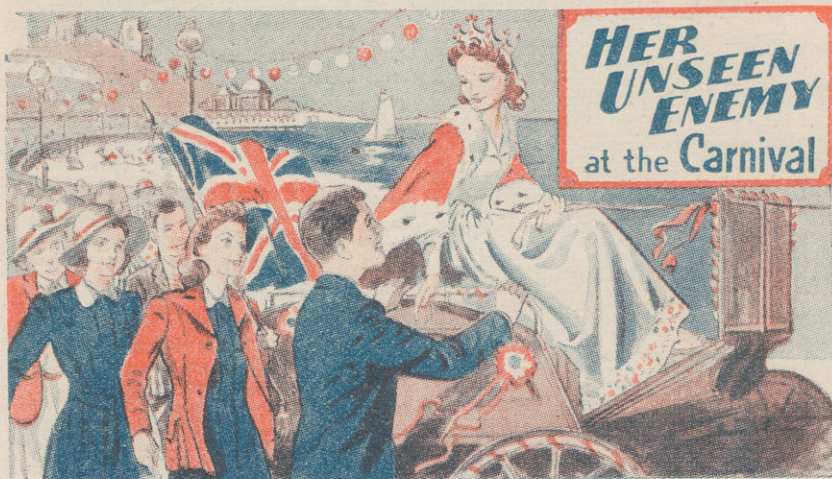


# GIRLS' CRYSTAL <sup>3<sup>D</sup></sup>

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"

Week  
Ending  
Aug. 11th,  
1945.



Noel Raymond, The Famous Young Detective, Is Featured In This New Double-length Complete Story—By PETER LANGLEY.

## THE STRANGE PROGRAMME-SELLER

"PROGRAMME! Carnival Week programme!" "Just like old times!" chuckled Noel Raymond, as he dropped a coin into the box rattled by the attractive young programme-seller. "Whytecliff-on-Sea is almost itself again—"

"Do you think so?" breathed the girl. She glanced at the young detective quickly in the fairy-like gleam of the myriad coloured lamps that bordered the promenade. She was dark-haired, dark-eyed, vivacious—yet behind her smile was an expression Noel tried vainly to fathom. Was it a hint of nervousness—anxious expectancy?

Impatiently the young detective dismissed the thought; this was no time for such fancies! Whytecliff, like a hundred other seaside towns, was almost its old self again.

Gone were the barbed wire and the black-out—the boarded windows and deserted pier. Music, lights and laughter held undisputed sway. Merry crowds had thronged to welcome Queen Carnival.

Noel, his latest case successfully completed, was enjoying a brief holiday before taking up his work again in London.

"An impressive list of events," he commented, smiling as he accepted a programme and glanced at the list of attractions. "Concerts, dances, grand firework display—all the fun of the carnival—presided over by its newly elected queen—" He broke off, eyeing the girl quizzically. "Not you, by any chance?" he asked jokingly.

The next moment he could have kicked himself, for it seemed to him that the girl's lips trembled as she looked away.

"No," she breathed. "A school friend of mine—Mavis Warwick."

"Lucky Mavis!" said Noel, suspecting a tinge of girlish jealousy. His interest was aroused, for somehow the girl did not strike him as being the type to envy a chum's good fortune. "When does her youthful Majesty hold court?"

"She'll be driving along the promenade this evening," was the reply, "and of course she will be in the big carnival procession to-morrow—"

There was a sudden stir in the crowd; a clatter of hoofs, and the merry jingle of harness-bells was audible above the strains of the band. Necks were craned and a party of spectators started a cheer.

Noel glanced at the young programme-seller as she made a hurried move. He was startled by the pallor of her face—the scared look in her eyes.

"Why—why did she come this way? I warned her—"

Only Noel heard the whispered, disjointed words, spoken aloud in her agitation. The next moment she had disappeared into the crowd.

For scarcely an instant the young detective hesitated. But the girl's fear was unmistakable.

As he thrust his way through the crowd, in pursuit of the elusive figure, he caught a glimpse of the approaching equipage. A small carriage, gay with rosettes and streamers, and drawn by three milk-white ponies, their harness twinkling with silver bells.

Standing upright in the miniature carriage, managing her spirited little team with apparent ease, was the youthful Carnival Queen.

A radiantly attractive figure she made as she drove smilingly through the crowds—tall and slender, her fair hair crowned by a tinsel diadem, her robes fluttering in the breeze.

But the young detective's anxious gaze was

seeking the dark-haired programme-seller. And at length he caught sight of her as she vanished down a flight of steps that led steeply to the beach.

Noel broke into a run, but his progress was hampered by the crowds pressing forward to see the carriage, and by the time he reached the steps the elusive girl had disappeared.

A puzzled frown crossed the young detective's face, for there was a barrier half-way down the steps, and a notice-board announced:

**"RECONSTRUCTION TO PAVILION GARDENS  
IN PROGRESS. KEEP OUT."**

"Queer!" muttered Noel, staring over the barrier.

Then suddenly his sharp eyes detected something lying on the steps close to the barrier—a small square of cardboard. A soft whistle escaped his lips as he scrutinised it. It bore a few words pencilled in block lettering.

"Remember the Dancing Faun," he muttered, raising his eyebrows. "Sounds like an advertisement. I wonder if that girl—"

He broke off, his hands clenching; a sudden commotion had broken out on the promenade. He heard a girl's frightened scream, followed by a tumult of shouting and the clatter of hoofs.

As Noel bounded up the steps his worst fears were confirmed. Something had started the spirited ponies drawing the Carnival carriage; its youthful occupant had lost control of the reins, and the carriage, with its unfortunate driver, was heading for the parapet.

Even as he sprang forward he recollected the cryptic words of the young programme-seller—"Why did she come this way? I warned her—"

But the mystery was thrust from his mind by the imminent danger to the young Carnival Queen. The parapet was low at this point, and the spiked railings had been replaced by a temporary length of wooden paling.

The scared ponies were heading for the gap, dragging the light carriage behind them.

The crowd of onlookers seemed momentarily too stunned to move, though one young man made a plucky effort to snatch at the trailing reins.

Noel realised that the only chance of averting a tragedy was to distract the frightened animals and head them away from the gap. Snatching up a piece of the broken parapet, he flung it with skilful aim—to land with a dull crash barely a yard ahead of the galloping team.

The leading pony reared, whinnying with fright; the other two were thrown into scared confusion. Then, before they could recover, the young detective seized the bridle of the prancing leader, calming the terrified animal with a practised touch and reassuring words.

In a moment the crowd had surged round, and the white-faced Carnival Queen was being helped out by the young fellow who had tried to grab the reins.

"Are you all right, Mavis?" he panted.

The girl nodded unsteadily, holding his arm.

"Yes, Ray—don't worry about me. Was anyone hurt? Who—who is the gentleman who stopped—"

All eyes were turned towards Noel. The young detective had succeeded in calming the agitated ponies; he glanced up as the girl held out her hand to him.

"Thank you, she breathed. "I—I don't know who you are—but you saved my life."

Noel smiled.

"I was lucky to be on the spot," he declared. "I did no more than your friend there, Miss Warwick—but I happened to be closer."

The red-haired young man treated him to a friendly grin.

"I say, that's jolly decent of you!" he exclaimed. "And it was dashed smart, the way you acted— Why, hello, Una!"

Noel's eyes narrowed in swift surprise. A slim, dark-haired figure had detached herself from the crowd to seize Mavis impulsively by

both hands. It was the young programme-seller he had encountered only a few minutes ago!

"Thank goodness you're safe, dear," the girl breathed. "When I heard the commotion I was afraid—but it's all right now."

"It's only thanks to this gentleman, Una, that—that I'm alive," declared Mavis simply.

The young programme-seller looked up, meeting Noel's steady gaze. For an instant she seemed to stiffen, but her glance did not falter.

"It was very brave of you," she murmured.

As the crowd began to disperse he stepped closer to her; she was watching Mavis and Ray, and there was a look in her dark eyes that might have been jealousy—or desperation.

Noel touched her arm, and she looked round with a start.

"Excuse me," said the young detective pleasantly. "I think you dropped this."

He opened his hand, revealing the scrap of cardboard with the curiously pencilled words. He was watching the girl closely, but she merely looked faintly perplexed. Either she was a superb actress, or—

"What—what is it?" she asked, turning the cardboard between her fingers.

"Have you never seen it before?" inquired Noel.

"Never!" replied the girl emphatically. The young detective retrieved the scrap of cardboard and glanced casually at the reverse side. His eyes glittered. Una knew more about Mavis's accident than she would admit.

## THE UNSEEN ENEMY



FOR a moment their glances met in an unspoken challenge.

"Strange," murmured Noel, smiling grimly.

"What—what do you mean?" breathed the girl.

The young detective shrugged, toying with the card which he had "treated" deftly before handing it to her. The crushed point of a lead pencil smeared on the reverse made an ideal surface for finger-prints. The narrow forefinger with the faint mark of an old scar was clearly visible; and there had been an identical print, barely visible, on the glossy surface of the card when he had picked it up on the steps!

Why had the girl tried to deceive him? For the moment he decided to keep his suspicions to himself, especially as Mavis Warwick now joined them again, accompanied by Ray.

"How do you feel now, Miss Warwick?" he asked cheerfully.

Una seized the opportunity to keep close to her chum, eyeing Noel a trifle defiantly.

The young Carnival Queen still looked pale and shaken, but she smiled pluckily.

"None the worse for the scare!" she declared lightly, but there was a perplexed, rather worried expression in her blue eyes as she fondled the leading pony. "I can't understand what frightened Toby and the others," she added. "That's the second time this week!"

Noel glanced at her swiftly, raising his eyebrows.

"The second time? Do you mean they've run away with you before—"

"Oh, no," cut in Mavis. "Not as bad as that. The first time it happened in the stables. I was feeding them, when Toby reared up suddenly and the other two stampeded. I had an awful chase across the fields before I caught them."

There was a thoughtful gleam in the young detective's eyes as he ran an expert hand over Toby's glossy mane and coat. The pony was obviously still nervous, though it turned to nuzzle in a friendly fashion into Noel's hand.

"Did you have any trouble with them before this Carnival Week, Miss Warwick?" he asked.

"None whatever," replied Mavis warmly.

"They're the best-behaved ponies you could wish for. That"—her voice shook slightly—"that's what makes it so worrying. This week, of all weeks, when so much depends on raising the money—"

She hesitated, glancing at Ray.

"Mavis is very anxious to raise funds for a pet project of hers," explained the young man, smiling. "The new Pavilion and its gardens will be opened as a free Holiday Camp and playground for poor children, orphans, and others."

Noel whistled approvingly.

"A splendid idea!" he declared warmly. "You deserve to succeed, Miss Warwick."

"I've had the idea for a long time," put in Mavis, her eyes shining eagerly. "I love children, and I think it's the least we can do to help the less fortunate. Luckily, daddy's on the Council and he backed me up. But it will require a lot of money, and we hope to make it out of the Carnival—don't we, Una?"

The dark-haired girl nodded, though she avoided meeting Noel's keen glance, and seemed absorbed in powdering her face with the aid of her handbag mirror.

But Noel was quick to see through the subterfuge.

"Hallo, what's her game?" he thought.

"She's keeping watch on the crowd."

It was an old trick, to use a mirror for secret observation. He was doubly intrigued by the girl's action, because she was obviously unaware that he suspected.

It was plain that Mavis noticed nothing amiss.

"Una tried to persuade me not to come on this ride," she remarked lightly, "but the programme was already settled, and I couldn't disappoint the visitors—"

There was a tinkling crash as the mirror slipped from the other girl's hand, shattering on the promenade.

"Oh, Una—what a shame!" exclaimed Mavis. "Seven years' bad luck."

Una's hand trembled as she stooped to collect the broken fragments; Noel bent to assist her.

Accidentally their fingers touched, and the girl clutched involuntarily at his hand. There was a look in her eyes of such desperate appeal that Noel's heart melted for her.

"Please—please don't let Mavis take part in the Carnival," she whispered. "I beg of you!"

She stood up again before the young detective had recovered from his astonishment. With a hurried excuse and a wave of her hand she mingled with the crowd.

Noel resisted the temptation to follow, deciding to follow up certain other clues instead.

"I suggest you don't attempt to drive any further this evening, Miss Warwick," he said quietly. "It would be better if you could persuade someone to lead the ponies home—"

His glance rested pointedly on Ray Garson, and the young man rose to the occasion.

"Oh, rather—good idea!" he declared.

"Jump in, Mavis; I'll take the bride."

Mavis Warwick leaned from the carriage, holding out her hand to Noel.

"I don't even know your name, yet," she smiled.

"Noel," rejoined the young detective coolly. "Frank Noel."

His reply was deliberately evasive; his real name was too well-known and might put certain persons on their guard.

"Au revoir—and thank you for everything, Mr. Noel," called Mavis. "I'll look out for you at the Carnival—to-morrow!"

The young detective watched the dainty carriage and its attractive occupant merge into the crowd. Thoughtfully he lit a cigarette and strolled over to the parapet.

The music of the band mingled with the distant sound of the waves. The twinkling lights on the prom threw into deeper, more sinister shadow the excavations below.

Noel gazed down thoughtfully. Some day, if Mavis's enthusiastic efforts prospered, there would be a new Pavilion on the site of the

ruins, and children's merry laughter in the extensive, tree-clad grounds—

The young detective stiffened suddenly, as his eyes attempted to pierce the gloom below. There was someone—or something—moving among the ruins! For an instant a solitary light gleamed like a watchful eye in the surrounding darkness.

Noel looked round quickly. The crowd on the promenade were too busy enjoying themselves to pay any attention to the unobtrusive young man leaning on the parapet. In a moment Noel had swung himself over the wall, and was scaling down one of the concrete piers that supported the prom.

He had acted on the spur of the moment, drawn by the mystery for he was convinced that the episode of the runaway ponies was no mere accident.

Breathlessly he landed on the derelict terrace. From his pocket he took a fountain-pen and touched a trigger. A tiny beam of light shot out from the bulb at one end. Cautiously the young detective picked his way among the ruins.

The wall appeared to have been part of a cafe at one time, probably a part of the old Pavilion. A belated signboard was still attached, and as Noel flashed his torch on it a stifled ejaculation escaped his lips.

"Great Scott—the Dancing Faun!" he muttered.

In spite of the blistered paintwork, the unusual sign was plainly discernible, bearing the name of the cafe.

The young detective's eyes glinted; his quest had not been in vain. The wording on the card dropped by the elusive young programme-seller obviously referred to the ruined cafe.

But the explanation merely helped to deepen the mystery. What was the connection between the ruined cafe and the frightened ponies? Who was the unseen enemy who menaced the young Carnival Queen?

Noel stared round him, seeking a clue—but there came a startling interruption. A girl's scream!

"Look out! Quick!"

Noel leapt back as the stifled cry rang out. With a rumbling crash, a huge piece of masonry toppled from the ruined walls on to the very spot where he had been standing.

It had been a hairsbreadth escape. A moment later, and the young detective would have been crushed beneath the jagged block of stone that now lay embedded in the soil.

White to the lips, torch in hand, he stumbled in the direction of the cry—the cry that had saved his life.

There was a rustle in the bushes, and Noel thrust aside the foliage—to find the gleaming muzzle of a revolver within a few inches of his face.

And behind the weapon stood the slim, white-faced figure of the young programme-seller.

"Stand where you are, Noel Raymond!" breathed Una. "You will do just as I tell you!"

## THE RED SCARF



NOEL stood motionless, a faint glitter in his eyes; not by a movement or tremor did he betray his bewilderment.

The girl who had saved his life by her timely warning now menaced him at the point of a pistol!

"What's the idea exactly?"

Noel asked lightly. "You'll walk in front of me till I tell you to stop," the girl said quickly. "Make for the green door on the far side of the Pavilion."

"Suppose I refuse?" asked Noel pleasantly.

"You—you won't refuse!" The words sounded more like a desperate appeal than a threat.



The young detective was intrigued. He decided to play this girl's game, whatever it was. "Right," he rejoined. "I'll do as you say!"

He picked his way carefully over the uneven ground, keeping a wary eye on the shadows. He felt convinced that he and the young programme-seller were not alone in the garden; the sudden collapse of the ruined wall had been no mere accident.

As he approached the weather-beaten green door he deliberately slowed his pace. He heard the girl's footsteps behind him.

"Open that door," she ordered softly, "and walk straight through. Don't argue—or look behind you."

Noel fumbled with the handle, allowing the girl to come close to him; then unexpectedly he swung round, catching her by the wrist and twisting the weapon from her hand.

"Now!" he said coolly. "You owe me an explanation, young lady. Just what is your game?"

There was a desperate gleam in the girl's dark eyes as she struggled to free herself.

"I'll—I'll explain," she gasped, "but—please—not here. Open the door—quickly."

The unmistakable urgency in her voice prompted Noel to obey. He jerked down the handle, and the heavy door creaked open on massive spring hinges.

The salt-laden breeze and a glimpse of white breakers only a few yards away revealed that they had emerged on to the narrow sea-wall.

With a dull thud the door slammed behind them.

The young detective looked round quickly, wary of a possible trap; but the narrow path was deserted and wet with spray.

He released his hold on the girl's wrist.

"Well?" he asked grimly. "Don't you understand," she burst out, glancing apprehensively over her shoulder. "I had to do that—you wouldn't have listened to me—and it was dangerous for you to stay—for both of us—"

"So I gathered," cut in Noel dryly. "I'm grateful to you for your prompt warning, young lady. But I mean to get to the bottom of this business." His tone became suddenly sterner. "Who's behind this plot—and how did you come to be mixed up in it?"

The girl shook her head. "I can't tell you," she breathed. "I daren't. I warned Mavis, but she only laughed. But she mustn't ride in the Carnival procession to-morrow! Tell her—tell her that red means danger—"

Una's voice trailed away; she was staring in horror over Noel's shoulder. The young detective turned instinctively. But all he saw was a shadow on the glistening stone of the breakwater—a vague, rather sinister shadow, probably cast by a cloud crossing the moon.

But in the brief moment that his attention was diverted, the girl slipped away from him and sped for dear life along the sea-wall.

"Stop!" shouted Noel, fearful for the girl's safety. "Una, wait!"

But either the girl did not hear him, or ignored his shout; though Noel started in pursuit, he could find no trace of her. The cliffs at this point were honeycombed with caves, and the lower reaches were covered by a dense scrub that would have defied any search.

Thoughtfully the young detective returned to the promenade by way of the public steps, scaling the newly erected barrier and mingling with the good-natured holiday crowds.

As he looked round for someone from whom he might possibly get the information he sought, he spotted a grizzled old fisherman with a brass telescope.

"Fine view of the luminations, sir—penny a time!" he invited.

Noel obligingly became a customer; the illuminations were well worth the modest sum, and the old man appeared likely to be talkative.

A picturesque figure, one eye concealed by a black patch, a thatch of iron-grey hair meeting

his bristling beard, old Jeff proved a willing narrator—encouraged by the glimpse of a half-crown.

Man and boy he'd lived in Whytecliffe for fifty years—knew everything and everyone worth knowing, he informed Noel.

Mavis Warwick—he'd known her since she was "so high"—fine girl, plenty of spirit! Her father, Rupert Warwick, owned the big red house at East Bay. Wasn't too popular; a hard man; so they said. But he doted on his attractive daughter, and let her have her own way in her choice of friends and youthful activities.

Noel thanked him, and managed to escape a further flood of reminiscences by hurrying to catch a tram. He took a ticket to East Bay and walked the remaining distance along the bleak cliff road to East Bay House.

The door was opened by the young Carnival Queen herself, still wearing her frock of white and silver tissue, with a rich crimson scarf thrown over her shoulders.

Back to Noel's mind flashed the young programme-seller's words—"Red means danger!" Impatiently he dismissed the thought as Mavis's eyes lit up in mingled surprise and pleasure.

"Why, it—it's you!" she exclaimed eagerly. "Do come in. Ray and I were just talking about you."

Ray Garson was in the hall, and he shook hands warmly.

"Jolly decent of you to call," declared the young man with a friendly grin. "We got home safely, though the ponies were a bit restive. We can't imagine what scared them."

"Probably the excitement!" said Noel lightly. "By the way, Miss Warwick, do you still intend to go through with your part in the Carnival procession to-morrow?"

"Why, of course!" exclaimed Mavis in mingled amusement and surprise. "You don't think would back out now? Why"—her expression became more earnest—"the success of Carnival Week will depend on the interest aroused by to-morrow's procession—and you know how much that success will mean to the children!"

Her blue eyes shone with enthusiasm for the cause she had so much at heart.

Noel's determination stiffened; at all costs he would wreck the scoundrelly plot that threatened her generous plans—and perhaps her life!

"What do you say, Garson?" he asked, glancing at Ray.

"I'm all for it!" declared the young man. "Mavis's not the kind of girl to be put off by a scare. Some people have tried to put her off—Una Carri, for instance."

Noel managed to conceal his interest.

"Ah, your friend, the programme-seller, Miss Warwick?" he asked.

"Poor Una," Mavis bit her lip. "She's been upset ever since Jack—her fiancé—disappeared. But, of course, you wouldn't have heard," she added apologetically, as she met Noel's swift, inquiring glance. "Jack Abraham was to have been the architect of the new Children's Home—only he left. Whytecliffe suddenly, without a word—to anyone."

Noel's thoughts were working swiftly as he made a non-committal reply.

"To get back to our first subject, Miss Warwick—would you mind if I had another look at your ponies?" he asked abruptly.

"Why, I was just going to suggest that!" exclaimed Mavis, jumping up eagerly. "I knew by the way you handled Toby that you understood horses. Please get my coat, Ray, and we'll go out to the stables."

She slipped the vivid crimson scarf from her shoulders, dropping it casually on the table. Noel picked it up, noting the fine quality of the silk—the unusual pattern.

"A beautiful scarf, Miss Warwick," he remarked.

Mavis laughed, flushing slightly.

(Please turn to page 357.)



# HER UNSEEN ENEMY

## at the CARNIVAL

(Continued  
from  
page 341.)

"It came by post—a present from an unknown friend—"

"Unknown admirer!" cut in Ray, grinning, as he returned with her coat. "And she's going to wear it in the procession to-morrow. I'm jealous!"

"Don't be stupid, Ray," laughed Mavis. But Noel was not smiling.

"Fool for danger!" he muttered, and he lingered for a moment before following the others through the french doors.

Mavis led the way across the yard to the stables—a row of compact, white-washed buildings, sprucely clean and smelling of new hay.

"And how is Toby this evening?" Noel asked, patting the first pony. Leaning forward, he flashed his torch over the animal's glossy coat and silky mane, his eyes narrowing slightly as he noticed something that had escaped his scrutiny that afternoon.

There was a trace of an old scar running diagonally across the animal's shoulder.

"Hallo," said Noel, "he's been hurt at some time."

"Oh, that?" Mavis nodded. "Yes, he had that when we bought him. When he was a very young foal there was a fire in the stables, I believe, and he was only rescued in the nick of time."

Noel's eyes glistened. One by one the disjointed scraps of the strange puzzle were piecing together in his active brain. The Carnival—the mystery girl's warning—the crimson scarf, they all linked up. And this tale of a fire involving the high-spirited leader of the ponies helped to clinch the young detective's amazing suspicion.

If only he could lay his hands on the chief scoundrel behind the dastardly plot. It was vital that he should unmask the trickster before the Carnival procession to-morrow.

"Toby—oh! Look!"

As Mavis' broken cry rang through the stable Noel flung himself at the pony. The erstwhile docile animal, its hoofs wildly flailing, had broken from its stall.

"Stand clear, Miss Warwick!" shouted Noel hoarsely.

But Mavis, making a plucky attempt to seize her pet, was flung to the ground, and the pony galloped in a frenzy into the yard.

Ray, white-faced, started forward as Noel lifted the unconscious girl in his arms.

"Mavis, is she hurt?" he asked anxiously.

"Shock," declared the young detective.

"Look after her, Garson."

He sprinted out into the yard. The outer gate was shut, so the frightened pony had been unable to escape. After some difficulty Noel managed to catch the spirited animal and lead it back to its stall. Its eyes were dilated and it was still trembling.

Noel's expression was grim as he strode to the narrow barred window that overlooked the adjoining fields. There was no movement in the darkness outside; but as he gripped the bars, Noel saw something reflected in the glass of his wrist-watch.

It was a single red light, gleaming like a malevolent eye, a light that vanished as swiftly as it had appeared.

Noel turned from the window, his eyes glittering.

"I think I've got the scoundrel where I want him now," he murmured grimly.

### THE GIRL WHO DARED



BACK at the house, Mavis was left in the care of an anxious maid, and while the attention of the others was engaged, the young detective picked up the red silk scarf, folded it tightly, and slipped it into his coat pocket.

"Going back my way, Garson?" he asked, when that young man put on his hat.

The young man nodded, obviously glad to have company. For a while they strode along the cliff path in silence.

"Tell me, Garson," Noel asked abruptly, "why do you suppose that young architect, Jack Graham, disappeared so suddenly?"

Ray turned and stared at him.

"Oh, you mean Una's fiancee? That was a queer turn-out! But I'm afraid I haven't the foggiest notion. Do you know?"

"I think so," rejoined Noel grimly. "Jack Graham was kidnapped! The scoundrels behind this plot involving Mavis will stick at nothing to gain their ends—nothing, I tell you!"

Ray's face was very pale.

"It sounds crazy to me. Have you told the police?"

"Not yet," replied Noel. "I need a bit more proof, and I know where to find it. But meanwhile, Mavis' carriage must drive in the procession; the whole success of the Carnival depends on it—"

"But surely," blurted out Ray, "surely you don't mean to let her take that risk again—"

"Leave that to me," interposed Noel dryly.

"I rely on you to say nothing about what happened to-night—as you value Mavis' life."

They parted as they reached the promenade, Ray still looking baffled and uneasy.

There was a thoughtful gleam in Noel's eyes as he made his way back to his hotel.

The holiday crowds were dispersing now, though the coloured lights were still blazing. Attendants were erecting rope barriers in anticipation of big crowds on the morrow, when the young Carnival Queen was to ride in state.

In the seclusion of his room, the young detective examined the red silk scarf under his magnifying-glass. Beside it he placed the crumpled card with its strange message—

"Remember the Dancing Faun."

A grim smile curved his lips. The last link in the chain of mystery had fallen into place. But the peril still remained!

And it was not only of Mavis, the young Carnival Queen, that he was thinking. There was another girl whose dark, reckless eyes still haunted him.

His daring plan must not fail!

Noel was up early on the following morning—a day of brilliant sunshine and a cloudless sky. As he strode along the sea front the Carnival crowds were already assembling, eager to obtain a good view. The promenade was gay with flags and streamers; coloured bunting fluttered from the masts of the ships in the harbour.

A broad path had been roped off along the whole length of the sea front, ending in a triumphal arch of flowers at the entrance to the pier. On the pier itself a throne had been

erected beneath an awning, where the young Queen of the Carnival was to hold court that afternoon.

The young detective mingled with the crowd, looking round keenly as he took a note of the preparations. He was searching for someone in the crowd, and at length he caught sight of a slim figure among a group surrounding one of the side-shows.

The girl recognised him as he approached and started nervously with the obvious intention of escaping; but Noel's hand closed on her arm.

"All right, Miss Carrol—no need to be scared," he said pleasantly. "I want to ask you a question. Have you heard from your fiancé?"

The girl caught in her breath sharply, staring at him with wide, startled eyes.

"You—you know something?"—her voice was choked—*is he—is he hurt?*

"I don't think so," replied Noel gently. "So you haven't heard from him? Now listen to me, Una. I want to help you, as well as Mavis. You needn't be afraid."

He gazed at her earnestly, waiting for her reply.

"How—how do I know it's not a trick?" breathed the girl.

"My word of honour," said Noel quietly. "When your fiancé disappeared, did you receive a threatening letter?"

"How—how did you know?"

"By putting two and two together," replied Noel quietly. "The letter warned you that unless you obeyed certain orders, your fiancé would be arrested. Ah!" as the girl started. "I guessed as much. It's an old trick."

"But I'm certain Jack has done nothing wrong!" blurted out the girl, clutching his arm. "You won't arrest him—"

"My dear girl, of course I won't," put in Noel. "The whole thing was a trick to scare you into keeping quiet. The point is, you were afraid to go to the police—and you carried out the instructions?"

"I—I pretended to," whispered Una. "I tried to warn Mavis, but she wouldn't listen. They—they wanted me to spread rumours about the Carnival—to say that the money was being collected under false pretences. Oh, it was hateful! Mavis's my chum, and I know how much it means to her. But I was scared for Jack. I don't know what to do. I had to fetch my instructions every night—"

"From the ruined café—the Dancing Faun?" asked Noel keenly. "So that's what you were doing when I caught you there?"

The girl nodded.

"Yes; I never saw anyone there, but I knew I was being watched. I was terrified. Jack left his old revolver at our house, and I slipped it into my bag; it helped me to feel braver. Last night I thought at first that you'd come to arrest me. Then I realised that you were in danger. I had to play a part—"

"You played it so well," put in Noel gravely, "that you nearly took me in! And you saved my life, young lady. I haven't forgotten that."

He eyed her quizzically. "Just one more question, Una. Have you ever seen this before?" He pulled the crimson scarf out of his pocket. Una turned white to the lips.

"Yes!" she breathed. "That's why I sent Mavis that message—Red means danger, Jack—Jack received a scarf like that—the night before he disappeared!"

Noel's eyes glittered.

"So that's the game," he muttered. "I can see the whole plot. Thank goodness it's not too late!"

He glanced swiftly at his watch. The Carnival was due to start in an hour's time.

"Don't worry, Miss Carrol," he said tersely. "No harm will come to your fiancé, I give you my word. Now to Mavis."

With that he left her and boarded a tram for East Bay.

His daring plan was cut and dried. At all costs the Carnival procession must take place

as advertised—but Mavis would not ride in her carriage.

With the hood raised and garlands of flowers and coloured streamers almost concealing the occupant, a glimpse of a tinsel crown—the flash of a red scarf—would be sufficient for the crowds.

Noel was convinced that the unknown trickster would strike again—and this time, concealed in the carriage, the young detective would be ready for him!

To his surprise, the pony-carriage was drawn up in readiness outside the gate of East Bay House. The three spirited ponies, their harness polished and glistening, their flowing manes garlanded with flowers, were shaking their heads and pawing the ground, eager for their morning outing.

The reins were held by the gardener's boy, broadly grinning and wearing his best suit in honour of the occasion.

"How's Miss Mavis this morning?" inquired Noel anxiously.

"Fine, sir," declared the boy. "Insists on taking the carriage out, though the master tried to talk her out of it. Look a real picture, don't they?" he added, referring to the ponies.

Noel nodded absently, a worried expression in his eyes as he hurried by the steps.

The door was opened by an elderly maid, whose face lit up as she recognised him.

"Oh, sir!" she blurted out, "Miss Mavis insists on driving, and the doctor said she wasn't to get up—"

"Nonsense, Annie. I'm quite well!" Mavis stood at the foot of the stairs, smiling a little wanly.

"Don't you think I'm well enough?" she asked, holding out her hand to Noel. "Please say yes! We can't have all our plans ruined now."

Noel smiled reassuringly.

"The procession will still take place," he declared. "But I'm not allowing you to take the risk of driving. I've arranged everything—"

He broke off, and a startled look flashed into Mavis' blue eyes as there came a sudden commotion from outside the house. The voice of the gardener's boy, raised in argument—a girl's tones, breathless, determined.

Noel sprang to the window and threw it open.

He was in time to see a slender figure spring into the carriage and snatch the reins—a girlish figure in a white dress, a crimson scarf partly concealing her dark hair.

"Una!" gasped Mavis in amazement.

The girl turned and waved, a reckless light in her dark eyes as she slackened the reins, urging the ponies to a trot.

"She's risking her life to make amends!" breathed Noel, pining.

He sprang to the door and down the steps, but the gaily decorated carriage was already vanishing round the corner.

Noel realised the hopelessness of pursuit on foot. He glanced at his watch. The main procession would be starting from the market square, and the carriage would join it.

Una was making a reckless bid to help her chum, knowing full well the danger she herself would be running.

Somehow that peril must be countered before the procession reached the promenade. Noel thought swiftly, his hands clenched.

There was still a chance! The tide was out. By taking a short cut along the firm sands to the pier, he could reach the promenade before the procession came in sight.

Pausing to reassure Mavis, who had hurried anxiously to the gate, the young detective sped across the field and along a narrow path that skirted the edge of the cliff.

As he rounded a bend Noel stiffened, sensing danger. He swung round. And then, without warning, the heavy end of a brass telescope was lunged into his face.

Noel ducked, grappling with his assailant. The loose chalk gave way suddenly beneath his

reet, and he pitched headlong, dragging his attacker with him.

**QUEEN** of the Carnival—for an hour!

Una held tightly to the reins of the trotting ponies, her lips smiling tremulously as she acknowledged the waving hands and cheers of the merry crowds.

Slim and graceful in her white robes, the crimson scarf tied gipsy-fashion round her dark hair and partly concealing her pale, tense features, she played her daring masquerade, for her chum's sake.

The vast majority of holiday-makers would not suspect anything amiss. Only those who knew Mavis might be puzzled, but the success of the Carnival would not be jeopardized by so few.

The sun shone from a cloudless sky, and a light breeze waved the flags and bunting that decorated the quaint, winding streets of the old seaside town.

But Una hardly saw what was going on around her. She had acted on the spur of the moment, fully realizing the danger she ran in taking Mavis' part like this. But days of anxiety and terror had steeled her to a reckless disregard for her own safety.

The two people dearest to her in the world were in peril—and she was willing to face anything to help them.

From which direction would the danger come? Even Una's courage faltered a little as the procession approached the gaily decorated pier—and she remembered Noel's parting warning.

Then hope flashed into her eyes for an instant as she caught sight of a young man waving to her from the entrance of the pier. It was Ray Garson, Mavis' friend. No doubt he was hoping to see Mavis, but even Ray was better than no one, and she waved back hopefully.

And then, just as she began to feel a little happier, fear returned swiftly. A sinister-looking figure was pushing his way through the crowd towards her. Una had often seen him—and instinctively she had shrunk from him—the grizzled old seaman with his one gleaming eye and black patch, his tousled grey hair and beard, and the brass telescope he invariably carried.

There was something ruthless in the way he strode towards the carriage now, and instinctively Una pulled on the reins, trying to turn the carriage aside as she urged the ponies to a quicker trot.

But the next instant the man had reached the carriage, seizing the reins and leaping on to the step. Una screamed as he seized her round the waist, lifting her bodily out of the carriage.

A sudden pandemonium broke out as the leading pony gave a wild, terrified whinny and reared up, dragging the reins from Una's captor, who leaped clear in the nick of time.

The empty carriage rocked madly as the three terrified animals headed for the pier gates. A burly attendant managed to seize the leading pony, but the carriage crashed into the barrier and overturned, its wheels spinning.

If anyone had been in the carriage he or she would almost certainly have been seriously injured.

Half-fainting, her thoughts numbed, Una found herself supported by a dozen willing hands, while her amazing captor thrust his way through the crush, to come face to face with Ray Garson.

"You double-crossing scoundrel!" grated the young man hoarsely, as his hand flew to his pocket.

But the seaman acted even more swiftly, and a fist like a bunch of steel crashed into Ray Garson's jaw, sending him sprawling.

"Scoundrel is the last word you should use, Garson!" a crisp voice rapped, and the figure snatched off his grizzled disguise, revealing Noel Raymond's stern features.

Una gave a little cry of amazement as she

broke from the kindly hands of her helpers and ran forward unsteadily.

"You!" she gasped, catching at Noel's arm and staring at him incredulously. "But—I don't understand. Why—"

Noel gently disengaged his arm and bent to pick up the malacca cane Ray Garson carried.

"Perhaps this will help you to understand, Miss Carrol," he said grimly, keeping a watchful eye on the sprawling young man who had raised himself on his elbow. "Stay where you are, Garson—I've got you covered!" he added. "Now, Miss Carrol, will you please turn the silver knob at the end of this cane, but I warn you not to look too closely."

Mystified, Una obeyed. There was a faint click, and a small bulb concealed by the silver knob glowed redly, like a malignant eye.

"Well, inspector, are you satisfied?" asked Noel.

A burly stranger stepped from the crowd and took the cane, peering at the glowing light. "You're right, sir," he declared. "It's a diabolical trick. He knew that pony was terrified by red light, owing to its having been trapped in a burning stable, and this lamp has a specially powerful ray. It explains the poor animal's terror."

"But why," burst out Una, "why should he want to harm Mavis? And how was Jack, my fiancé, concerned?"

"If you'll accompany the inspector and myself to the ruined café, I think I can give you a pleasant surprise," said Noel gently. "Meanwhile"—his tone hardened—"I suggest you arrest Garson, pending further inquiries, inspector."

He turned to Una Carrol.

"I'm afraid this has upset the Carnival," he said, "but Mavis will be well enough to appear this afternoon, and we'll have a full explanation broadcast. By the way, inspector, you'll find old Jeff, Garson's accomplice, waiting at the police station. He attacked me on the cliff, but he got the worst of the encounter. He admitted that Garson had bribed him and two of his cronies to kidnap Jack Graham. The young architect stumbled on the truth when he was inspecting the ruins, and Garson had to act quickly. He sent Graham a scarf so that the kidnappers should recognise him more easily. Mavis was to have been kidnapped if the plan to wreck the Carnival had failed."

"Red for danger!" whispered Una.

"That's all clear, sir," said the inspector, "but why was the scoundrel so anxious to wreck the Carnival? How did he hope to gain?"

Noel smiled grimly. "Because the proceeds from the Carnival are to rebuild the ruined pavilion," he said dryly. "The council were not prepared to start rebuilding without a substantial sum from the public, which Mavis had promised to obtain."

"Garson had a good reason for wishing the rebuilding to be delayed, as he's been carrying on a profitable smuggling concern in the ruins for the past year!" Noel turned to Una. "Now let's go along to the Dancing Faun Café," he said.

**I**N a cellar beneath the Dancing Faun Café a hollow-cheeked young man stumbled to his feet, and Una threw herself into his arms, crying happily on his shoulder.

Noel beckoned the inspector aside to show him proof of the recent smuggling activities.

And that afternoon, beneath a cloudless sky and surrounded by cheering crowds, Mavis took her place as Queen of the Carnival, with Una and her fiancé sitting close to her.

Noel Raymond was there, too, and the young detective's eyes twinkled with satisfaction as he looked out over the merry crowds towards the rippling sea.

Now, perhaps, he'd be able to enjoy the rest of his holiday in a more ordinary and conventional way.

THE END.