



Everyone Liked The Boy Assistant At The Kennels—Except Dirk, And That Clever Alsatian Knew That He Was Not To Be Trusted—By HEATHER GRANGER

### SO UNLIKE DIRK

"WELL, here are the kennels, and yours is the privilege of looking after them, Joy," Uncle Bob Benson said jovially. "I hope you'll make a better job of it than your father and I did."

Joy Benson's eyes shone as they roved around the Benson Kennels. They shone not so much at what they saw, but at the rosy picture that had jumped into her mind. Certainly the Benson Kennels could be improved a great deal, for they had fallen into a state of neglect during the war. Which perhaps was not surprising, seeing that her own father had died during the war, and that her Uncle Bob, who had been his partner, had been called into the Army, and only just recently demobbed.

The kennels flanked a wide path which led to Benson Lodge, her uncle's home and her own now. Benson Lodge, though big, roomy and comfortable in peace time, wore the same air of neglect as the Kennels themselves.

"I'm sure I'm going to love it, uncle," she said sincerely.

"I hope you will," Uncle Bob grunted. "As you're so fond of animals—and especially dogs—you should. I'm pretty busy with other things these days, so you'll take over complete responsibility, Joy. And there's no need for me to tell you that if you show yourself capable I'll take you into partnership. If not—"

He paused.

"But we won't talk about that," he added. "I'm counting on you, Joy. You've got a big job, but I'm not leaving you to tackle it entirely on your own. Did I mention Yorke Norton?"

"Norton?" Joy looked at him. "You mentioned you had a boy helping you. Is that who you mean?"

"That's him." Her uncle smiled. "He's a nice chap. You and he will get along fine. And he knows all about dogs, so you can take his advice. He'll be along presently, and I'll introduce you. Now I'm going to leave you and him to it." He stopped. "Is that your dog?" he asked abruptly.

Joy turned. A flush of pleasure sprang into her cheeks as a huge sable-coloured Alsatian came strolling through the gates, carrying a leather lead between his teeth.

Joy blinked. She had brought Dirk along with her from school, which she had left that morning, but had thought it best to tie him up outside the gate of the little cottage her uncle was at present occupying until they had got their little talk over. But Dirk had his own ideas of being tied up. Obviously he had freed himself, but careful guardian as he was of his mistress' property, had brought the lead along with him.

"Yes, uncle." And then, as Dirk with a stately wag of the tail ambled towards him, she grabbed him by the collar. "I wanted you to meet him. He's a lovely old boy. Very clever, and frightfully intelligent," she said, patting the dog's head.

"Big chap, isn't he?" her uncle said dubiously. "An Alsatian, too. H'm! I don't know, I never have liked the breed myself. Bit savage, I always think. But if you're fond of him—"

"I love him!" Joy asserted with vehemence. "I'd rather do anything than be parted from Dirk."

"OK," her uncle nodded. "Then that's all right—as long as you see that he behaves. Better put him in that spare kennel there while I show you round."

He still did not look too pleased, Joy thought, but that was because he did not know Dirk yet.

Like everybody else, her uncle would love the dog when he did know him, thought Joy, as she parked Dirk in the kennel indicated, and went off on the tour of inspection.

There was a lot to be done—work which there were not many dogs—only four, in fact, would last her months and months. But so far One was a small black Highland terrier.

"That's Tess," her uncle said. "Owned by Mrs. Partridge, who's very wealthy and likely to be our best customer. Mind you keep a special eye on him, Joy."

Joy promised, knowing a warm feeling of happiness at the prospect of looking after the dogs, of perhaps filling the kennels to capacity within a short time. She did so hope that the boy, Yorke Norton, would be as nice and as co-operative as her uncle described him.

"Uncle, supposing I start work—now?" she said.

He smiled at her enthusiasm. It was an approving smile.

"Just when you like," he agreed. "But I'd wait, if I were you, until Yorke comes along. Then you and he can work out some sort of programme together—see? Why not come along to the cottage and have some tea?"

They went into the cottage—a tiny, snug little dwelling. They had tea, which Joyce helped her uncle to prepare, and were sitting talking after the meal when a sudden barking caused Joy to jerk upright.

"That's Dirk!" Joy cried. "What on earth—"

She was up in a moment. She knew that particular bark of Dirks', and at once she was filled with apprehension. She dashed outside, and there paused. As she did so the bark was repeated, this time accompanied by a deep, menacing growl.

"Dirk!" she cried.

She saw at once that the door of the kennel in which she had left him was wide open, proclaiming again that Dirk had escaped. And then, looking towards the Lodge, she saw that the door which faced the drive between the kennels was open, too. And it was from there that Dirk's bark had sounded.

Joy frowned. Her chief emotion was anxiety, for she had realised that her uncle was not fond of Alsatians. He would hardly be pleased to discover that Dirk had released himself from his kennel, though Joy herself took that as evidence of her pet's cleverness. He would be still less pleased to discover the dog trespassing in the Lodge.

Without hesitation she raced up the driveway. Breathlessly she skipped across the overgrown lawn at its end, and as another growl came from Dirk, raced into the Lodge.

And then abruptly she halted.

She found herself in a large, neglected and very dilapidated room. In one corner was a boy—a boy slightly older than herself, curly-haired, good-looking, but at this moment flat against the wall.

Before him was Dirk, his teeth showing white and threatening, his fur bristling from neck to tail. Joy wondered for a flashing moment who the boy was, what he had done to arouse such hostility from her pet. Then the boy saw her.

"I say," he said, "is this your dog? If it is, call the brute off!"

"Dirk!" rapped Joy, and at once Dirk twisted round. Then, as he saw her, his ears flapped back and he turned slowly towards her. The boy gave a gasp.

"Gosh, thanks for that! The brute gave me a scare—"

"He's not a brute!" Joy cried indignantly. "He—he's a dear. Anyway, what were you doing to make him behave like this?"

Before the boy could reply there was a step behind them. Uncle Bob, frowning, came into the room. He cast a look at Dirk, now sitting docilely at his mistress' side.

"Joy, what's this? How did that dog escape? And who's opened up the Lodge? Norton," he

added, and Joy knew then that this was her new partner, the boy who was to help her to run the kennels, "what's going on?"

Yorke Norton straightened his jacket.

"I'm sorry, sir, but I'm afraid I can't explain," he said. "All I know is that I was passing the Lodge, found the door open, and thinking something must be wrong, went in. And then, before I knew it, this—this"—he paused, looking at Joy—"this dog was leaping on me, and had me penned into a corner. But perhaps," he added hastily, seeing the distressed and half-indignant expression on Joy's face, "he didn't mean any harm."

Joy smiled at him, feeling a flash of gratitude. But Uncle Bob frowned.

"Humph!" he said, and more doubtfully than ever regarded the animal. "I still don't trust the breed. I knew a chap once— But never mind that. He ended up in hospital, anyway. I know he's your dog, Joy, and I know you think you understand him, but be careful. It's not going to do these kennels a bit of good if he gets a name for being savage."

"Uncle!" Joy hotly protested.

"I know," he shook his head. "Anyway, we won't argue the point now. Now I'll lock up here and we'll get out."

As Joy followed her uncle, she was puzzled.

"Why on earth had Dirk attacked Yorke Norton?"

It was so unlike her pet. She did not know Yorke well, of course, but he struck her as being a very decent sort of fellow, and there was no doubt that Dirk had threatened him. She felt worried suddenly. Had the sudden change of environment upset her Alsatian?

With a careful hand on his collar she followed the boy and her uncle as they walked back down between the kennels. At length they reached the open door of the kennel from which he had made his escape.

"Better lock him up again," her uncle said with a grunt. "And mind you make a better job of it this time, Joy."

Joy nodded. While the two went on into the cottage, she dragged Dirk into the kennel. Then she looked severely into his face.

"Dirk, why did you do that?" she said reproachfully. "You know I want everybody to love you."

The great dog seemed to laugh. A pink tongue came from between his white teeth, and his trusting amber eyes gazed full into hers. Then confidently he lifted a hairy paw and put it trustingly into her hand.

"Oh, Dirk, you silly!" she said. "Was it a game, or were you just thinking there was a trespasser on uncle's property?"

The amber eyes flickered for a moment. Then Dirk stretched forward his long, pointed muzzle and buried it in the palm of her hand. For a moment Joy held it there. Then suddenly she felt something hard, round and warmly moist in her palm. Something which had been in the dog's mouth.

"Dirk!" she cried, while the dog sat back, proudly swishing his tail.

She looked at him. Then she looked at the thing which he had placed in her palm. It was a medal—a round, silver medal, ornamented by a design in which two crossed darts were conspicuous. She seemed to recognise it even before she turned it over in her hand.

When she did turn it over, when she read the name of the winner to whom it had been awarded three years ago, her heart gave a little lurch.

For that winner was Thomas Benson—her own father!

She stared at it. How had it come into the Lodge, for that was obviously where Dirk had picked it up? A vision of her father rose in her mind's eye—jolly and popular. Tom Benson, the great sportsman, had won many medals, cups and trophies. And there was mystery there, she recalled, for when her father had died not one of those memories of his sporting triumphs had ever been discovered. Now—



And now here was one of them. She peered harder at the medal. And then a little breath of excitement left her lips. For beneath the winner's name had been scratched a message—a message which, in the half-light, she found some difficulty in making out.

But when finally she was able to read it, her puzzlement was vaster than ever.

"Follow clue on the reverse," it said. "There you will find it."

"Find what? And what clue?" Joy murmured dazedly.

### UNCLE BOB'S DECISION



"DIRK, where—how did you find this?" she asked her pet.

Dirk, still wagging his tail happily, only laughed pleasantly into her face by way of reply.

Joy patted him and tied him up. With strict instructions that there was to be no more escaping, she shut him up for

the night and went into the cottage. Uncle Bob and Yorke were sitting before the fire with the lamp—there was neither gas nor electricity in the cottage—lighted on the table behind them. They looked up at her approach.

"Joy, have you shut that dog up safely?" her uncle asked.

"Yes, uncle."

"Good!" he grunted. "Seems pretty hot at taking leave when he wants to, doesn't he? What got hold of him in the Lodge? Yorke here—"

"Oh, the old chap didn't do any harm," Yorke said at once. "He probably thought I had no right there, anyhow. Which, of course, I hadn't," he added, after a thought. "I'd never have gone there if I hadn't found the door open. Wonder who opened the door?"

"It might have been the dog again," Uncle Bob said. "The lock's pretty weak, and one good thump against the door would send it flying. I'll see to that before I go to bed. But I can't think what there could be to interest a dog in there. No buried hoard of bones as far as I know."

"Perhaps, because of that," Joy said, anxious only to find some reasonable excuse for her pet. "Recognise it, uncle?"

Trying to control the note of pride in her voice, she laid the silver darts medal on the table. Her uncle whistled as he regarded it.

"Jove, it's Tom's—your father's!" he said. "Where did you find this, Joy?"

"I didn't—but Dirk did," Joy said, and she told the story, feeling prouder than ever of her pet. "And look what daddy wrote on it."

Uncle Bob frowned as he examined the find. Yorke craned over and carefully followed the inscription as Uncle Bob spelt it out.

"Your father was always doing fool things," Uncle Bob said. "He made quite a name for himself at unusual stunts. Still, it's good to see even that much of his collection of trophies, even if the others never turn up. Here, you'd better take it, Joy. I'll go and fix that lock before it's absolutely dark."

"Shall I come, sir?" Yorke asked quickly.

"No, you stop here and talk to Joy, lad." Bob Benson reached for his bunch of keys which hung on the wall, and, with a nod, went out. Yorke grinned.

"Good idea," he said. "But, Joy—I may call you Joy, mayn't I?—I've got a feeling about the medal. Let's have another look at it."

She handed it to him. Together they examined it. The inscription stood out plainly now, and beneath it Joy noticed a little squiggle—the sort of crossbar mark her father might have made as a finishing-off flourish.

She found Yorke's blue eyes gazing into hers.

"Joy, what do you think?"

"D'you know," Joy said slowly, "I've got an

idea that my father hid all his other trophies somewhere?"

He stared.

"Hid them? But why?"

"Well, he had several funny little ways, you know. Perhaps he was afraid they might be bombed, or something—a bomb did fall near here. And it would just be like him to leave a clue of this sort."

"Whizz-ee!" Yorke said, and his eyes showed excitement. "Then that means if the trophies are hidden anywhere at all, they're hidden in the Lodge?"

"That's what I think."

Yorke's eyes sparkled. He was full of a sudden boyish excitement which made Joy like him tremendously.

"What fun! Supposing we try to find it, Joy. It'd be a thrill to unearth a real modern treasure."

"I was thinking that, too," she laughed. "It's nice of you, Yorke—"

"It's not." He chuckled. "I'm just out for the excitement like you. Anyway, I really would like to help," he added more seriously.

"But—" He frowned. "Perhaps we'd better say nothing to your uncle about it. Let it be a surprise to him. When do we start?"

"To-morrow."

"To-morrow it is, then," he said. "When we've finished the morning jobs in the kennels. Your uncle's off to the market at eleven."

Next morning Joy found working with Yorke a real pleasure. When the dogs were fed, watered and exercised, and the kennels scrubbed out, they started work upon clearing up the debris of the years. By mid-morning the place was looking surprisingly shipshape again.

And, of course, Joy did not forget to visit Dirk.

"We'll go for a scamper at eleven, boy," she told him. "And I'll take you back to the Lodge where you can show me exactly where you found daddy's medal. You understand, old boy?" she added, and she showed the medal to him.

Dirk eyed it, and a little whine welled in his throat. Joy patted him.

"Be patient till eleven," she soothed.

Outside the cottage her uncle was already seated in his trap, bound for the near-by market. He waved his whip genially.

"Bye, youngsters! I'm off. Behave yourselves."

"Trust us, sir," Yorke cheerily called, and chuckled as the trap bowed out of sight.

"Now for the treasure hunt, Joy!"

"Let's go," Joy suggested. "Just a minute, though, what about the keys? Uncle fixed up that lock, remember."

Yorke grinned.

"He's left the keys where he always leaves 'em—on the wall."

With eyes shining Joy skipped into the cottage, grabbed the keys, and skipped out again. Then she went towards Dirk's kennel.

"I say," Yorke protested with sudden uncertainty. "You—you're not going to take the dog, Joy?"

"But why not?" she asked, turning to face him. "Dirk can help us. He found the medal, remember, and you don't know Dirk as a detective. In any case, I've promised him," she added decisively.

To Dirk's unbounded delight she released him. He frisked around on the grass, eagerly barking in his new-found freedom. Then he saw Yorke.

Joy's heart knew a jump of alarm as she watched him.

For suddenly the dog's delight vanished. Dirk stopped dead in his gambolling, his eyes upon the boy. The fur along his spine rose and bristled. Again Joy saw the flash of white, menacing teeth, heard the threatening growl that came from the dog's throat. Yorke, his face a little white, backed away.

"Joy, I told you—"

"Dirk!" she cried sternly. "What IS the matter with you? Behave yourself!" Severely she grabbed him by the collar. "I can't understand it," she went on. "He never behaves like this usually."

"Oh, shut him up again!" Yorke said uneasily.

"Oh, no! He—he'll calm down again in a minute," Joy said, but she wondered, for even beneath the collar she could feel the tensed muscles of her pet. "Take no notice, Yorke," she advised.

But Yorke had a very wary eye upon Dirk as they strode up the path, and Dirk, for his part, never took his eyes off the boy. Now and again he growled.

"Look here, Joy, there's no fun in this," Yorke protested, when they reached the Lodge. "How on earth are we going to look for trophies with Dirk looking for a chance to tear me to pieces? Do take him back."

"No, let's try him out first," Joy said, though considerably conscious that some of her enthusiasm had now turned to concern. "Here are the keys."

Yorke shrugged. With another glance at the watchful Dirk he took the keys. He tried four before, with an easy click, the fifth one turned the lock. Then he threw the door open.

"Enter!" he said dramatically. Joy went up the step, towing her pet behind her. But as Dirk passed Yorke he growled again.

What on earth was wrong? she wondered. Why should he have taken such a violent objection to so likeable a boy?

She went into the big room that led from the front door. In the sunlight she could see much better than in the half-light of last night. Old and crumbling the place certainly was. Though it was still furnished, it was in an appalling state of disrepair.

"In a pretty awful state, isn't it?" Yorke said. "But then it must be as old as the hills. Just the spot to hide a hoard," he said, with a flash of his old enthusiasm. "I—". And then he jumped back as Dirk growled again. "Joy, dash it, I wish you'd lock that dog up—"

"Dirk, please!" Joy cried exasperatedly. "Take no notice," she advised again. "He'll be all right when he knows the game. Now, Dirk," she said wheedlingly, and took out the medal again and showed it to him, "where did you find this?"

Dirk understood. Joy could tell that by the sudden alert pricking of his fine ears and the flash of intelligence that lit his eyes. Then, looking at Yorke again, he deliberately sat down.

"He's not playing," Yorke considered. It was obvious from that moment that Dirk was not playing. Even when Joy dragged on his collar he refused to move.

She could almost have wept with vexation and humiliation. For the first time in her life Joy found herself becoming angry with her pet.

"Oh, shut him up!" Yorke said. "We're only wasting time. Joy, I'm here to help. It's pretty obvious Dirk isn't."

At last Joy was forced to see the wisdom of that advice. She was disappointed, but there was no doubt now that Dirk had just made up his mind to be rebellious.

"There's a little room along the passage here," Yorke continued. "It's got a barred window, so he can't escape. Bring him along there."

And so the disgraced Dirk was towed along. It was Yorke who opened the door of the little room—Joy who took the dog in. She knew this room of old. In her father's day it had been Uncle Bob's study. Among the furniture was Uncle Bob's television set—one of the early, upright cabinet variety, which were just coming on to the market before the war.

"Now, Dirk," she said severely, "lie on the carpet there and be quiet."

She tapped him admonishingly on the nose, and stifled the little choke in her throat as she saw the beseeching, yearning look in his eyes. Then hastily she put herself at the other side of the door, carefully closing it behind her.

"Good for you," Yorke applauded. "Now we can start our search."

They began in the large entrance hall, but though they searched industriously they could find nothing unusual.

From room to room they went. The ground floor yielded nothing. On Yorke's suggestion they climbed to the upper regions. Here a long passage, flanked each side by doors, met their gaze.

"Tell you what," Yorke said, "you take the rooms this side. I'll take them on this."

Joy agreed. And so the search divided. But as on the lower quarters, the search yielded nothing further in the nature of a clue.

For nearly two hours she and Dirk searched the Lodge, room by room, cupboard by cupboard. But when finally they met again at the head of the stairs they both had to confess themselves beaten.

"No luck!" Yorke said ruefully. "Have to try again when we've had another think about things. And we'd better get back. Your uncle's about due from the market."

"Golly, yes, and I've got lunch to prepare!" Joy cried in sudden alarm. "You go on, Yorke. I'll get Dirk and lock up."

He nodded. While he went off, Joy made her way to Uncle Bob's old study. There she opened the door, and before she had a chance to enter the place Dirk was in front of her, looking up at her with a wistful hopefulness that plainly asked for forgiveness. She conquered the almost irresistible desire to cuddle the great soft head.

"You've spoiled the whole morning," she told him severely. "Now come along—and behave yourself, sir!"

Carefully Joy locked the front door and went down the alleyway. Even as she was rekeying Dirk her uncle's pony and trap rattled into the yard, and beside her uncle was a stout, beaming-faced man whom she had never seen before.

"Hallo, Joy!" Uncle Bob said jovially. Then he saw the keys in her hand, and frowned a little. "What have you been doing with those?"

She blushed guiltily for a moment. Then she decided to tell. Joy did not like secrets, and, after all, her uncle had not forbidden her to enter the Lodge.

"Well, Yorke and I thought we'd have a look round the old Lodge," she said. "It really is a mess, uncle, and we'd love to give a hand clearing it out when we've got the kennels to rights. You didn't mind, did you?"

"No, I suppose not." Her uncle spoke as if he hadn't considered the matter. "Still, I'd rather you'd mentioned it first," he said. "Better let me have those keys. Mr. Long wants to look at that old television set I've got."

Joy handed over the keys. Into the cottage she went to rejoin Yorke, who was helpfully cutting up bread—the lunch-to-day was to be cold meat and salad. He smiled relievedly when she told him of the encounter with her uncle.

"Good!" he said. "Glad he didn't cut up rusty about our exploring without permission. That makes it all right for the next time," he added, with a grin. "Joy, let me carve the meat."

Presently she heard uncle come back, heard Mr. Long departing. Then the door was thrown open and Uncle Bob, with a decidedly angry frown on his face, stood there.

"You said that you and Yorke had been in the Lodge this morning, Joy?" he asked in an accusing voice.

"Why, yes," Joy answered.

"Did either of you go into the old study?"

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# The Merrymakers at College



By DAPHNE GRAYSON

## SYLVIA'S STRANGE BEHAVIOUR

"YOU and the boys will have to go without me, Fay; I've got hours more work to do for the Merrymakers' play," Sally Warner said, with a sigh. "But I promised to do some shopping for Sylvia Wayland—"

"What, again?" Fay Manners put in indignantly. "She's been pestering you for things all the week, Sally!"

"As if you hadn't got enough to do as captain of the Merrymakers, to say nothing of the play coming on to-morrow night!" said Don Weston.

"You tell Sylvia Wayland to do her own shopping, Sally!" urged Johnny Briggs.

"Fay, would you mind doing it instead? I'll get her list," said Sally, and ran cheerfully up the steps of her chalet.

It was a free afternoon at Roxburgh Co-ed College, and her chums' vexation, she told herself, was merely because she'd had to back out of their trip to town at the last minute. They hadn't really any vexed feelings towards the inoffensive Sylvia Wayland, even if Sylvia had been rather a nuisance during the last few days. It didn't bother Sally. As captain of the Merrymakers Club she was used to being at everybody's beck and call.

Humming to herself, she pushed open the door of her cubicle, then—

"Oh!" came a startled voice.  
"Sylvia!" She pulled up, amazed, at seeing the drawer of her writing-bureau open and Sylvia Wayland bending over it. "What are you doing in my room?"

But it was quite plain what Sylvia was doing. She had taken some sheets of printed notepaper—Merrymakers Club paper—from the drawer, and she was in the very act now of reaching for the rubber stamp bearing the official title: "Captain of the Merrymakers Club."

"Oh, I—I thought you'd gone to town, Sally," she began confusedly. Then her rather timid face flushed deeper and she tried to cover up that guilty admission. "I—I only came in to get some club paper. Do you mind?"

"No, I suppose not. But—well, I didn't expect to see you in my room—alone."

"I'm sorry," faltered Sylvia.  
"Oh, it's all right!" Sally said uncomfortably. "I just popped in to get your shopping list!"

Sylvia looked at her mutely, then stole out, her cheeks bright pink. Sally found the shopping list, took it out to Fay, then returned to her chalet, forgetting about the incident with Sylvia Wayland.

She sat down at her bureau and got busily to work, writing an order to the local florist's for to-morrow night's stage decorations. Then she remembered that extra refreshments would be needed in case of stray visitors dropping in at the last minute, so she wrote another order to the caterers. She signed each of them. She reached for her rubber stamp and pad, preparing to add her title-seal of captain, and then paused. The stamp was wet with ink! She hadn't used it all day—yet it had been recently inked!

Sally frowned perplexedly. She remembered Sylvia's surreptitious visit here—remembered seeing her fumbling for this stamp. Had she used it? Why? What object could Sylvia Wayland have for meddling with the club captain's stamp? Sally felt puzzled. She couldn't understand the new girl's strange actions at all.

She shrugged her shoulders, then, sealing the letters in their envelopes, set off to the clubhouse to get postage stamps for them.

One small room at the back of the clubhouse was reserved for the use of herself and the committee. It had been provided with a somewhat rickety desk for herself in a corner by the window, and now, as she passed that window, she suddenly stopped in blank astonishment.

Someone was there, sitting at her desk! It was Sylvia Wayland! But it was the task she was doing which held Sally stupefied.

A sheet of club notepaper lay on the desk, and upon it Sylvia had carefully copied out the rules of the club in her own handwriting. At the foot it bore the rubber-stamped impression: "Captain of the Merrymakers Club." And at this moment she was signing above that title her own name: "Sylvia Wayland!"

Sally rushed for the door and stepped inside.

"So you've promoted yourself captain, Sylvia," she began.

Sylvia whirled round from the desk, her face crimson.

"Oh!" Her voice came in a smothered gasp. "It's you—Sally! And you've seen it! I—I thought—"

"Thought you'd got rid of me! That's why you asked me to do your shopping!" Sally accused her.

"Y—yes!" Sylvia was too taken aback to deny it. "It was only for this afternoon. I was desperate, Sally. I had to do it!" she blurted out wretchedly. "I know it sounds awful, b—but my aunt and uncle are visiting me to-day, Sally, and they—they think I am captain of the Merrymakers! I—I didn't mean to deceive them! Not in the first place! B—but they got the idea in their heads that I was captain—"

"And you were going to deceive them to-day?" cut in Sally.

"Y—yes! Yes, I was, Sally!" And there was something pathetic in Sylvia's abject confession. "You see, auntie got the idea I was captain when I first joined the Merrymakers and s-sent her the programmes you'd initialised. My initials are the same as yours, Sally. And—and auntie thought it meant I was captain. She told uncle. Th-they both believed it, and I know it was mean and d-deceitful of me, but I let them go on b-believing it! Then I got such a shock when I heard they were coming here to-day, and I was so afraid they'd find out—"

"But, Sylvia, they'd have found out anyhow!" Sally interrupted, her feelings softening. "Were you going to pin this thing over my own list of rules? In case they came in here?"

"Yes," confessed Sylvia. Sally shook her head, feeling sorry for Sylvia, for she wasn't artful enough to be a real deceiver.

"Didn't it strike you that one of us was bound to come in and see it?" she asked gently. "Supposing it had been someone like Elsie Pym—why, you'd never have heard the end of it, Sylvia, and she'd certainly have got you thrown out of the club!"

"I was just going to risk it," Sylvia said, tears in her eyes. "I've been in such despair. I didn't want to d-deceive auntie; she's sweet. But my uncle—" And her voice choked away. "Oh, you wouldn't understand, Sally!"

Sally felt awkward and made a move towards the door.

"No, I'm afraid I don't understand, Sylvia, but I shouldn't worry any more. You don't want your aunt and uncle to find you down in the dumps."

She stamped her letters, then strode off to the post-box at the gates. Though Sally knew she ought to feel angry with Sylvia, she just couldn't. There was something timid and defenceless about her. Even her silly little pretence had probably been due to her timidity, to her fear of being laughed at had she pointed out her relatives' mistake when they first—

"Excuse me, my dear," a soft voice said, breaking into her thoughts. "I wonder if you can tell me where I might find my niece—Sylvia Wayland?"

With an involuntary start, Sally found herself gazing at a sweet-faced, silver-haired little lady who had just walked in through the gates.

"Sylvia Wayland," the lady repeated, adding with a touching little smile of pride: "She is the captain of the Merrymakers Club, you know!"

"Oh—er—" And at a loss, Sally added weakly: "Oh, yes!"

She hated to think of the disappointment and distress of this charmingly sweet lady when Sylvia told her the truth. But now another voice sounded outside the gates. A man's voice—sharp and blustering. He was talking to his chauffeur and he was obviously the lady's husband—Sylvia's uncle.

"Can't, Jenkins?" he was rasping. "No such

word as can't, man! You can do anything if you try! Now do what I have told you!"

The lady at Sally's side began to look embarrassed.

"My husband doesn't mean to be unreasonable, but he does expect too much of people," she murmured nervously.

Sally took one glance at her husband and could more than believe it. He was a dour, thick-set man, a man who looked as honest as steel and as hard as granite.

"Nothing is impossible, Jenkins!" he was barking at the chauffeur. "That is my motto—that is how I got on. I want you to get on. You're no use to me if you don't. I've got no time for anyone who doesn't get on!"

With a faltering little smile, the lady whispered to Sally:

"It's only his way, my dear. He's just the same with me—and with poor Sylvia. It's too bad what he expects of that child, bless her heart! Don't you wait, my dear. Tell me where we'll find her."

"Oh, yes, ma'am!" And rather dizzily Sally indicated the Merrymakers' chalet. "In that chalet where the flag's flying. That's the clubhouse!"

She dropped her letters in the box and sped swiftly towards the clubhouse. A fantastic idea had seized her, but her mind was made up to it. She knew now why Sylvia had kept up that pretence! Sylvia hadn't dared to confess that she wasn't really captain of the Merrymakers—she was too frightened of her forbidding uncle! He expected her to get on—he thought she had got on! Her nerve wasn't equal to telling him the truth. She had gone on deceiving him instead. And so she should—and, right or wrong, Sally knew she was going to help her!

She burst into the little committee-room again just as Sylvia was on the point of creeping out.

"Sylvia, I didn't understand before," she began breathlessly. "Your uncle's just arrived—"

"Uncle Jasper?" quaked Sylvia, adding, as if to seek courage: "And—and Auntie Cloe?"

"Yes, they're both here," Sally rushed on. "And there's nothing to be afraid of, Sylvia, because I'm not going to give you away! I'll stand by you! You're going to be captain while they're here—see? And I'm going to help you put it over!"

"Sally, you're—Sylvia couldn't at first grasp it—"you're going to help me d-deceive uncle?"

"Yes. No harm in it, after all!" Sylvia was gazing unbelievably at her, and Sally laughed. "Look snappy, Sylvia, and help me take everything off the walls that's got my name on it. Quick—they'll be here any moment!"

Sally rushed from room to room of the clubhouse, taking down from the wall every paper and notice that bore her own name as captain. Sylvia assisted her in feverish gratitude. Then suddenly the door opened.

Sylvia swung round to give her aunt and uncle a fitting welcome, then stopped, her face paling. Sally fairly jumped with dismay.

It wasn't Sylvia's relatives who walked in—it was Elsie Pym!

"What are you two doing?" Elsie began inquisitively and then her sharp eyes darted about her curiously. "I say, why have you taken everything off the walls? You're a fine captain, Sally Warner—what's going on here?"

## UNCLE JASPER ARRIVES



"JUST having a tidy-up before to-morrow night," Sally invented rapidly.

"But we're not holding the play here; we're holding it in Community!" burst out Elsie. "What's Sylvia Wayland doing in the committee-room, anyway? Why's she looking like a ghost?"

"The shock of seeing you!" retorted Sally with more truth than Elsie knew.



Her brain was working swiftly. Sylvia's aunt and uncle would walk in at any moment! How could she get rid of Elsie Pymm? One word from Elsie and that would spoil everything. Already Elsie suspected something. She was staring piercingly at Sylvia's frightened face.

"Have you smashed something of mine?" she hazarded, and her gaze flashed to the committee table. "My inkstand! It's gone!" she cried. "Where is it?"

"I d-didn't touch it, Elsie!" stuttered Sylvia, her eyes frantically watching the door.

"I've taken it to clean—and it isn't your inkstand, anyway," gabbled Sally, who had removed it because it was a presentation bearing her own name as well as Elsie's, also her title. "It's time all the silver had a good polish, and you can take it away and do it, Elsie, now you're here!"

It was a masterly inspiration for getting rid of Elsie Pymm. Give her something to do! Sally opened the drawer where she had hidden the silver cups and inkstand and thrust them into Elsie's hands.

"I'm not a s-sculion, I'm on the c-committee!" spluttered Elsie, shaking with indignation. "Why can't Sylvia Wayland do them, as she seems so eager to help you?"

"Sylvia's got visitors coming!" Sally said, urging her desperately to the door.

"Indeed? Then why—?"  
The door opened before Elsie could finish, and to Sally's dismay and Sylvia's horror, in walked Sylvia's aunt and her forbidding-looking uncle!

"Oh!" broke off Elsie. Then, after a quick glance at Uncle Jasper, she added bitterly: "Suppose I've got to obey captain's orders!" And out she marched with the silver rattling in her arms.

Sally couldn't have planned anything to please Sylvia's uncle better, even had she tried.

"That's the style, Sylvia! That girl looks as if she needs a bit of discipline!" he observed heartily, with a grim glance at Elsie's angry, retreating figure. "Didn't know you'd got it in you, Sylvia! Well, how are you?" He held out an enormous hand to her. "Glad to know they've made you club captain! This one of your young members?"

"She's my very best friend, Uncle Jasper!" And Sylvia's eyes glowed as Sally stepped forward. "Sally Warner!"

"Sylvia's letting me help her to-day," Sally said brightly. "There's a lot of work in a club like this, and the captain can't do it all."

"She can if she tries—!" began Uncle Jasper on his favourite theme.

"But there's nothing like others learning the ropes as well, sir!" carried on Sally boldly. "I'm ambitious, the same as Sylvia, and I believe in taking points from a good skipper. I want to get on, the same as Sylvia!"

"You will, too, my dear!" Sylvia's aunt said fondly.

"She certainly will!" nodded Uncle Jasper, and he gave Sally a hearty, approving thump on the shoulder. "Well, niece"—he turned to Sylvia—"what about taking us round this clubhouse of yours?"

It was really Sally who showed Aunt Cloe and Uncle Jasper round, though she did it so skilfully that she might have been acting under the orders of Sylvia.

Uncle Jasper was particularly interested in the poster of the play.

"Pity we can't stop and see that, Sylvia," he muttered gruffly.

"I should like to see it," sighed Sylvia's aunt. "What a pity it is impossible—but we have to return home this afternoon. Your uncle is buying a new automobile, Sylvia, and he has arranged for a demonstration!"

Uncle Jasper didn't speak. He passed on to some other pictures adorning the wall—paintings by various members of the club. Sally's gaze went to the window and she gave a start. There was Elsie Pymm returning with those

telltale cups in her hand! Oh goodness, how was she to get Uncle Jasper out of the way?

"Your uncle might like to come to see the college collection, Sylvia, as he's interested in art—!" she began quickly.

"Art!" A loud snort came from Uncle Jasper. He was gazing at Elsie Pymm's painting of a sunset. "You don't call this daub art, do you, Sylvia?"

"N-no, uncle!" stammered Sylvia.

"Then why the dickens do you hang it here?" he demanded irritably. "You're captain—it's for you to see that only the best is hung in the clubhouse! Who did it?"

"One of the girls—Elsie P-Pymm!" faltered Sylvia, and glanced uneasily at Sally as they heard Elsie enter the committee-room next door.

"Then if Elsie Pymm calls that rubbish painting, I don't!" Uncle Jasper declared roundly. "The best thing you can do, Sylvia, is to take it down from the wall and pitch it in the lumber-room!"

"Excuse me!" gasped Sally, and dashed into the adjoining room, closing the door and leaning her full weight against it.

She was only just in time. Elsie's flushed, indignant face showed that she had heard Uncle Jasper's words. She had only paused to place the silver on the desk before bursting in on the scene.

"It's all right, Elsie," Sally whispered breathlessly. "Sylvia couldn't help what her uncle said, and he didn't mean it, really!"

"Why are you s-sticking up for Sylvia?" hissed Elsie. "I don't care a dime about her uncle, but I'd like to see her take my painting down and—throw it in the lumber-room! Who does he think she is?"

Before Sally could find words, Uncle Jasper's voice floated clearly to them through the door.

"It's all very well for you to have authority in the club, Sylvia," he was saying, "but you must learn to exercise your authority, and exercise it firmly. If Elsie Pymm's paintings are not good enough for the club, you must tell her so, and not mince any words about it. Now we will go and see something better!"

And the outer door was heard to close as Sylvia escaped with her relatives.

"T-tell me, did he say"—Elsie's voice fairly choked her—"Sylvia Wayland to tell me—me!—whether I shall hang my paintings in the club! That silly little nobody! What are you shielding her for, Sally? What is all this?" she burst out accusingly. "What did her uncle mean about her—her authority?"

"Her authority as a judge of painting, you know," Sally said desperately, but not very tactfully.

"She doesn't know any more about painting than you do!" retorted Elsie. "You're backing her up, Sally Warner! You didn't move those things off the wall because you were tidying-up. You only sent me away with this silver to get rid of me! You're up to some funny game with Sylvia Wayland and I'm going to stop here till I find out what it is!"

"Stop here all night if you like," shrugged Sally, hoping she would. And without another word, she hurried out after Sylvia.

It was going to be dangerous, Sally realised, now that Elsie was suspicious. At all costs she must be given no chance to meet Sylvia's relatives. Sylvia must be warned from taking them into the cafeteria for tea. That would be Elsie's opportunity. The glimmerings of an idea struck Sally, and she hurried off in the direction taken by Sylvia and her visitors, and she caught up with them just as they were about to enter the college. By that time her plan was clear in her mind.

"Would you like me to get tea for you in your chalet, Sylvia?" she asked. "I'm sure your aunt and uncle would enjoy it better than in the crowded cafeteria!"

"Rather, Sally!" Sylvia agreed, for she knew that in Sally's chalet her relatives would be

safe from Elsie Pymm's awkward questions.

"And will you join us?"

"I'd love to, if you're sure you don't mind."

"Of course not!" Sylvia smiled.

And, her confidence revived, Sylvia spent a safe hour taking her aunt and uncle round the college buildings, then brought them back to her chalet.

Uncle Jasper complimented Sally on the excellent tea she had prepared, then turned to his niece.

"You know, Sylvia," he said bluntly, "I've been thinking you lacked the will to try to get on. I only sent you to this college to give you a last chance. I don't spend money for nothing. I want to see results. If you hadn't got this captaincy and shown you were worth a chance I was going to take you away this very day!"

The colour drained from Sylvia's cheeks, and her aunt, seeing it, with gentle compassion hurriedly changed the subject.

"It's such a pity we couldn't stop for the play to-morrow night, dear," she said fondly. "We should have loved to see you in it. I suppose you are taking the principal part?"

Sylvia hesitated, and Sally came quickly to the rescue.

"Sylvia's modest about her acting, but she's fine and she's never made a slip yet!" Which was quite true, although Sylvia really had only a small part in the play.

"Modest!" boomed Uncle Jasper. "No good being modest about your talents, Sylvia. That won't get you on! I didn't even know you could act. I always thought—"

He was cut short by the tooting of a motor-horn at the college gates.

"That's our car. We must be going now, dear," sighed Sylvia's aunt.

Sally accompanied them to the gates to see them off.

She was congratulating herself gaily on having hoodwinked both Uncle Jasper and Elsie Pymm to the very end. But at the gates a shock awaited her.

"There, Jenkins, didn't I tell you that nothing is impossible?" Uncle Jasper was saying to the chauffeur. "Your friends in the trade wish to sell me a new car—therefore they will put off the demonstration to a day that suits me better. I knew they would!"

Then he turned to Sylvia, and his stern face was beaming with real kindness.

"A happy surprise for you, Sylvia," he said heartily. "Your aunt and I are going to stay the night in Roxburgh—and to-morrow night we will come to see you in your play!"

## A TRIUMPH FOR SYLVIA



A STAGGERING rumour went round J House next day. Sally's chums—Don and Johnny and Fay—were besieged by frantic questions from members of the Merry-makers Club.

"I say, what's this about Sally backing out of the play to-night?"

"It isn't true that she's given up her part to—Sylvia Wayland?"

Don & Co. knew the worst from Sally's own lips, and their private opinion was that she must indeed be crazy. But they could only loyally support her as she had bade them.

"I'm afraid it's true," Don said in a hollow voice. "Sally's got a sore throat and—and she's decided to change parts with Sylvia Wayland and to coach Sylvia up to play the lead for her!"

In the Community Room, on the same stage that was now set for the play, Sally was alone with Sylvia, rehearsing her vigorously in the principal part. Nor was there the least sign of soreness about Sally's throat; her voice was never more firm.

"You can do it, Sylvia—and you've got to do it!" she insisted. "You know why!"

"I—I've brought it all on myself and I deserve it, I suppose!" faltered Sylvia.

"That's right—and you've got to have the grit to go through with it!" Sally said heartily and without reproach. "It's no good preaching about your deceit, because I've been as bad as you and helped you put it over. Now you've got to help yourself, Sylvia! You've got to carry the principal part squarely on your shoulders. I know you can do it—if you try!" she added with warm encouragement.

Her own confidence inspired confidence in Sylvia. She was an intelligent actress, but timid because no one had ever encouraged her before, and for years her uncle's overbearing manner had subdued her. Soon, under Sally's coaching, she forgot her timidity, and after a while was speaking her lines firmly, was acting splendidly, when—

"Sally Warner"—Elsie Pymm came bursting on to the scene—"you're not going to let the play down like this, pushing Sylvia Wayland into the leading part! If you can't play it yourself, then I will!"

"You won't!" Sally retorted calmly. "You've got a jolly good part and it's the one you asked for, Elsie! Don't be selfish!"

"You're not going to put this nobody in front of me!" stormed Elsie.

"Sylvia is going to play the lead!" Sally said with force.

"There! I thought you were supposed to have a sore throat! It's no more sore than mine!" triumphed Elsie. "You're a fraud—you're both frauds!" she blazed on. "I haven't forgotten what I found yesterday! This toady of yours forging her name to the club rules—signing herself captain of the Merry-makers! You're egging her on for what you can get out of her, Sally Warner! You don't care two cents for the club or the play! You wait!" she threatened as she flounced out through the wings. "You wait till to-night!"

Sally watched her go, feeling vaguely uneasy. What had she meant by "You wait till to-night"?

She turned to Sylvia, who was trembling again.

"Come on, Sylvia! Never mind Elsie! You can act her head off! Let's get on! You can do it—I know you can! Now we'll begin Scene Two again."

All day long Sally kept Sylvia at it, and by the time evening came, and they were changed and made up ready for the curtain to go up, Sylvia was cooler than Sally had dared to hope.

"I promise one thing," were the last words she whispered before her cue came. "Whatever happens, I won't let you down, Sally."

Sally smiled, squeezing her hand.

She stood in the wings, watching as Sylvia took her call. She could see, sitting in the third row, the sweet-faced Aunt Cloe and the austere, critical-looking Uncle Jasper. There was a look of intense pride on his hard, honest face, and Sally clenched her hands, hoping desperately that Sylvia would be a success.

And Sylvia was! She acted as though inspired—because she had promised not to let Sally down!

The first act ended in a complete triumph for Sylvia Wayland.

Her triumph was repeated in the second act, and as the curtain went up on the third and last act, in which Elsie Pymm did not appear, Sally, glancing towards Uncle Jasper to see how he was responding to his niece's talent, felt a cold chill at her heart.

Elsie Pymm was sliding into the seat beside Uncle Jasper and was whispering in his ear.

Sally's fears rioted; her senses were suddenly confused. Next moment a huge roar of applause burst up from the audience, and the curtain was falling on the end of the play.

"Sylvia Wayland!" a shout went up amid the applause.

(Please turn to the back page.)





### A SECRET MEETING

**J**UNE GAYNOR, niece of Noel Raymond, the famous young detective, went to Port Craig College disguised as a new girl, Dorothy Whitman. Her object was to help her uncle track down a mysterious master-crook known as the Grey Falcon.

As a result of the Grey Falcon's scheming Noel was accused of himself being the Grey Falcon, and of stealing jewels from the near-by Manor, tenanted by Howard Wyndham, chairman of the college governors.

Miss Tuft, the Upper Fourth Form-mistress, was secretly in league with the Grey Falcon, and she suspected that one of her girls was really Noel Raymond's niece in disguise.

The Upper Fourth Formers were invited to a party at the Manor, and Noel Raymond arranged to meet June there, disguised as a police inspector. To June's dismay he did not turn up.

Wondering if he had been captured by the Grey Falcon and hidden in one of the secret rooms beneath the Refectory, June set off that night to explore.

In one of the passages she discovered an iron bar fixed to the wall. Recklessly she pulled it. A secret panel opened, revealing drawn curtains. June peeped through, and what she saw brought a stifled gasp to her lips.

**J**UNE caught in her breath as she peeped through the velvet curtains.

She found herself looking into the library of the Manor, but it was not this fact which set her heart thumping; it was the discovery that the oak-panelled apartment had three occupants.

Seated in armchairs on either side of the old fireplace were two male figures. One was the grey-haired, stately-looking butler; the other was a young, handsome man, whom she recognised as James Needham, one of the guests. And standing by a table near by, pouring out coffee for them, was Miss Tuft!

The presence of the Upper Fourth Form-mistress, coupled with the familiar way the butler was hobnobbing with one of his master's guests, convinced June that her suspicions had been right.

"All three of them are members of the

gang," she told herself, and her pulses began to race as she realised that she was eavesdropping on what might prove to be an important meeting of the crooks. "But I wonder which of them is the Grey Falcon?" she murmured, regarding the two men speculatively from her hiding-place in the alcove.

At that moment Miss Tuft passed the tray around, and, with a smile, raised her own cup. "Let's wish ourselves success!" she cried.

Instantly the two men sprang to their feet, and the butler gave a gruff chuckle.

"Yes—here's to to-morrow!" he cried. "If all goes well, we'll have discovered Sir Roger de Coreville's secret and made ourselves rich for life."

"Rather!" James Needham grinned excitedly. "And then we'll be able to get out of here." Anxiously he looked across at the manservant. "Has the Grey Falcon made arrangements about the yacht?" he asked.

The butler nodded. "Yes; it'll anchor off Smugglers' Isle to-morrow night," he said.

June felt her heart hammer even more wildly, as she listened to this conversation. The first fact she noted was that, apparently, none of this trio was the Grey Falcon. Then who could he be? And where was he now?

Involuntarily her fingers closed on the wig and false beard she had found in the secret passage—the disguise which made her fear that Noel Raymond might have been captured by the gang. Was the Grey Falcon now with his prisoner; perhaps mockingly telling him of his plans?

June's face went a little white as she realised that the whole gang, apparently, intended to leave the country once their haul had been completed. But what exactly was their haul to consist of? What secret could Sir Roger de Coreville, the medieval knight whose ghost was supposed to haunt the old refectory, have left behind?

"Oh, if only Uncle Noel were here!" June muttered with a groan. "I'm certain he knows the truth, and I'm certain—"

She grew suddenly tense, for the three conspirators on the other side of the velvet curtains had abruptly broken off their conversation and were looking expectantly towards the door.

"Here's the Grey Falcon!" exclaimed the butler, as the door-handle turned.

June held her breath. At long last she was going to see the elusive master-crook face to face.

Who would he prove to be?

Her heart began to pound again, as she remembered the thumb-print in her autograph book and thought of the sensational suspicion which it had suggested.

Was her theory to be confirmed, or—

Taut and breathless, she watched the door swing open. A tall figure loomed into sight, and a genial voice rang out:

"Hallo, folks! Hope I haven't kept you waiting, but I had to wait until I was certain everyone was safely in bed. It wouldn't do for anyone to learn about this secret meeting, you know, especially as none of us is wearing the usual mask!"

And into the room stepped Howard Wyndham!

June gasped, and her eyes bulged with amazement. Although she had suspected the tenant of the Manor ever since her autograph album trick, nevertheless the discovery that her startling theory was true held her spellbound.

The Grey Falcon was the chairman of the college governors! The most respected man in the district! It was incredible—and yet it was true.

Howard Wyndham seated himself by the fire, and he and his gang began to converse in eager whispers.

But for a while June was too taken aback to attempt to listen. The thrill of her discovery still held her spellbound. What a sensation the news would cause when it became known! And how proud the school-girl detective would be when she was able to tell her uncle of her astounding discovery.

Thought of Uncle Noel made her excited smile fade, for suddenly she began to realise that it would not be easy to make use of her discovery if the famous detective really was a prisoner. For how could she hope to bowl out the Grey Falcon unaided? Without gilt-edged proof of Howard Wyndham's guilt her story would be laughed to scorn. And there was not long to secure that proof. By this time tomorrow night the crooks hoped to complete their haul, and then—

Abruptly she became aware of the Grey Falcon's confident voice addressing the rest of the gang.

"Yes; I've as good as solved the puzzle," he was declaring. "You need have no fear, folks. To-morrow night the secret will be ours, and before midnight we'll be safely aboard our yacht. By the way"—he turned to Miss Tuft—"have you made the necessary arrangements?" he asked.

The treacherous Form-mistress smiled and nodded.

"Yes; I had an interview with the Head this evening," she declared, "and she swallowed my story completely. She thinks that my sister is seriously ill, so she gave me leave of absence readily enough. I have arranged with her to leave after tea to-morrow."

"Good, then let's get down to business," said the Grey Falcon. "But first I'd better get that chart. It will help to explain my plans."

As he spoke he came striding across the room. June's heart did a crazy somersault of fear, for the master-crook was heading straight for the alcove. In alarm she realised that the chart of which he had spoken must repose in the bookcase to the right of the secret panel.

"Oh, golly, I've got to get out of here—quick!" she gasped.

With desperate haste she turned and went plunging down the three stone steps, then she grasped the rusty iron lever which protruded from the wall. At all costs she must close the panel before the Grey Falcon saw it.

But it was not to be.

Even as her fingers closed over the lever the velvet curtains of the alcove were swished aside, and there came a startled shout:

"The panel's open! Someone's been spying! Quick—follow me!"

### A CHEERING MESSAGE



WILDLY, June turned and went racing back down the underground passage. A furious bellow told her that her hooded, macintosh-clad figure had been seen, and, her heart thumping with fear, she rushed blindly on faster than ever. If she were caught now she could expect no mercy. She knew too much for the crooks' safety.

On she pounded, her face white, her breath coming in frantic, apprehensive gasps. Fortunately the tunnel was inky black, and, apparently, the Grey Falcon and his gang had no torches; also, the tunnel twisted and turned every few yards. The result was that, beyond that first blurred glimpse of June, the crooks saw nothing more of her, but the angry shouts, echoing eerily down the tunnel, told that they were still racing in hot pursuit.

Exhausted, breathless, June gained the circular chamber where the two main passages met. For a brief moment she turned her head, then, as she saw a dim light in the distance, she realised that one of the crooks had struck a match. She then put into action a desperate ruse.

Pulling off one shoe, she flung it so that it fell into the entrance to the passage leading to Smugglers' Cave and the open beach. Then she went racing down the other tunnel—the one which led to the staircase which gave access to the old refectory.

Once safely out of sight, June pulled up, and anxiously peered back round the corner.

She was just in time to see the Grey Falcon enter the circular chamber. Holding a flickering match above his head, he glared about him.

"Which way did she go?" he demanded. "The little spy mustn't escape. She knows too much, and—" He finished with an excited cry as he glimpsed the shoe. "She's lost a shoe by the look of it!" he announced. "Right—this way! Follow me!"

And he led the way down the other passage, quickly followed by the rest of the gang.

June heaved a sigh of heartfelt thankfulness. Her ruse had sent them off on a wild goose chase. One danger, at least, had been averted.

But what should she do now? That was the question she asked herself again and again when, having safely returned to school, she finally let herself into her cubicle and got into bed.

"Oh, if only Uncle Noel were here," she muttered to herself. "With his help, I could soon find a way of exposing Howard Wyndham—soon find a way of trapping the whole gang."

But Noel Raymond was missing, and, if her fears were justified, he was actually a prisoner.

How, then, could she hope to deal single-handed with the crooks? How, indeed, could she even hope to discover the truth about her uncle's fate?

As she lay there, acutely conscious of her utter helplessness, a new fear came to her.

Suppose Miss Tuft came up to the dormitory and, with brazen assurance, accused her of breaking bounds?

But, though the minutes passed, there came no sign of approaching footsteps. The rascally Form-mistress had decided, apparently, to make no effort to discover definitely which of her girls was Noel Raymond's niece. After all, June told herself miserably, why should Miss Tuft bother? What had she, or the Grey Falcon, to fear now? By this time to-morrow night they would be aboard their yacht—

would be setting sail with their mysterious booty, never to return.

The thought was agony to June, and she hardly slept a wink all night.

Her face was white and strained when she got up next morning, and Julie Vermont was quick to notice it. As she brushed her hair, the leader of the Upper Fourth regarded anxiously the girl she believed to be Dorothy Whiteman.

"Goodness gracious, what's the matter, Dorothy?" she asked. "You look like a ghost. Not feeling ill, are you?"

Hurriedly June shook her head. Though she would have loved to have confided in the friendly captain, she dared not. Even though she felt bowed down under her burden of worries, she must still safeguard her secret.

"No—I'm all right," she murmured. "Bit tired—that's all."

And, eager not to be bothered with more awkward questions, she hurriedly left the dormitory and went downstairs. And there something happened which completely transformed her. One of the maids was busy dusting in the hall, but as she saw June descending the stairs, she straightened up and put her hand into her apron-pocket.

"Good-morning, miss," she said. "I've got a letter for you!"

"A—letter?" June echoed in surprise. "Yes, miss—it was delivered by hand not a few moments ago."

Wonderingly, June took the envelope the girl handed over; then, as she glanced at the bold, masculine hand in which her name was penned, she gave an incredulous gasp, and the blood came rushing back to her cheeks.

"Why, it looks like uncle's handwriting," she whispered. "I do believe the note's from him!"

Oblivious of the curious stares of the maid, June ripped open the envelope and gave a delighted whoop as she saw Noel Raymond's signature at the foot of the letter it contained.

"It really is from him!" she exclaimed. "I've been worrying for nothing. Oh, goody! This changes everything!"

Almost delirious with joy, she eagerly scanned the few typewritten lines:

"Sorry I could not meet you at the Manor as arranged, but there was an unexpected setback. However, everything is all right now. Will explain when we meet. Come to the main dressing-room in the old refectory immediately after lunch. Whatever you do, don't fail me. Have great news, and together we will quickly bring the case to a successful conclusion."

June's eyes sparkled, and it was radiantly that she went into breakfast. So startling was her transformation that Julie could not help commenting upon it.

"Golly, you've soon perked up!" she ejaculated. "You look like a million dollars. What's the secret?"

June chuckled happily. "I've had some good news," she said, then curiously surveyed the plump girl. "But, by the look of you, it's more than you have had," she declared. "Why this sudden frown?"

Julie glowered across to the Fifth Form table, and with an irate hand indicated Cora Jarrod.

"She's been spreading more of her spiteful rumours," she declared. "She's trying to get the Upper Fourth blamed for what happened at the Manor last night."

Momentarily June forgot the exciting letter she had had from her uncle. Puzzledly she eyed her chum.

"Happened at the Manor," she repeated. "But what did happen?"

It was Julie's turn to look surprised. "Mean to say you haven't heard? Why, I thought the whole school knew about it—thanks to Cora." She glared across at the malicious Fifth Former again, then leaned

across the table. "Why, apparently Noel Raymond's niece—that girl named June Gaynor—broke into the Manor," she declared. "She stole several books out of the library and left a threatening message behind her."

"A—a threatening message?" echoed June, a little uneasily, for it was obvious that the Grey Falcon must have been the author of this false story, and she could not help wondering what had been the master-crook's motive.

Julie nodded. "Yes—apparently this June Gaynor blames Mr. Wyndham for all the attempts that have been made to capture her uncle, and her message threatened him with further reprisals unless he desisted."

"And that's not all!" It was Lady Sue, who sat next to Julie, who broke in. "According to Cora Jarrod, Mr. Wyndham still believes that Noel Raymond's niece is here in disguise."

"Yes—and Cora actually has the cheek to suggest that she's a member of our Form," declared Celia Treves, an indignant flush dyeing her cheeks.

Other girls joined in the conversation, and during the rest of the meal the Fifth Former's spiteful suggestion formed the one topic of discussion.

June, listening to the angry comments of her fellow Upper Fourth Formers, felt that queer sense of premonition which always assailed her when danger threatened.

What was the Grey Falcon's motive in inventing this story of an imaginary burglary and a fake threatening message? she asked herself again. It looked as if he still feared her, and was out to expose her. But how could he possibly do that? Although he and Miss Tuft might suspect that she was June Gaynor, they couldn't possibly prove it.

And then, as involuntarily her fingers closed around the letter in her pocket, June forgot her fears.

Whatever the Grey Falcon's latest scheme was, it would come to nothing. Uncle Noel would see to that. Once June had told him her sensational news and had learnt of all that he had discovered, it would not take them long to devise some means for outwitting the master-crook.

If all went well the Grey Falcon, instead of fleeing in his yacht to-night, would be under lock and key. Uncle Noel had as good as said so in his letter.

The sparkle returned to June's eyes as she thought of her appointment with Noel Raymond. What a lot they would have to tell each other! What thrilling plans they would have to prepare! And what a shock awaited the Grey Falcon and his gang!

Impatiently June waited for the lunch hour to come round. To her the morning seemed to drag on interminably, but at last the school bell clanged out, and eagerly June joined in the procession to the dining-room. She hurried through the meal, and as soon as she could, excused herself and left the table.

Her heart thumping excitedly, her pulses racing with eager expectancy, she slipped out of school and went racing across the grounds to the ancient building amongst the trees.

With the aid of her duplicate set of keys she let herself into the old refectory, and, clambering up on to the stage, made her way to the main dressing-room. The arched door stood ajar, and, with quivering fingers, she pushed it wide open.

"Uncle Noel"—she began, then stopped, for the long, dusty apartment, with its vaulted roof and mullioned windows, was empty. With an effort she smothered her disappointment. "I suppose he didn't expect me to get here so quickly," she told herself. "I'll have to wait in patience."

She stepped into the room and idly looked around. Instantly her gaze was drawn to the stone sill of one of the windows. Piled there were half a dozen leather-bound, valuable-looking books. She regarded them in surprise.



"Hallo, where did they come from?" she speculated.

Crossing to the window, she picked up the top book and opened it. Instantly she received a shock, for on the fly-leaf was a label indicating that the volume was the property of Howard Wyndham. And that was not all. As she flicked over the pages, she saw that many of them had been wantonly torn, while others had been daubed across with paint.

"What on earth does this mean?" she asked herself with a gasp.

One by one, she examined the rest of the books. All had been ruined in a similar way, and in the last book she discovered a loose sheet of paper. The words which had been painted on it seemed to leap out and strike her between the eyes:

"THIS WILL TEACH YOU TO LEAVE MY UNCLE ALONE.—(Signed) JUNE GAYNOR."

As she stared at that vengeful message and remembered what Julie Vermont had told her at breakfast that morning, June was again seized by that feeling of premonition.

"The Grey Falcon must have put these books here himself," she murmured. "And he must have written this note. But what—"

She broke off and eagerly turned towards the door as she heard approaching footsteps. "Uncle Noel!" she called. "Here—quickly!"

But it was not Noel Raymond who appeared in the doorway. It was three figures, who, obviously, from their scandalised looks, had overheard her excited cry.

Miss Stanton, Miss Tuft, and Howard Wyndham!

### THE TRAP



AS if petrified, June stood there, that book and incriminating note clutched in hands that had suddenly become lifeless. Like a lightning flash she realised the truth—realised that she was the victim of a cunning plot.

That letter she had received had not been from her uncle at all. The mocking gleam of triumph in Howard Wyndham's eyes proved it. Noel Raymond had been captured; was still a prisoner. And the Grey Falcon had sent her that forged note in order to trick her into visiting the forbidden refectory where he had left those mutilated books and that menacing note.

Blindly she had walked right into the carefully laid trap, and now, as she stood there, stunned by the overwhelming disaster which threatened to engulf her, Miss Stanton, her face white and distressed, took an agitated step forward.

"Then it's true! You are Noel Raymond's niece!" she whispered.

Miss Tuft gave an exultant nod. "Yes—even she can't deny it now!" she cried. "We all heard her call out his name as we approached, and—"

But a shout of mock horror interrupted her. Howard Wyndham, as if suddenly noticing the books for the first time, strode forward. He snatched the volume June still clutched, flicked over its pages, then gave another horrified cry.

"Look, it's been wantonly mutilated!" he announced hoarsely. "And look!"—snatching the note from June's other hand, he passed it to the scandalised headmistress. "This is her revenge for all I have done to try to bring about her uncle's arrest."

Dazedly Miss Stanton read the incriminating note, then she made a distressed gesture.

"Yes—this proves it," she murmured agitatedly. "There can be no possible doubt about it. You were right, after all, Miss Tuft."

This girl is an impostor. She is actually June Gaynor—the niece of that scoundrelly Grey Falcon."

As if from some horrible nightmare June roused herself, and, as she realised her plight, could see how all her excited hopes had been shattered, she drew in an angry breath.

"Yes!" she cried, defiantly facing the headmistress. "I am June Gaynor, but my uncle is not the Grey Falcon. If you really want to know who is that master-crook, then take a look at Howard Wyndham." Fiercely she pointed to the chairman of the college governors. "He is the scoundrel who ought to be arrested!" she exclaimed. "And it was he who tricked me into coming here! Those books weren't stolen—they were deliberately brought here by Howard Wyndham himself!"

"The girl's crazy!" declared Miss Tuft, with a pitying shake of the head.

Furiously June swung round. "Oh, no I'm not—and you know it!" she cried. "You're in this plot as well. You're every bit as bad—"

"Girl, how dare you!" With a supreme effort Miss Stanton recovered from the shock of June's stormy outburst. "Are not your crimes bad enough already without adding to them? How dare you speak of Mr. Wyndham and Miss Tuft like this?"

"I dare, because it's the truth!" cried June, but the headmistress raised a stern hand.

"Silence! I will not listen to another word of your preposterous story!"

"But—"

"Silence, I say! Miss Tuft!" Agitatedly the Head turned to the rascally Form-mistress.

"Please escort this girl to the detention-room." Howard Wyndham, a sardonic look in his eyes, gave an approving nod.

"Very good idea, Miss Stanton. She had better be kept locked up until we can decide what to do with her. A night in the detention-room may make her realise how wickedly foolish her behaviour has been."

As he spoke the rascally chairman of the governors grinned mockingly across at June.

She felt an icy chill clutch her heart. Obvious now his intention. He meant to keep her locked up until he and his gang had made good their escape, together with their booty.

Realising that once she had been shut up in the detention-room all hope would be gone, June turned desperately to the headmistress.

"Miss Stanton," she panted, "you must listen to me—"

But the Head raised a stern hand. "Not another word!" she ordered. "I refuse to listen to your wicked slanders!" Miss Tuft—again she beckoned to the Form-mistress—"take her away!"

Miss Tuft, an exultant grin curling her lips, stepped forward, but June, torn between tears and furious anger, shook off the hand that made to seize her arm.

"Don't you dare touch me!" she gasped. "I won't be locked up! I tell you—"

"Silence!" ordered the headmistress sternly, and Howard Wyndham, a disapproving look on his face, came striding forward.

"I'll lend you a hand, Miss Tuft," he said, and grimly seized June's other arm.

Furiously she struggled and strove to tear herself free.

"Let me go!" she burst out. "I won't—"

Between them the rascally pair forced June out of the room, along down the corridor, and back to the school, leaving Miss Stanton, her face white and distressed, to follow more slowly.

It looked like the final triumph for the Grey Falcon.

What chance is there now of June being able to bring the Grey Falcon to book? Be sure to read next Friday's exciting chapters of this serial.



## The Skating Girl's MYSTERY MASCOT

By MARIE MATHESON

### SHEILA'S DANGER

SHEILA MAYNE lived with her family at the little Canadian town of Juniper Bend.

The "Bluebirds," the skating club to which Sheila belonged, were anxious to do well in the forthcoming ice carnival and impress Lee Farrell, the film producer, who would be present.

Sheila's rival, Corinne Lefevre, was being tutored by Karl Olsen, who boarded with the Maynes. He and Corinne seemed curiously interested in an owl totem necklet which Sheila had found, and which Red Eagle, a young Redskin, told her to guard closely. He also offered to help her improve her skating.

While spending a week-end at Larry Green's home with the rest of the Bluebirds, Sheila discovered a portrait of an ancestor of Red Eagle's. She believed this to be a clue to the mystery, and ski-ing across to the wigwam where Red Eagle was camping, told him about the portrait.

As they were making arrangements for Red Eagle to secretly visit the house and see the portrait they heard voices.

Corinne and the rest of the Bluebirds had followed Sheila's ski-tracks, and were coming towards the wigwam. Sheila gasped in dismay. Whatever happened she must not be caught.

SHEILA gave a gasp of dismay as she saw the ski-ing party coasting down the long, snowy slope.

If she were caught here with Red Eagle, the Bluebirds might think that she had deliberately deceived them. It would give Corinne a chance to achieve the purpose Sheila was sure she had in view, that of getting her out of the Bluebirds and ruining her chance of achieving skating fame.

"Red Eagle," she panted. "They're coming straight here. What am I going to do?"

Red Eagle lowered the flap of the door he had raised and faced her gravely.

"Do not worry," he said. "Red Eagle will divert the attention of these curious ones, and

during that time you can slip out through the back and make your escape."

As he spoke he put on his skis, and, bow in hand, stepped out of the wigwam and went to meet the approaching party. Reaching the narrow tree-bridge which spanned the ravine, he stopped and waited.

Corinne was one of the first to spot him. She gave a shrill cry and pointed triumphantly.

"Look!" she cried. "That's the fellow—Red Eagle! I told you he was here, and I'll bet Sheila is hidden in that wigwam. Her excuse for not joining us was all bluff. The moment our back was turned she slipped out to meet that rascal!"

Larry Green, Jack Nelson, and some of the others looked indignant. They liked Sheila and resented Corinne's malicious suggestion. The rest, however, were disturbed by the thought that perhaps Sheila had preferred the company of an Indian they believed to be a rascal of their own.

"Well, we'll soon see," declared one of them, and led the way forward.

Barring the way at the end of the bridge, Red Eagle regarded them sternly.

"This is private property and Red Eagle does not wish to receive visitors," he announced. "What seek ye?"

"We're looking for a friend," explained Larry.

"Yes, a girl named Sheila Mayne," cut in Corinne, and she glared at the Indian youth. "It's no good you trying to bluff, we know she's been meeting you. Come on, stand aside. We're not going to let a rascally Redskin like you prevent us from learning the truth."

She made to storm forward, but Red Eagle did not budge.

"Paleface girl is insulting," he said coldly. "Red Eagle wishes to bandy no words with her. Let her and her friends depart."

Corinne glared more angrily than ever.

"Let me pass!" she shouted, and turned desperately to where Larry and the rest stood. "Come on, boys, make him move," she panted.

Red Eagle calmly fitted an arrow to his bow.

"I have no quarrel with palefaces," he said, "but I cannot permit them to cross the bridge. The land beyond is rented by Red Eagle. They have no right there."

Sheila, watching through a slit in the tent, saw to her delight that most of the Bluebirds were not inclined to provoke a row, and, as all their attention was concentrated on Red Eagle and the angrily arguing Corinne, Sheila darted across to the back of the wigwam.

"Now's my chance," she whispered. "Lifting the furry skin which formed the back wall, she crawled out and quickly put on her skis. From the other side of the bridge, she heard Larry's voice ring out.

"What this chap says is right, you know. Anyway, I don't believe Sheila has come here."

"I tell you, she has!" burst out Corinne. "Well, we can't prove it—so why get hot and bothered? Come on, I vote we turn back. It's time we returned home, anyway."

And Larry led the way back from the bridge. Sheila waited to hear no more. Screened by the trees, she went ski-ing through the forest. But she knew that Corinne would try to stir up more trouble. If she was to avoid awkward questions, it was essential that Sheila should reach the Green mansion first. Fortunately she knew a short cut, and down it she coasted, making for a snowbridge which spanned the ravine higher up. But when the ravine came within sight she got a shock. The snowbridge was down.

"There's only one thing for it," she told herself. "I'll have to risk ski-jumping over the ravine."

Precious minutes were lost while she trudged back up the slope, then, turning, she dug in her ski-sticks and went racing back down towards the ravine. The thrill and excitement of the long run down, and the quick leap out into the air made Sheila tingle, and for the moment forget her troubles.

Swish!  
Out she sailed into the air, arms outspread, skis close together, and then started to drop. For a moment she wondered if she had jumped short.

Then she was over the ravine and dropping to the snow.

Smack!

She landed pat and ran on, slowing to a stop before she struck out for the ground leading up to the outskirts of the Greens' home. She wondered anxiously whether she had left the Bluebirds behind. She looked around, but could see no sign of them. Hopefully she ski-ed on, but when she reached the Greens' home and went hurrying up the drive, she received an unpleasant surprise. Gathered by the porch were the rest of the Bluebirds. Thanks to the delay at the ravine, she had failed to arrive first. Clearly she could hear Corinne's spiteful voice.

"I tell you, I was not mistaken," she was declaring, "and I must say it's jolly queer that Sheila should want to hobnob with a rascal like Red Eagle. I'm almost certain I've seen his photo on a 'wanted' notice. He's an outlaw—"

She broke off as Sheila came into sight, then gave a triumphant cry.

"There she is! I knew she had been out! I knew her excuse about staying in was all bluff! Well, now perhaps you will realise what a deceitful girl she is!"

## THE BLUEBIRDS ARE ANNOYED



SHEILA was caught. There was no chance for her to withdraw now. The Bluebirds were all staring at her, mingled feelings showing on their faces.

Mavis Poynter and Mabel Rowan, two of her best friends, were definitely looking upset and dismayed. Sheila bit her lip, then pushed her way forward on her skis.

It was Larry Green who spoke first.

"Sheila, what does this mean?" he asked awkwardly. "You did tell us you were going to rest, didn't you? Yet you've been out."

Sheila realised that she must be frank and calmly she nodded.

"I did not mean to go out at all, at first," she answered. "But later I had my reasons. I went down to Mohawk Wood because of what Corinne had told me. I did see Red Eagle. But I don't see what business that is of Corinne's. I can have my own friends, surely."

Larry frowned. "I suppose so," he said. "All the same, I'm sorry to learn that you are friends with that Redskin fellow. By all accounts he's a bit of a rascal."

"He's more than that," put in Corinne. "I'm practically sure he's a wanted outlaw. If he's not, then why does he have to sneak about the way he does? And what's Sheila's purpose in meeting him?"

"Yes, Sheila, you're getting mixed up with the wrong sort of chap," chimed in Jack Nelson. "Of course, you've a perfect right to do as you like, but I must say I think you're unwise."

"If you ask me," declared one of the others, "she's letting down the club, carrying on like this."

Sheila saw that many of them were disgruntled and annoyed with her. Corinne had undoubtedly stirred up trouble. Trembling inwardly, but putting a brave face on the situation, Sheila stood up to them.

"Red Eagle is my friend," she said stoutly. "I've always found him to be straight and honourable. I won't believe a thing you say against him. Why, even Corinne was friendly with him once."

Corinne started, for she did not know that Sheila had witnessed her recent meeting with the mysterious young Redskin.

"Yes," she agreed. "I met him once, but what I saw of him was enough. I didn't trust him. I know he's a bad 'un. He's up to no good. I think Sheila should be ashamed of herself."

Sheila stood calm. She was not going to let Corinne upset her. Her enemy was trying to make the most of the awkward situation she found herself in.

"Whatever I say or do with Red Eagle is my own business," she answered. "I don't go poking into other people's affairs. I've good reasons for what I'm doing. I don't understand what all the fuss is about, anyway."

Larry nodded slowly. He liked Sheila and he was loyal to her.

"Sheila is quite right," he declared. "What she does is not our business unless it affects the club. Let's all forget it, and have some fun tobogganing before we prepare for the torchlight show to-night and the dance we're giving in the house. You're all here for a week-end's fun, not to squabble."

"Hear, hear," said Mavis Poynter. "Leave Sheila alone. It's her own private affair. I hate rowing."

There was a murmur of agreement from a number of the others. Sheila was one of the most popular club members, and they did not quite like the way Corinne had attacked her.

The suggestion of having some fun appealed to them all. Corinne was evidently disappointed when she saw the way the wind was blowing, but she gave Sheila an unpleasant look and shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, trouble'll come from it," she declared. "But I won't say any more now. Just wait and see if I'm not right."

"Oh, let's forget it!" urged Larry. "Come on, Sheila, you'll partner me in my first run."

He linked her arm and led her off towards the slopes near the house which were most suitable for tobogganing. In a few minutes



they had all got their toboggans out, and the fun started.

Coasting down with Larry, Sheila flashed him a grateful glance. The young president of the Bluebirds was evidently out to show that he would stand by her, whatever Corinne and her friends might think.

Not once did he ask her any awkward questions, but behaved just like his normal self. But all the time Sheila was conscious that he was worrying about her and her connection with Red Eagle.

"Never mind," she told herself. "Some day Larry will know the truth and find out that Red Eagle is what I believe him to be."

A riotous snowball fight ended the fun, and having stowed away all their gear, the Bluebirds trooped into the house for tea. It was a jolly, happy meal, and Sheila's companions seemed to have entirely forgotten the incident which had been so upsetting.

But whenever she looked across the table, Sheila found Corinne's eyes fixed on her, bright and malevolent. What could her enemy be plotting now? she wondered.

It was all so puzzling. Sheila knew that Corinne was jealous of her success at skating as the result of Red Eagle's coaching, but what was the meaning of the hint that Red Eagle had given her that Corinne had a definite purpose in trying to prevent her becoming a skating star?

Why, too, had he suggested that the mystery surrounding the totem was in some way connected with this ambition?

The more she puzzled over it, the more baffled Sheila felt. But there was a chance that she soon might learn the whole truth. She had given Red Eagle an invitation card to the party, and if she could obtain him access to the ball-room, and he could see the portrait there, then by reading the marks on the totem he might be able to solve the mystery.

Tea over, preparations were begun for the torchlight parade down on the lake, and also for the party. As a fair number of guests were expected, they had to have things ready in time.

The girls worked in the ball-room, putting up new decorations and setting up buffet tables in the adjoining lounge.

Down on the lake, the boys stacked torches ready and gathered wood for a fire. Sleighs and horses were decorated and held ready. At last all preparations were complete, and the Bluebirds went to don their masks and fancy-dress costumes. Mr. and Mrs. Green went down to the lake to receive the guests, who, after giving up their invitation cards, were escorted by the servants to the scene of revelry. A radiogram provided music, and soon the lake was dotted with picturesquely attired happy skaters. As each guest arrived Sheila waited anxiously, hoping that it might be Red Eagle, but she saw nothing of him.

Had anything happened to prevent him coming? she wondered. At that moment a bell rang out. It was time for the torchlight parade. At a signal from Larry, the guests all skated to one side, and the Bluebirds, removing their skates, mounted on the sleighs and formed their various tableaux.

Torches were kindled at the big fire and stuck at various points round the lake, while smaller ones were carried by skaters leading the horses.

It was a romantic, entrancing sight, and was greeted by cheers from the watching guests.

Larry, on the same sleigh as Sheila, was delighted with the success of the parade.

"We'll make a real go of this down in Juniper when we advertise the ice-ballet," he said enthusiastically. "It shows what we can do when we really try hard."

Sheila nodded, for she agreed with him. But inwardly she was still worried about Red Eagle's non-appearance.

There was more skating after the pro-

cession, after which the scheme was for everyone to go up to the house, sit down to a special supper with their partners, and then dance on till midnight.

Sheila had just finished a skating dance, and had left her partner, when a new figure came skating towards her. He was barchanded and dressed in simple buckskin, and wore a mask, but the minute he joined her she knew it was Red Eagle.

"Sheila," he whispered as he waltzed her off, "I had no time to find a disguise, so I just came like this, and stuffed my racoon cap in my pocket when I passed the gates. Red Eagle is sorry. He would have preferred to be disguised. He runs a great risk of being recognised."

Sheila's heart leapt. Her friend was here, and now she had to work fast to achieve her objective. Soon everyone would be going up to the house. But the ball-room would be empty till supper was over.

"Listen, Red Eagle," she whispered. "Now is our chance, I think. We'll slip away and get up to the house now. The ball-room is in darkness, but I can find you a torch. You can hide, perhaps, and then do what you want to do while we are all at supper. No one knows I have invited anyone."

"That is good," said Red Eagle. "Your plan seems satisfactory, Sheila. I will obtain what I came for and then slip away quietly. That is the best plan. Then there is no chance of your being involved in further trouble. Hurry, let us work quickly."

"No, no," breathed Sheila urgently, her fingers pressing his arm. "Don't do anything yet. Corinne has got her eyes on us. I believe she's suspicious."

Red Eagle nodded imperceptibly, and they skated on round the rink.

Corinne was standing at the edge of the rink, her eyes fixed on Sheila and her partner. For a heart-stopping moment she looked as if she would come across to them, but instead she skated away. Sheila waited for a few moments then quickly guided Red Eagle out of the light cast by the torches, then they slipped off the lake and out of the throng, in among some small trees. There, they removed their skates and took the road to the house.

"We haven't much time, Red Eagle," whispered Sheila. "I must show you the ball-room before the others all come in or any of the servants see you."

The house was partially in darkness, except for the entrance hall and the dining-room, with its well-spread supper table, and the lounge adjoining the ball-room.

"Look!" said Sheila softly, taking Red Eagle into the dimness of the lounge, with its palms and shrubs. "That is the door to the ball-room. It is closed now. But if you are quick you can get inside without anyone seeing you. I'll come with you, show you in, but first I must get you a torch."

She signalled Red Eagle to hide among the palms and raced upstairs to her room for her pocket torch. When she descended with it in her hand he eagerly grasped it.

"Many thanks," he whispered. "I should be able to find it myself now. Later I will communicate with you, either here or at Chinook Lodge."

He was just about to slip off when he stiffened and gripped Sheila's arm. Two figures had quietly entered the lounge. One was Corinne. The other was Jack Nelson.

"Hallo, who's there?" came Corinne's sharp tones. "I'm sure I heard voices. Jack. Yet I think we're the first ones up from the lake."

Corinne came striding forward, peering straight for the spot where Red Eagle and Sheila were standing in the semi-darkness. Red Eagle's fingers gripped Sheila's tightly. In another moment it seemed as if they were bound to be discovered.

## A STARTLING DISCOVERY



"HSST! This is bad medicine. But leave everything to me," Red Eagle whispered in Sheila's ears. "I'll bluff them, then slip away."

Taking a pebble from a pot in which a tall palm stood, the young Redskin made a swift cast in the darkness.

As the pebble struck one of the shaded lamps immediately behind them, Corinne and her partner started, halted, and looked round in surprise.

It gave Red Eagle the moment he wanted. He darted off lightly into the ball-room corridor, vanishing in the darkness there.

"What was that, I wonder?" asked Corinne sharply. "There is someone here. I'm going to find out."

Sheila stood trembling, then, finding a chair close to her, swiftly sat down in it. A little trill of laughter came from her lips.

"Scared you, didn't I, Corinne?" she called in a natural voice, feeling relieved now that Red Eagle had managed to make himself scarce. He knew his bearings, had the torch she had brought, and would surely be able to carry out his plans now without her assistance.

"That's Sheila," called Jack Nelson, and he clicked down the switch on the wall behind him.

The light flashed on, illuminating the whole carefully set out lounge quite clearly, just as the rest of the Bluebirds and their guests came trooping in. It also revealed Sheila, sitting in the chair, in costume and the only one to be still masked.

"Yes, it's me," agreed Sheila, smilingly taking off her mask.

Corinne, in Magyar costume, peered sharply at her.

"What are you doing, hiding in here?" she demanded. "Resting again, I suppose, or up to some more of your queer tricks. I don't expect you sneaked up here before the others for nothing."

Jack Nelson looked uneasily from one girl to the other.

"Sssh!" he cautioned. "Here's everyone!"

But Corinne had given a sharp cry, and was darting forward. Reaching past Sheila's chair, she pounced for something that lay on the floor there.

"Look," she cried. "I knew it. An eagle's feather. The same as that rascal Red Eagle was wearing in his cap when we saw him this afternoon."

Sheila's heart went cold with dismay as she eyed the feather which Corinne now waved at her accusingly. It was undoubtedly Red Eagle's, and must have fallen from the cap which he had stuffed into his pocket while they had been standing there in the dimness.

Larry Green stepped forward. The rest of the Bluebirds were all staring wonderingly.

"Give it to me, Corinne," he demanded. "Yes, it's the same feather. I could swear it. If that scoundrel's broken into the house I'll see to it that he's punished. Sheila, don't you see what this means? The fellow is a rogue. He had no right here."

Sheila rose and faced them all.

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## THE HOUSE OF THE GOLDEN MOON

An enthralling story of mystery and adventure in Egypt by Hazel Armitage. It will appear complete in next Friday's

## GIRLS' CRYSTAL

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"Yes, he had," she declared unflinchingly. "I invited him."

Larry's face went crimson. He was both hurt and angry. The remainder of the crowd stared at Sheila incredulously.

"Is that true, Sheila?" asked Mavis Poynter in amazement.

"Yes, I gave him my invitation card," said Sheila. "He was shy of coming, and now he's disappeared, probably because you've all scared him."

"Well, I think that's just the limit," snapped Corinne. "Asking a bouncer like that to our party. Look here, Larry, I'll bet he's up to no good. Let's search the house and find him. Then we'll force him to give some explanation of himself."

Sheila quivered. She saw that Corinne was triumphant over her discovery, and that while some of the Bluebirds looked uneasy, the rest were definitely angry at her having invited a doubtful character to the party. But now a new dread gripped her. What if Red Eagle was discovered? Would he be able to give a satisfactory explanation?

"I didn't think I was doing any harm, inviting him," she said, facing them all, with two red spots on her white cheeks. "I am positive he is as decent and as honest as anyone here."

"We'll see," said Larry Green grimly. "Come on, everyone. We'll search the house for him. Sorry, Sheila," he added with an apologetic glance at that girl, "but we've simply got to clear up this business once and for all."

The other boy members of the club went off with him, and Corinne gave Sheila a vindictive glance.

"You'll see, no good will come of this," she declared. "You're a fool, Sheila Mayne. I warned you."

But a complete search of the house revealed nothing, not a sign of the mystery Redskin. The supper bell had just started ringing, so Larry looked at them all.

"Not a word of this to the old folks," he warned them. "We don't want to spoil their evening. The fellow seems to have gone, thank goodness."

Sheila trooped unhappily into supper with the others. Where had Red Eagle got to? Would his mission fail now? Had all her efforts been for nothing, and would she now have to endure the suspicion of even her best friends?

She did her best to join in the fun at the table, but anxiety held her fast. She just could not be natural. The trifle was being handed round, and Mr. Green gave an order to one of the servants, who left the room.

"I've sent to have the ball-room lit up, so it'll be ready for you young folks dancing," said Larry's father. "You want to make the most of this evening, and— He broke off with a gasp. "Whatever's the matter, Baines?"

The door of the dining-room had been thrown wide, and the servant who had just left had reappeared, white and breathless.

"There's been a burglary—in the ball-room, sir," he shouted. "Come and see—quick!"

In a moment everyone was on their feet and a rush was made for the ball-room. Sheila, one of the first to enter, gave a gasp of amazement at what greeted her.

A chill wind was blowing aside a heavy curtain that had covered one of the french windows, whose glass now lay in atoms on the ball-room floor. But it was Corinne's voice that directed everyone's attention.

"Look," she cried in a voice that quivered with anger. "The portrait! It's been stolen! I knew Red Eagle came here for no good."

Sheila stared at the portrait, but only saw a large, gaping frame. The picture of Red Eagle's ancestor had been ripped clean out of the frame and was gone!

Next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** will contain another thrilling instalment of this grand serial.



# THE BOY Her Pet Mistrusted

(Continued from  
page 144.)

"Why, yes," Joy said at once. "I did."  
"You did!" He drew a deep breath. "In that study, Joy, was my television set. It cost a lot of money before the war."

"Yes, I—I saw it," Joy wonderingly admitted.

"I was going to sell that set to Long," her uncle went on heavily. "I WAS, I said, but I'm not now. When we both went to inspect it a minute or two ago, we found the thing smashed to atoms. Now, how do you account for that?"

There was a moment of dumbfounded silence. Joy stared at him in amazement. She remembered the set. It had been standing in perfect, if dusty, condition when she had shut Dirk in the study.

She had not noticed it when she had released Dirk, because Dirk had come to the door so quickly. But the accident to the set had obviously happened during the time that Dirk had been in the room.

The same thought was apparently running through Yorke's mind. For suddenly he stared at her. Suddenly he let out a startled exclamation.

"Joy, surely it wasn't Dirk—"

He stopped, his tongue clicking short on the name, as he suddenly realised the truth he had blurted.

Uncle Bob's eyes gleamed.

"Joy, you let Dirk in that room?"

"Yes," Joy faltered. "I shut him up there while we explored. But, uncle, I'm sure—"  
"And so am I," her uncle said. "It's pretty plain, isn't it? Neither you nor Yorke upset the set. If Dirk was alone in that room for any length of time, who else could it have been? Joy, this is a pretty big blow to me. Mr. Long had offered me a big sum of money for that set."

He drew a deep breath.

"I think," he added, "that I'm entitled to speak plainly now. I don't like your dog, Joy, because I don't like the breed. I don't like its way of getting in and out of places, and I certainly don't like its clumsiness. And so"—he pursed his lips—"Joy, you must get rid of Dirk!"

## THE FIND IN THE LODGE



IT was obvious that Uncle Bob meant what he said.

"If you want this job, you can't have Dirk as well," he went on firmly. "And so tomorrow morning you can trot him over into Staple and leave him at the vet's."

It was a heavy-hearted Joy who sat down to lunch with her still ruffled uncle, and a silent, sympathetic Yorke. She was to lose Dirk! Dirk was to go! After three years—three years in which she had educated Dirk from a winsome, frolicsome puppy, she was to lose him. She couldn't do it! She just couldn't. It would break her heart.

And yet, what alternative was there?

She was puzzled as well as unhappy. As a

pup certainly Dirk had been clumsy, but since he had grown older there just hadn't been a more careful dog in spite of his size. It was strange, too, she thought, that although Dirk was supposed to have upset the television set, she, who had been in the house, had heard no sound.

After lunch when she and Yorke were working together in the kennels again, she mentioned the fact to him.

"I know it is queer," he said. "You would have expected it to make a row, wouldn't you? But it fell on carpet, remember, and we were at the other side of the house."

"And now—now Dirk must go," Joy said.

"I'm sorry, Joy." His voice was so sympathetic and sincere that she half felt the tears starting to her eyes.

"It—it'll be beastly without him," she said.

"Of course it will—at first," Yorke said gently. "But you'll soon get used to it, Joy. With all the other dogs around you'll be surprised how quickly you'll forget Dirk. And, after all," he added seriously, "this is your job now, isn't it? You've got to put that first. I'm sorry, because I like the old chap, though he doesn't seem to like me. Don't worry too much about it, Joy."

But Joy did, though she was grateful to Yorke for the comfort his words were intended to give. She knew there would never, never be any other dog to fill her heart as Dirk had filled it.

After tea she took him for a run in the fields at the rear of the cottage. There she sat on a grassy bank, and catching his face in her hands, looked long and keenly into those shining amber eyes of his.

"Dirk, why did you do it?" she asked.

He put his head on one side, his eyes puzzled. "DID you do it, Dirk?"

Again he shook his head, eyeing her with puzzled mystification. Taking her hands away from his collar, she saw that some tiny strands of material had got caught in the brass studs which adorned it.

Almost without thinking she plucked one away, and idly examined it. The fibre in her hand was obviously a thread from a sack or a sandbag. She remembered noticing one or two of them lying about in the Lodge. But Dirk hadn't been anywhere near them. Dirk had never touched them.

Then how, she found herself wondering, had the strand got caught in the studs of his collar?

She shook her head. It didn't seem very important compared with the thought of parting with him to-morrow.

She couldn't! Yet she must unless—

Unless she could prove to her uncle that Dirk wasn't guilty—that his television set had got upset in some other way.

"If only I could!" she breathed.

Could she? She pondered the matter on her homeward journey. There was a chance—a feeble one, it was true—but one which she was resolved to try.

Just after ten that night they all went to bed.

In her bed-room, Joy became busy at once. She did not undress. Instead, she went to her case, and from it fished out a small pocket torch. It was nearly midnight when her heart beating fast, she crept downstairs again, took her uncle's keys from the nail on the wall, and silently let herself out of the cottage.



With a warning whisper she approached Dirk's kennel.

"All right, old boy, it's only me."

There came a low, pleased whine in response.

Quietly Joy let Dirk out, and softly they both stole along the pathway between the kennels. At last the Lodge was reached. Cautiously Joy fitted the key, and, allowing Dirk to go before her, entered the place.

He padded along beside her as she made her way to the old study. Everything was whisperingly silent, very still. Suppressing a shudder, Joy felt glad of Dirk's company.

Trembling a little, Joy opened the door. Dirk, still by her side, gave a low growl as she stepped inside, switching on the light.

She halted, peering around.

Her eyes went at once to the upset television set lying smashed on its side. Again Dirk gave a strange, agitated whine, and reaching out a hand Joy patted him reassuringly on the head. At once the dog became silent.

Joy gazed around, taking in every detail. And suddenly she started as she saw a sand-bag lying by the fireplace. Immediately she thought of those strands she had found caught in the studs of Dirk's collar. Then she crossed over to the ruined television cabinet.

It was smashed all right. But it was not smashed in the way she had expected it to be, as if it had been merely overturned. It looked rather as if some heavy weight had been dropped on its lengthwise surface. One panel out of the side had been smashed in, and approaching curiously, she saw that the internal works through this panel had been completely smashed up.

"Funny," she said to Dirk. "I wonder—". And then all at once an idea struck her. This looked to her as if it had been done deliberately. It was no accident—certainly not one that could have been caused by Dirk.

Her heart raced at the thought. While Dirk, growling a little in his throat, wandered around sniffing the air, she examined the cabinet again. It still bore a layer of dust, but here and there the dust was disturbed, and now, looking at the surface which confronted her, she felt a quick thrill. For unmistakably imprinted in that dust was a footprint—the patterned print of a sole which had been made of rubber.

"Somebody jumped on or kicked this set after overturning it," she said softly. "I'm sure—".

A low, eager whine came from Dirk. Suddenly he came trotting to her carrying something in his mouth.

As Joy turned he dropped the object on the ground, growling at it.

Stooping, Joy picked it up. It was a leather button, one which could only have come from a sports coat. For a second she stared at it. Then, as if a sudden wind had rushed into her mind, clearing it of confusion, she gave a little jump.

It was the same sort of button which she had seen on the jacket Yorke Norton had worn that day.

She stiffened. Suddenly she found her thoughts racing. Suddenly she was remembering Dirk's strange antipathy for the boy, Yorke's own anxiety to exclude the dog from the search—the fact that he and she had been searching away from each other in different directions this morning. Yes, and it was he who had blurted out Dirk's name to her uncle. Was it possible—

No, no, she told herself. She was just imagining things. And yet—yet—

There was the footprint on the dust of the smashed cabinet. That, she felt sure, was Yorke's. There was the sack by the fireplace. And suddenly, in a blinding flash, she realised why she had found traces of sacking caught in the studs of Dirk's collar. Somebody had thrown that sack over Dirk's head. Somebody—

She felt shaken and weak all at once. But

she knew one thing now for certain. Dirk had not done this. Yorke had. But if that was true, why? What was his game?

In an instant the answer came. Yorke, like herself, was on the track of the hiding-place of her father's lost hoard of sports trophies.

Astounding as this seemed, Joy felt sure it was the truth. But what could she do about it? How could she prove her suspicions of Yorke, and so save the parting from her pet?

## HIS TRUE COLOURS



IN the morning Uncle Bob harnessed up the trap. He stood by while Dirk climbed into the seat beside Joy, and he watched them drive off.

But Joy did not go to the vet's. In a side street she made Dirk crouch in the well of the trap, and there covered him with rugs. Then, driving back along the same road again, she halted at Staples Wood, a little cove not a quarter of a mile from the cottage. And there, in the old woodsman's hut, hid him.

"And whatever you do, Dirk, don't make a sound until you see me again," she breathed.

She returned to the kennels to find Yorke and her uncle busy. Her uncle glanced at her as she came in.

"So you're back," he said. "Did you leave the dog?"

"Yes, uncle," she said, feeling it unnecessary to say where.

"Good. I'll talk to the vet when I go into town at the week-end. Now perhaps you'd better come and help."

"Yes, uncle."

She got busy, working side by side with Yorke. He was pleasant, sympathetic, and though she played up to him, Joy had great difficulty at times in not allowing her thoughts to betray themselves on her face. She was still asking herself if it could be true that Yorke was the culprit when she saw his coat hanging up on a post, and spotted the small button that was missing from one of the sleeves.

That button was identical with the one Dirk had found in the Lodge last night.

Later, after lunch, when Yorke, sitting with his legs crossed, all unwittingly displayed the sole of his shoe, she knew that the prints on the television cabinet could have been made by no other shoe than his. And she knew then for certain that Yorke was her enemy. Yorke was playing some game of his own.

After tea, with work in the kennels finished for the day, Joy examined her father's medal again.

Once again she read that cryptic line: "Follow clue on the reverse."

But the other side of the medal contained only the maker's design of crossed darts.

Joy frowned. Once again she turned to her father's inscription. And then suddenly and intently she found herself peering forward—not at the words this time, but at the little squiggle beneath it. And now, for the first time, she saw that squiggle was no mere flourish as she had at first imagined. It was a definite if crude design.

"Wait a jiff, I'll get my magnifying-glass," she breathed.

Under the magnifying-glass the design seemed to jump into life. The outline of a squat, peculiarly shaped vase—an outline which struck her as familiar at once. And staring at it now with a new throb of excitement, she suddenly recognised it.

The bowl, one of her father's less valuable trophies, had been won in a darts competition. It was only made of metal, but for years it had adorned the mantelpiece of the drawing-room at the Lodge. She remembered seeing it during her search yesterday. Like the medal, it was decorated with crossed darts. She recalled it

more fully now, and remembered that it was fitted with a lid.

A sparkle came to Joy's eyes, a flush to her face. Her plans were made.

"You seem bucked about something, Joy," Yorke Norton remarked at supper. "I thought you'd be worrying over Dirk."

She smiled and murmured some reply. But she knew from that moment that Yorke was watching her, and she resolved to be on her guard.

Her relief was great when bed-time came at last. Once again she waited in her room ready dressed, and when she judged that Uncle Bob and Yorke were fast asleep she stole out.

Five minutes' swift walking through the moonlit night brought her to the hut in the woods, and with a delighted Dirk frisking puppy-like before her, she made her way again to the Lodge.

With the keys she had brought from the cottage she let herself in, hissed to Dirk to keep quiet, and closed the door. And then with the dog—his presence strangely comforting in the crumbling old house—at her side, she flashed on her torch and made her way to the drawing-room.

"Dirk, on guard!" she said outside the door. Immediately Dirk sat down. Joy's eyes went at once to the unpretentious darts bowl on the mantelpiece. It was not a big article—no bigger than a tea-cup, in fact, but when she took it down and tried to unscrew the lid she found to her vexation that it was fastened tight.

"Now, what?" she murmured, and examining it more closely, saw that a film of solder had been run round the join, firmly fixing the lid to the bowl itself.

She knew then, beyond doubt, that she was on the right track. As she shook the thing and heard a faint rustle from inside, her excitement rose.

From Dirk came a sudden shattering bark: a snarl. Joy twisted, instinctively thrusting the bowl into the large pocket of the mac she was wearing. Then came a crash and a thump, a sudden furious shout.

"Down, you beast! By Harry, it's Joy's dog!" Joy stood rooted as her uncle appeared at the door, firmly gripping Dirk's collar. His eyes blazed across the room at her.

"So this is your game!" he said. "You—your deceiver, Joy! You tricked me into believing you had taken this dog away, and here he is, attacking me as soon as I set foot in my own property. All right! All right!" He breathed heavily. "I'll attend to this dog now. From this moment Dirk is in my charge, and I'll warn you there'll be no tricks this time!"

Joy was heartbroken then. In vain she pleaded, in vain she begged. Uncle Bob was adamant. Dirk, he declared, should be shut in the cellar of the cottage for the rest of the night. To-morrow he would take him to the vet's himself.

And so, with Uncle Bob firmly gripping the dog's collar, and Joy bringing up a dreary rear, they proceeded back to the cottage. There Yorke came forward to meet them.

"You were right, Yorke, there was something happening at the Lodge. This!" Uncle Bob said, indicating the dog, and Joy bit her lip, realising that Yorke had again given her away while artfully keeping himself out of the picture. "And now, you animal," Uncle Bob breathed, and tugged the downtailed Dirk towards the door that led to the cellar. Yorke, with a little cough, looked at Joy.

"Joy, I'm frightfully sorry—"

"No, you're not!" snapped Joy. "You know you deliberately gave me away to uncle. What was the idea?"

He gazed at her reproachfully, all the distress in the world on his face now. Really, Joy thought, the fellow was a marvellous actor, but she would not trust him. In any case, she thought, with a flash of comfort, as she fingered the bowl still in her pocket, she had

the secret now—or the bowl which contained the secret. He knew nothing about that.

Uncle Bob came back in a few minutes, announcing that Dirk was tied up, locked up, and safe. Gruffly he ordered both Yorke and Joy to bed, and up the stairs they went. Once in her own room, however, Joy locked the door again, and with the point of a pair of cutting-out scissors got busy removing the solder which held the lid of the darts bowl.

Presently she felt a little thrill of exultation as the lid snapped off, and out of the upturned trophy fluttered a little square of paper.

A paper—written in the well-remembered hand of her father.

Almost holding her breath, Joy read it, and so great was her excitement then that she almost cried out aloud. For on it her father had written:

"Look beyond the third panel which faces the door in the entrance hall of the Lodge. What is found there belongs to my dearly loved daughter, Joy Benson."

"The third panel!"

She was quivering now. If she waited for daylight, Yorke would undoubtedly spy on her every step. Besides, to-morrow Dirk was to go to the vet's, and it would then be too late to clear her pet's name.

"I'll go now," she told herself.

She waited a little while longer, and then, when all was quiet, she crept to her door, let herself out, and slipped noiselessly down the stairs. Outside she shivered a little in the night air, and blinked a little in the darkness, for the moon had gone, and the night had become a greyish black, which made it difficult to discern objects even near at hand.

But she knew the way, and confidently she stepped along the concrete pathway.

Until—

Behind her she heard a sudden sound—a movement, a heavy breath. She halted, was in the act of twisting, when something was thrown over her head and viciously pulled across her shoulders, keeping her arms helpless to her sides.

In a choking gasp she tried to cry out, guessing in that sickening moment that Yorke had stayed awake, and had followed her.

Then she heard the snick of one of the metal doors of the kennels; felt herself thrust forward, and again heard a key being metallically turned in the lock. She was a prisoner.

For a few minutes Joy gasped and struggled. Then somehow she managed to whip the clinging cloth from her face.

"Help!" she cried, but she knew that her uncle, who was a heavy sleeper, would not hear.

She flung herself at the metal kennel door. But she knew that was hopeless.

"Oh, what—what shall I do?" she cried. "Oh, if only Dirk were with me now!"

**DIRK**, the Alsatian, pricked up his ears. He had heard Joy's urgent, summoning whistle—a sound to which he had never yet failed to respond. At once his magnificent head flashed towards the grating which instinct told him was his only possible avenue to freedom.

Uncle Bob had fixed Dirk by a rope to a staple in the wall, but Dirk had already bitten through the rope, and was now rambling in the cellar.

Dirk, as was his habit, had also tested the door, and had given up any hope of escape that way. Ordinary door-handles he could manage, but not this stout lock.

He looked again at the grating. There was a pile of coal beneath it. Slipping occasionally, Dirk climbed the mound. With his nose at the grating, he sniffed and whined. The opening had been covered with wire mesh



from the outside. It was impossible to get a hold on it with his teeth.

With a throaty whine Dirk jammed his head into the oblong guarded by the mesh, gruntingly braced himself, and then hurled his weight forward against the mesh.

Nothing happened, except that the mesh gave a protesting squeak.

Dirk jerked again and again, putting every ounce of effort into the movement. A dozen times he repeated the performance, until with a click something outside snapped, and one end of the mesh became free. Frantically then the dog renewed his efforts. Another corner snapped—another. Dirk gave one joyous whine, and leapt through, and next moment had dropped to the ground outside.

Joy, desperately clinging to the wire fencing, was trying to get her arm round to the key which Yorke had left in the door.

Then she saw Dirk.  
"Dirk!" she cried joyously. "The key—the key, boy!"

Dirk understood. Raising himself up on to his hind legs, his strong white teeth gripped the key, a twist of his great head, and it turned. And Joy, with a sobbing cry of gratitude, turned the handle and flung open the door.

"Dirk!" she cried, and bent for a moment, her face buried in his warm fur. "Oh, Dirk, you darling!" she choked. "But now, Dirk—with her brain suddenly working like lightning—fetch uncle!"

Just for a second Dirk stared at her, then he turned, and with a sharp bark headed towards the cottage. Joy made straight for the Lodge.

Sounds there, a subdued light, told her that Yorke was already busy.

She reached the door. Bracing herself, she pushed it open and peered in.

Yorke! she breathed.

There, directly in front of her was Yorke Norton. A panel in the wall had been ripped out, and Yorke was in the act of stuffing cups and bowls and shields into a sack at his side. They were her father's trophies.

"You—you thief!" she found herself suddenly panting, and ran forward. And at the sound of her voice, her steps, Yorke with a start turned, his hand gripping on the cup he held.

For the first time Joy saw the real Yorke Norton. His eyes were blazing, his lips were drawn back in a snarl.

"You!" he said thickly. "You—what do you want here?"

"I want my father's property!" Joy said scornfully. "I've come here to prevent you from stealing it. Put that down—"

His answer was a short, clipped laugh, horrid in its harshness, and with fury still gleaming in his eyes, he advanced upon her, the cup upraised.

Joy saw his intention then. She shrank back, but at the same instant there was a growl.

A dark brown shape shot past Joy. She saw the face of Yorke suddenly blotted out. He went backward with a yell, Dirk on top of him. And then she turned as she heard a voice, and saw Uncle Bob in his dressing-gown and slippers standing there with an amazed look on his face.

"By jingo!" he said. "The trophies—and Yorke—"

"Yes, Yorke—stealing them!" Joy cried. "He was going to attack me, too."

"I know. I saw it," her uncle answered angrily. "The dog saved you, Joy. Gad—yes, I see now why you're so fond of him—why you wouldn't part with him. And I—I'm the fool—I let that lout hoodwink me. But no more," he added grimly. "I think we've found out Mr. Norton, and I'm going to have pleasure in taking him, not Dirk, to town to-morrow, and not to the vets either," he added, as the

terrified Yorke with Dirk clinging to his coat, gave a protesting whimper. "He'll go to the police station."

And that was where Yorke went, and when Uncle Bob returned he came straight to Joy.

"I'm sorry, Joy, I was an idiot about your dog," he said. "He's a good lad, and I'll like to have him around."

And Joy, holding her pet's paw in her hand, smiled up at him happily.

THE END.

## THE MERRYMAKERS AT COLLEGE

(Continued from page 148.)

Sally saw Sylvia take one shy little bow at the footlights. And she saw Uncle Jasper rising heavily from his seat.

SALLY was standing in the Green Room beside Sylvia when Uncle Jasper came in.

"Wasn't she marvellous, sir?" Sally burst out breathlessly. "Aren't you proud of Sylvia? She was the hit of the play! It took a lot of grit, sir, to carry the whole show on her shoulders like that!"

"Yes," he murmured thoughtfully. "I suppose it did take a whole lot of grit—eh, Sylvia?"

"I'd never have got through with it if it hadn't been for Sally," Sylvia said in a small voice, and then she drew a deep breath and moistened her lips. "I know it was acefful, and you were bound to find out that I'd been deceiving you all along, and I'm not captain of the Merry-makers Club and never have been, Uncle Jasper—but I took the part to-night because I promised Sally I wouldn't let her down!"

Uncle Jasper was silent for a moment. "I'm glad you've confessed your deceit to me," he said slowly. "Did it strike you, Sylvia, that I should hear everybody mentioning Sally Warner's name as captain before I'd been in my seat five minutes?"

"Yes, uncle, I guessed you would!" admitted Sylvia in a flat little voice.

"And yet you still went through your part—bravely—and played it very well indeed!" And all the hardness had melted in Uncle Jasper's grim face. "Well, well, you were a minx to deceive me, but it's not going to be hard to forgive you! You're a good trier, Sylvia! You'll get on!"

Then his big hands went out—one to Sylvia, the other to Sally.

"I know I'm a tough old nut sometimes. Expect too much of you, don't I, niece?" he said. "But you, Sally Warner—you've achieved what I never could, and you've succeeded in getting the best out of Sylvia by better ways than mine! Go on being a pal to her. She needs someone like you to spur her on!"

Sally smiled across at Sylvia, whose eyes were full of warm gratitude.

Afterwards, when Uncle Jasper had gone to see the dean, Aunt Cloe, looking very relieved, told them that no one had ever understood Uncle Jasper like Sally. Certainly Elsie Pynn didn't. She made a great mistake when she went telling tales to the blunt, plain-speaking Uncle Jasper. And when Uncle Jasper, beaming, left with Aunt Cloe, Sylvia and Sally were at the gate to wave them on their way, Sylvia no longer afraid of her uncle.

(End of this week's story.)

In next Friday's GIRLS' CRYSTAL there will be another sparkling story, featuring Sally and the Merry-makers. So don't miss your copy.

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