

LUCKY PENNY

BY GLORIA KAYE

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CASTRO AGAIN

CHAPTER VIII

FOR her visit to the Kirk mills, Penny borrowed a slack suit from Midge. With a dinner pail under her arm and a pass clutched tightly in her fingers, she joined the men who passed the gate watchman on their way to start the 8 o'clock turn.

The mills stretched in an endless maze along the river. Penny was fascinated as she watched the processes of steel making. When the noon whistle blew, she was already tired, her feet protesting against the extended hike.

Men poured out of the mills, seated themselves on piles of lumber, and opened their lunch kits. Penny was due for a pleasant surprise. As she scurried across a railroad siding, she literally bumped into Bud Walsh.

"What in heaven's name are you doing here?" Bud demanded, when the first shock of meeting her had faded.

"It's lonesome at the Courier office," she told him, "so I thought I'd come over here to have lunch with some of the boys."

"Glad to have you with us," Bud said, warmly. "Come on over and meet the gang." Delighted, she shook hands with his friends.

"It feels good to sit down," she said. "I've been wandering around for hours." Happily, she opened the lunch box. The sandwiches Midge had made tasted good. She gave Bud one of the pears packed neatly into the kit.

"You're not going to go wrong on Midge," Penny assured Bud. "She sure can make good sandwiches." All the men laughed. The whistle signalling their return to work blew all too soon.

PENNY returned to the Courier office to write her first story about the Kirk mills, a light, personalized feature story in which she stressed the good humor of the men. Jim was encouraging, helpful. He took time off from his proof-reading to suggest a good lead paragraph. Both of them were absorbed in their work when they heard heavy footsteps clomping down the stairs.

A heavy-set, short, swarthy man walked in. He held a rolled sheet of paper in his hand. "Hello, Vickers," he scowled. "I want to see you, alone."

"Hello, Castro," Jim replied, coolly. "Penny's my partner. She's just as interested as I am in anything you have to say."

"Okay, Vickers," Castro answered. "I want to run a full-page ad in your paper this week."

Then he pulled a roll of currency from his pocket, peeled off 10 bills, and lined them up on the counter. Each had a value of \$100.

"What's this, Castro?" Jim asked, quietly.

"That's payment for my ad," the gangster replied, impatiently. "A thousand dollars."

"Our rates are the same for everyone," said Jim. "Just \$50 a page."

"I know that," Castro answered. "I just want you to know that I like you, that's all. It's yours. No strings tied."

"Castro," Jim told him, with ice in his voice, "You're a swell guy and I like you too. But I'll give you just 10 seconds to get out of here and stay out!"

Dynamite blazed in Castro's flushed face. Penny could see his fist clench. Then he calmed down. He picked up the money Jim had rejected.

"Vickers," Castro said, "There isn't room in this town for the two of us. I'm warning you. One of these days I'm going to blow you and your fly-by-night rag so high they'll never be able to put the pieces together again."

He turned on his heel and swung out through the door and up the stairs.

"Good for you, Jim," Penny said, finally. "I know you're not just making a noble gesture. You could use that money."

Jim smiled wryly. "I'd rather be broke," he said. "Keeps me out of mischief."

"Castro isn't the kind who throws money around promiscuously," Penny cautioned. "He means business. You're a real threat to him. I'd watch out if I were you."

"Don't worry, Penny," Jim answered, grimly. "I've met his type before. In Paris they were a lot smarter, a lot tougher, and a lot more dangerous. He's right when he said there isn't room enough in this town for both of us. I don't like rats."

PENNY would never forget the Thursday afternoon when her first story was published. She would always remember the thrill of watching the press roll slowly into action. Then Joe, the pressman, lifted a page still wet with ink. She saw her feature emblazoned on the front page.

There, too, was Jim's editorial alongside his story of the fatal bridge accident. He hadn't pulled any punches. Involuntarily Penny shivered as she thought of the reaction his words would provoke among Kirktown's politicians.

That first issue, together with her first pay check, Penny put aside as carefully as though they were her most treasured possessions. She would always cherish them.

Now Penny learned the joys that every creative artist must feel. Her mill story had caught the attention of many eyes in Kirktown. People went out of their way to meet her. She was as much at home now as though she had lived in Kirktown all her life.

The days ahead were busy ones.

Penny was happy in her work. Her first mill story began a series of new adventures for her. Every department in the mills had a wealth of story material. She visited the teeming, busy little mills so often that she was soon a familiar figure to the hard-working steelmakers.

She wrote about their hobbies. Many of the men were inventors. Some had traveled extensively, and they reported interesting experiences.

Every week, she learned more, too, about the grievances that disturbed the men's morale. They were petty things, mostly. Ideas, she found, were sarcastically rejected. Men were discouraged from trying new methods and new techniques.

Despite the modern facilities installed in most departments in the mills, there were still a few places where safety devices had been neglected. There had been nasty accidents.

Many of the foremen and superintendents were hardbitten, arrogant. They aroused resentment rather than loyalty. Then, too, Kirktown offered little recreational outlet, and the workers had little incentive for self-improvement.

All these things and more Penny discovered in her conversations. She found out, too, that in the men who worked in the Kirk mills there was the foundation for progress and growth. Steel making coursed through their blood as much as printer's ink had begun to run through her veins.

The time was coming, soon, when Penny must make her decision. Should she take an active part in management of the mills? Should she shoulder the problems she knew existed? How would the Kirk executives react? And how would tough, independent, scrappy steelmen feel about working for a frail girl who was a tiny mite

by comparison with them? She pictured herself disciplining a giant worker towering above her.

"Hm," she said to herself, laughing inwardly, "It might be fun at that."

(To Be Continued)

HOLD EVERYTHING!



"Holy smoke! I forgot about tank maneuvers here today!"

By J. R. Williams

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THIS CURIOUS WORLD



ANSWER: Any Bonds Today; Skylark; The Story of a Starry Night. U. S. ARMY OFFICIAL HORIZONTAL 1.8 Pictured U. S. Army official. 11 Flavors. 12 Coltsfoot. 14 Those who take sides. 16 Domesticated. 18 Wrench. 19 Corded fabric. 20 Ringworm. 21 Bronze. 22 Era. 24 Rooms in a harem. 25 Nova Scotia (abbr.). 26 Shield fillet. 27 Right (abbr.). 28 Junior (abbr.). 29 Within. 30 Exclamation. 31 Heart (Egypt). 33 Notch. 35 Consumption (abbr.). 37 Person of rank. Answer to Previous Puzzle JOHN BULKELEY B. ROAM PANDASIA O. WREN CAGYPTI ALL LEASTEN VE PAD TRESS JOHN ED MORE SEEK IF BULKELEY GO ISIS CRANAS CAR MID TRIDENT INK ODOROUS TEE ND COIN TESTEWE G. MAROON LUREIR MINISTRELEVRA VERTICAL 1 Type of gem (pl.). 2 Birds. 3 Plastic building material. 4 Bitter vetch. 5 Steamship (abbr.). 6 British Columbia (abbr.). 7 Rubber tree. 8 Lease. 9 Patriotic. 10 Suffer. 11 Male parents of beasts. 13 Smudge. 14 Aquatic bird. 15 Exist. 17 Direction. 19 Enter again. 23 Gleam. 26 He is Chief of Army. 31 Book of the Bible. 32 Cooks in an oven. 34 Those who ease. 35 Lock of hair. 36 Wagers. 38 Distress. 39 Incident. 42 Bone. 43 Enclose. 44 Metal. 46 Place. 47 Beret. 49 Symbol for tellurium. 50 Manuscript (abbr.).

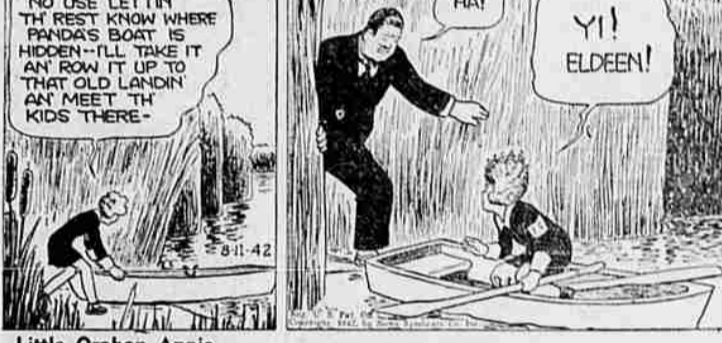
Crossword puzzle grid with a portrait of a man in the center.



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 Herman



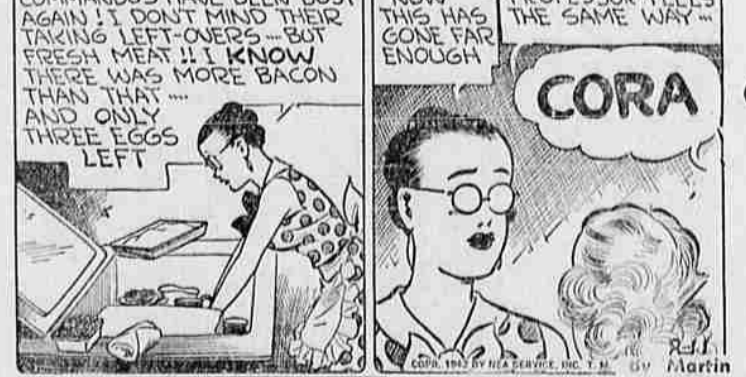
By Harold Gray



By Blosser



By Crane



By R. J. Martin



By V. F. Hamlin