhale in tremendous relief from her fear.

"Well, yes," he admitted. "There have been tracks here, and I was curious. I still am."

"Tracks," Roselee echoed, still wide-eyed. Fright made Roselee's large blue eyes larger and more beautiful still. The young man appeared to discover them.

"Yump. But they were men's tracks. Here in the dirt and dust of the bank, leading to the vault. I saw you riding up in the distance. I thought you'd be—they. So I hid in here to see who you—who they—were. See? And it turned out not to be they, but you. I'm awful sorry I frightened you girls. I wouldn't have done it for anything. I blunder a lot."

"Do you?" This was inadequate, but Roselee was still shaking a little, appraising him. The muscular fellow was strikingly handsome, she saw. He stood with his feet apart, hands on his hips, smiling down at her. She couldn't disperse the thought that something about him looked familiar.

"You—uh—live here?" Christine asked.

"Yes."

"On business, no doubt?" Christine was prone to speak a little loftily at him, now. "What business?"

"Oh, yes. That is—well, important business. You see—well the fact is—say, what's your names?"

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THE girls looked at each other. They were still flushed with excitement. Roselee took up the conversational reins again.

"You're doubtless the crazy old hermit of Goldcrest," she declared. "Every ghost town has one. Well, old hermit, I'm Roselee Dale, and may I present my friend Christine Palmer. So there!"

The "old hermit" smiled again. He had fine teeth, the girls noted. And well chiseled lips.

"My name's Bancroft," he bowed a little. "I'm happy to see you even though I—"

"Oh!" Roselee exclaimed, softly.

"Oh what?"

"N-nothing! I just—was thinking. You haven't said how the hermit business is, or why you're here."

"I don't think I'd better say why," he stated, seriously.

"You are a trespasser," Roselee said.

"So are you both!" He looked stern. "I could go to the owners and have you thrown off the property. Or I—I could throw you off myself!"

The girls gasped, and looked significantly at each other.

"Do we have to fight?" he asked then, with a new smile. "I'd rather invite you to dinner. Honest, I can scrape up enough for all three. It's pretty lonesome here. I—I keep batch over yonder in the Ace High Hotel."

"Batch?"

"Sure. Since last Friday. I've been awfully busy."

"Hermiting?" Christine turned her own pretty eyes directly on him.

"Waiting for Franklin. He's due tonight or tomorrow."

"Um. Another crusty old hermit, no doubt?"

"Franklin's my roommate in college. Franklin Larraway. He went by to see his folks first, and bring some things we need here."

"White sheets and such, to scare people with."

He smiled at her. "No. Frank's going to study. And I have a serious job. I've loafed some because I've been curious about that vault since I found it locked and saw the tracks here. I have opened every other door in Goldcrest. This one defies me, and I can't stand it."

"You can't stand being defied," Christine echoed him.

He looked it, but he was surprised at her statement.

"Well, you know what I mean," he said, lamely. "I'm curious, is all."

"Naturally."

"I'll skip over for my flashlight and show you what I mean," he said, boyishly. "Wait a sec."

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HE ran swiftly out and all at once the girls were alone again with the bank ghosts of yesteryear. They didn't like it. Details of the building had slipped into night gloom, so they walked to a barred window and peered out into the street that had been deserted for almost 40 years. It was spectral; gray and dim.

They saw him hastening back, and his pocket light was a blessing.

"We've a long ride home," Christine remembered. "Let's hurry."

"All right," said he, pointing with the light beam. "See what I mean? Here's flaky rust and dust everywhere except along the crack where the vault door opens, and on the knob and handle. They've been turned. I tried for an hour to work them myself, but—"

"I have the combination," Roselee suddenly put in.

He turned to stare down at her a long moment, incredulous. "You have?"

"Yes."

"Say, who are you, anyhow?" he demanded anew.

"I told you my name. Here—you turn, and I'll read off the combination." She was opening the letter she had taken from a pocket of her blouse. He looked very seriously at her, hesitating, confused.

"Go on, turn it," Christine urged.

The mystic numerals worked—12-L4½-R6-L3-R8. He strained at it and the massive door inched open tantalizingly. Instantly three heads were peering inside.

"Nothing but dirt and cobwebs—and a burlap sack," the young man murmured.

The sack was half full and tied resting on the floor. They went in, tiptoeing quite unnecessarily, and he knelt to unfasten the string while Christine held the flashlight. All three young people looked like phantoms high-lighted feebly but theatrically in the gloom.

"It's money!" he whispered, in awed tones. Together they stooped to inspect it, handle it, count it, currency and specie alike. They were extremely quiet, almost furtive, as if suffused with a sense of guilt. Neither girl spoke; both stared wide-eyed.

"Glor-ree!" the man murmured at length. "There's nearly $12,000 of it! Sa-a-a-ay!" Mr. Bancroft sat back on his heels to stare up in fresh wonder and amazement at Christine Palmer and Roselee Dale.

(To Be Continued)

Real Princess

Newest member of the Japanese imperial household is H. I. H. Princess Taka Sugamomiya, 4-month-old daughter of the Emperor and Empress, who smilelessly poses for the cameraman in her first official picture.

FLAPPER FANNY

By Sylvia

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"Having lipstick trouble?"
"Yeah—I washed my face this morning and I can't do a thing with it."

PURIFIER OF MILK

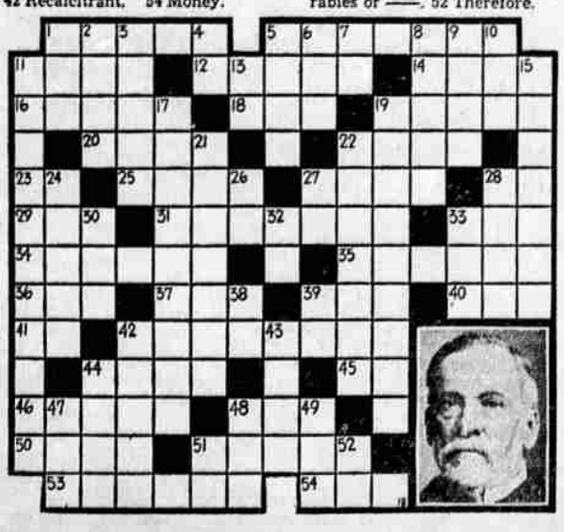
HORIZONTAL

1, 5 Man who discovered how to keep milk pure.
11 Pile.
12 To prevent.
14 Long poem.
16 Plowboy.
18 Performance.
19 Diagram.
20 Dress fastener
22 Platform.
23 Road.
25 To thrash.
27 5280 feet.
28 I am (contraction)
29 Metallic rock
31 Decisive.
33 Blackbird.
34 Itinerant monk.
35 Insect parasite.
36 Pronoun.
37 To clip.
39 Was victorious.
40 To corrode.
41 Upon.
42 Recalcitrant.
44 Great mass of ice.
45 Doctor.
46 Symbols of deities.
48 Mineral resort.
50 Officer's helper.
51 Female students.
53 His —— of treating milk bears his name.
54 Money.

Answer to Previous Puzzle

VERTICAL

1 Lion.
2 Trees.
3 To set on end.
4 South Africa.
5 Fourth bushel.
6 A craft.
7 Street.
8 Frightened.
9 Arrow poison.
10 Torn place.
11 He discovered a cure for rabies or ——.
13 Go on.
15 He was a —— by profession.
17 Larcenists.
19 Courage.
21 Murmuring as a cat.
22 Jewel.
24 Sewer.
26 Bushel.
27 Musical tone.
28 Dolphinlike cetacean.
30 Tree, genus Ulmus.
32 Credit.
33 Devoured.
38 3.1416.
39 Plural pronoun.
42 To rent again.
43 Shark.
44 To foreshow
47 Darkish.
48 Turf.
49 Stir.
51 Company.
52 Therefore.

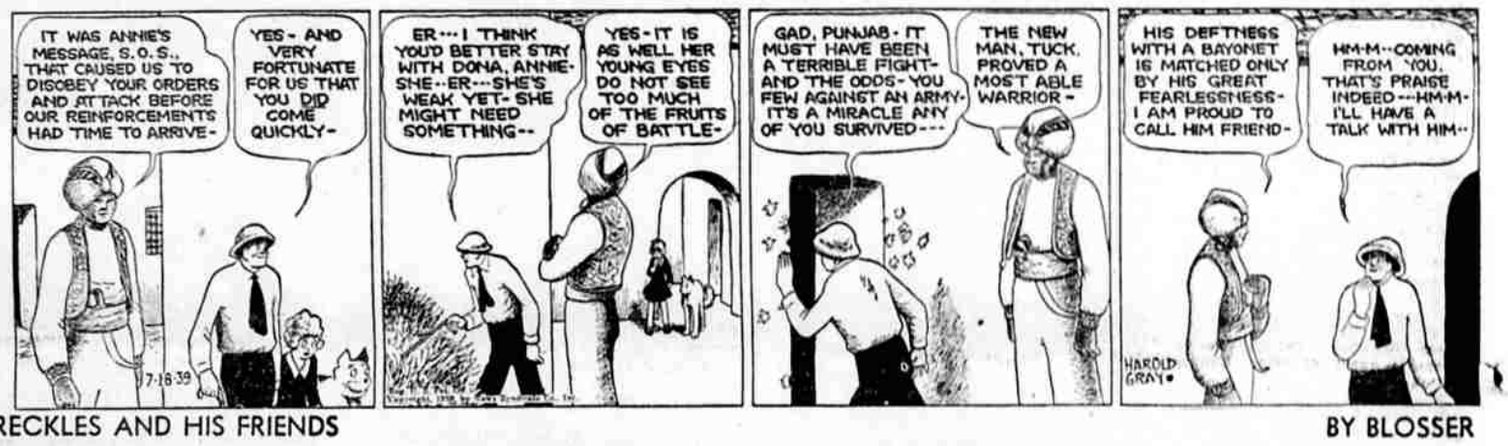


OUT OUR WAY BY J. R. WILLIAMS

OUR BOARDING HOUSE With MAJOR HOOPLE

RED RYDER BY FRED HARMAN

LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE BY HAROLD GRAY



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS BY BLOSSER

WASH TUBBS BY CRANE

BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES BY MARTIN

ALLEY OOP BY V. T. HAMLIN