

VOL. XVI

MAY, 1902

No. 1

The Designer



10 cents a copy
\$1.00 a year
post-paid

6^d a copy
By post 9^d a copy
7/6 a year

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY
STANDARD FASHION COMPANY
NEW YORK—LONDON—TORONTO

ENTERED AT THE POST-OFFICE, N. Y., AS SECOND-CLASS MAIL MATTER.

*** A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook ***

This ebook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the ebook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the ebook. If either of these conditions applies, please contact a FP administrator before proceeding.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. IF THE BOOK IS UNDER COPYRIGHT IN YOUR COUNTRY, DO NOT DOWNLOAD OR REDISTRIBUTE THIS FILE.

Title: What Came of a Dare

Date of first publication: 1902

Author: L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery (1874-1942)

Date first posted: Nov. 17, 2016

Date last updated: Nov. 17, 2016

Faded Page eBook #20161119

This ebook was produced by: Alex White & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>

What Came of a Dare

A Story for Young Folks

L. M. Montgomery

First published in *The Designer*, May 1902.



It was such a rainy afternoon that Josie and I had to stay in the house. This we disliked very much, for we loved to be out of doors.

Josie and I were cousins and we were both twelve years old. We had never met until this summer, when I had come down from my city home to spend my vacation at Uncle Donald's farm. I thought I had never seen a lovelier place than "Morningside," with its wide apple orchards, its splendid barns, scented with hay, and the big green beechwoods which towered behind them.

I thought Josie was lovely too. I admired her bright black eyes, round rosy cheeks and brisk country ways very much. Of course she knew a great deal more about farm life and ways than I did and thought me very green. She even made fun of me at times, but as I always cheerfully acknowledged my ignorance we never quarreled, and by dint of keeping my eyes open and profiting by Josie's instructions when she was in a condescending mood I soon gathered quite a respectable fund of information concerning the birds, bugs, flowers and trees at Morningside Farm.

Uncle Donald and Aunt Harriet and Josie's elder brother and sister were very indulgent to us and we were allowed quite as much of our own way as was good for us.

The only thing that vexed Uncle Donald seriously was our habit of "daring." He had no patience with this at all. Josie had become addicted to the practice at school, where it evidently flourished. I was initiated into it on the very day of my arrival at the farm, when Josie had taken me out to show me her brood of ducks and had dared me to "walk the rail" of the poultry yard fence.

I did not exactly know the code of “daring,” but instinct and Josie’s mischievous eyes told me that my reputation for “spunk” was at stake, and that if I failed I would never recover lost ground. So I bravely climbed to the topmost rail, balanced myself and tried to walk along it. Needless to say, I promptly tumbled off, for, with the best intentions in the world, one cannot “walk” fence rails without some practice. But the fact that I had not hesitated to attempt the feat was in my favor, and Josie, after having shown her contempt for my feeble effort by mounting the fence and walking erectly down the rail, was graciously pleased to state that I would “do,” and we were fast friends from that time.

Seldom a day passed, however, that we did not “dare” each other to do something. Naturally, Josie had the advantage of me, but I never “took a dare,” no matter what the consequences might be, and they were often unpleasant enough, as, for instance, when Josie dared me to walk through the pig-pen yard. While I was doing this, in mortal terror, one of the pigs ran at me, and in the rush and scramble which ensued I scratched my hands and ruined my dress on the nails in the fence. As a result I got a hearty scolding from Aunt Harriet, while poor Josie was punished for “daring” me by being deprived of pudding for dinner.

Now a rainy day had come, and there could be no picnicking in our playhouse, no picking berries in the pond pasture, no fishing for trout over the bridge—in short, none of our dearly beloved delights. We must be good and quiet, because Aunt Bethia was an invalid, and couldn’t stand noise.

But after dinner Josie had an inspiration and asked her mother if we might go and play in the garret. Permission, hedged about with sundry warnings and prohibitions, having been given, we scampered joyfully off and climbed the dim, dusty stairs. I had never been in the garret at Morningside and its appearance was quite a surprise to me.

“Nice place, isn’t it?” asked Josie, surveying its effect on me with evident satisfaction.

It *was* a nice place, for it was gloriously suggestive of games. It ran the whole length of the big farmhouse; along the sides were ranged boxes and old trunks, while bunches of herbs, bundles of knitting yarn, and other odd articles were suspended from the beams. At one end the “rag room,” as it was called, was partitioned off from the rest of the garret. It was full of old clothes, bags of rags, broken furniture and odds and ends. The kitchen chimney went up through it and was hung around with bundles of soft, fluffy rolls, ready for spinning. What a time we had, to be sure! But after a long play spell we grew tired and sat down on an old trunk to have a talk.

“This is splendid in daytime,” I said, “but it must be awfully dismal at night.”

"Mice!" said Josie, with a shiver. "And spiders! Fancy! And ghosts!"

"I don't believe in ghosts," I said, scornfully. "There isn't any such thing."

"Oh, isn't there!" said Josie, mysteriously. "You don't know, Elma Stanley."

"Well, did you ever see one?" I demanded.

Josie had to admit that she never had.

"But I know someone who did," she added, triumphantly. "Old Mrs. Jenkins down at the Corner saw one one night. I heard her tell about it."

"What was it like?" I asked, curiosity getting the better of my skepticism.

"Well," said Josie, with a glance around—for the garret was getting dusky—"it was all in white, you know, and awful tall, and had living coals for eyes. It had so. Mrs. Jenkins said so, and she wouldn't tell a lie, you know."

"What did the ghost do to Mrs. Jenkins?" I asked, with a shiver of conviction, for Josie's last argument had been quite unanswerable.

"Nothing. It just walked past her and shook a long, bony hand. Mrs. Jenkins said she knew it was a warning and that she would die inside of nine days. But that was a year ago and she is alive yet, so that couldn't have been what the ghost meant. Do you suppose this garret is haunted? They say garrets always are."

"Nonsense!" I said, scoffingly. "Something has to be done in a place before it can be haunted—somebody killed, or something like that, you know. And anyhow, there are no such things as ghosts."

"It is easy to talk like that," said Josie, sagely, "but I don't believe you would stay in this garret alone at night."

"I wouldn't mind a bit!" I declared, rashly.

"Then I dare you to do it!" cried Josie, maliciously. "I dare you to come up here alone at bedtime and sleep here at night."

Then I saw where my boasting had led me. I was between two fires. On the one hand was the prospect of spending a night in the garret; on the other the certainty that Josie would never let me hear the last of it if I failed to make good my words. Terrible as was the former alternative, it was less so than the latter, and I said, trying to speak as boldly as possible,

"I'll do it, Josie Bell, and I'm not afraid to, either."

Josie looked at me with a trace of reluctant admiration.

"The mice will run over you—you know you are scared to death of mice; and perhaps you will see a ghost. Ugh! I wouldn't be you for anything, Elma Stanley."

"What will I sleep on?" I asked, trying to turn the conversation, for at every word of Josie's I found my miserable courage ebbing away.

"There's an old feather bed in the rag room," said Josie. "We'll drag it out here

and you can bring up your share of bedclothes and a pillow. Of course, we mustn't let on a word to the others, or they won't let you do it. You'll come crawling down again in mortal terror, I know."

"I won't, then!" I said, stoutly. "You'll see! Come down to tea now. It's getting dark here already."

At nine o'clock that night Josie and I slipped away to our room quite unnoticed, for Aunt Bethia was having one of her "spells," and everybody who was not in her room was in the kitchen getting up a roaring fire to heat water. "It's a splendid chance for you to get up in the garret without being seen," said Josie. "You look awfully scared, Elma."

I had no doubt that I did, but I resented Josie's saying so. At least I had no thought of backing out.

"You must help me carry up the clothes," I said.

"Deed and I won't!" returned Josie, promptly. "You couldn't pay me to set foot up there at this hour of the night. Something might grab me coming down the stairs. I'll tell you what I will do, though. I'll hold the candle at the foot for you to see your way up."

It was no use to coax Josie, so I began to mount the stairs, carrying my pillow and dragging a sheet and spread. When I reached the top and saw the long, desolate room before me I almost faltered. But a glimpse of Josie's malicious face at the bottom decided me.

"Good-night!" I called out, bravely.

"Good night. Don't let the rats carry you off!" was Josie's cheerful parting salute. Then the little glimmer of light vanished, the stair door was shut and I was alone.

A pale stream of moonlight fell through the gable window down the centre of the long, ghostly room. But all along the walls was shadow, and the things hanging from the beams assumed weird, grotesque shapes in the dim light. I do not know how I managed to creep along the floor to my bed, glancing fearfully over my shoulder at every step. Just at that moment, if I could have found myself safely out of the garret, I would not have cared if Josie had taunted me all my life.

But when I was once snuggled down under my quilt things were not so bad. As the minutes passed quickly by and nothing dreadful happened my courage returned and I ventured to look around. My eyes soon grew accustomed to the dim light, and the suspended objects no longer terrified me by their unearthly appearance. After all, the garret by moonlight was not such a very bad place, and I began to feel quite brave and confident. To be sure, the wind outside was making a dismal noise about the eaves; I could also hear the rats and mice of Josie's cheerful prophecies

scrambling among the boxes, and I drew up my toes with an involuntary shiver. I thought of Mrs. Jenkins' ghost, too, as well as every other ghost I had ever heard of. But at last I fell sound asleep. I do not know how long I slept. But I began to dream a dreadful dream. I thought the door of the rag room opened and that Mrs. Jenkins' ghost came out and advanced down the moonlight path to my bed. I watched its progress in fascinated horror. Yes, there it was, tall and white, with the eyes of flame and smoke issuing from its mouth and nostrils! Now it had reached my bed, its bony hand was extended to touch me, and I awoke with a shudder and found myself sitting bolt upright. The garret was quiet and untenanted, save by myself. The ghost of my dreams, with blazing eyes and bony hands, was gone, but the smell of smoke had not. It was still distinctly there.

I turned my head toward the rag room. Through the cracks of the partition I saw ruddy, flickering gleams of light, and smoke was curling through the crevices.

I sprang from my bed, rushed to the door and threw it open. To my terrified eyes it seemed as if the room and everything it contained was a mass of flames. The next moment I went screaming down the garret stairs, burst open the door and rushed down to Uncle Donald's room.

"What on earth is the matter?" I heard uncle's sleepy voice exclaiming.

"The rag room is on fire!" I screamed, and after that I really don't know what happened. In a few minutes the whole household was aroused, and uncle, aunt, Jack, Bessie and the hired man were dashing up and down the garret stairs with pails of water. For nearly an hour they fought the fire, while Josie and I, bidden to keep out of the way, huddled forlornly in our room.

At last the fire was out and we crept out into the hall, where the others were assembled.

"That was a close call," said Uncle Donald, wiping the perspiration from his grimy face. "I believe ten minutes later would have been too late. Those rolls must have caught from the flue somehow. We had such a fire on in the range for Bethia. I have always said, Harriet, that it wasn't safe to have those rolls and feathers so close to the flue. But how on earth did you come to discover it, Elma?"

"I—I was sleeping in the garret," I said, shamefacedly.

"Sleeping in the garret!" exclaimed Aunt Harriet.

"Yes. Josie dared me. She said I'd be too scared to stay there, and I said I wouldn't. And I fell asleep and woke up and smelled smoke."

"The idea!" said uncle, trying to speak sternly but failing. "Well, I can't scold you now, for your prank has certainly been the means of saving the house. But do let this end your nonsense. Go to bed now, like good girls."

I never saw anybody so subdued as Josie was when we crept away to our room.

“I’ll never dare anyone again as long as I live,” she declared. “Elma Stanley, just suppose that you hadn’t wakened up till it was too late and you had been smothered or burned to death! It would have been all my fault, and just think how I should have felt!”

It was not until next day that Josie remembered to ask me about the ghost.

“Did you see it?” she said.

“No, but I dreamed I did. And after all, Jo, you know there is no such thing.”

“Well, I suppose there isn’t,” admitted Josie. “But if it wasn’t a ghost Mrs. Jenkins saw, what was it?”

“I am sure I don’t know,” I said, “but I expect she dreamed it, just as I did.”

And there the matter rests to this day.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *What Came of a Dare* by L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]