



Detective June's MOST THRILLING CASE

THE GREY FALCON'S NOTE

By PETER LANGLEY

JUNE GAYNOR, niece of Noel Raymond, the famous young detective, went to Port Craig College disguised as a new girl, Dorothy Whiteman. Her object was to solve the mystery which surrounded an old play which the Upper Fourth Form, led by Julie Vermont, intended producing in the ancient refectory, which was used as the school theatre.

She was startled to discover that her case and that of her Uncle Noel, who was out to capture the Grey Falcon, a mysterious master-crook, were connected.

Thanks to the Grey Falcon's treachery, it was rumoured that Noel himself had turned crook, and that he himself was the Grey Falcon!

Noel Raymond was accused of stealing some jewels from the near-by manor, tenanted by Howard Wyncham, chairman of the college governors, and was forced to live in secret in one of the attics at the college.

June suspected that Miss Tuft, the Upper Fourth Form mistress, might be the Grey Falcon's unknown helper, and one afternoon she found a note in Miss Tuft's wastepaper-basket, bearing a fingerprint of the Grey Falcon. While she was reading the message she heard footsteps, and in dismay she saw the door handle turn!

QUICKLY June stuffed the torn letter into her blazer pocket, then hurriedly she bent over the Form-mistress' desk. Next moment the door swung open and Miss Tuft herself entered.

"What are you doing in my study?"

There was an unusual curttness in the young mistress's voice, and it was in a brisk, purposeful way that she came striding across the room. This was a very different person from the nervous, fussy young woman the Upper Fourth knew, but not by so much as a blink of the eyelid did June betray the fact that she was acutely conscious of the remarkable difference in Miss Tuft's manner. Innocently she returned that suspicious glare.

"I came to hand in my imposition" she said. "As you weren't here, I put it on your desk." Inwardly blessing the fact that she

had such a good excuse for being found in the room, she picked up the sheaf of lines. "I hope they are satisfactory," she added, holding them out.

Miss Tuft made no attempt to take the impot. Instead, she waved an irritable hand.

"All right! Put them down. I will inspect them later on. At the moment I am busy," she snapped, and, seating herself at her desk, she made an impatient gesture of dismissal.

Only too gladly June left the study, but as she proceeded along the corridor there was a thoughtful gleam in her eyes.

Had Miss Tuft's irritable manner anything to do with the Grey Falcon's letter?

June's heart began to thump as she thought of the torn message she had found in the Form-mistress' wastepaper-basket. That note proved that Miss Tuft was the master-crook's secret helper. At first June had been incredulous. It had seemed fantastic to believe that the fussy, nervous Form-mistress could be anything other than she pretended to be.

But now—

June drew in a sharp breath.

"She gave herself away," she murmured. "That agitated manner is just a pose. Actually, she's as alert and brisk as anyone. What a shock Uncle Noel will have when I tell him the news!"

Entering her study, June paced up and down. Should she steal up to the attic where Noel Raymond was living in secret? June's impulsive nature urged her to do so, and yet she resisted the temptation.

If her uncle learnt that Miss Tuft and the Grey Falcon were to meet that evening, then he would insist on venturing out in order to watch their movements. But, although his injured ankle had made excellent progress, it was still far from well, and, in any case, it would be unwise for him to risk being seen. No one must even suspect that the detective whom the Grey Falcon had feared, far from having been drowned, was very much alive. Besides, June had an irresistible urge to follow up this startling discovery herself.

"If I tell Uncle Noel, he will try to stop me," she murmured. "He will say that it's too

dangerous for me, or something silly like that." Then, as she thought of the forthcoming meeting between the Grey Falcon and his helper her heart began to pound more wildly than ever. What a thrill it would be if the next time she saw Uncle Noel she was in a position to reveal to him the name of the elusive master-crook.

The gleam in her eyes deepened, and impulsively she made up her mind.

"I'll do it," she murmured. "I'll shadow Miss Tuft to-night—and I won't breathe a word of what I've discovered until to-morrow."

Now that she had come to a decision she was eager to get into action. It was agony to have to wait patiently until seven o'clock. Fortunately, Julie Vermont had arranged a rehearsal, so June was able to divert her attention to other matters.

After tea, the whole of the Upper Fourth proceeded to the college gym, and soon they were happily engrossed in their play. June found herself caught up in the general air of excitement, and it was eagerly that she stepped forward to rehearse her part.

This was the first time Julie & Co. had seen June act, and, anxious to justify the confidence they had shown by giving her the leading feminine role, June forced herself to forget the forthcoming adventure. Script in hand, she threw herself heart and soul into the test, and when it was over she turned breathlessly to Julie.

"How did I do?" she asked.

Julie beamed on her.

"Wizard—simply grand," she declared. "I can see we've got a real discovery in you. With you in the lead the play's bound to be a success."

"Hear, hear!"

There came a chorus of hearty agreement, and June flushed with delight. She had come to like this band of jolly girls very much, and it was lovely to know that her efforts to please had been successful.

Celia Treves, although she joined in the chorus of praise, nevertheless looked a little glum.

"You mean, if we're allowed to put on the play," she corrected Julie. "Don't forget that the refectory's still out of bounds—and that's the only place where we can present the play."

At this reminder the smiles faded, but June's eyes continued to sparkle. The big discovery she had made in Miss Tuft's study had made her recklessly optimistic. She felt certain that before the night was out she would have learnt the identity of the Grey Falcon, and once that had been done it would be comparatively easy to solve the whole mystery and to secure the master-crook's capture.

"Don't worry, girls," she said, smiling around confidently. "Long before Foundation Day the ban'll be removed—I'm positive it will be, so let's get on with the next scene."

Her assured manner made Julie & Co. forget their fears, and enthusiastically the rehearsal proceeded. But suddenly June gave a violent start. Happening to look out through the window, she saw a slender figure, carrying a week-end case, go hurrying across the quadrangle. It was Miss Tuft, and agitatedly June turned to Lady Sue.

"I say, what's the time?" she asked.

"Nearly five to seven," was the reply.

June gave another gasp.

"Golly, then I must fly!" she exclaimed.

"Sorry to desert you," she added, as she saw Julie regarding her in surprise. "But there's something I simply must do before roll call."

To her relief the Form captain nodded good-humouredly.

"All right. As a matter of fact, you don't appear in the next two scenes, so we can spare you," Julie said.

"Good. So-long, then. See you later."

And, snatching up her hooded mac, June simply flew out of the gymnasium. As she reached the open, she was just in time to see the Form-mistress disappear amongst the trees

which screened the quadrangle from the refectory and the cliff path.

Though she was anxious not to lose sight of her quarry, for she did not know where the meeting-place was, June paused to put on her mac and to adjust the hood around her head. Should Miss Tuft realise that she was being followed it would be disastrous if she recognised her shadower. However, thanks to the concealing hood, June had no fear of that happening.

Excitedly she went hurrying forward, but when she gained the far side of the trees it was to pull up in dismay. For there was no sign of the young Form-mistress.

Where could she have gone?

June looked along the cliff path, first to right, then to left, but it was deserted. Then her gaze became riveted on the refectory. Was it possible that the meeting-place was there?

Remembering the strange interest the Grey Falcon had always taken in the college theatre; remembering, too, that Uncle Noel had declared that the master-crook had some vital secret hidden in the main dressing-room in the refectory, June's pulses leapt, and it was with a feeling of intense excitement that she darted across to the great double doors.

With a quivering hand she lifted the cumbersome latch, then cautiously she pushed. To her delight the doors began to creak open. Someone had unlocked them, and who else could it be but Miss Tuft?

A CUNNING DEVICE



FEELING more convinced than ever that she was on the verge of great discoveries, June stole into the ancient building. It was dark and gloomy in the theatre, but there was sufficient light for her to see that except for herself it was empty.

Where had Miss Tuft gone?

Her heart in her mouth, June crept down to the stage and peeped through the velvet curtains, but the stage also was deserted. As if by a magnet her eyes were drawn to the arched doorway beyond the stage—the doorway which gave access to the mystery dressing-room!

"I'll bet that's where she is," June breathed.

On tiptoe she crept to the archway. Beside the door she paused, listening intently. Not a sound. Gingerly her hand went to the latch. She lifted it and pressed gently. The door swung open. It also had been unlocked. She peered through the narrow crack, but to her surprise could see no one. Nor did any sound come from the room. So recklessly she flung the door wide open, frowning in perplexity as she saw that the long, vaulted apartment was really empty.

"But it must have been Miss Tuft who unlocked both doors," she murmured. "So where—"

She broke off, her eyes gleaming, as lying on the dusty floor she saw a small, brown-leather case. It was the case that the Form-mistress had been carrying! Darting across to it, June lifted the lid, then she had fresh cause for wonder, for the case was empty.

What had it contained? Above all, what was the explanation of Miss Tuft's inexplicable disappearance?

Remembering how once Uncle Noel had tested both walls and floor for signs of a secret exit, June looked around in bafflement, then she gave another gasp as her gaze became settled on the big figure of Justice which was carved on one of the walls.

Under the carving was a narrow stone shelf on which usually stood three brass images representing Faith, Hope, and Charity—the three virtues featured in the legendary play which the Upper Fourth were planning to produce.

But the metal figures had vanished. The ledge was empty!

"Well, of all the queer things!"

Feeling more puzzled than ever, June took a step forward, and as she did so her eyes grew wide with amazement, for she suddenly saw that the missing images had not gone far. They lay in one of the bowls of the stone scales which the figure of Justice held!

The bowl which held the statues was lower than the one on the opposite end of the stone balancing rod. It was just as if the carving were a real pair of scales and that the weight of the brass images had caused one bowl to drop and the other to swing upwards.

June felt her heart thudding.

"I'm certain both bowls were level last time I saw them," she whispered. "Golly, can it be—"

Breaking off, she lifted out the three metal images. Instantly the stone scales in the picture swung level, and from somewhere below came a muffled, whirring noise.

Her eyes gleaming, June replaced the images. At once the left-hand bowl descended with a thud, and from the distance came that whirring sound again.

"So that's the secret!" June exclaimed. "These scales operate a hidden door! That accounts for the Miss Tuft disappearing! No wonder the Grey Falcon didn't want us girls in here! He was scared we should be interested in those brass figures! He was frightened we might discover his secret!"

But where was the hidden door?

Certainly not in the dressing-room. Though June kept operating the scales, setting the invisible mechanism into operation, no trapdoor opened in the floor no section of the stone walls creaked wide.

Yet door there must be somewhere, and suddenly, as she remembered how on an earlier occasion she had seen the ghostly figure of Sir Richard de Coreville in the cellar beneath the stage, June gave an excited gasp.

She replaced the weights in the left-hand bowl, then tore back to the stage. Pressing on the spring trapdoor in the floorboards, she went hurrying down the wooden steps, and as she did so her eyes gleamed with triumph.

For one of the flagstones which paved the floor was now reared on end, revealing a square opening and a crumbling stone staircase.

"Well, of all the cute ideas!" June murmured. "Who would ever think of looking for a secret trapdoor operated by remote control!"

For a moment she hesitated, then recklessly she clambered through the trapdoor. Those ancient stairs would lead her, she was convinced, not only to Miss Tuft, but also to whatever strange secret the Grey Falcon had hidden below!

At the foot of the steep stone steps was a circular rocky apartment from which led two narrow, dark tunnels.

Wonderingly, June surveyed them. Which should she explore? The question was quickly answered for her, for as she stood there, hesitating, her keen ears caught the murmur of distant voices. The sound came from the left-hand tunnel, so it was down that which she stole.

The underground passage sloped downwards, and the air was surprisingly fresh. Indeed, in her nostrils was the faint tang of seaweed. The reason for this was soon explained.

Ahead of her the darkness became less intense. Abruptly she caught a glimmer of light, and as she lifted on she suddenly found her way barred by a heavy, rustling curtain of seaweed. It was through the chinks between the fronds that the light gleamed, and excitedly the schoolgirl detective pressed an eye to one of the gaps.

What she saw brought a gasp to her lips. Beyond the curtain was one of the large caverns which burrowed deeply into the cliff on which the college was built.

The front part of the cave was flooded by the rising tide, but at the back was a wide, natural platform of rock, against which the rippling waves hissed and frothed.

Bobbing up and down on the water was a motor-launch, moored to a boulder, and on other boulders, in an awe-inspiring, grim half-circle, sat three masked men.

It was the one in the centre who riveted June's attention. Despite that disguising mask, there was something strangely compelling about his personality. His eyes gleamed like dagger-points, and for one frightening moment June had the awful feeling that it was at herself that steely look was directed. Then, with a gasp of relief, she realised that the man was not gazing at her, but at someone seated on the other side of the rocky ledge.

June put her eye to another chink and then she caught in her breath.

For, seated with its back to the curtain, so close that by stretching out a hand June could have touched it, was a figure dressed like a medieval knight, and from its picturesque clothes came an eerie, greenish glow.

The ghost of Sir Richard de Coreville!

And, although the spectral figure, like its fellow conspirators, wore a mask, June felt positive of its identity.

"It's Miss Tuft," she whispered to herself. "Now I know why that week-end case was empty. She carried her spooky outfit in it, and—"

She broke off, for that lithe, dominating figure in the centre had begun to speak.

"I have called this meeting, because I have great news for you," the unknown declared—"news which will make us all rich for life."

Like his eyes, the speaker's voice had a steely, menacing quality about it, and despite herself June shivered.

For she knew that that central figure was the Grey Falcon himself. She was not only seeing and hearing the notorious master-crook, but she had obviously arrived at the commencement of a momentous meeting of the whole gang!

A MOMENTOUS MEETING



WHAT new and daring coup was the Grey Falcon planning?

June hardly dared breathe, so intense was her excitement. She forgot her peril—did not stop to think of what would be her fate if her presence here should be discovered. All she could realise was that she was on the verge of knowing something startling. Eagerly she strained her ears, determined not to miss a single word.

A thrilled hush greeted the master-crook's first words, then the ghostly figure of Sir Richard de Coreville gave a shrill exclamation.

"You mean you have actually discovered the secret of the Three Virtues?" she asked, and, although she spoke in disguised tones, June felt more certain than ever that she was the young Form-mistress.

The Grey Falcon nodded.

"Yes—or at least I am on the track of it," he declared. "All I need is a book entitled 'The Tale of the Three Virtues.'"

The bogus knight gave another gasp.

"But that's in the college library!"

"Exactly—and it will be your job to secure it for me. For that book will tell me all I want to know." The master-crook chuckled vibrantly. "This maze of tunnels has been very useful to us," he went on, "but the profit they have yielded so far will be nothing compared with the profit we'll earn once we've solved the secret of the Three Virtues."

He laughed again, and the sound echoed eerily around the dark cavern.

Behind the seaweed curtain June felt her brain whirling. What was this new mystery? What secret could be hidden in these underground passages? Was it in some strange way connected with the legendary play which the Upper Fourth intended to present on Foundation Day? And what could the Grey Falcon

already have carried on down here to yield a profit?

As she crouched there, trying desperately to untangle this new puzzle, the figure she believed to be that of Miss Tuft leaned forward, her face white and strained beneath her mask.

"What you say makes it more vital than ever that you should heed my warning," she declared.

The Grey Falcon smiled, a cruel, calculating smile which sent an involuntary shiver running down June's spine.

"Do not worry," he said, "this girl will be taken care of. Now that we have got rid of Noel Raymond, we have nothing to fear."

"But I tell you I'm certain she's trying to discover the truth," persisted the bogus knight.

The Grey Falcon showed his teeth in another slow smile.

"There are many ways of dealing with spies, and I know them all," he boasted. "I tell you, you have nothing to fear from this girl in the college. Besides, your warning is unnecessary. I have already learnt that Noel Raymond's niece is, if not at the college, at least in the district."

June caught in her breath, and she could feel the blood ebbing from her cheeks.

It was herself they were discussing! Though, apparently, they did not suspect the false identity she had assumed, they did know that she was trying to pit her wits against theirs—and they were actually discussing how to track her down!

June felt herself shiver. That curtain of seaweed suddenly seemed a very inadequate screen. Involuntarily she found herself crouching lower, as if to avoid the penetrating gaze of the Grey Falcon.

As she huddled there, the Grey Falcon made an impatient gesture.

"Never mind that girl!" he snapped. "We will deal with her later. First, I want to show you something. Gather round!"

As he spoke, he took a large, folded map from his pocket, and, rising to their feet, the other two men and the ghostly figure in green grouped themselves about him.

Eager to get a glimpse of what was on the map, June crossed to the far end of the curtain, and, greatly daring, pulled aside several of the down-hanging fronds of seaweed.

Next moment she bitterly regretted her impulsive act.

Clang, clang. The sound seemed to fill the entire cavern, and as hastily she let go of the seaweed strands the bells clattered out again. They were tied to the top of the seaweed curtain!

Instantly the Grey Falcon leapt to his feet.

"The alarm signal!" he roared. "There's a spy at hand!"

"It must be that girl!" It was the bogus knight who shrilled out the exclamation. "Quick—catch her!"

Horrified with what she had unwittingly done, June turned. Frantically she made to race back down the tunnel, but in the darkness she tripped over a fallen piece of rock and fell headlong. Before she could scramble to her feet, the seaweed curtain was ripped aside and the Grey Falcon's two male confederates came plunging into the passage.

Next moment strong, fierce fingers grasped June, and, gasping, she was dragged to her feet. From the Grey Falcon there came a cry of satisfaction.

"Well done! Bring her out here. So this is the girl, eh?" He smiled maliciously as, helpless in her two captors' grasp, June was forced out on to the rocky platform. "Well, my dear, you will soon learn the folly of attempting to spy upon the Grey Falcon, but first—let us see who you are."

He took a step forward and stretched out his hand to rip off June's concealing hood.

How can June possibly prevent her identity being discovered? Be sure you don't miss next Friday's splendid chapters of this serial in the GIRLS' CRYSTAL.

THE SKATING GIRL'S MYSTERY MASCOT

(Continued from page 8.)

all the hurly-burly of an hotel outside working hours. I shall be as little trouble as possible."

As her father had apparently accepted him and agreed on what were actually generous terms, Sheila could offer no protest in their present needy circumstances. It just made her feel a little uncomfortable housing the tutor of her rival.

Olsen, however, kept his word. He went about quietly, and gave a minimum of trouble. He was away immediately after breakfast, and did not come home till late, taking his other meals out. But before he had been a day in the house he made it quite clear what he thought of Corinne Lefevre.

"That girl can beat anyone on Emerald Lake at figure-skating," he stated confidently. "I don't see anyone who has a chance against her at the Carnival."

Sheila's father looked across at her and gave her a sympathetic glance. Apparently he accepted Karl Olsen's verdict. It roused Sheila. She felt more determined than ever.

"With Red Eagle to help me I'll beat them all," she promised herself valiantly, and she snatched every spare moment she could to go down to the lake for practice.

A few days after Olsen's arrival she was cleaning out his room when she received a shock. Picking up a crumpled scrap of paper from his dressing-table and unrolling it before throwing it into her dustpan, she gave a sharp cry of surprise.

It was a pencil drawing of the owl totem that hung suspended from her necklace! A drawing of the lucky mascot that had so intrigued Corinne Lefevre!

What was Karl Olsen's interest in it? Was this just a coincidence, or was her discovery a detail in the sequence of strange events that had happened since it had come into her possession? She heard the familiar warning whistle of the ski-postman outside, but went on staring at the drawing.

She must tell Red Eagle about this, about Corinne, too. It was all so mysterious. She had crumpled the paper up again and was slipping it into a pocket of her apron when she heard her father call. On going downstairs she found him smiling broadly, holding an open letter in his hand.

"Sheila dear, here's luck at last. I think you're aware that Chinook Lodge and the ground attached isn't entirely ours—that I am just a co-heir with a distant cousin, Norman Wayne, who has never yet been traced."

"Yes, you've told me," nodded Sheila. "Why?"

"I've had a generous offer from Norman Wayne's agents to buy out our rights here," exclaimed her father. "It's a big sum, more than I could ever hope for elsewhere. It's just what we need for a new start. I'm going to take it, for it'll enable us to all go east to a big town, where I can build up my connection again, the kids can be placed with their Aunt Lucy, and you can have what I've always wanted for you, a year at a good finishing college. Isn't it just splendid? No more worries, no more struggling."

Sheila stared at her father's excited face, while a cold hand clutched at her heart. The news, instead of exciting her, filled her with dismay, for if they left Chinook it was goodbye to the Bluebirds and all their winter fun, farewell to her fascinating and mysterious friend Red Eagle, and, above all—the end of all her skating ambitions.

You will find the next instalment of this grand new serial even more enthralling. Read it in next Friday's GIRLS' CRYSTAL.