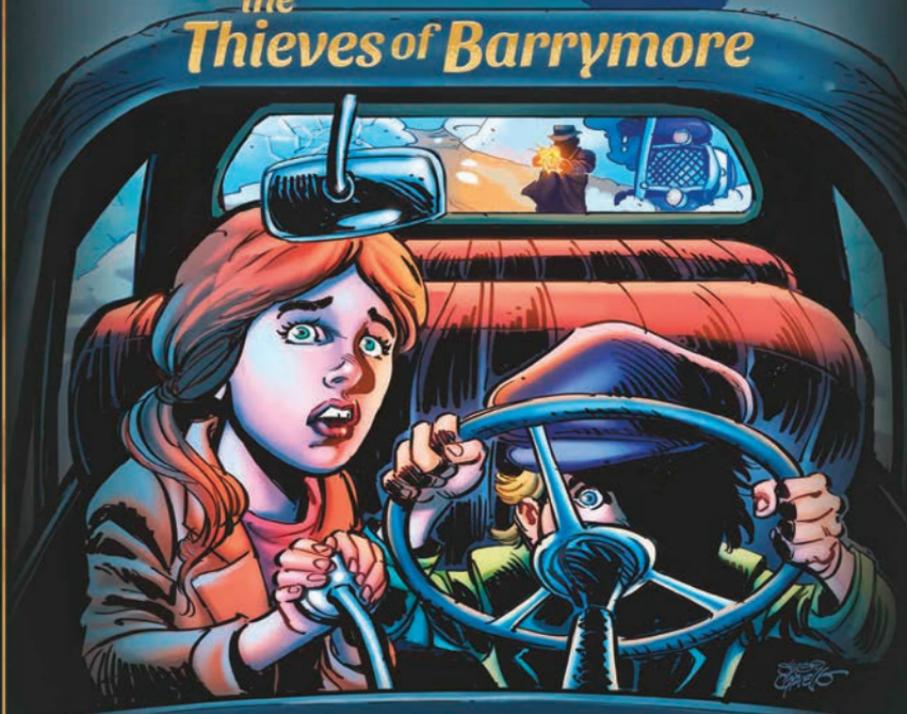


FOCUS ON THE FAMILY PRESENTS

Adventures in
ODYSSEY

YOUNG WHIT

the
Thieves of Barrymore



Dave Arnold & Phil Lollar

**YOUNG
WHIT**TM
the &
Thieves of Barrymore

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Young Whit and the Thieves of Barrymore

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Chapter One



OCTOBER 29, 1935

A serpentine wire crossed the dark room. At one end of the wire, behind a file cabinet, a man hunched over a small metal box. Another man stood beside him, barking out orders.

“Aren’t you done yet?” he scolded in a whisper.

“You wanna do it yourself, Ray, have at it. Otherwise, go check the connection.”

Ray thought hard about cuffing Harry, a Dickensian-looking character slight of build, but wiry and reminiscent of a clown who’d forgotten to apply his makeup. Ray fancied himself the brain and Harry

the brawn. Harry wasn't fond of that assessment. He may not be as notable as Ray, but he wasn't a slouch either.

Ray growled at Harry and shoved him aside. "You check the connection."

Harry complied. Following the wire's path, he bent down periodically to ensure it hadn't passed over anything damp or sharp. Twenty feet later, it lifted off the ground and terminated at a towering steel door.

Harry stopped, stuck his hand in his pocket, and pulled out a pack of cigarettes. He tapped the box on the side of his hand until one jugged out. He pulled it out and placed the end between his lips, tucked the pack in his trouser pocket, and took a wooden match from his shirt pocket. Using his fingernail, he ignited the match and, holding it to the cigarette, inhaled until the tobacco glowed crimson. Then he held the match front of him.

On a metal door that must have been a foot thick, he saw a painted image of a house on a riverbank adorned with scrolls around its perimeter. The details framed the words *Mosler Safe & Lock*. A round cylinder as big as a saucer with numbers etched around its circumference was partly covered by the five sticks of dynamite he had taped beside it. Inserted into one of the sticks was the

other end of the wire. Harry checked to make sure it hadn't pulled loose. It was secure.

A hat slapping across his ear startled him.

"You wanna get caught? Put out that light, you muttonhead!"

Harry blew the match out, flicked it in Ray's face, and shoved him backward.

Ray tumbled over the low railing surrounding the safe. "I ain't takin' none of that from you! I ain't stupid!"

Ray stood up, bent his face close enough to Harry that their noses almost touched, and muttered through gritted teeth, "Yer stupider than toast." He grabbed Harry by the collar and shook him so hard the cigarette fell from his mouth. "If it weren't for her, I'd—"

"Shut it!" Harry said. "Someone's comin'!"

Ray spun around to see a flashlight shining through the front window.

"You brought the cops down on us, ya idget," Ray scolded.

Both men ran back to the metal box. They had just huddled down over it when the door opened.

"Who's in here?" a commanding voice bellowed. The click of heavy footsteps followed behind the beacon of the bobbing flashlight as it entered the building.

“A copper. Nuthin’ for it now,” Ray whispered bitterly. “We need to get outta here before—”

A shower of sparks bursting off the floor next to the safe interrupted him. The sparks hissed and spit, speeding along the wire, upward toward the dynamite.

“My ciga-reet musta lit it,” Harry spat. “Get down!”

They fell to the floor just before a massive explosion rocked the building, sending the constable flying backward. He hit hard against a table and fell limply to the floor.

The dust of the explosion clouded the room making it difficult to see. “Grab as much as you can and head for the door!” Ray coughed.

The two men ran toward the safe. Harry stopped to discover whether the police officer was conscious. He was not. Nor was he alive.

The vault door hung open. By the time Harry reached it, Ray had already stuffed most of the cash into the bags they brought for the job. “Hurry! Folks’ll be swarming in here like locusts before long.”

One minute later they ran outside carrying the remaining hopes and dreams of the people who had managed to not lose everything when the Depression hit six years ago to the day.

Now a new depression would claim their dreams.



“I think we clipped a copper,” Harry said, rather indifferently. He was talking over a pay phone at a filling station an hour’s drive away. The voice on the other end groaned.

“Well, how much did ya get?”

“Not much,” he answered. “The safe weren’t very full.”

“If that copper’s dead, they’ll be after ya. Best to split up and let things cool off for a while.”

“I dunno,” Harry said. “I was thinking we oughta hit another place tomorrow. They’d never expect it.”

After an awkward silence, the voice on the phone resumed. “We been testin’ our luck too long. I got myself a feeling and when that happens, I listen. That means you should listen too.”

“If you say so,” Harry mumbled.

“Where you at?”

Harry looked around. “Some sleepy town. Don’t know the name of it.”

“Ray should steal a car and head for Chicago. You hunker down for a spell, try and blend in. We’ll meet up in Toledo after Christmas.”

“What about you? Where you headed?” Harry asked.

“Don’t worry about me. I’m right where I need to be. I’ve got something brewing.”

“I’ll case a few banks along the way,” Harry said. “We’ll need a lot more money than we took from that last one.”

“Fine, but keep yer head down.”

The phone clicked dead and Harry hung up the receiver. “I always do,” he snarled. He walked over to the black Chevy sedan he stole a few months back and got in. “Thinks you oughta get a different car and head to Chicaga fer a while,” he told Ray.

“That’s nice,” Ray responded, eyes closed. “But I’m more interested in Ohio.”

Harry scowled as he started the engine. The car backfired twice. He considered how it sounded just like his gun did when he popped that copper back in Arkansas. He put the car in gear and sped away down the dirt road, a plume of haze floating in its wake.