

SERIAL STORY

Murder on the Boardwalk

BY ELINE COWAN STONE

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Yesterday, when Christine arrived in Surf City, there is no one to meet her. Christine calls her cousin's home, is told service has been discontinued. The telephone operator adds, mysteriously, "if there's any trouble, you're to call Main 2070."

CHAPTER II

"I WAS to tell you to get a room at the Crestview, and—"

Abruptly the agitated voice at the other end of the line broke off. When the girl spoke again, it was with the studied impersonality of the regimented operator: "I am sorry. Your party does not answer."

For a moment Christine sat, stunned, trying to grasp the entirety of the dilemma in which she found herself. She did not even try to understand the amazing conversation she had just finished.

She could go to the hotel, of course—but in the present state of her finances, any hotel bill assumed the dimensions of a national debt. . . . Or she might just sit here for the rest of the night. But in that event, how was she to get rid of that officious young man?

As she had expected, he was waiting inexorably when she went back to the platform.

"Well?" he demanded.

"Well," Christine told him, catching at the first phrases fate lent to her tongue, "it seems that as the result of an unexpected domestic upheaval, my cousin had no one to send to meet me. So I'm to go to a nice, quiet hotel for the night."

"A nice, quiet hotel in Surf City?" He grinned. "Have you one in mind?"

Scrambling about in her memory, Christine pulled out a name. . . . "Crestview," the telephone girl had said. And Christine definitely recalled Cousin Emma's remarking once, "If there is a respectable hotel in Surf City, I suppose it's the Crestview."

"Oh, the Crestview, I suppose," Christine said casually.

"The Crestview, hm?" He looked at her with new interest. "Well, there's nothing like camping on the battlefield if you have Amalgamated shares to vote tomorrow."

"Battlefield?" Christine echoed.

"I hear there's likely to be a right gory little war over that merger between Amalgamated and National at the stockholders' meeting. . . . But forget it. It's not my war anyhow. . . . Well, shall we start? I'll drive you over. My car's out there."

"Thanks, but I'm taking a taxi," He shrugged.

"May I call one for you, or does your rugged individualism run to calling your own cabs?"

At that moment a taxi rolled into a berth at the end of the platform, and laughing a little, they hurried toward it.

While the driver was stowing Christine's bags away, the young man began almost diffidently, "Of course, I'm taking a chance of your shouting for the police, but the Crestview runs into money. . . . What I mean is—well, I know that young girls don't carry a lot around, especially when they're visiting relatives. If you—it would only be a loan."

Christine thought, "It's strange, but I never felt this way about a man before—as if I'd known him forever—as if borrowing from him would be perfectly right and natural."

Aloud she said, "I'm really all right. But thank you, Mr. . . ."

"The feller," he told her, "call me 'Bill' . . . I wish you would, Miss Talbert."

"But my name isn't Talbert. It's Thorenson—Christine Thorenson."

ONCE in her luxurious quarters at the Crestview, Christine emptied the contents of her purse on the bed and counted anxiously.

When she had told the bare-headed young man that she was "all right," she had been guilty of a rash overstatement. After she had bought her railway ticket, she had had left a thin sheaf of bills which she optimistically expected to stretch into pin-money and modest tips to Cousin Emma's household.

Now, after the extravagance of a night at the most "respectable" hotel in Surf City, she would barely have enough for a return ticket to New York—and no prospects to speak of after she got back.

"Oh, well," Christine told herself, "Cousin Emma must have made some arrangement for me. I'll hear from her tomorrow."

She took a bath in the luxurious tub, put on her best satin nightgown, and fell into a dreamless sleep.

When the sunlight awoke her early next morning, her immediate interest was only in breakfast—lots of it.

She dressed carefully, selecting her green linen with the orange and black Balkan embroidery, which was perfect with the copper of her hair, and the open-toed pumps she had picked up for almost nothing at a little New York shop.

On her way through the hotel lobby it occurred to her that there must be a message from Cousin Emma, and stopped at the desk. . . . But there was no message for Miss Thorenson.

Christine thought a little forlornly as she went down the Boardwalk, scrutinizing the menus posted in the windows of the cheaper restaurants, "I'll think of something—after I've had a good, strong cup of coffee."

But even after two cups—neither of them too good—in a small cafe reeking of fried potatoes, the only idea that occurred to Christine was that she was practically broke, and stranded alone in one of the most expen-

sive, most heartless pleasure resorts in the country.

As often happened when she was deeply absorbed, she reached for a pencil—found one a waitress had left on the table, and the only drawing surface at hand, the back of a menu card—and began to sketch.

Rousing from her abstraction, Christine compared her sketch with the original, the fat, insufferably self-satisfied looking proprietor of the cafe; she was frowning over the finishing touches when a voice said, "Excuse me, but that is really excellent!"

Startled, Christine turned. A plump, neat little man—bald except for a tuft of hair well back on a shiny pink scalp—was peering down at her sketch through astigmatic lenses.

When Christine looked up, he gave a funny duck of a bow and coughed apologetically. Because he looked so like he was afraid of offending her, and because Christine was a friendly young woman, she gave him her best smile and said, "Thank you."

"I suppose," he asked, "that you are employed somewhere as an artist?"

"I wish I were," Christine replied from her heart.

"Then," he asked, "you might consider an offer?"

"Just try making me one," Christine thought.

"You see," he went on, "I have a concession that isn't paying. I should be grateful if you could help me."

"Should you mind," Christine asked, clasping her fingers to keep them from shaking, "explaining what you want?"

"I need some one to do portraits—very much like that, but in color. You'd just stand in a studio

near the Boardwalk and draw passers-by at so much each. A fast worker like you should easily make \$5 a day. . . . That is," he hesitated anxiously—"you'd probably have to pretty some of the customers up a little."

"For \$5," Christine told him, "I'm entirely willing to make them all look like movie stars—especially if it will contribute to the self-esteem of the great American public. When do we start?"

Christine had no way of knowing that with her impulsive acceptance of what seemed unbelievable good luck, she plunged into the most tragic events of her life.

(To Be Continued)

Crash Heroine



Tales of heroism follow wreck of crack train, City of San Francisco, in Nevada. Despite injuries to self, Stewardess Thelma Risvold, above, gave medical aid to many in two hours before help arrived.

OUT OUR WAY

BY J. R. WILLIAMS



RED RYDER



LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



WASH TUBBS



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



ALLEY OOP



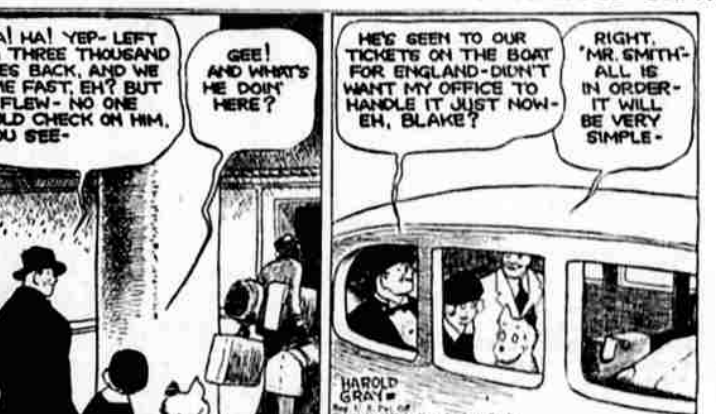
OUR BOARDING HOUSE With MAJOR HOOPLE



BY FRED HARMAN



BY HAROLD GRAY



BY BLOSSER



BY CRANE



BY MARTIN



BY V. T. HAMLIN



FLAPPER FANNY

By Sylvia

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KINGDOM OF HELLAS

