

The Gallery of Rogue Kids in Plumsville

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A saunter down the Gallery of Rogue Kids in Plumsville leaves us amazed at the innovative skills, cunning, and resource of the children we come across in the works of P G Wodehouse. Some end up boosting the sagging morale of their fathers; some treat their stepfathers with as much scorn as they can muster. They do not spare them while out to collect protection money. Their antics could make or break matrimonial alliances in a jiffy. Souring up business deals comes easy to them. When they burn down cottages, guests are forced to seek shelter in garden sheds. When infatuated with celebrities, they devote their lives to being worthy of their affections. When in the company of clergymen, they end up making them more spiritual, thereby making

them hotter at their jobs. When it comes to wreaking vengeance, they do not discriminate based on one's wealth or social stature: a cabinet minister has as much chance of spending a rainy afternoon marooned on an island inhabited by an agitated swan as you or I.

If we have reported their misdemeanours to an unforgiving mother (Aunt Agatha), we are bound to land in the soup sooner or later. If we have decided to kick them on their backsides, we are bound to find hedgehogs in our beds at night.

When it comes to ranking them on a Richter Scale of Roguishness, one has to evaluate the evidence available. Marking on a scale with 10 as the maximum, I shall base my assessment of Plum's Rogue Kids on three broad parameters: the gravity of the kind of pranks played; the ingenuity displayed; and the goofiness of the methods deployed.

The field (rated on the Richter scale 1-10)

Ogden Ford 8.2 Can manipulate his kidnappers with much aplomb, change the rules of the game at the school he joins, and even tick off his stepfather. If there is a spoilt and unpleasant brat who is over-indulged by his wealthy parents, it is Ogden, the supreme fiend in human shape.

Thomas Gregson 7.9 "Young Thos" is one of the star attractions in the Gallery of Rogue Kids. He is the King of the Underworld – also known as the Shadow. He has carrot hair and a cynical expression. His manner is curt and supercilious. The only person who appears capable of outwitting him is Jeeves.

Edwin Craye 7.7 When Florence's Boy Scout brother tries to catch up with his acts of kindness, human life is imperilled. His acts of mercy include burning down country cottages, mistaking his father for a burglar and striking him with his Scout's stick, mending egg boilers with perilous results, and pasting press reviews of *Spindrift* upside down.

Seabury 7.3 If you do not cough up protection money when called upon to do so, things could happen to you. Using butter-slides to trip one up is one of the tricks he can teach us. This is how Bertie Wooster views him: "In my Rogues Gallery of repulsive small boys I suppose he would come about third – not quite so bad as my Aunt Agatha's son, Young Thos., or Mr. Blumenfeld's Junior, but well ahead of little Sebastian Moon, my Aunt Dahlia's Bonzo, and the field."

Kid Blumenfeld 5.1 In the world of theatre, he is an undisputed kingmaker. Besides nipping the career of aspiring artists in the bud, this dish-faced specimen is also in the habit of walking off with a guest's pet.

When he takes a fancy to the dog McIntosh, Jeeves has to intervene so that relations between Bertie and Aunt Agatha continue to be cordial.

Sebastian Moon 4.6 The boy with golden curls has hidden depths. He tends to be direct and blunt. Devotedly in love with Clara Bow, he does not mince words when criticising Greta Garbo. Jeeves is convinced about his proficiency in matters which might get classified as pranks in our civilised times.

Bonzo 3.8 Details about his escapades remain fuzzy but the opinion of his mother, Aunt Dahlia, does carry some weight with us: "When it comes to devilry, Bonzo is just a good, ordinary selling-plater. Whereas Thomas is a classic yearling."

Peggy Mainwaring 3.6 Red-haired young girl with a snub-nose and extremely large grin. She could impart lessons on unnerving the best of public speakers by using such techniques as giggling and staring.

Oswald Glossop 3.3 The brother of the formidable Honoria Glossop, Oswald happens to be one of those supercilious souls who give you the impression that you went to the wrong school and that your clothes do not quite fit.

Clementina 2.1 This young cousin of Bobbie Wickham teaches us the art of going AWOL when under the care of Miss Mapleton, the female lion-tamer.

Prudence Baxter -1.8 An innocent kid, she secures the fifth position at the local Egg and Spoon Race. However, thanks to Jeeves, she gets declared as a winner. She deserves a *negative* rank on the Richter Scale of Roguishness.