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EVERY
FRIDAY.

GIRLS' CRYSTAL ^{3rd}

Week
Ending
June 19th,
1948.

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"



HER HOLIDAY WITH LING MIN YO

The Onrushing Logs Had Been Released By Their Enemy—Written by DORIS BROOKES

A THRILLING RESCUE

WHILE staying at Puchow in China with her friend, Ling Min Yo, Maureen Carstairs learnt that an organisation known as the Scarlet Dragon, whose leader was Ku Yi Tso, was scheming against the House of Ling.

She befriended Wong, a young boatman whom the Lings believed was chief of the river pirates.

As a result of this friendship, and the cunning of Ku, Maureen was forced to disguise herself as a Chinese girl, and together with Min Yo, became a fugitive.

They hid in a cavern while Wong was away on a mission connected with a mysterious jade tablet.

The two girls were caught and banished up river. For miles in the pouring rain they were marched by men whom Maureen believed to be members of the Scarlet Dragon. At last they halted on the banks of the river.

And suddenly Maureen's heart leapt. She could hear the roar of oncoming motor-boats. Could it be Wong, come to rescue them?

MAUREEN'S heart was racing, a wild hope surging through her. With straining eyes she peered through the mist of rain. But as yet she could see nothing; only hear that vibrant roar, growing louder, coming nearer.

Could it be Wong and his pirates, out there on the river?

She felt a tug at the rope with which she and Min Yo had been bound together by their captors.

"What is it, Maureen?" whispered the Chinese girl, her pale, streaming-wet face suddenly animated. "What makes all this noise?"

"Motor-boats, Yo-Yo!" Maureen breathed. "I'm wondering if it's Wong. Watch the river and get ready to shout for help if it is!"

But others were watching, too. Their captors, muttering uneasily

among themselves, had abandoned the preparations of a meal. They clustered together under the rocky ledge, gesticulating agitatedly. Then two of them came rushing forward, and the girls found themselves seized. Maureen struggled wildly. Now the roar had reached a shattering crescendo of sound.

Out of the curtain of mist and rain over the river suddenly appeared the motor-boats—a fleet of them, racing through the water in arrowhead formation. It was a stirring, never-to-be-forgotten sight.

And in the bows of the leading craft stood a statuesque figure, proud and magnificent in a vivid blue costume of silk on which was emblazoned a silver crescent.

"Wong! It is Wong!" Maureen cried, frantic with joy.

But from the guards went up a wail of fear.

"The pirates come! Do not let them see us. Hide the prisoners!"

They began dragging the struggling girls away from the river. An awful fear suddenly gripped Maureen—the fear that she and Min Yo would not be seen by Wong; that, after all, with rescue so close at hand, it would yet pass them by.

Desperately, frantically, she fought and squirmed. Beating her hands in the face of the man who held her, she managed to wriggle free. Back to the bank she began running, tugging Min Yo after her.

"Wong—Wong! Help—"

Her shout ended in a choked splutter as once again she was seized and a hand thrust over her mouth.

But those few moments of freedom had been sufficient.

Wong had heard and seen. Instantly his hand shot up, swept round in a signal. The fleet of motor-boats changed course and raced towards the bank.

Another panic-stricken cry went up from the Scarlet Dragon men. Concealment was useless now.

"Bring up the horses! We must flee!"

Fiercer than ever Maureen struggled, only to crumple suddenly as a blow fell on her head, dazing her. Down beside her Min Yo was dragged.

Then both were caught up again by their captors and dragged towards where the horses were being untethered.

Crack, crack!

Shots rang out from the river. Wong's fleet had reached the bank. One by one the motor-boats swooped up. With a lithe leap Wong was first ashore, and after him poured his faithful followers.

Crack, crack!

The Scarlet Dragon men were firing back wildly. Bullets whistled through the air, but Wong came on fearlessly.

His face was grim and forbidding, yet racked with anxiety. He saw the girls being lashed to one of the horses. He rushed on, oblivious of the hissing bullets.

"Villains!" he raged. "You have dared to harm the girls, and for that you shall suffer!"

Like an avenging fury, he plunged among the Scarlet Dragon men. He reached the two girls just as one of the guards was about to send the horse galloping away. With one terrific blow Wong felled the man. Then he was drawing Maureen down into his arms. One of his followers was doing the same to Min Yo, after cutting the ropes which had fastened them together.

"Back to the boats!" Wong instructed.

The fight was nearly over, the Scarlet Dragon men in full flight.

Now, at Wong's command, the pirates withdrew, surrounding their leader as he returned to the boats.

Again that shattering roar rent the air as the engines were started up, and a few moments later the fleet was once more sweeping up the river.

While, down in his cabin, Wong was gently tending the two girls, Maureen's eyes flickered open. Beside her on the bunk, Min Yo, who had

fainted from shock, was beginning to stir.

"Wong—"
"All is well, Maureen," smiled Wong. "I heard of your capture in Shanghai, and, knowing you would travel near the river, I gambled on seeing you. But you are safe now."

Maureen gave a sigh of relief.
"Oh, Wong, how wonderful to hear that! Thank goodness you found us," she murmured. Her eyes closed, then opened again. She tried to sit up, the colour flooding back into her cheeks.
"Wong, the message on the jade tablet!" she added excitedly. "What happened—?"

"It has been translated. And now we go in search of the bridge depicted on the tablet," Wong replied. "It is about one hundred miles away from here. But now sleep, Maureen," he added. "I will tell you everything when you awake."

Maureen nodded drowsily. She still felt limp and weak from the ordeal of that march from Luchin. Then again she sat up, gripped by sudden apprehension as she remembered something.

"The jade tablet—Ku Yi Tso now has it!" she gasped. "And he may have been able to decipher the message. He passed us in a car hours ago. Perhaps he was on his way to find this bridge—"

"Do not distress yourself, Maureen," Wong smiled confidently. "It is on this river and we go there direct. The road winds through the mountains—and it will be flooded. We shall get there first—we must, for the bridge holds the key to everything!"

He would say no more then. He went out, closing the door of the cabin behind him.
And the motor-boats swept on up the river.



THE JADE TABLET'S SECRET

"Wong, you've let me sleep for ages and ages!"

Indignantly accusing, yet with a twinkle in her blue eyes, Maureen stepped out of the cabin and joined Wong as he stood at the helm.

It was the following morning—an oppressive morning, with the sky full of ominously black clouds. But for a while at least the rain had stopped.

"You are feeling better, Maureen?" asked Wong.

"As fit as a fiddle," replied Maureen.

And she looked it. Her eyes were glowing and the colour was back in her cheeks. No longer was she disguised as a Chinese girl, though she still wore her Chinese clothes and her hair was still dyed. The heavy rain of yesterday had washed off all the make-up and yellow stain and there seemed no need to renew it.

All that night, while she and Min Yo had slept, Wong's fleet of motor-boats had roared on up the river, battling against the steadily increasing surge of the flood waters.

But some fifty miles had been covered—nearly half the distance to the picturesque, humped-back bridge which was now their objective.

"And now, Wong, I want you to tell me everything," Maureen said excitedly. "But first—did you send that message to Min Yo's father, saying that she was safe?"

"The message was sent. And, Maureen, I have news of her illustrious father, Ling Cho Yen." Suddenly Wong's face became grave. "At this moment he is a ruined man—"

"Wong—what is that you say?"

Unexpectedly the door of the cabin had opened, and Min Yo herself appeared. Her cheeks ashen, she ran forward.

"What has happened, Wong? I must know. How is it that my honourable father is suddenly ruined? Who is to blame—?"

"The river pirates are to blame, Min Yo!"

Min Yo stepped back, staring at him in horror.

"The—the pirates! Your pirates! You can stand there and admit such a thing? Oh, Wong!"—Min Yo's eyes suddenly misted—"I had come to trust you, to believe that you were my friend—"

"And I am, Listen, Min Yo! I am not a pirate! Neither are my men, though it has suited my purpose at times that it should appear so. I speak of Ku Yi Tso's pirates—the Terror of the River!"

Maureen's heart gave a leap of gladness. All along she had known that Wong could not really be the villainous pirate which everyone had branded him. And now, after all that had happened, it came as no great shock to learn that the treacherous Ku was the culprit.

"Do not distress yourself," Wong went on, gazing earnestly at Min Yo. "I have said that to-day your estimable parent is a ruined man. And yet on this very same day, Min Yo, he may well be far richer than ever before. Once we have found the casket—"

"Casket? What casket?" broke in Maureen excitedly.

"Wong, what are you saying?" asked Min Yo.

"The casket—the bridge of the jade tablet!" Wong told them. "For in this casket are contained the deeds and documents which will prove that all Ku Yi Tso's wealth and property should have been divided between your father, Min Yo, and me!"

There was an amazed, incredulous silence as Wong made that momentous announcement.

"Let me tell you the whole story," he continued quietly. "Much of it I have suspected for many moons, but now the message on the tablet has confirmed it and all links together. Listen! The story starts many years ago, just before Ku Wing Ho died—"

"Ku Wing Ho?" Maureen gave a start, her memory suddenly stirred. "I've heard that name before—"

"I am not surprised, Maureen. Your father, when he was in China, knew Wing Ho. In fact, he was able to render him a great service. Did I not say that all our three destinies were linked? So grateful to give your father all the trading concessions in this part of China. But Wing Ho's rascally cousin, Yi Tso—"

"Ku Yi Tso?" Maureen gave a gasp. "Golly, I never connected the Scarlet Dragon Ku with the Ku my father knew! Oh, go on, Wong!"

Ku Yi Tso's grasping, rascally character had been known to his wealthy cousin, and so Wing Ho had decided to leave all his wealth and property to two other branches of the Ku family—to Min Yo's father and to Wong.

Ku Yi Tso, knowing of this, had plotted to get everything for himself. And he had succeeded, inheriting everything on the death of his cousin. But he had known that there were vital documents which would prove that he was not entitled to his inheritance, and ever since he had been searching for them. He had known, too, that the secret of their whereabouts was told on a jade tablet.

That tablet had been broken, and one half had gone to Min Yo's father, who had never suspected its secret. The other half had drifted around and had been picked up quite accidentally by Maureen's father.

Then Maureen had brought it with her to China.

Meanwhile, Wong, suspecting much of the truth, but unable to prove anything, had also been searching for the vital documents, determined to expose Ku. With a band of faithful followers he had started on his quest, only to find himself branded as a river pirate and blamed for everything that Ku, in his desire for more power and more wealth, had been doing.

"And there you have the story," Wong concluded. "Min Yo's father and I have been robbed of our inheritance. And your father, Maureen, had been robbed of all these trading concessions. But the end is in sight,

and once we have the casket in our possession justice will be done!"

Maureen nodded, every fibre of her quivering with excitement.

All this time the fleet of motor-boats had been speeding along. Unnoticed, the rain had again started, and on the left-hand bank they could see simple dwellings that had been overtaken by the flood waters.

"We shall beat Ku," Wong said an hour later. "The roads will be almost impassable. He will never get through—"

He broke off, and Maureen saw him suddenly stiffen, saw his face pale. She followed the direction of his gaze, and then her own cheeks blanched.

Coning down the river towards them was a curious black mass. For a moment Maureen could not make out what it was through the rain haze. But she sensed danger—some terrible danger.

And then she realised the truth: saw that plunging down towards them on the flood waters was a tightly wedged mass of huge logs!



CHECKED BY KU

With a thunderous crashing that could be heard above even the roar of the motor-boats that heaving, menacing mass swept nearer and nearer and nearer.

The tumbling pile of logs filled the width of the river. Anything in its path would be crushed, with no chance of survival.

"Make for the bank!" roared Wong, and swung over the helm.

Everyone had seen the terrible peril. All the boats swerving, roaring at full throttle towards the nearest bank.

"Jump—jump!" Wong panted.

The girls leapt at the same moment as he did. Maureen felt a thudding jar that jolted her whole body as she landed sprawling on a ledge of rock. Min Yo and Wong tumbled close beside her.

Everything that happened then was like a blurred nightmare. She saw the motor-boat crash against the bank. There was an awful, ear-shattering roar, and the boat was caught up amongst the crashing logs as they swept by. By split seconds only had they escaped the same fate!

For a few moments everything was a whirl of thunderous sound which gradually receded as the logs rushed on down the river.

Trembling violently, Maureen picked herself up.

"That was Ku's work!" Wong's voice grated with fury. "I am certain of it. Either he or his men released the logs!"

Maureen shuddered at the nearness of their escape. She helped Min Yo to her feet and then gazed around her.

One by one Wong's followers came to report. None of them had been seriously hurt. But eight of the twelve motor-boats had been lost, and the remaining four were badly damaged.

"Then we cannot continue by river," said Wong grimly. "It was done to delay us—and in that Ku has succeeded."

Maureen gave a dismayed gasp. "You—you mean we cannot go on? That Ku will get to the bridge first?"

"Not yet has he beaten us, Maureen!" replied Wong. "We can go overland, the three of us, while my men stay behind to repair the remaining boats and follow on. But hours will be lost, and—"

He broke off. His face was bleak. Even Wong's confidence had been shaken by this disastrous blow.

"Come!" he added. "We must start immediately!"

Two minutes later he and Maureen and Min Yo set out through the teeming rain. Could they get to the bridge and find the vital casket before Ku Yi Tso?

This is to be a desperate race against their enemy—and now the odds are against them! Don't miss next Friday's exciting instalment.

The SECRET OF THE TORN PHOTOGRAPHS



By PETER LANGLEY

A SURPRISE FOR NOEL AND JUNE

"I SUPPOSE it will be good-bye to Hollywood soon, nunky?"

June Gaynor, the girl detective, glanced across the smart, chromium-fitted office that she shared with her famous uncle and partner in the palatial film studios.

Noel Raymond looked up with a smile from his work.

"I'm just waiting for the advertising 'stills' from England, June," he explained. "We're illustrating the brochure of our new film, 'The Web of Justice,' with photographs of some of the daring crooks who have passed through Scotland Yard in recent years—"

As he spoke there came a brisk knock on the door, and it opened to admit a slim, good-looking youth, wearing horn-rimmed spectacles and carrying a satchel of mail.

"Morning, Miss Gaynor—morning, Mr. Raymond!" he remarked, with the slightest nasal twang, as he tilted his big-brimmed hat, jauntily on his thick, dark hair. "Air-mail packet for you, Mr. Raymond!"

"Just what I was expecting, Mick!" declared Noel, signing for the large flat package.

"Getting used to the job, Mick?" asked June, glancing with a friendly smile at the young messenger—a newcomer to the studios.

The youth's reply was interrupted by a startled ejaculation from Noel, who had broken the seals of the package and opened it out on to the desk.

"June, there's something wrong here!" he exclaimed. "This is the second batch of photos that has been mysteriously damaged in transit, but goodness knows how they came to be in this state!"

June started to her feet, crossing quickly to her uncle's desk. A gasp escaped her lips as she stared at the pile of torn scraps lying among the wrappings—all that remained of the consignment of photos from Scotland Yard.

"Nunky, this is the limit!" she said. "Did you send a cable about the last parcel?"

Noel nodded.

"They cabled back that they couldn't understand it and were sending a fresh batch by air."

"Phew!" whistled Mick Rogan, his eyes wide behind his spectacles. "Say, what'd you know about that? Looks like someone's been playing a joke on you, Mr. Raymond!"

"I can hardly imagine that's the explanation, Mick," rejoined Noel, with a puzzled frown. "When did the package arrive here?"

"This morning, Mr. Raymond—by special messenger from the airport. The postal clerk signed for it okay, so I guess it must have been tampered with on the way from England—"

"Possibly!" muttered Noel. "I'll

contact the airport. All right, Mick—you needn't wait."

The youth departed, with a friendly wink at June, and Noel reached for the telephone, dialling the airport.

"No satisfaction there, June," he declared, as he replaced the receiver. "They say that it's highly improbable that it could have been meddled with during the flight—and it was delivered to the studio by a trusted messenger. It must have been tampered with since it arrived here!"

"But, nunky—why?" demanded June. "Why should anyone here want to tear up a packet of photos—"

She broke off. While they had been talking she had been deftly sorting the pieces of torn photographs, as though they had been a jig-saw puzzle.

"Nunky—there's a piece missing!" she declared. "A large piece from the photo numbered 'six.' I think the others are all intact."

Noel leaned forward with quickened interest.

"You've keen eyes, June! I wonder if that's accidental, or—"

He caught in his breath sharply as he examined the torn photograph.

It was an official police photo, like the others, and it revealed a burly English constable, his left wrist handcuffed to the wrist of his prisoner.

But the main portion of the picture was missing—and the only trace of the prisoner was the slender wrist and hand.

"June," said Noel tersely. "I've an idea that these photos were torn for a more desperate reason than we first imagined. The trickster's motive was—fear!"

June stared at him.

"Fear—of what, nunky?"

"Of our using that particular photo in our brochure!" said Noel, pointing to the incomplete picture.

"If the entire package had been stolen there would have been immediate inquiries—the last thing that the culprit desired. And as the photos are all numbered, the trickster could not remove one of them from the set without arousing suspicion—"

"I get you, nunky!" said June eagerly. "By tearing up the photos and simply removing a vital part, he—or she—hoped to hoodwink us into imagining that the whole thing was simply a hoax or piece of spite!"

"Exactly!" said Noel. "The question is—what did the missing portion contain? I could get the details from Scotland Yard, of course—but there should be a quicker way—Ah, I thought as much! Here's something that our astute trickster overlooked."

Turning over the torn scraps, he revealed that on the back of each

photograph was a small label bearing a penciled caption. Fortunately, the label on No. 6 was intact, though the writing was smudged.

June snatched up a magnifying-glass from the desk and peered eagerly through it at the label.

"The Arrest of Ros—something—Font—" she read.

There came a startled ejaculation from Noel.

"Great guns!" he breathed incredulously. "That slender hand, June—doesn't it bring back memories? Can you remember when we last saw it, holding a cigarette to a pair of taunting, smiling lips, belonging to the most unscrupulous girl crook who ever hoodwinked the police—"

"Rosina!" gasped June, amazed enlightenment in her eyes. "Rosina Fontaine!"

They stared at each other across the desk as June repeated the name—the name of the fascinating and daring trickster against whom they had so often pitted their wits in the past. Rosina, the elusive—the girl of a hundred disguises.

"But, nunky," cried June, recovering. "Surely this is just a coincidence? We haven't seen or heard anything of Rosina since she vanished from England—during the war. She might not even be alive."

"She might not," agreed Noel gravely. "On the other hand, someone is evidently anxious to prevent our using Rosina's photograph in the brochure. Why?"

June shook her head, her grey eyes bewildered.

"We've got to get to work on this, June!" Noel said. "See if you can find out who could have had access to this package—apart from Mick and the postal-clerk. I'm going to make an appointment with Mr. Wilburn, the director!"

Slipping the torn remains of the vital photo into his wallet, Noel sought out the director's efficient secretary in another part of the huge building.

"I'm afraid that Mr. Wilburn already has an appointment at twelve, sir," remarked the secretary, glancing at the clock. "With Miss Julia Delane, his latest discovery, who's playing a leading role in a new film, 'The Smiling Enchantress.' But you might catch him before she arrives."

The young detective murmured his thanks, and hurried to the director's office. The door stood ajar, and Noel looked in.

"Oh—I beg your pardon—" he began, for the only occupant of the office was a well-dressed girl, who sat on a corner of the big walnut desk, powdering her nose.

Her back was towards him, and he could see only her slim figure and her dark, sleek hair.

"Mr. Wilburn's late!" she drawled, obviously mistaking him for the secretary, as she turned carelessly towards the door.

Then a startled ejaculation escaped Noel's lips—and he saw the girl stiffen, a smile frozen on her hauntingly attractive face.

"Rosina!" exclaimed Noel.



ROSINA OUTWITS NOEL

Swiftly the young detective closed the door, as the girl slid from the desk to confront him, a challenging light in her eyes.

"I think," she rejoined softly, "that you are making some mistake!"

Noel shook his head, a hint of reluctant admiration in his glance.

The fascinating girl crook had scarcely changed one iota since their last meeting. That slim, boyish figure—that raven hair—the faint, taunting smile on her red lips.

Though the encounter must have taken her completely off her guard, she had recovered her composure in a twinkling. Her eyes were gently mocking as she lit a cigarette from the tiny gas-jet above the ash-tray on the director's desk.

"I don't think we have met before," she drawled. "My name is Julia Delane—and I have an appointment with Mr. Wilburn, at twelve."

"That won't do, Rosina!" Noel said dryly. "You and I know each other too well for play-acting. Might I ask what you are doing in Hollywood—masquerading under an assumed name?"

The girl raised her pencilled eyebrows.

"Might I ask who you are?" she countered. "And exactly what you are talking about?"

Noel was not to be bluffed. "I'm talking about you, Rosina—and it won't help you to keep up this pretence!" he rejoined sharply. "If I remember rightly, you are still wanted by Scotland Yard for the affair of the Melrose necklace."

The girl laughed—but with a trace of defiance.

"So, what—Mr. Raymond?" she challenged, blowing a smoke-ring towards him. "I'd like to remind you, my dear Noel, that we're in Hollywood now and nothing is known against me here."

"Not yet—perhaps!" Noel eyed her keenly. "I don't know what your game is, Rosina, but you're not here for the sake of your health! Supposing I inform Mr. Wilburn of your real identity?"

Rosina's lovely eyes narrowed.

"Supposing you do, Mr. Raymond?" she mocked. "Do you think he'd believe you? It would be your word, my friend, against mine!"

"Precisely!" said Noel. "And my word would be backed up by definite proof."

"Proof?" echoed Rosina, drawing back instinctively—and Noel observed the direction of her hurried glance.

The young detective smiled grimly. "It must have been a shock to you, Rosina, when you learnt that I was working on a picture here—and that I intended to use authentic photos from Scotland Yard, and hard luck for you that I should encounter you in this office. But I must say that you acted with your usual quick presence of mind in tampering with the postal packet. You overlooked one thing, however."

Rosina smiled amusedly, though her eyes were wary.

"Really, Noel, this is too much!" she murmured. "How could I—a visiting film-actress—possibly tamper with your mail?"

"I don't know," admitted the young detective coolly, "but it won't happen again! In my wallet is an authentic picture of an English constable, handcuffed to a girl's wrist. And the missing portion of that photo, Rosina—ah, no, you don't!"

With a swift bound he crossed the room, securing the dainty handbag that Rosina attempted to snatch from a chair.

"The direction of your glance gave you away," he said, as he jerked open the bag, extracting the missing part of the vital picture. "No doubt you meant to destroy it when you were safely out of the premises—but you didn't anticipate my visit. A charming portrait, Rosina—but you'll have to think quickly to explain away the constable and the handcuffs on the photograph in my wallet."

Breathing hard, Rosina made a sudden move as if to snatch the fragment. She caught Noel's arm, but he coolly whipped the portrait behind his back.

At that instant the office door burst open, to admit Mr. Wilburn, the director.

"Snakes alive!" he ejaculated, staring. "What's happening?"

Even as Noel spun round, Rosina gave a quick, merry laugh, her tense expression vanishing.

"Say, Mr. Wilburn—I guess you interrupted a little rehearsal!" she declared. "I was just trying out my part with Noel Raymond—an old friend of mine."

The director chuckled. "Waal, I reckon you nearly took me in!" he declared admiringly.

Noel encountered Rosina's mocking smile. The girl-crook had stepped back, and was lighting a fresh cigarette.

"Miss—er—Delane almost took me in," he remarked grimly, "but not quite. You might be interested in this portrait, taken some years ago in England, Mr. Wilburn."

Rosina's lovely eyes did not falter, as Noel handed the torn portrait he had taken from her to Mr. Wilburn.

"Not a bad photograph," remarked the latter, obviously puzzled.

"You haven't seen the whole picture," put in Noel dryly, as he felt for his wallet. "I'm sure that Miss—er—Delane—"

A startled expression crossed the young detective's face—for his pocket was empty! And, looking up, he encountered Rosina's taunting smile as she held out his wallet—defly removed when she had moved close to clutch his arm.

"I think you dropped this, Noel!" she murmured.

Noel snatched the wallet—but its vital contents were missing, as he might have guessed. And then he saw something smouldering in the ash-tray on the desk—all that remained of the tell-tale photograph.

"Don't say that you've lost the rest of the picture, Noel?" Rosina mocked reproachfully.

The young detective hesitated, meeting the director's puzzled glance. Then a slow, grim smile touched his lips.

He knew Rosina expected him to accuse her now of being a crook, but strangely enough he made no move to do so.

Meeting her puzzled eyes he calmly shook his head, and there was a world of regret in his tones as he addressed the still puzzled director.

"I'm afraid I must have mislaid the little picture I intended to show you, Mr. Wilburn—but I'm certain Miss Delane will forgive me. By the way—what role is she playing in this new film of yours?"

"Say, didn't she tell you?" demanded the director. "Miss Delane is to play the part of a fascinating girl-crook!"

Noel's eyes glistened as he encountered Rosina's audacious smile.

"I'm quite sure," he said gallantly, "that she will play it to perfection. By a curious coincidence, I'm engaged on a case in which a real girl-crook is playing a reckless game—but I've every confidence that I shall outwit her."

"Guess I wish you luck!" exclaimed Mr. Wilburn heartily.

"I, too, Mr. Raymond!" murmured Rosina. "I guess you'll need it."

For an instant Noel met her taunting glance, then turning, he left the room.



AN AMAZING TRICK

"Well, June—dig you get the script of the 'Smiling Enchantress'?" asked Noel, as his young partner hurried into the office

the next morning. June nodded and placed a batch of typescript on the desk.

"It's all here, nunky—though, goodness knows why you want to read it. Do you suppose that Rosina has perhaps decided to go straight, and has jumped at this chance to make a name for herself in Hollywood—"

"Not if I know Rosina, June!" commented Noel grimly, as he flicked over the typed pages, swiftly scanning the story of the film. "I'm convinced that she's after something big. It was to discover that something that I did not try yesterday to unmask Rosina without proof!"

June whistled softly, and nodded. "I see, nunky. You were afraid it might have taken time to convince Mr. Wilburn—and during that time Rosina would have abandoned her scheme and escaped."

"Exactly," Noel nodded. "As it is, Rosina thinks I'm checkmated."

"But what can she possibly hope to steal from a film studio, nunky? And why is it necessary for her to play a part in the film?"

Noel frowned thoughtfully at the script of the new film.

The girl-crook in this story," he said, "manages to steal a diamond tiara. The tiara will obviously be an imitation, the diamonds made of paste. But—we must check every possibility, however slender."

He rang the property-room handling the new film, and June glanced at him questioning as he put down the hand-set.

"Paste," remarked the detective. "The tiara is being copied from a priceless original belonging, oddly enough, to Mr. Wilburn's family. The original is at the jeweller's, and Mr. Wilburn is collecting it this afternoon, with the paste copy—in time for the first shots."

"So what now?" asked June. "I'm not sure—yet. But I have a feeling I'd like to be present when Mr. Wilburn collects the tiara. Meanwhile—I have a job for you, June."

She looked at him eagerly. "I've been in touch with Scotland Yard, by transatlantic phone," said Noel. "They're arranging for an official photograph of Rosina to be sent by cable to the offices of the 'Hollywood Courier.' It should arrive this afternoon, before they start work in the studio—and with that photograph I can unmask Rosina without possibility of doubt."

June caught in her breath quickly. "You want me to collect it, nunky—to make certain that Rosina doesn't tamper with it again?"

"Correct, June!" nodded Noel. "Slip down to the newspaper office at two o'clock, and show your credentials. You'd better take one of the studio messengers with you as a precaution—someone you can trust."

June agreed, and hurried off in search of Mick Rogan.

Noel, meanwhile, was determined to put Mr. Wilburn on his guard against the dangerous girl-crook. He felt convinced that Rosina had designs on the priceless tiara—though how she hoped to lay hands on it he could not surmise.

On the pretext of discussing business, he visited the director after lunch, and casually suggested driving him to the jeweller's to collect the tiara and the paste copy.

Mr. Wilburn accepted—and Noel was present when the valuable heirloom was handed to the director, together with the paste replica—a perfect imitation.

"Say—Miss Delane will look splendid when she wears this," declared Mr. Wilburn. "I guess I couldn't tell the difference, if I hadn't asked them

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THEIR SCHOOL ON Castaway Isle

By RENEE FRAZER

THE MATE AND GERRY PLOT

TANIA, a jungle girl who had lived alone on Castaway Isle for many years, possessed an old book containing a map of the island. She knew that an unknown enemy among a party of castaways was interested in the map and was convinced that he must be either quiet Dave Cardew or cheery Gerry Royston.

Her map was stolen and one day, when entering the Grotto of Shells, she was startled to see Dave standing there, the missing map in his hand. It looked as if he was her enemy. She demanded him to give her the map, but he refused, so she made him a prisoner.

Mr. Barnard, the master in charge of the castaways' school, insisted that Tania should give back Dave but when she went to the grotto she found it empty. Tania believed that Dave had escaped, but the castaways suspected that the jungle girl, with the aid of her pet panther, had forcibly moved her captive to another part of the island.

TANIA shrank in dismay from the master's stern, accusing gaze. She had never heard Mr. Barnard speak like this before.

He had accused her of deliberately breaking her promise—of smuggling Dave to some new hiding-place, with the aid of her panther!

And it was clear that most of the castaways were of the same opinion.

Only Gerry looked at her with apparent sympathy on his handsome face—an expression that masked the satisfied gleam in his eyes.

"I say, sir, isn't that a bit rough on Tania?" he murmured. "After all, we've no actual proof that Dave has met with harm!"

"Kindly leave this to me, Gerry," interrupted Mr. Barnard, as Tania flashed the boy a grateful glance. "I'm far from satisfied that Dave can have escaped, and set off into the jungle of his own free will. I'm certain that he would have contacted me. And, in any case, there are definite indications of a struggle! Tania, I want the truth!" he added sternly.

"It is true—what Tania has told you!"

"Then why were you hiding Dave's watch?" shrieked Moyra Curtis.

"Tania not understand!" breathed the jungle girl, ignoring Moyra and turning appealingly to Mr. Barnard. "She seek for Dave, following trail through the jungle, but she find only Dave's magic dial that tell the time. It show Tania that he has come this way!"

Earnestly she pointed to the blurred trail of footprints.

"Let Tania follow footprints!" she begged. "She will find Dave—and prove that she speak the truth!"

Her appealing tone might have melted Mr. Barnard's heart had it not been for the incriminating proof—and his responsibility to the missing boy.

"If you ask me," muttered Tim Burchell, in an undertone, "Tania meant to cover up the tracks, to prevent us from searching!"

He was silenced by a stern frown from the master. Mr. Barnard had reached his decision.

"I'm sorry, Tania," he said, "but I'm afraid I can no longer trust you! I gave you an opportunity to clear yourself—to bring Dave to confront me. But instead of keeping your promise, you come to me with an even more incredible tale. I am convinced that you have hidden the boy, and till he is found you will be detained in the camp. Do you understand?"

Tania's heart sank. She understood only too well. She was to be made a captive, because of Dave's disappearance. She was not to be allowed a chance to prove her innocence!

That Mr. Barnard's decision was prompted by his anxiety for Dave, she did not fully comprehend. Her wild, impulsive heart welled up in rebellion against this injustice.

"Tania will not stay!" she exclaimed chokingly, breaking away from him. "This is Tania's jungle, and she will go to seek Dave now—and prove her word!"

She made a sudden dash across the clearing, only to find her way barred by Tim Burchell and several of the others.

It was Gerry who intervened, taking her gently by the arm and drawing her aside. In his eyes was that reassuring, understanding look that he could assume so well when it suited his purpose.

"Take it easy, Tania!" he breathed. "You'll only make things worse by defying them! I'll do what I can to help you, you know that!"

"Tania is coming back to the camp with us at once, Gerry!" said Mr. Barnard, approaching them.

"Of course, sir, if you say so!" said Gerry, with apparent reluctance. "But please don't be too hard on her. She doesn't understand our ways. With your permission, Mr. Barnard, I'll try to get on Dave's track right away, while the trail is fairly clear. I've got my torch, and if I discover anything I'll report back at once!"

Mr. Barnard eyed the boy keenly, but Gerry's frank tone gave no hint of his secret thoughts.

"Very well," said the master. "If you think it will do any good, Gerry, go, by all means. I intend to round up the remainder of the party, and organise an immediate search. Come, Tania!" he added.

The jungle girl whirled, her hands clenched.

"You will never find Dave—with-out Tania's help!" she exclaimed.

But in spite of her tearful, angry protests, she was forced to accompany them as they started back towards the camp. Some distance behind, uneasy, padded her panther, Michi.

Gerry watched the party disappear

among the bushes. Then swiftly he was galvanised into action. Hurrying across the clearing, he came to the spot where Tim Burchell had found traces of a recent struggle.

That had been a narrow shave, but Gerry had managed to divert suspicion from the real truth!

Halting, the boy whistled—softly at first, and then more loudly. In a moment, his signal was answered. Cautious footsteps sounded in the gloom, and the bushes parted to reveal the lank figure of Stanhope, the ship's mate!

Gerry spun round on him, his blue eyes questioning.

"Well," he breathed anxiously, "what happened?"

An unpleasant grin crossed the mate's face.

"Don't worry! The whole thing went as you planned up to a point! Thanks to your watching the jungle girl, I was able to move that stone from the mouth of the cave, and young Dave came out, thinking the girl had returned!"

"Did he see you?" demanded Gerry apprehensively.

"Not him!" The mate chuckled. "He didn't get a chance! I was waiting for him behind the boulder, and knocked him flat before he had a chance to shout!"

"Good!" breathed Gerry, a vindictive smile on his handsome face. "That's one I owe him for his meddling! But the map, Stanhope—did you get the map?"

The mate shook his head.

"I didn't get a chance—that was the snag! I was anxious to get him away before Mr. Barnard and his crowd turned up. I carried him up here, and started to search his pockets, but he partly recovered, and put up a struggle, though he was still too dazed to recognise me in the hall light!"

"Dash it!" exclaimed Gerry, his hands clenched. "Then you bungled it, Stanhope! What happened?"

The mate's face darkened.

"There's no call to get excited!" he growled. "I'm telling you! I gave him one to keep him quiet, as I heard voices in the distance. Then I climbed on to a rock to make sure the coast was clear. Young Dave must have been tougher than I thought, 'cause when I came back he'd picked himself up and cleared off!"

"You mean, you've lost him!" exclaimed Gerry, his usually cool voice suddenly agitated. "You fool! If Dave's wandering through the jungle, half stunned and carrying that map, anything might happen! He might wander back to camp, or stumble into some danger, and then where are we? If anything happens to that map, I'll hold you responsible!"

An ugly expression crossed the other's features.

"Cut that out!" he growled. "I'm in this business with you for half shares, see, and it looks like I'm doing most of the work! I'm not standing for being insulted into the bargain!"

Gerry bit his lip, regaining his composure with an effort.

"All right, Stanhope," he rejoined soothingly, "we can't afford to fall out—just as we're on the point of success! But we've got to overtake Dave and recover that map—before

the others come across him. And we'll have to move quickly!"

The mate gave a surly nod as he turned to lead the way.

"What about the girl?" he demanded.

"Barnard's going to lock her up—no need to worry about her! But we've got to beat the others to it! Come on!"

Together the two conspirators plunged into the shadows.



TANIA ESCAPES

Her dark eyes rebellious, her head erect, Tania was led back to the castaways' camp.

Mr. Barnard had scarcely spoken to her on the way, and the others treated her to covert glances, some pitying, but the majority indignant. For most of them believed that she was responsible for Dave's disappearance.

The jungle girl's lips trembled and she clenched her hands as she saw the glow of the camp-fire reflecting on the familiar outlines of the tents and the log-built School House that had such happy memories.

She was being brought back in disgrace—a prisoner—with hardly a friend left among the jolly crowd of boys and girls whose companionship had meant so much to her.

Several members of the party who had not taken part in the search were waiting anxiously round the camp-fire, together with Sam Perkins, the sailor handyman.

An excited chorus greeted the appearance of the searcher.
"Any news of Master Dave, sir?" cried Sam. "We were just thinking of coming to look for—"

He broke off, his jaw dropping, as he caught sight of Tania, walking defiantly between two of the boys.

"Tania!" cried Pat Saunders, darting forward.

But she was checked by a stern gesture from Mr. Barnard.

"Tania did not keep her promise!" he said grimly. "I've reason to believe that she is deliberately hiding Dave from us! Sam, I want you to signal to the ship, and ask Captain Rawlins if he can send some of his men to help us in the search! You boys"—he turned to the others—"hurry and collect lanterns and axes, and be ready to join the party! I intend to scour the island till I have found Dave!"

Moyra, meanwhile, had been breathlessly blurting out the story of their encounter with Tania and the incriminating evidence against the jungle girl!

There were murmurs as Mr. Barnard led his defiant young prisoner towards the School House.

"I told you no good would come of allowing a savage jungle girl to come to our school!" declared Moyra, in a spiteful aside to the others. But Pat at least was not convinced.

"Poor Tania!" she breathed. "I can't believe that she'd have done such a hateful thing! There must be some mistake!"

Most of the party, however, looked on with silent condemnation, while Mr. Barnard unlocked the door, sternly motioning Tania to precede him.

Lighting a lamp, he placed it on one of the desks.

"You will stay here, Tania," he said, "till we return from our search. For the last time"—he looked at her steadily, his face troubled in the lamplight—"will you tell me where you have hidden Dave?"

The jungle girl clenched her hands. "Mr. Barnard not understand!" she cried. "Tania has spoken the truth. She does not know what happen to Dave. She asks you to let her help in search, because only Tania can find him!"

The master bit his lip in obvious disbelief as he turned away to secure the shutters.

Just then there came a knock on

the door, and Sam Perkins thrust his head into the school-room.

"Beg pardon, sir, but I've just had a signal from the ship. Cap'n Rawlins says the tide's runnin' too high to risk sending the long-boat, but the mate's ashore, on duty, and he'll give you a hand if you contact him!"

"There's no time for that," said Mr. Barnard. "We'll have to manage on our own. Are the boys ready with the lanterns, Sam?"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"Right, then we'll set out at once! Keep an eye on the School House, Sam. Tania is to remain here till we return!"

Without another glance at the young captive, he strode quickly from the room, followed by the sailor. The door slammed, and Tania heard the key grate in the lock.

The jungle girl stared round her. The once friendly walls of the school-room seemed to close her in, mocking at her dismay. For the first time in her life she knew the meaning of captivity.

Frantically she ran to the door and attempted to open it, but it resisted all her efforts. The rough wooden shutters at the windows were fastened securely, and she had no idea how to loosen them.

Sobbing in anger and distress, she hammered on the walls, only to bruise her hands.

Gradually she became calmer as her natural good sense reasserted itself. Straining her ears, she could hear the distant voices of the search-party as they set out on their quest.

But Tania was convinced that they would never find Dave, unaided! Only someone who knew the island—as she knew it—whose eyes were accustomed to the jungle paths, could ever hope to follow that faint trail by night.

But they had disbelieved her word. They had refused her the right to search for the boy whom she suspected had robbed her!

Desperately Tania stared round the dimly-lit room, seeking some loophole of escape, however frail.

It was then that a curious sound reached her ears. It was a stealthy scratching, and it seemed to come from the roof.

Tania glanced up, and a cry of delighted amazement escaped her lips.

"Bimbo!"
There, on the overhead beams, was her little monkey, swinging by its tail, and chattering excitedly.

For a moment Tania could hardly believe her eyes. She could not imagine how her nimble pet had gained access to the locked school-room.

Then, as she stepped back, she saw the pale, silvery light of the rising moon creeping through an open skylight in the roof!

Her mischievous pet must have followed her, and scrambled on to the roof, contriving in some way to pull open the skylight.

Tania's tanned face was transformed. Despair gave place to delight—and a reckless determination.

Where Bimbo had come in, she—Tania—could go out!

Climbing quickly on to a desk, she grasped the overhead beam.

Chattering delightedly, Bimbo guessed her purpose, and with an agile leap he caught at the skylight, turning his small, furry head as though urging her to follow.

The next moment Tania was swinging by her hands from the skylight, drawing herself up till she was able to slip her slender shoulders through the aperture.

Soon she had joined her excited pet on the sloping roof.

She was free—free! Free to search for Dave, and to prove her innocence to Mr. Barnard and the castaways! Free to get her precious map back!

Sliding down the wattle roof, Tania sprang nimbly into the branches of an overhanging tree.

But her daring escape had been witnessed, and by none other than Sam Perkins, who stood below, in

expression of almost comical amazement on his face.

"Hi!" he bellowed. "Hi, stop there! Come back!"

Tania sprang from the branches and darted like a startled lawn across the moonlit clearing, with Bimbo clinging to her shoulder.

The next moment she had plunged among the trees, and Sam's vain shouts reached her from a distance as she sped into the friendly depths of the jungle.



DISASTER OVERTAKES DAVE

Tania ran without pausing to take breath till she had put a long distance between herself and the camp.

At length she halted in a moonlit glade, her heart pounding.

She had escaped! But her task had only just begun. Her purpose was to find Dave, and every minute was precious!

The little monkey chattered excitedly on her shoulder, obviously looking on the whole thing as a game. Tania swiftly silenced him, straining her ears to listen.

Faint shouts reached her ears from the distance, revealing that the search-party had spread out and were heading this way. But the jungle girl was convinced that they would never be able to follow the broken trail that had almost blinded her own sharp eyes.

Her one fear was that they might overtake her and prevent her from continuing her quest.

Once again she broke into a run, while Bimbo swung himself into the branches, keeping up an excited chatter. But after a while she heard no more of her pet, and concluded that he had gone off on some quest of his own.

Tania pressed on, more slowly now, until she was not far from the Grotto of Shells. She began studying the ground at every step. Once or twice she discovered blurred footprints, but more often she had to rely on tiny, insignificant signs that would have meant nothing to eyes less practised than hers.

Here a broken twig, there a scrap of bruised moss, or bark grazed from a tree trunk. She felt convinced that she was on the right track of Dave.

Suddenly the voices of the searchers came closer, and with sudden panic the jungle girl took refuge among the branches of a tree.

Only in the nick of time!

Lanterns gleamed among the bushes as the straggling party came to a halt almost directly beneath the tree where she was crouching.

"Keep together, you boys!" came Mr. Barnard's anxious voice. "Can anyone see those footprints?"

"There's no sign of them now, sir," declared Tim Burchell. "We seem to be walking in circles!"

"I said we'd come the wrong way," put in one of the other boys. "Those footprints were going towards the beach!"

"Towards the stream!" objected another.

Tania held her breath, her heart pounding as she stared down at their anxious faces revealed in the moonlight.

It was clear that they had completely lost their way, and were blindly following the jungle paths in the hope of picking up Dave's trail.

"We'd better keep going," said Mr. Barnard. "Spread out, boys, but, whatever happens, keep in touch with one another. We can't afford any more casualties!"

Tania stared after them as the winking lanterns disappeared among the trees. They were heading in the wrong direction. Dave could not have gone that way!

Swinging herself silently from the branches, the jungle girl once again picked up the faint trail.

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Dolores The MISCHIEF- MAKER

By HAZEL ARMITAGE

DOLORES' TRICKERY

PAT ROCKWELL and her chum, Chris Caslon, who were staying at Westonmouth Holiday Camp, were helping to organise a regatta. Pat's idea was to turn an old ketch into a Roman galley.

Dolores Belgrave Bellamy, a beautiful, wealthy girl, seemed strangely interested in the ketch, and although she had declared that she scorned all holiday camps, she came to stay at Westonmouth.

One evening Dolores stole the key to the boathouse where the ketch was kept, from Pat's handbag.

Pat and Chris followed her and found her on the ketch, kneeling by the hatch.

"Got it—at last!" she was muttering triumphantly. And then, as she turned and saw the two girls, her face abruptly froze.

NOT even Dolores, supreme actress as she was, could altogether control the fury which possessed her as she whirled and saw Pat and Chris standing there.

"You!" she choked.
"Us," Pat returned. "And isn't it just too bad for you, Dolores Bellamy! A pretty tricky game you're playing!" she added contemptuously. "What are you doing aboard this ketch?"

With an effort Dolores got control of herself.

"If it comes to that, what are you doing here?" she retorted. "I haven't heard yet that the ketch is anybody's private property. I thought it was hired for the benefit of the holiday camp!"

"And so it was," Pat returned. "All the same, as I hired the ketch I feel sort of responsible for it. And the boathouse key was in my charge—the key, Dolores, which you stole from my bag. What are you searching for?"

"Want an answer?" Dolores asked mockingly.

"We do!"

"Then find out!"
"And we will," Pat retorted. "You're playing some shady game with this ketch, Dolores, and I've a pretty strong hunch it's a game that's going to do nobody any good except you. And when we do find out——" she added, a flash in her eyes.

"It will be a day!" Dolores sneered. "And do I shiver in my shoes! Please do stop being so childish, Pat Rockwell. Anyway, I've got something better to do than to stop here listening to you."

As she spoke she stepped forward, obviously meaning to depart, but Pat caught at her shoulder.

"No, you don't," she said grimly. "We're still going to get to the bottom of this. And if you won't tell us——"

"As if I would!"

"Then we'll take you along to Bruce. We'll make you explain to him——"

To their surprise Dolores laughed. "And why not?" she asked. "It's a wizard idea!" With another laugh, she tore herself free from Pat and

went running forward. "Bruce!" she shouted. "Bruce, ahoy! Come here a moment, will you?"

Pat swung round, half expecting some new trick. Then she stared as she saw the figure of the young sports master appear in the boathouse doorway. Bruce himself—and Dolores, astoundingly, was calling him!

He came forward.

"Hallo, what's going on?" he asked. "I saw you and Chris slip out, Pat, but I never guessed that Dolores was also here. What's cooking?"

"Something pretty fishy," declared Chris. "Dolores took Pat's key and came along here to snoop around the ketch. She refuses to give an account of herself——"

"As if," Dolores said with a protesting pout, "you're giving me a chance. Oh, Pat—oh, Chris—what a couple of silly geese you are! It's no crime to be on the ketch, is it? And, anyway, I only came to put my cabin cruiser away—there," she added, pointing. "I suddenly remembered it during the dance."

Pat blinked. There, sure enough, was Dolores' cabin cruiser.

"And as for being on the ketch——" Dolores amusedly shrugged. "Well, I had to salvage the tow rope I left on board. And that," she added with a laugh, "explains that—at last! I don't really see, Pat, what there is to get excited about——"

Pat drew a deep breath. She saw Bruce's face clearing; saw that he, at least, believed the girl. But she was convinced that Dolores wasn't the innocent she made herself out to be. She was certain that the newcomer to the holiday camp had trickily prepared for every eventuality beforehand—that once again she had armed herself with the most natural and convincing of excuses.

"That's all very well," cried Pat, "but what about the key?"

"Yes—what is your excuse for taking it out of Pat's bag?" demanded Chris.

"But I didn't take it," Dolores protested. "Pat left her bag open and there was the key—lying on the table. I ought to have asked her, I know, but she was busy dancing at the time and seeing the key there reminded me about the cruiser. Apart from that," she added with a smile, "I wanted an excuse to escape from Arthur—a nice boy, but oh—his dreadful dancing! And so——"

"And so," Bruce rather gruffly broke in, "that ends the matter. Bothered if I see what there is to make a fuss about. Dolores obviously was within her rights—even if she did forget to ask you for the key, Pat. Anyway, lock up the boathouse and let's get back. I hope," he added suspiciously, "you weren't rowing about it?"

"Rowing?" Dolores laughed. "As if we would row, Bruce. Just a little misunderstanding, that's all. Still, that's all over now, isn't it, Pat?" She looked winningly across at that girl. "You do understand, don't you?"

Pat did not reply to that. But the

glance she shot at Dolores brought a smile of mocking amusement to Dolores' lips. Bruce was striding back towards the door, so he did not see it. Outside, they all waited while Pat turned the key in the lock.

"Now," Bruce said to Pat, "take care that that key doesn't go astray any more."

He and Dolores strolled on ahead, leaving Chris and Pat, conscious of resentful bafflement and defeat, to follow.

"Of all the hypocrites!" exclaimed Pat. "Did you ever hear such trickery! But now we know her for what she is," she added grimly. "Now there's no possible doubt that she is after something on that ketch—and whatever that something is spells mischief."

"But what can it be?" Chris asked despairingly.

Pat shook her head.

"I don't know, but I mean to find out," she declared. "Don't forget that I've still got the key, so—tell you what! As soon as the dance is over, we'll go back to the ketch and search her ourselves. What do you say?"

Chris gave an excited nod.

"I'm on," she agreed.

And from that moment that was the two chums' main objective. When the dance was over, they returned to their chalet. There Pat fished out the one and only torch they possessed between them, and as soon as the lights-out had sounded they donned slacks and pullovers and made their way back to the boathouse. There, Pat unlocked the door and, switching on her torch, led the way aboard the old ketch.

"Now," Chris said, "where do we start?"

"Where Dolores left off," Pat returned. "Come on; let's see what she was up to at that hatchway."

They crossed the deck, and by the light of the torch examined the raised sill of the hatchway. The little knob with which Dolores had been tampering proved to be only the knob of a concealed ventilator.

"Well, she found nothing here," Pat decided. "That was only a part of her search. But what was she looking for? She—but wait a minute!" she added, as she swung the beam of the torch along the wooden framework of the hatch. "Chris, see that black board screwed there? Somebody's been tampering with that!"

Chris stared at the board in question—a narrow slat of wood with its screw-holes revealing circular outlines of white wood, plainly indicating that the board had recently been removed and screwed back into place. For a moment Pat stared at it. Then——

"Chris, I've got it!" she cried. "That strip was screwed there over a nameplate! Of course! When the ketch was taken over by the Government they obliterated every sign of its name. Dolores," she went on excitedly, "has had that down and screwed it back again. But why?"

"Best find out," Chris said grimly. "Look, I've got a nail file here!"

And vigorously she set to work. Having once been dislodged, the screws were easy enough to extract and in a few minutes she was lifting

the board down. And then, in thrilled astonishment, they found themselves staring at a line of letters, painted in fill.

Letters which spelt—the "White Phantom." "The—White Phantom!" Chris stuttered. "Pat, the White Phantom!" Her face was flushed with emotion, her eyes were wide and startled. "Pat," she said huskily, "don't you realize what this name means to me? This—this ketch was the boat on which my Uncle Charles met his death."

THE MESSAGE ON THE FLOOR



For a moment Pat was too taken aback to speak. She knew all about Charles Caslon's tragic death, of course, but it was a shock to

learn that this was the very ketch on which he had made his last voyage.

As she stood there, trying to recall all that her chum had told her about her uncle, Chris gave an agitated gasp.

"I'm certain I'm right, Pat," she whispered. "This is the ship where uncle met his death. But—but what about Dolores? What can she know of Uncle Charles?"

Pat shook her head. Her mind was still busy piecing together all that Chris had told her about her Uncle Charles. He had been Chris' guardian and it had been he who had provided for her ever since her parents' death.

His ketch, the White Phantom, had been taken over by the Government during the war and had been assigned some secret commission in which it had completely lost its identity. With Uncle Charles aboard, it had sailed away, only to be wrecked not far from these very shores. This, without doubt, had been Charles Caslon's boat, but—

Why was Dolores Bellamy so interested in it? What was she seeking so desperately aboard it?

Suddenly the mystery seemed to take on even greater importance, and excitedly Pat turned to her chum.

"Chris—" she began, then stopped, for obvious it was that this latest discovery had affected Chris badly. Her face was white and she was trembling. "Steady on, old thing," Pat said, putting an arm around her chum. "I know how fond you were of Uncle Charles, but you mustn't give way."

She gave her chum a comforting squeeze, then, anxious to turn Chris' thoughts away from the tragic memory of her uncle's death, she picked up the small board they had unscrewed.

"We'll put it back, then hunt around and see what else we can discover," she said. "It's obvious that Dolores was hunting for something, and with luck we may be able to find it before her."

Chris nodded, and when they had replaced the black board they continued their search—ranging the deck from end to end and then descending into the living quarters below. For an hour they quested this way and that. Then—

"Pat!" Chris suddenly cried. It was an iron bolt head in the floor which, reflecting the now yellowing torchlight, had caught her attention. At first Chris thought it was a coin and was half stooping to pick it up when she realised her mistake. And in the same instant her gaze became riveted. For near that shining bolt head, scratched thinly into the varnish of the floor, was a set of shaky, wriggly lines.

"Somebody's been writing—or trying to," she said. "But why on the floor? Pat, there's a message there—oh, gee, I wonder if this was what Dolores was after? She—" Then suddenly she gave a cry of mortification. "Oh, gosh! The torch!"

For suddenly, its battery spent, the torch had snapped out, plunging them into darkness. Frantically Pat pressed the button.

"It—it's gone!" she said.

In the darkness Chris bit her lip. She was filled with bitter disappointment.

"Oh, gosh, haven't we got a match?" "Fraid not," Pat answered. "Sorry, Chris, but we can't investigate in the dark. We'll have to wait until tomorrow to look at that message. But—who wrote it, Chris? And why should he write it on the floor?"

Chris shook her head. She was more than disappointed. But obviously as Pat said, they could do nothing further in the dark, so she led the way back up to the deck, which was now bathed in moonlight. As the two girls paused there, Pat gave a start.

What was that? For a moment she stared towards the copse near by. Was it just a trick of moving branches in the uncertain light or had she seen a dark-clothed figure suddenly flit into the trees?

She could not be sure. She said nothing, for Chris, deep in her own thoughts, seemed not to have noticed. Quietly Pat locked up the boathouse. Back she and her chum went to their chalet. Then, as they undressed, Chris spoke again.

"It's Uncle Charles' ketch all right," she said. "I don't know whether that writing is his, but I've got a feeling that it's important, and I'm pretty certain it was that for which Dolores was searching."

Pat nodded. She felt the same. "We'll investigate first thing in the morning," she declared.

Despite the excitement of the evening, they were soon asleep, but next morning they were awake with the first notes of the bugle calling reveille. Quickly they washed and dressed and, eager to visit the ketch again, they stepped out into the morning sunshine. But hardly had they reached the end of the line of gaily painted chalets than there was a shout and half a dozen happy campers swooped down on them.

"Good enough! We want you two!" declared Lucy Day. "We're playing the boys at rounders and we want two more girls to make up our side. And you're jolly good at rounders, aren't you? Come on!"

"Now?" Pat asked. "This very minute!" Lucy affirmed. "The boys are waiting."

"But—but we've got something to do!" Pat protested. "Oh, blow! Do it later," Lucy said impatiently. "Please, Pat. Don't let us down. We shan't be more than half an hour."

Pat looked at Chris. Chris made a little face. But it was obvious now that they couldn't get out of this without a great deal of explanation. Obvious that Lucy & Co. had made up their minds. And—well, the ketch, locked up in the boathouse, was safe enough. Surely it could wait for another half-hour?

"Be sports," came in an eager chorus.

That clinched it. Overcoming their own eagerness, Chris and Pat just had to give in. They accompanied Lucy & Co. to the pitch where the boys, headed by the grinning Willis Green, were waiting.

There Pat was flatteringly made

captain of her side. She won the toss and went in, Willis acting as bowler. Easily enough she hit the ball. Returning it with a low skimming shot to avoid being caught, she dropped the bat and sprinted for the first base.

"Well done, Pat," chortled Lucy. "Fine shot!"

It was Chris' turn next. Confidently Chris struck out, sending Willis scampering breathlessly across the field. Chris had got one rounder before the ball was returned to the bowler.

"Jolly good," chorused the girls. Chris laughed. Both she and Pat were warming up to the game now. Enjoying it, despite the setback it meant to their own programme. Merrily they struck and ran. By the time the girls had got five rounders, with only one girl caught out, the boys were beginning to look a bit rueful.

"Gosh," Willis said. "I never thought you'd be so super, Pat. No wonder Dolores said you could play rounders."

"Dolores!" Pat was instantly alert. "What's Dolores know about it?"

"Ask me," grinned Willis. "But it was she who tipped Lucy off to get hold of you two. Anyway, let's go—"

But Pat was tingling all at once. Dolores! Instantly she was full of a vague suspicion. How did Dolores know they were good at rounders—or any other sport, come to that? She looked round, vividly conscious now that Dolores was not here.

At that moment Bruce Feltham strolled along. There was a pleased smile on his face.

"Getting up an appetite, Pat?" he asked. "Good fun, eh? I saw that last stroke of yours—a beauty. No wonder Dolores said you could handle a bat—"

Pat looked at him quickly. "Dolores? Where is Dolores?" He looked a little surprised.

"Didn't you know? Why, she's on the ketch—"

Pat's heart seemed to stand still. Chris' eyes gleamed.

"On—on the ketch?"

"Just there," Bruce nodded enthusiastically. "Pretty good sort, Dolores—and, gee, what a worker! She's no end keen on this regatta business, you know, and she's pretty anxious to get the old tub cleaned up so that we can all get busy on the transformations. And so," he added, unaware of the dawning horror in Pat's eyes, "she's volunteered to spend the before-breakfast hour on the ketch scrubbing out—and that's where she is now!"



SEEN THROUGH THE PORTHOLE

Pat and Chris stared at each other in consternation, for they were convinced that this was another of Dolores' artful tricks.

Pat gave a gasp as she remembered that last night she had thought she had seen a figure melt into the trees outside the boathouse. That had been no flight of fancy. It had been Dolores she had seen. Dolores had been watching them, and she had overheard their arrangements to search the ketch this morning, so she had artfully arranged this hold-up for themselves while she had cunningly volunteered to scrub out the ketch in order, probably, to examine the mysterious message which the chums had discovered.

"What's the matter?" asked Bruce, staring at them curiously.

"N-nothing," Pat forced herself to say. "Only—only a bit surprised that Dolores volunteered to do a spot of work. But how did she get the key?" she added.

"Oh, that?" Bruce smiled. "I borrowed the duplicate from the camp overseer. Can't afford to say 'no' to a willing volunteer, you know."

(Please turn to page 131.)

HOW MUCH WASTE PAPER HAVE YOU SAVED THIS WEEK?

Paper was a vital munition of war—now it is an important factor in the campaign to hasten our return to prosperity. So save every scrap you can for salvage.

The Unknown Voice That Spoke Through The Ship's Loudspeakers Brought Terror
To The Young Stewardess



The MERRYMAKERS A FLOAT

By DAPHNE GRAYSON

Sally didn't stop to explain. With one movement she snatched the necklace from Helen's grasp and threw it on to the bunk. Then she and her chums fairly hustled the girl out of the cabin. As they whirled her away round a corner out of sight a rush of feet and the clamour of excited voices told them that Nicola and the others had arrived on the scene.

Hearing the shrill exclamation, Helen faltered and turned a deathly white. In utter horror she stared at Sally & Co.

"It was a trap," she muttered. "I was meant to be caught there so that—that everyone would think I was stealing." She shuddered. "Oh, it's cruel—cruel! Who is doing this? Who wants to harm me?"

"That's what we want to know," put in Sally. "Look here, old thing, we're your friends and we want to help you. Isn't there anything you can tell us—any little clue that would help us to find out who this mystery enemy is?" She looked shrewdly at the girl. "A little while ago you said something about having to get to Australia, as if it were very important."

"It is—it is!" broke in Helen agitatedly. "I have a fortune waiting for me there—I only learnt of it a short while ago. If it isn't claimed within a specified time then it goes to my uncle."

Sally gave a surprised gasp. This was astonishing news. "Go on!" she bade.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY



"This ship will get me there just in time," declared Helen. "That is why I'm so terrified that this person will get me thrown off the

boat before we reach Australia. I have no money to charter a plane—I should be completely stranded."

"What is your uncle's name?" asked Sally keenly. "What's he like?" "His name is Martin Kershaw, but I haven't any idea what he looks like," said Helen tremblingly. "I've never seen him. Oh, what shall I do?"

"Nothing for the moment," replied Sally. "If anyone asks any questions about this Cabin Fourteen affair, just say you've been with us—which is quite true."

"But there's something else—" began Helen desperately.

"Not now," said Don agitatedly. "Off you go—quickly. I can hear the others coming."

"And if we don't see you before, we'll see you at the staff dance to-night," called Fay cheerily. "And don't worry!"

With a grateful glance, but looking more worried than ever, the young stewardess darted away, just as Nicola, Tubby Winwood, Linda Powell and several others came into view.

"Was it a false alarm?" asked Sally. "I hope everything is all right?" "It looks like a silly practical joke," replied Nicola. "My cabin was topsy-turvy, but nothing was missing. And certainly Helen was not there."

THE LOUDSPEAKER WARNING

"WHAT'S the matter, Johnny?" Sally Warner, Fay Manners and Don Weston, sitting on the boat deck of the college ship, Ocean Star, looked wonderingly across at Johnny Briggs as, red-faced and excited, he came hurrying up.

"The mystery voice!" panted their chum. "It was heard again—only a few minutes ago!"

Sally & Co. sat up and uneasily they regarded one another.

The mystery voice had been the talk of the whole ship during the past few days. At irregular intervals it had come booming through the loudspeakers, and always it had insinuated the same thing—that Helen Burgess, one of the young stewardesses, was not to be trusted.

Most of the passengers and crew believed the mystery voice to be some nasty-minded practical joker, but Sally & Co. were worried for they liked Helen and knew how these scornful slanders were affecting her.

"It's a shame!" declared Sally, jumping to her feet. "Helen's ever so sweet and I hate to see her upset like this. Somehow we've got to discover who it is who keeps on broadcasting."

"Yes—and why he or she is making such a dead-set against Helen," agreed Don as they all went walking along the deck.

"I vote we go to the control-room," said Johnny. "That voice must come from there, and so— Oh, sorry!" he added, as he bumped against a steamer-chair placed against one of the deck-houses.

"Clumsy young rascal!" barked an irate voice, and the black-bearded, muffled-up man who sat there, glared. "Why don't you look where you're going? Why don't you—"

But the four Merry-makers hurried on. The black-bearded man was supposed to be an invalid, and he spent most of his time sitting in that secluded corner: from past experience they knew how grumpy he was.

As they hurried down the nearest companionway, the ship's loudspeakers boomed out:

"Attention, everybody! If Helen Burgess is your stewardess, insist upon having her changed. Do not trust that girl."

"The mystery voice again!" gasped Sally. "Come on—to the control-room—quickly! The trickster must be speaking from there."

But when they reached the room which was the nerve centre of the Ocean Star's loudspeaker system, they were surprised to find there only the officer in charge. He declared that the mystery voice could not have spoken from there, for he had not left the control-room for a single moment.

Puzzled, Sally & Co. were walking

along the corridor when a pretty, but white-faced girl in the trim uniform of a stewardess came running towards them. It was Helen Burgess herself. "Oh, what does it mean?" she asked tearfully. "Why does that horrid voice keep picking on me?"

The Merry-makers did their best to comfort her and Sally gave the young stewardess' arm a soothing squeeze.

"Don't worry too much," she urged. "We mean to bowl the trickster out. So keep smiling, old thing."

"I'll—I'll try," gulped Helen, but agitatedly she twisted her handkerchief between her fingers. "But I'm frightened if these slanders persist that the captain may take action. He might turn me off the ship at the next port of call, but I must go to Australia—I must."

At that moment the dinner-bell rang out, and with a pathetic smile at the chums she hurried off. Still discussing the mystery voice, Sally & Co. made their way slowly to the dining-saloon. The rest of the students and ordinary passengers were already seated, and the chums were about to make for their table when abruptly the loudspeakers began to boom out once more.

"What is Helen Burgess doing in Cabin Fourteen while its occupant is at dinner?" demanded a harsh voice. "An immediate investigation would be advisable."

There was not a sound as the mystery voice ceased. In startled wonder everyone gazed at one another, then a girl passenger named Nicola Mendoza rose agitatedly to her feet.

"Cabin Fourteen!" she gasped. "But that's mine! Please come with me, someone."

Instantly half a dozen passengers had pushed back their chairs, but Sally & Co. were the first to leave the dining-room. With the vague feeling that that last message might be a trick to trap the young stewardess, they went racing down the steps and along the corridor. Suddenly Fay gave a shout.

"The door of Cabin Fourteen is open!"

Darting forward, Sally peered through the doorway, then she felt herself go pale.

Inside the cabin drawers had been pulled out, boxes upturned. And in the middle of the debris, bewilderedly holding a valuable topaz necklace, stood Helen!

"HELEN!" At Sally's hoarse cry the young stewardess swung round, to smile uncertainly.

"Hallo!" she said. Then, a little worriedly: "I—I came to tidy up, and I got the shock of my life when I found all this disorder. The necklace was lying on the floor and— She broke off and stared helplessly. "What does it mean?" she asked.

She seemed inclined to overlook the affair, much to the chums' relief, though they could sense the strained atmosphere in the dining-saloon when they returned.

"We've simply got to do something," Sally declared when the meal was over. "There must surely be more than petty spite behind this business."

"You mean the uncle-Johnny?" asked Don quickly. "You're right, Sally. We'll take a look at the passenger list after dinner."

They did, only to draw a blank. No Martin Kershaw appeared on the list of passengers or crew.

"No good," said Johnny despondently. "What do we do now?"

"We find out how that microphone can be worked without the trickster being in the control-room," replied Sally. "And I know just the person to help us. Come on!"

She led the way to the carpenters' shop down below. Slick, the boy inventor, was just dashing out as they got there, staggering under a load of wooden batons, around which were wound yards of paper.

"Can't stop!" he sang out as he saw the chums. "Just thought out a new invention—a real humdinger!"

"You'll stop for a few seconds," said Johnny, planting himself solidly in the path of the tall, thin Slick. "Long enough to tell us how this mystery voice rotter gets to work, if he doesn't operate from the control-room."

"It's a cinch," said Slick airily. "Bare a piece of wire anywhere that leads from the control-roof to the loudspeakers, clip on a pocket microphone, and there you are. Simple! Could have told you that days ago if you'd asked."

He dashed off, while Sally & Co. stared at each other in growing excitement.

"A clue at last, shipmates," murmured Sally softly. "Our first one."

"And a jolly difficult one," replied Don. "There's yards and yards of wire—"

"I don't care if there's miles and miles," replied Sally determinedly. "We'll jolly well look at every inch of it and find out where it's been scraped bare. And, what's more, we'll start right now."

They did, but after a full hour of cramping, back-aching searching, they still had not found the elusive piece of wire. It seemed almost a hopeless task, but the chums were determined to go on. Such a lot depended on that small clue. If only they could find the piece of wire, hide near it. Then, when next the mystery voice used it, they could pounce on him, find out what lay behind his vendetta against Helen.

But as they rather wearily bent to their task again, the head stewardess called them.

"The staff dance is just starting," she cried. "Most of our guests are already there. We're looking forward to seeing you, so don't be long."

"Golly!" exclaimed Sally in dismay. "I'd forgotten all about it. All right," she called. "Be along in a jiffy."

The stewardess nodded and walked off. While Sally & Co., regretfully abandoning their task for the time being, hurried to their cabins to wash and change.

"Supposing we call for Helen on the way?" suggested Fay, as together she and Sally, looking entrancingly pretty in their nicest dresses, quitted the cabin. "Maybe she'd like to come along with us?"

"Good idea!" approved Sally.

But Helen, when they knocked at her door, showed no signs of getting ready for the dance. Obviously she had been crying, though she smiled wanly as she saw Sally and Fay.

"I—I don't think I'll come," she said quaveringly. "I—I feel I can't face everybody. They must be thinking awful things of me—"

"Nonsense!" said Sally briskly. "Everybody's terribly sorry for you, and as anxious as we are to bowl out this schemer. Buck up, Helen! It'll do you no end of good to forget your troubles for a while."

Helen hesitated, then nodded. "You're right," she agreed. "I'll come along to the dance when I'm ready. And—thanks, both of you," she added softly.

Sally and Fay's eyes were a little misty as they continued on their way. The plucky way Helen was facing her accusers made them keener than ever to help her.

A gay tune was being played when they entered the ballroom, where the staff and all their passenger guests were assembled. The atmosphere was all laughter and jollity—just right for cheering-up Helen, Sally decided.

With a smile she swung into the dance with Don, while Fay followed with Johnny. The dance was just coming to an end when the loud-speaker in the far corner began to boom.

"Attention, everybody!"

Sally gasped as she recognised the mystery voice, and she stopped so suddenly that Don almost lost his footing on the slippery floor. In a second the laughter and light-hearted chatter ceased. Staff and guests looked uneasily, nervously at each other, while Sally stared at Don in stricken horror.

"The mystery voice again," she muttered. "Oh, Don—"

"Why isn't Helen Burges here to-night?" boomed the voice into the silence. "She pretends she is too upset to attend the dance, but that is just a cunning excuse to stay behind while all the cabins are unattended. Already she has made her haul. Go to her cabin—you will catch her red-handed. And if she protests her innocence—there was an unmistakable sneer in the voice now—"ask her why she is travelling on this ship in disguise!"

As suddenly as it had started, the voice stopped. Everyone stood petrified. Then—

"Don!" cried Sally agonisedly. "It's another trap—I know it is. Oh, why did we leave her alone? We must go to her—"

She started pushing frantically towards the door. But as she did so the captain gave a grim shout.

"Out of the way, please," he ordered. "I'll look into this business myself. Miss Royle—he turned to the chief stewardess—"please come with me. I may want you to—"

He didn't finish, but as he and the chief stewardess disappeared from view, Sally's heart sank like a stone. Why had they let themselves be caught off guard? Why had they left Helen alone? What had the voice meant by saying Helen was disguised?

Frantically, Sally & Co. pushed their way through the crowd and tore off along the corridor. They were just behind Captain Thorne and the chief stewardess when they reached Helen's door.

"Wait!" cried Sally agonisedly. "Oh, please—"

But the captain wasn't waiting. He rapped urgently on the door. There was a muffled exclamation from inside the cabin. The door swung back. Then Sally gave a startled cry.

For confronting them was Helen, shaken and ashen-faced. But such a different Helen that Sally stared in bewilderment. For gone was the heavy, black hair. Instead, her head was covered with a mass of tight, auburn curls!

In utter astonishment, Sally stared at the shrinking girl, from her to the black wig lying on the table. Helen—disguised! Then the mystery voice had spoken the truth.

But what did it mean? Why was Helen travelling in disguise. Her puzzled speculations came to an end as she saw the anguish in Helen's blue eyes.

"Captain Thorne," she began desperately. "Please—"

But with a gesture the captain silenced her. There was a look of incredulous disbelief on his usually genial face as he stared at Helen.

"You!" he said. "I recognise you now. You are Helen Kershaw! The stewardess I dismissed at the end of

our last voyage. I just don't understand—"

"Captain Thorne, I'm sorry," said Helen tremblingly. "I know things look black against me, but I had to return to Australia in this ship. And the only way I could do it was by disguising myself. Oh, I know I was dismissed because you thought I was a thief. But it wasn't true—"

There was a gasp from the group in the doorway, followed next moment by startled exclamations as the chief stewardess, who had been searching the cabin, started back from a curtained alcove with a little cry, holding an untidily wrapped parcel in her hand.

And from that parcel came a glint of gold, the glitter of jewels. With a wild cry Helen shrank back.

"No! No!" she sobbed. "I didn't take them—I didn't! Please—"

She looked imploringly at Sally, but Sally was staring in horror at that incriminating packet. The mystery voice had proved that Helen was travelling in disguise—had he also proved her a thief?

Apparently there was no doubt in Captain Thorne's mind. Grave, suddenly stern-looking, he looked heavily at Helen.

"So you've done it again," he said. "Up to your old tricks, eh? Well, this decides it. At the next port you will be handed over to the authorities. Meanwhile, you will remain in this cabin under guard. Now I must ask everyone to disperse."

And, as Helen sank, trembling and horror-stricken, on her bunk, he motioned everyone outside and closed the door.



THE CHUMS LAY A TRAP

Slowly, the crowd of passengers melted away, until only Sally & Co. and a rather uncomfortable-looking guard were left outside

the cabin. From inside they could hear Helen's heartbroken sobbing. White-faced, Sally looked at her chums, saw in their faces a reflection of the same shattering doubt that filled her own mind.

Helen had returned to the ship in disguise, after having once been proved a thief! And now she had been caught out again with stolen goods in her cabin!

They had been so sure of her innocence all the time, had been so ready to back her up. Had their trust been misplaced? Was she a thief?

Only for a second or two did Sally allow that thought to enter her mind. Then her blue eyes suddenly flashed, her chin squared.

"I don't believe it," she said staunchly. "Goodness knows, things look black against Helen, but I can't, and I won't believe she's a thief."

"I'm with you, Sally," supported Don. "She couldn't do it."

"That's right," agreed Johnny. "But what can we do?"

"Well, even now we may have a chance of helping Helen," began Sally.

"You mean if we catch the microphone rotter and prove it was in his interests to get her thrown off the ship?" asked Don. "But Sally, now he's done what he set out to do, he won't broadcast any more."

"Maybe not, but we're still going to find that bare wire," replied Sally determinedly. "It may possibly give us a clue. We'll have to change our clothes, of course—and get torches."

The other three nodded, anxious to do anything, however futile it might seem, rather than sit about helplessly and do nothing. And, as Sally said, it might give them a clue.

But Sally herself was really far from hopeful. So black was the case against Helen that it seemed nothing would clear her. They were up against a cunning, unscrupulous enemy who, now his underhand work was done, would lie low for the rest of the voyage.

It was with a heavy heart that, complete with torch, she rejoined her

chums, to continue their hard and seemingly fruitless search. Several times in the following hour they almost gave up, only the thought of the stricken Helen kept them going.

All around the different cabins and state rooms they searched, on to the open decks. And then—

"Jumping catfish!" shouted Johnny suddenly. "I've got it—I've got it!"

"Quiet, chump!" hissed Sally. And in the same breath: "Oh, Johnny, you clever old thing." Thrilled, she looked down at the wire. There could be no doubt about it. Quite recently it had been scraped clean of its covering. She looked around. Then a flood of excited colour flooded her cheeks. "But this is amazing!" she cried. "Don—Johnny—Fay—don't you see what this means?"

In mystification, the chums looked round, then, as they saw the empty steamer-chair against the wall of the deck-house and recognised the book that lay on it, they also gasped with excitement.

"It is—it must be," muttered Don. "Sally, what do we do? Tackle the blighter who tampered with the wire?"

But Sally shook her head. "Oh, no," she murmured. "We'll meet cunning with cunning. This particular person wasn't around when Helen was caught in her cabin—that helps quite a lot. First of all, Don and I are going to the control-room. Fay, you and Johnny stay here. But for goodness' sake, don't be seen. We'll join you soon."

Mystified, but not questioning, Johnny and Fay crouched back in the shadows, while Sally and Don hurried off. With a muttered word to her boy chum, Sally approached the door of the control-room. She knocked and entered.

"I came to see you about the microphone in the lounge," she murmured vaguely to the officer on duty. "There may be something wrong with it—"

The officer got to his feet. "I'll take a look at it myself," he replied. "The rest of the staff are at the dance, so I'll have to fix it myself."

He followed Sally from the control-room, not noticing her backward glance, her smile of delight as she saw Don slip in behind them.

The officer reached the lounge, stood on a chair to look at the microphone, then almost fell backwards as a voice suddenly boomed out:

"A late news flash of interest to all passengers. Owing to the fact that no stolen property was found in the cabin of Helen Burgess—or Helen Kershaw, as she really is—the captain has decided to take a lenient view of her escapade. In the circumstances she will travel with us to Australia."

The message ended. In open-mouthed stupefaction the officer stared at a strangely tense-looking Sally.

"N-not found?" he stuttered. "But the jewels were found in her cabin—I was there, I saw the whole thing." As if suddenly aware of the tenseness

in Sally's attitude, his eyes narrowed. "There's some trickery going on here," he said grimly. "And I'd like to know—" Then suddenly his eyes travelled up to the microphone. "You told me that thing was out of order—could that have been a trick to lure me out of the control-room so that that message could be broadcast? Come to think of it, I saw one of your friends lurking around when I came out of my room—and I believe that was his voice just now. Just wait—"

With a forbidding glare at Sally, he dashed off, while Sally hurried away in the opposite direction. Suddenly she was joined by Don.

"Nice work!" she approved. "But, golly, I hope our trick works, otherwise we'll all find ourselves in iron for the rest of the journey. The captain must be livid—"

"Sally, please!" implored Don. "I can't even bear to think of it. But—shush—here we are!"

Trembling with excitement, yet inwardly quaking a little at the thought of what would happen to them if their ruse failed, they crouched down beside Johnny and Fay, eyes strained for the slightest movement, ears pricked for the smallest sound.

Then, suddenly, they tensed. For along the deck stole the dark figure of a man. The feeble light of a torch flashed out as he dropped to his knees. There was a scraping sound, then—the mystery voice boomed out through the ship's loud-speakers once again.

"Attention, everybody! A proper search was not made of Helen Kershaw's cabin. Look for a brown paper parcel behind the curtain hiding the alcove. There—"

The voice broke off with a hoarse yell as two boyish figures suddenly sprang at him, sending him flat on his back on the deck, while two more figures grabbed his wildly waving hands.

"Got you, you rotter!" panted Don. "Keep still, or it'll be the worst for you."

"Your belt, Fay," cried Sally grimly.

"We'll tie his feet, and—Golly!" She blinked dazedly as a searchlight suddenly flashed on, its blinding beam directed on the writhing, struggling mass on the deck. And then:

"What is this? What is going on?" demanded the voice of Captain Thorne. "Is everyone taking leave of their senses to-night? What do you mean by attacking one of my passengers?"

Flush-faced, bright-eyed, Sally sprang to her feet.

"Yes, he is one of your passengers, captain," she agreed. "And he's the mystery voice as well! We caught him in the act of sending that last message—"

"That's it," panted Don. "Sorry I barked on to the control-room without permission, sir, but it was the only way. Sally figured if this rotter thought Helen was staying aboard until the end of the journey, he'd have one more try to get her chucked

off. That's why I put out that fake message—to trick him into broadcasting himself. And we caught him red-handed."

"And look who we caught," cried Fay jubilantly. "The poor invalid who always sat here, who could only leave his steamer-chair with great difficulty."

"Just a hoax to cover his microphone trick," broke in Johnny.

The captain blinked as he looked down at the black-bearded figure writhing on the deck, then shook his head in bewilderment.

"But—but why?" he asked helplessly.

"Because," said Sally, handing him a bulky pile of papers, "he's Helen's uncle, Martin Kershaw. These papers, which fell from his pocket, will prove it. He was after Helen's fortune. Obviously he got her thrown off the boat on the last trip, but Helen had to make the return journey on this boat—it was the only one that could get her to Australia in time. That was why she had to disguise herself. He must have found out—"

"Sure, I did," snarled Martin Kershaw. "And I'd have got away with it if it hadn't been for you interfering youngsters. I'll—"

"You'll do nothing," roared the captain. "You'll go below, under guard, and there you'll stay. Somebody get Helen Kershaw, bring her here."

In a very short while a white-faced Helen arrived. But as the captain explained what had happened, a glorious flood of colour stained her cheeks.

"It's true," she cried. "I was falsely accused of being a thief on the voyage to New York. It was only when I got there that I learnt of my fortune, and I knew I'd have to return somehow on this ship. I'm so sorry, captain—"

The captain cleared his throat.

"I'm sorry, too, young lady. This will teach me not to believe all I see and hear in future. You'll stay with us now, of course, until we reach Australia. Probably open up your own shipping line in competition with us with this new fortune of yours," He chuckled. "But, remember, you've got these very good friends of yours to thank for your good fortune."

"I know," said Helen tremulously, as she looked at Sally & Co. "They've been so wonderful all the time—I don't know how to say thank you."

"Then don't try," laughed Sally. "Incidentally, we may not look very smart now, but if we hurry we'll just be in time for the last waltz. Come on, shipmates!"

And, with a smile at the still bemused captain, she and her chums hurried off with the radiant Helen, to finish up the dance amid the ringing cheers of the excited and admiring crowd in the ballroom.

(End of this week's story.)

Next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** will contain another enthralling story featuring Sally & Co.

DOLORES THE MISCHIEF-MAKER

(Continued from page 128.)

With a nod he walked away, leaving Pat inwardly quivering. "Oh, goodness, what were they to do? How to foil Dolores now?"

And then, as Willis pitched the ball again, she had a sudden idea.

She saw it coming; saw it falling. She raised the bat and struck with all her strength.

There was a crack as ball met bat. Away hissed the ball, disappearing into the thicket at the other side of the lawn.

"Oh, sorry!" Pat cried, giving her chum a swift, meaning wink. "I shouldn't have hit it so hard. Don't worry, I'll find it."

"And I," Chris said swiftly, understanding perfectly what was in her

chum's mind. "I'll come and help you."

And off the two chums dashed. Breathlessly they plunged into the thicket, but once out of sight they paused.

"O.K. We're away. Now to find what Dolores is up to," Pat said. "Off to the ketch, Chris."

Together the two girls raced for the boathouse. The double doors stood open, and, dropping to a walk, they approached it cautiously. Inside stood the old ketch. There was no sign of life on the deck, but smoke was rising from the ketch's little chimney.

"Dolores must be inside the ketch," said Chris in a whisper.

"Yes, and I bet she isn't scrubbing it out, either," Pat said grimly. "I'm going to see."

Cautiously she crept up to a porthole that she guessed would overlook the spot they had searched last night.

She peered through, and then her lips compressed.

"She's here!" she whispered to Chris. "And look—"

They stared, anger rising within them. There, truly enough, was Dolores. A bucket of water beside her, she was kneeling beside the very place where the mystery message was scratched, but the scrubbing-brush and flannel she had brought with her lay neglected on the floor.

Dolores, pencil in hand, was carefully and painstakingly taking notes in a small, green-backed book.

Pat drew a deep, quivering breath. "So it was the message she was after," she exclaimed. "And—look! She's copying it down in that notebook!"

What does the mystery message say? And why is Dolores so interested in it? See next Friday's exciting instalment of this grand serial.

THE SECRET OF THE TORN PHOTOGRAPHS

(Continued from page 121.)

to label the cases. I'll lock the real tiara in my safe when we get back."

"May I have another look at them?" asked Noel, when they reached the office.

"Sure!" replied Mr. Wilburn. "Though I guess I wouldn't trust anyone else to handle the real tiara."

Noel studied the two flashing ornaments and then returned them to their cases, snapping the lid closed.

"Not even—Miss Delane?" he asked. The director laughed, as he locked the safe.

"I guess Miss Delane's a charming girl—but why do you ask?"

"Because," said Noel sternly, "Miss Julia Delane is actually Rosina Fontaine—a notorious English crook. And what is more, my niece will be here in a few minutes—with the proof."

There came a gentle knock on the door. While the director stood gawping, Noel opened it quickly to step back, his eyes narrowing.

Standing there, a faint, mocking smile on her lips, was Rosina!

"Miss Delane," exclaimed the director, "Mr. Raymond has just made an astounding charge against you. He states that you are a—a—he gulped—"an English crook—"

Rosina's lovely eyes narrowed. "Dear Noel," she murmured. "That was always one of his little jokes."

"This time, Rosina, the joke is on you," said Noel, with an anxious glance at his watch. "This time I shall have conclusive proof."

June was late. Supposing something had happened—

A sigh of relief escaped his lips as he heard hurrying footsteps, and the next moment his young partner burst into the office, carrying a large envelope.

"Here it is, nunky—the photo from Scotland Yard," she exclaimed. "I waited while it was developed—and Mick drove me part way in the studio car. The car broke down soon after we started, and I had to take a taxi—"

She broke off, catching sight of Rosina.

Noel swiftly took the envelope, tore it open, and pulled out the vital photograph with its tissue-paper covering.

On the cover was written: Official photo of Rosina Fontaine—wanted by the English police.

"Stand where you are, Miss Delane," said Noel sternly, barring the way to the door—while June and the director looked anxiously over his shoulder as he removed the tissue-paper wrapping.

Then a startled ejaculation was torn from Noel's lips. June gave a bewildered cry.

They were staring at the picture of a thin, acid-faced young woman with fair hair—a girl they had never seen in their lives before.

Rosina's soft, amused laugh broke the silence. In some incredible way, she had tricked them—once again.

THE first rehearsal of the "Smiling Enchantress" was in full swing—and Rosina was acting magnificently.

"I guess Mr. Raymond, you owe Miss Delane an apology," remarked the director, as he crossed over to where Noel and June were standing on the fringe of the set. "If she's not a pukka actress, I'll eat my hat. You've sure got her mixed up with some other girl—as that photo proves."

Noel said nothing. He was watching the slim, enchanting figure cross the set, the exquisite tiara flashing against her dark hair. Waving to them gaily, she entered her dressing-room.

Noel turned to June.

"Did you give my instructions to the doorkeeper?"

June nodded.

"On no account is Miss Delane to be allowed to leave the studio, nunky."

"Eh—what's that?" demanded the director, glaring. "Who's giving orders round here, Mr. Raymond?"

"I am," rejoined Noel sternly, as he took a slip of paper from his pocket.

Here's a message I received from police headquarters just before the rehearsal. The employee who labelled those two jewel-cases was held for questioning at the rehearsal—and he's admitted the truth. Someone bribed him to put the wrong labels on the cases. And that someone was obviously Miss Delane—"

The director's face turned white as he stared at the official message.

"Say—then that tiara she was wearing was the real heirloom. Then she is crooked, nunky! Those diamonds are worth a fortune. If she gets away with them—"

Followed by Noel and June, he raced to the dressing-room, hammering on the door. There was no reply, and he burst in.

"She's gone!" he shouted huskily.

"The window's barred," snapped Noel, "and I've given orders that she's to be stopped from leaving the studio."

The commissionaire at the studio entrance stared at them in bewilderment when they rushed up.

"Miss Delane? I'm sure she hasn't passed me, sir," he declared.

"But—she must have!" cried the agitated director.

"Just a minute," cut in Noel, his eyes narrowed. "Has anyone at all passed you in the last ten minutes—anyone that you know?"

The commissionaire scratched his head.

"Only young Mick Rogan, sir. He—"

Noel drew in his breath sharply. "Mick—I had my suspicions. That explains everything. No wonder Rosina was able to tamper with the postal packets, and to substitute that photograph without your suspecting, June. And thanks to the same clever trick, she's been able to escape."

"Nunky—what do you mean?" gasped June. "Even if Mick was her confederate, how could he have helped her escape?"

"Come back to the dressing-room," jerked Noel. "And you, too, Mr. Wilburn. I think we'll find the explanation there."

Returning to the dressing-room allotted to Julia Delane, Noel opened drawers and cupboards in his search for the final clue.

It was as he threw open the big wardrobe in the corner that June gave a bewildered cry.

For hanging there was a young man's sports jacket and flannels, a coloured tie and a big brimmed hat, while on a shelf lay a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles.

"There is Mick Rogan!" said Noel. "Or, rather, a spare set of his clothes. Rosina always took precautions."

"Nunky!" gasped June incredulously. "You mean—Mick Rogan was Rosina, in disguise?"

"Precisely," said Noel grimly.

"Rosina—without her make-up and lipstick, her eyes hidden by spectacles, her own hair cut short and brushed back, like a man's. Note her cleverness—for when she appeared as herself she was obviously wearing a wig."

Her plan to steal the tiara must have been laid for weeks—but she realised that the game would be up if that tell-tale photo was brought to Mr. Wilburn's notice.

"In sheer desperation, she invented a new role—obtaining a temporary job as messenger in order to get at my mail."

"So—she's tricked you, after all," muttered the director huskily, "and got away with my tiara into the bargain."

The young detective shook his head.

"The genuine tiara is locked in your safe, Mr. Wilburn. I took the precaution of exchanging them when we reached your office—as I suspected Rosina's game. She's escaped—with a case of worthless paste."

June gave an unsteady, admiring laugh.

"I bet she'll be mad, nunky, when she finds out. I wonder—I wonder if we'll meet her again?"

"Somehow," said Noel dryly, "I've an idea that we will."

(End of this week's story.)

And in next Friday's grand story you will read how Noel and June do meet the audacious Rosina again!

THEIR SCHOOL ON CASTAWAY ISLE

(Continued from page 126.)

After a while she heard a rustling in the bushes behind her, and she turned with a start to see a pair of golden eyes gleaming in the shadows. "Michi!" she breathed in quick relief.

In a moment the faithful panther was at her side, purring like a great cat. He must have followed his young mistress when she escaped from the camp, trailing her with uncanny instinct along the jungle trail.

His presence gave Tania a sense of comfort and companionship.

"Michi, we must find Dave!" she breathed. "You and I will seek him where the others failed. He cannot be far away now!"

Tania felt convinced of this by the altered nature of the ground. They were leaving the dense jungle and

approaching a wild, barren area interspersed by tall cliffs and treacherous ravines.

The jungle girl had rarely ventured this way herself, and she felt certain that a boy unaccustomed to the island would have been forced, sooner or later, to retrace his steps.

Excitedly now she pressed on, Michi padding silently at her heels.

As they emerged from the trees Tania halted, staring round her in the moonlight.

Straight ahead of her the path ended in a fringe of stunted bushes that concealed an unexpected drop. To right and left, among the tangled undergrowth, rose great moss-grown boulders, effectually barring the way to all but the most venturesome explorer.

And there was no sign of Dave! Tania bit her lip. Had her jungle skill for once misled her?

Even as she stood there, hesitating, her dark eyes troubled, she became aware that Michi was growing rest-

less. The panther was sniffing the air uneasily.

Tania became tensed. Something was wrong! Michi would not have acted like that without a reason.

Now, with a low, peculiar growl, the panther sprang ahead of her. Tania followed, cautiously parting the bushes.

The edge of the drop was barely a pace from where she stood. Holding her breath, Tania crept forward, peering over the steeply shelving side to the scattered rocks and tangled creeper some fifteen feet below.

Then an involuntary cry was torn from her lips.

For lying there in the moonlight, his face deathly pale, his eyes closed, was Dave!

Dave—the boy whom she thought had robbed her, whom she believed to be her enemy—was lying there desperately injured, in need of help!

How Tania goes to Dave's aid and what follows will enthrall you in next Friday's instalment.