



The Lion Roared by Virginia Eiseman

If a Mr. P. Alfred Merivale ever passes your way, you'd better let me know. Just write to me, Mike Brock, assistant manager, at the Mark Twain Hotel, South Plains, Missouri. If you meet P. Alfred, it's a cinch you'll take a long look at him. He's a great big, white-haired guy who wears expensive three-piece suits with silk shirts and ties.

It was a couple of months ago that this P. Alfred Merivale checks in at the Mark Twain Hotel. Minutes after he arrives, Timmy, the bellhop, rushes in, waving a green bill.

Say, Mike," Timmy yells. "This is one for the books! A big shot from Chicago just pulled in. And guess what he asks for. A *luxury* room! Get a load of that – a *luxury* room!"

Timmy's laughing, and I get a kick out of it too. The Mark Twain's a fine hotel, but it's not what you'd call a really fancy place.

"This dude must have us mixed up with the Waldorf Astoria," say Timmy. "You ought to see his leather bags – three of the sharpest looking suitcases I've ever had my hands on. And he gave me this ten bucks just for dumping them in his room."

Timmy sticks the bill in his pocket. "Anyhow, Mike," he says, "you'll get a look at this Chicago fellow on account of he's staying two weeks" And then our bellhop breezes out of the lobby.

Well, I don't pay much attention to Timmy's story at first, because he gets emotional when anyone gives him more than a twenty-five cent tip, which isn't very often. But I begin wondering why a stranger would make a point of sticking around South Plains for two weeks. Don't get me wrong. This is a great little town, if you were born and raised here. Still, compared to Chicago, it's a pretty tame place.

At that moment, the lobby door opens and in walks the biggest and most solid-looking citizen I've ever seen. I size him up from top to bottom – from his dark hat to his spanking white shoes. The big guy flashes me a smile.

I say to him in my most hospitable manner, "You must be the gentleman from Chicago. They tell me you're going to be here for quite a spell."

"For two weeks," he nods. I'm here for a rest. Doctor's orders."

And ten I notice something shiny on his suit lapel. I see it's a pin – it's a gold lion pin. At first I think it's one of those pins that colleges hand out, but it's too big for that. I can tell that it's not real gold. And I'm about to ask him just what that gold lion pin is, when I remember that I'm just the assistant manager, and if the customers go in for silly jewelry – well, that's none of my business.

In the meantime, the man from Chicago's keeping up a steady stream of chatter. Then he plops down on one of the chairs in the lobby, and pretty soon the afternoon gang wanders in and I see that my new pal has joined them.

"I'd like to introduce myself," he's saying. "I'm P. Alfred Merivale from Chicago."

A great session of handshaking and backslapping follows, and in half an hour they're making jokes a mile a minute, and Mr. Merivale's fat pigskin wallet does the honors for sandwiches and cold drinks all around.

Then all of a sudden Cy Archer, our local banker, takes some words right out of my mouth.

"Tell us about the lion pin you're wearing, Merivale."

"Well it's a funny thing about this pin," answers Merivale. "I was down in Lima, Peru, about fifteen years ago. One afternoon I wandered into a little shop and bought a lot of trinkets. When I got back to my room and unwrapped the package, this gold pin was on the top. I took it back to the man who sold the other articles to me, and he said he'd never seen the pin before. So the only thing for me to do was to keep it."

"Why do you wear it?" Luke Williams asks. "Any special reason?"

The big man turns on his smile full blast. “That’s another funny story. It turned out to be the luckiest little pin anybody ever wore.” Mr. Merivale paused for a moment. “Well, gentlemen, “ he continued, “I realize this is something one usually doesn’t discuss, but I’ve been extremely successful. The reason I mention it is because of the pin. From the second I first saw the lion, the breaks have come my way in everything – oil wells, mines, real estate, the stock market, just everything. And it’s all due to this little pin here.”

Mr. Merivale laughs. “I wouldn’t part with this pin for anything in the world, “ he says.

Well, during the next week he and his gold lion spend a lot of time in the lobby and the hotel restaurant. You can’t believe the number of friends he makes. And it’s all on account of the pin.

One morning, Timmy nearly collides with me in the hotel lobby, he’s in such a state. “Did you hear the news about Mr. Merivale?” he pants. “He’s lost his lion pin.”

Right there you could have knocked me over with a feather. It seems that the last time Mr. Merivale remembers seeing his pin is at dinner the night before, and now he is offering a thousand dollar reward to anyone who finds it. He’s buying a full-page ad in the paper, Timmy tells me.

I feel mighty sorry for Mr. Merivale. He strikes me as being the most high-class customer I’ve ever met up with. Then I think long and hard about the thousand buck reward, which wouldn’t do Mike

Brock any harm at all. I can’t help wondering if the pin is stolen or lost.

Mr. Merivale shows up the same as usual later in the day. “Maybe I’m carrying this thing too far,” he says to the gang. “You fellows must think I’m crazy to promise such a big reward, because the lion’s certainly worth no more than a few dollars at most. But that pin means luck to me. I’ve got to go back to Chicago at the end of the week, and I’m hoping the pin will go with me.”

“Don’t worry, Alf, we’ll find it for you,” pipes up Cy Archer.

But we don’t find it. Mr. Merivale’s loss is the topic of the town, all right.

People wander about with their eyes glued to the ground, and yet nothing happens.

Finally, the day of P. Alfred’s departure rolls around. Right after Timmy brings down his bags, the big man comes over to me.

“I couldn’t leave South Plains without telling you goodbye, Mike,” he says.

I make it clear how sorry I am to see him go, and then we get on the subject of his lion pin.

“That thousand dollar reward still holds,” he tells me. “If you ever find a clue, Mike, you can reach me at the Brownstone Hotel in Chicago.”

Well, the town seems pretty dreary without Mr. Merivale. Now and then somebody mentions the gold pin, but it still doesn’t show up. Everyone acts like there’s been a death in the family – they’re that fond of P. Alfred. They all keep saying how they wish he’d come back.

One afternoon – it’s early and the gang hasn’t dropped in yet – I notice a large stranger standing at the end of the lobby. This character hasn’t had a shave or haircut for months. He’s wearing a tattered jacket and a pair of pants with patches. One toe is sticking through a hole in his shoe. I say to myself that I’m looking at the original washed-up wreck.

“You’d better move along, Bud,” I tell him in a polite way.

Just then my eyes almost pop out of my head. There, sitting on top of a patch in this bum’s jacket is Mr. Merivale’s gold lion. As fast as I can get the words out, I ask the tramp where he got it.

“Found it by the railroad tracks,” is his answer.

I guess I’m making a whole lot of noise ‘cause when I finally ask the guy how much he wants for the pin, he thinks for a minute. Then he admits the lion doesn’t mean a thing to him. Still, he says, it must mean something to *me* or I wouldn’t be making all this fuss, and he says he won’t sell it for a cent under five hundred dollars in cash.

I grab my checkbook and pen, and head for the cashier. In a minute I’m back with a wad of bills. They go straight into the bum’s grimy fist, and in exchange I get Mr. Merivale’s gold pin.



I'm thinking about calling Merivale right away, but I decide that it can wait until after I share my good news with the gang. I'm still congratulating myself, when Cy Archer comes in later with a grin on his face.

"You'll never believe it, Mike," he says. "It's a miracle—an absolute miracle! I just met some broken-down bum outside, and you'll never guess what I bought from him!"

Well, I can guess all right. It's Mr. Merivale's gold pin.

A few minutes later, Luke Williams comes in looking mighty happy—and afterwards, Ben Woods, with a big smile on his face. It seems they've each paid some bum \$500 for Merivale's lion.

Well, we may not exactly be geniuses, but I can tell you this. If Mr. P. Alfred Merivale is as smart as I know he is, he won't ever again pick South Plains for a rest cure, or come into the Mark Twain Hotel looking for a room.

Telling About The Story. Complete each of the following statements by putting an x in the box next to the correct answer. Each statement tells something about the story.

1. Mr. P. Alfred Merivale gave Timmy: a gold lion pin a sandwich and a cold drink
 ten dollars
2. According to Mr. Merivale, the gold lion pin: brought him good luck
 was given to him by a friend was stolen by someone at dinner
3. The bum was willing to give Mike Brock the pin in exchange for : a new suit of clothes
 a hot meal and a bath five hundred dollars
4. Mike Brock is certain that Mr. Merivale: could be found at the Brownstone Hotel in Chicago
 will never return to South Plains will visit the Mark Twain Hotel again

New Vocabulary Words. Answer the following vocabulary questions by putting an x in the box next to the correct response.

1. Timmy got emotional whenever anyone gave him more than a twenty-five cent tip. What is the meaning of the word *emotional*? upset excited very calm
2. The assistant manager spoke to Mr. Merivale in a most hospitable manner. The word *hospitable* means: friendly and welcoming loud and annoying solemn and serious
3. According to Mr. Merivale, he found the gold pin in a package of trinkets he had bought. Which phrase best defines the word *trinkets*? ornaments or small pieces of jewelry
 fancy clothing delicious candies
4. After two weeks, the day of Mr. Merivale's departure finally rolled around. The word *departure* means: arrival leaving disappointment

Identifying Story Elements. Each of the following questions tests your understanding of story elements. Put an *x* in the box next to each correct answer.

1. The *setting* of “The Lion Roared” is the: Brownstone Hotel in Chicago
 Mark Twain Hotel in Missouri Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York
2. What happened last in the *plot* of the story? Merivale introduced himself to the afternoon gang.
 Smiling Cy Archer announced a miracle Mike Brock saw the lion pin on the jacket of a bum
3. At the beginning of the story, Mr. Merivale is *characterized* as a: well-dressed, wealthy visitor from Chicago shy man who is under a doctor’s orders to rest foolish fellow who tries to become popular
4. Which of the following best expresses the *theme* of the story? A stranger tricks his new friends out of their money A lost pin is finally returned to its owner The townspeople are sad when a new friend goes home

Thinking About The Story. Each of the following questions requires you to *think critically* about the selection. Put an *x* in the box next to the correct answer.

1. Which of the following was probably true about the pin?: it was bought in Peru
 it was made of pure gold it was never really lost at all
2. We may assume that Mr. Merivale came to South Plains to: improve his health
 cheat the citizens there make some lifelong friends
3. Clues in the story suggest that Mr. Merivale and the bum: never met each other before
 were partners or even the same person were very honest
4. At the end of the story, how do you think Mike Brock, Cy Archer, Luke Williams, and Ben Woods felt?: foolish and angry very happy amused

• The title of this story is “The Lion Roared.” It might be said that the lion in the story “roared” with laughter. Explain.

• In your opinion, who was the bum who appeared at the end of the story? Give reasons to support your answer.

• What things did Mr. Merivale do to make the citizens of South Plains fall for his scheme? (Think about his clothing, actions, words, etc. in answering this question). List them.