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EVERY
FRIDAY.

GIRLS' CRYSTAL ^{3!}

Week
Ending
Oct. 9th,
1948.

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"



LEADER OF THE ALPINE REVELLERS

The Strange Young Swiss Guide Alone Could Help Jill & Co. To Win The
Havensburg Test—Written by ENID BOYTEN

WOULD HANS AGREE?

JILL GARDINER, holiday-making in Switzerland with her chum, Rosemary Walsh, was thrilled when she learnt that all the young guests who passed a winter sports test would be invited to be the guests of Mr. Paul le Grand during the Venetian Ice Fete to be held at romantic Havensburg Castle.

Girls had never gone in for the test, but Jill was determined that some of them should successfully pass it this year. She encountered an unexpected setback, however, for she failed to secure a guide to act as trainer.

While out ski-ing, she was rescued from a perilous position by a strange, moody boy named Hans Peterson. He declared he wasn't a guide, but, convinced that he was qualified to act as the girls' coach, Jill went to his home to try to persuade him to act as trainer.

As she neared the log cabin where he lived she was startled to hear jeering shouts and Hans' voice raised in anger.

JILL pushed her way through the snow-laden bushes around the little cottage and halted in amazement.

For a strange scene met her eyes! In front of the cottage, with its log walls and picturesque porch, stood the sturdy figure of Hans Peterson—cheeks flushed, eyes stormy, fists clenched. In the background two or three rough-looking lads from the village were hastily retreating.

It was something else that caught Jill's astonished gaze, however.

Pinned to one of the pillars of the little porch was a roughly-scrawled notice:

"THE GUIDE WHO
RAN AWAY
LIVES HERE."

What did it mean? Had Hans, returning to the cottage, found those boys fixing it there? Was that the cause of the scuffle she had heard?

As these questions throbbed in Jill's brain the Swiss boy swung round. He had already taken off his skis, which were leaning against the cottage wall. Now he strode to the porch, tore down the notice with one sweep of his arm and flung it away.

Next moment he was turning to the door, his back to Jill, as if he had never even seen her.

"Hans! Please!"
Jill found her voice at last, gliding forward on her skis towards the porch.

Slowly he turned, frowning sombrely at her. Silently he waited, his frown growing deeper.

"Surely," she cried, "you haven't forgotten me already, Hans?"

"Why have you followed me here?" he muttered. "What do you want?"

"I've come to ask a favour from you, Hans," she said quickly. "I know you're an expert ski-er—an ace at winter sports and mountaineering—and I want to ask if you'll coach me and my girl chums for the Havensburg Test?"

Breathlessly she waited for his answer. And it came with another frown:

"No!"
"But why?" she exclaimed. "Why not, Hans?"

An odd thing happened then. A sudden breeze caught the notice he had flung away and whirled it so that it lay on the snow between them. The colour flooding his cheeks again, the Swiss boy pointed to it.

"There is the reason!" he uttered harshly.

"But I don't understand—" Jill began.

She broke off as he took a quick step towards her, that angry, brooding gleam in his deep-set eyes.

"You mean to tell me," he broke

out, "that you've never heard what they say about me in the village? You've never heard the taunts, the jeers, the whispers?"

Blankly she shook her head. "Then I'll tell you," he stated harshly. "And you'll know why your friends at the hotel won't want to be coached by me."

He paused, and his mouth twisted bitterly.

"I've been disgraced," he said. "Until ten days ago I wore the official badge of a guide—here, on my wind-jacket. It has been torn away from me, in front of the whole village. Can you understand what that means?"

The smile had died from Jill's lips. Her eyes searched his rugged, sun-burnt face.

"Ten days ago," he went on slowly, "I was engaged to take a party of tourists through a certain ravine in the mountains. And while they were there an avalanche came thundering down from the slopes above. And they say that I took to my heels and left the tourists to struggle out of the danger as best they could. That's what they say, and everyone believes it."

Impulsively Jill shook her head. "Not everyone, Hans!" she breathed.

"What do you mean?"
"I don't believe it!" she cried. "I can't!"

For she couldn't!
She remembered how calmly and pluckily he had rescued her from the peril of the crevasse. She recollected how safe she had felt in his care; how she had sensed something strong and dependable beneath his gruff, moody manner.

This sturdy, rugged boy—he just couldn't have deserted those who were left in his charge. Every instinct in Jill rebelled at the thought.

"It—it can't be true!"
The whisper broke from her.

"It isn't!" He caught her up almost fiercely. "It isn't true!"

"Then why—?" She gazed at him in utter puzzlement. If it wasn't true—and she was sure it wasn't—why had they accused him? Why had he been made to suffer that terrible, public disgrace?

She had a feeling now that he was glad to unburden himself. Glad of a chance to talk.

"I was on my way to keep the appointment with the tourists that morning," he told her. "But I never got there. I was attacked in the woods—something was thrown over my head and I must have been drugged, for when I came to myself two hours later I was lying in a woodman's hut. And meanwhile that terrible thing had happened in the ravine!"

Jill was still baffled. "But if you weren't there—"

He shook his head. "There's only one way I can figure it out," he muttered. "While I was lying in the hut someone must have impersonated me. Someone, disguised like me, must have led the tourists into the ravine and then deserted them, so that I got the blame. And no one would believe my story!"

He checked himself, and the old moody look returned to his eyes.

"So now you know," he muttered, "why your friends won't want me as a trainer."

Morosely he regarded Jill, then turned towards the door again.

"Hans! Stop!" Jill was quivering with eagerness.

While listening to Hans' strange story she had almost forgotten her own ambition. But now it flooded back on her—that wonderful plan for her and her chums to pass the Havensburg Test, so that they would take the ski tour across the mountains to the romantic castle in the next valley.

"You don't know the Alpine Revellers—that's what they call me and my chums," she cried. "They're a grand lot of girls, Hans. And they'll believe in you—just as I do—when I've told them the whole story. They'll be as keen as mustard on this scheme, and to have you as a coach."

Already he had opened the door, and he gave a short, bitter laugh over his shoulder.

"They won't!" he muttered. "They'll be like everyone else in this valley. They'll want to keep clear of Hans Peterson—the disgraced guide!"

In a moment he would be gone, and still she hadn't persuaded him!

What could she say, before it was too late?

"Hans! I'll make a bargain with you!" she cried impetuously. "I'll get at least six girls to sign a letter to you, saying how keen we are to have you as our trainer. Would that make you change your mind? Would that make you realise how desperately we need your help?"

She held her breath as he paused in the doorway, still with his back to her.

"It might," she heard him mutter. Then he had stepped inside the cottage and slammed the door behind him, leaving her alone in the little clearing.

At her feet, in the snow, flapped the notice those boys had pinned to the door-post, and mechanically Jill stooped and picked it up. How it must have hurt him! Was it any wonder he was morose and difficult and touchy, if he had to put up with insults like that?

"I'll tear it up," she murmured. "Take it right away!"

Then suddenly she noticed an odd thing. She held it up to the light, examining it closely.

"It's the paper they use at the hotel!" she exclaimed.

She had seen a pile of it in the office of Herr Mayer, the manager. It was used for posters and notices about the fancy dress dances and skating contests and the other holiday events that were always taking

place. It was a special paper with a peculiar water mark that Herr Mayer had told her he got from Zurich.

Strange that those hobbledehoyos from the village should have had a sheet of that paper. Unless—

"Unless someone at the hotel wrote that taunting message," she mused. "And bribed the boys to stick it on Hans' cottage."

She shook her brown curls. It didn't seem likely, and yet surely Hans must have an enemy—a bitter, scheming enemy who had plotted his public disgrace.

And then a smile dimpled Jill's cheeks.

"At least I teased him into giving a half-promise," she thought, "and if I can get six girls to sign that letter he may agree!"

The thought thrilled her as she sped back to the hotel.



THE VITAL LETTER

Half an hour later Jill was stepping into the hotel lounge.

A gay chorus greeted her from where the group of cheery holiday-makers, known as the Alpine Revellers, were seated in front of a huge log fire.

"Good-oh!" cried Rosemary Walsh, her special chum. "It's Jill!"

"Say, Jill! What's cooking?"

"Have you found a coach, Jill? We're all thrilled to the eyebrows at this idea of entering for the Havensburg Test. Rosemary's told us all about it. Spill the beans, old thing!"

And they all looked eagerly at the girl who was their acknowledged leader.

Jill's brown eyes sparkled. That excited chorus proved, at any rate, that the girls were keen on her plan.

"Yes, I've got news!" she cried. "I've found someone who may be able to coach us. What's more, he saved my life up on the Brunhof slope this very afternoon!"

And breathlessly Jill told them the whole story of her meeting with Hans Peterson.

Certainly they were interested! Every pair of eyes was fixed on Jill.

"Golly! What an adventure!" burst out Rosemary.

"And that boy guide!" exclaimed shy Prue Denham, blushing to find herself speaking. "He must have been very unjustly treated if he had his badge taken away for no reason, and—"

"One moment, please! All of you!"

The clear-cut voice rang on their ears as someone strode quickly across the lounge towards them. It was Max Kildare, the young sports coach at the hotel.

Max was training the boys for the test, but he had refused to coach Jill and her chums because he felt it was too hard for girls. Now there was a regretful look on his sunburnt face as he gazed at the excited group.

"Sorry, Jill!" he apologised. "I don't want to keep butting in like a spoilsport, but I do want you all to understand just what the position is."

He paused, his eyes grave.

"This boy, Hans Peterson, has been publicly disgraced," he began.

Jill whirled on him.

"But, Max, he didn't deserve it!" she cried. "I'm sure of it!"

"Wiser heads than yours, Jill, have decided that he did," replied the sports coach.

"There was complete proof that he deserted those who had placed in his charge. If you want him as your coach I can't stop may have something to say about it—but I want you to know that I don't consider him a suitable person to train you. That's all!"

There was tense silence as, with a friendly nod, Max turned away.

Jill drew a deep breath. She knew that Max was a very popular figure in the hotel. Would his opinion of Hans swing the Alpine Revellers against her plan?

"Well! You've heard Max, and

you've heard me," she said, trying to speak lightly. "I've drawn up a letter to Hans asking him to train us for the Havensburg Test, and I want all those who are keen on the plan to sign it—now!"

A moment's pause. Then: "Count me in, Jill!" cried loyal Rosemary.

"And me!" added Brenda Curtis, the American girl, in her pleasant drawl. "I'm tickled to death with the idea, Jill!"

"And me, too—please!" put in Prue. "That is," she added hastily, "if you think I've got an earthly chance of passing the test."

Fondly Jill squeezed her arm.

"Course you have, Prue! A jolly good chance!" she encouraged. "Max was saying only yesterday how you've come on in your ski-ing. Now, who's the next one?" she laughed.

Suzie Millard put up her hand. "O.K. for me!" she said in her blunt way.

"Good for you, Suzie!" Jill sparkled, gazing round at the rest of them. "Anyone else want to sign, before it's too late?"

This time there was a longer pause. Some of the girls had been influenced by what Max had said, and were looking doubtful.

"Oh, well, we've got five names," Jill laughed. "I guess that'll be enough, though I told Hans I would try for six. Pass the letter round, Rosemary. I've signed already—you four others add your signatures, and—"

A silky voice broke in on her words. "Hey! What about me?" it purred.

"I'm in on this, too, you know!"

In a shadowy corner of the huge fireplace a girl had been lounging in the most comfortable chair. Now she rose to her feet and stepped into the lamplight.

It was Magda Beaumont, a dark girl in a crimson frock with the gleam of a diamond bracelet at her slender wrist.

"I've been utterly intrigued," Magda went on, "by all this talk of the wild boy of the Alps, who is going to coach us for the Havensburg Test. I'm just longing to meet him."

Jill bit her lip.

She didn't quite know what to make of Magda. That attractive girl hadn't been very long at the hotel, though she had already proved herself quite an ace at most winter sports. And she certainly seemed to have plenty of money to spend, which made her popular with some of them.

Magda shot a glance at Jill from under silky lashes.

"They were talking about Hans Peterson in the village sports shop this morning," she drawled. "Seems he's got a remarkable nose for avalanches. If he smells one coming he takes to his heels and runs. Can't say I blame him!"

Jill flushed angrily.

"Look here, Magda, if you're going to talk like that in Hans' hearing, you can count yourself out of it!" she exclaimed.

"Hear, hear!"

"No catty remarks, Magda!"

The dark girl flashed her brilliant smile.

"Oh, come! As if I would!" she murmured. "I expect I'll be so scared by the wild boy that I shan't even open my mouth. Where is the document? I'll sign on the dotted line!"

Already she had produced a dainty gold fountain-pen from her handbag. Reaching across, she took the letter from Prue, who had just signed it, and added her own name with a flourish.

Well, there it was! They couldn't very well prevent Magda joining, if she wanted to.

And Jill's optimistic spirits bubbled up again, as she glanced down at the letter Magda had just handed her:

"Dear Hans,—We, the undersigned Alpine Revellers, are keen to pass the test that will qualify us to take the

(Please turn to the back page.)



The Fourth GREY GHOST

By DOROTHY PAGE

OUTWITTING SMEEKE

PENELOPE CARTWRIGHT, daughter of the headmaster of Harcourt Abbey Boys' School, sympathised with a secret society calling themselves the Grey Ghosts. They were out to fight against the tyranny of the bullying senior master, Mr. Aspell, also known as the "Wasp," and to prove the innocence of Glynn Tracy, a boy who had been expelled.

Calling herself the "Fourth Grey Ghost," Penelope appeared at a meeting of the secret society, and offered to help it. She managed to secure a vital plan of the abbey and gave it to Hugh Mason, leader of the Grey Ghosts.

The following morning, Penelope went to collect a message from Hugh. To her horror she saw Harold Smeeke, a Fifth Form spy of Mr. Aspell's, making for the disused fountain where the note was hidden.

DESPERATELY Penelope ran on. Somehow she must prevent Harold Smeeke from securing the note hidden in the fountain.

Knitting-bag clutched under one arm, she rounded the Clock Tower, then pulled up in startled relief. For there, still ten yards away from the fountain, was the Fifth Former.

What had made him so slow to reach his objective Penelope did not know; she only realised that, after all, there was a chance of saving the Grey Ghosts.

"Smeeke!" she called. "Smeeke!" And, a plan already humming in her brain, she went hurrying forward. The Fifth Former turned reluctantly.

"What is it?" he muttered. "Did I startle you?" she inquired breathlessly. "I was so relieved to see you! I thought all the boys would be in school—and I do so want help!"

"I'm afraid I've got something to do, Miss Cartwright," Smeeke muttered, shifting impatiently. "It's urgent—"

Penelope thought grimly: "I know it is, you sneak!" But the smile she forced was winning.

"But this really won't take a moment."

She zipped open her knitting-bag and hastily dragged out a new skein of wool.

"If you'll just hold this skein while I wind it into a ball—"

"What!" Smeeke stepped back, pasty cheeks reddening.

"Me—hold wool! I—I can't do that. I'm a senior; I mean—it would look silly. Besides," he gabbled, "I haven't time—"

"Nonsense," said Penelope, with a confident firmness she was far from feeling. "It won't take a minute."

"But look here—"

"Harold Smeeke," said Penelope severely, "I am surprised at your attitude. My father would be surprised, too—especially as I am knitting the pullover for him. I am sure you don't

want to get into his black books. Here—"

With a deft movement, she forced the wool over his podgy hands.

"There," she beamed. "I'll soon wind it. Then I can continue with the pullover. I must finish it in time, you see," she rushed on. "And—I know my father will be pleased to hear that one of his senior boys was not discourteous."

There was an emphasis in her last remark that told on the toadying Smeeke. If there was one man he really feared, it was the headmaster.

He squirmed, glancing almost huntedly towards the fountain and then towards the school building.

"Well—be quick—hurry—" he fumed.

"Naturally," said Penelope gravely. "I am very dexterous."

But she commenced to wind with— to Smeeke—infuriating slowness. She had one eye on Clock Tower. If only she could hold up Smeeke until the end of break! The sneak's hands were trembling with furious impatience.

"Look here," he burst out at last. "I can't stop. You're being too slow. There's something I've got to do—"

He started to drop his hands, and just then there was a brisk footstep and Mr. Budgell, the sports master, appeared round the corner of the Cloisters. He stopped, stared, then hid an amused smile.

"Oh, Mr. Budgell," cried Penelope quickly, "Harold Smeeke is helping me. Don't you think it's awfully nice of him?"

"Very," said the young master solemnly. "However"—he glanced at his watch—"Smeeke, break's nearly over. You'd better cut along to Senior House. You'll have to excuse him I'm afraid, Miss Cartwright."

"Oh, of course," murmured Penelope. "Lessons come first."

"But, sir—" protested Smeeke.

"Cut, Smeeke," said Mr. Budgell crisply. The sports master knew all about the toady and heartily despised him. "Hurry now—"

For one agonising second Penelope feared that Smeeke would blurt out to Mr. Budgell what he had seen, what he suspected. But he didn't. With a sullen glare at Penelope, he dropped the wool and stamped off towards Senior House.

Mr. Budgell looked at the wool with twinkling eyes, lifted his mortarboard to Penelope, and strode on.

Penelope sighed long and deeply; the suspense had been shaking.

"Oh zimmy—what a hot spot! Thank goodness Smeeke didn't speak out! Wonder why he didn't? Who cares—the day's saved. Whoopee! And now—"

One quick glance around. The Cloisters was quiet, deserted. She stuffed the wool back into her knitting-bag and sped to the fountain.

The thrill of the moment laid its grip on her as she fumbled in one of the stone gargoyles' heads. Her fingers quivered. They came out clasping a folded note.

Penelope breathed faster—and

grinned a little at a jammy thumb-print on the paper. So like a boy! But the message—

Another lightning glance around and she unfolded the note. Printed words held her eager gaze.

"WELL DONE, NO. 4! THE PLAN GIVES VITAL CLUE FOR OUR NEXT MOVE! MEETING TO-NIGHT 'EIGHT O'CLOCK. CLOCK TOWER."

"LEADER OF THE GREY GHOSTS."

Penelope gasped. Her face lit up with excitement and pleasure. The very fact that Hugh had written "No. 4" surely meant that she had passed her test and was to be accepted into the ranks of the daring boys' secret society.

And equally thrilling was the knowledge that the old plan of the abbey had proved all-important in the Grey Ghosts' quest.

"Wizard!" she breathed. "Penny, you've done it! At eight to-night! I'll ask daddy if I may practise in the music-room. I'll slip off at a quarter to eight!" Her eyes shone dreamily. "Golly, how shall I wait so long? I know—I'll prepare a little surprise for the boys!"

She almost danced from the Cloisters. Her triumph was complete. She had beaten Smeeke, bluffed him beautifully, and at a quarter to eight to-night she would start on the big adventure!



ADMITTED TO MEMBERSHIP

The strokes of eight commenced to boom out, throwing back thunderous echoes in the confined space of the small compartment

above the giant mechanism in Clock Tower.

In that tiny room burnt two candles. Their yellow light flung three flickering shadows on the stone walls—the shadows of the Grey Ghosts.

"It is time No. 4 was here," said their leader softly.

He listened, cowed head half-turned towards a small arched doorway.

"I wonder, Hugh," grunted No. 3, "who on earth he is? By his size, he might be a Fourth Former, but I can't place him at all."

"Nor I," admitted No. 1 slowly. "All I know is, he's got bags of nerve and grit, and—somehow he got us this!" He patted the pocket of his sombre robe, whence showed the top of a bulky envelope. His dark eyes gleamed. "That fact alone makes him worthy to be one of us—"

"Definitely," murmured the tall, robed figure of Harvey Doane, No. 2. "But listen, Hugh!"

They tensed. From somewhere below had come the faint hoot of an owl.

Hugh answered it, softly. Light footsteps sounded on the stone, winding staircase. They paused outside the door. It opened—and a slim, robed figure stood there. Penelope had arrived.

Breathing a little faster after her climb, she paused a second. Here

they were, these three daring boys she had risked so much to help.

"Welcome, No. 4," said Hugh quietly. "Take your place."

Four heavy pieces of the old masonry had been dragged into a rough circle about the candles. Robes rustled. The Grey Ghosts sat down. Quietly, conscious of their intent gaze, Penelope joined them.

A little silence ensued, broken by the slow, ponderous movement of the big clock beneath their feet, by the faint whine of wind about the top of the tower just above their heads.

"No. 4," said Hugh Mason slowly, "the Grey Ghosts gave you a test—a difficult test. You succeeded, and in doing so you have proved yourself worthy of membership."

He paused. Penelope's heart beat faster, expectantly.

The Grey Ghosts slowly rose. No. 1 stepped forward.

"No. 4, will you take the vow of the Grey Ghosts?"

They watched her intently. Penelope knew that this was a moment when she must make a decision from which there was no turning back.

She did not hesitate; she believed implicitly in the three boys. Her chin came up. She rose herself.

"I will take the vow," she said, her voice low and muffled, but very steady. "Then raise your right hand and repeat these words."

Her right hand came up; it shot a quivering shadow across the wall.

"I, No. 4, pledge myself," started No. 1 quietly, "to the cause of the Grey Ghosts—to make their fight against the tyranny of Mr. Aspell my fight, to make their mission for Glynn Tracy my mission. Even though I face expulsion, their secrets, their identity, I vow to keep!"

Slowly, muffling her voice and trying to keep a tiny quiver out of it, Penelope repeated the solemn vow.

As the last words left her lips, the figures of the Grey Ghosts seemed to relax. No. 1 stepped forward, his hand outstretched.

With a tiny thrill, Penelope took that firm grip, and tried to make her own boyish and strong. Then came the slim fingers of Harvey Doane; then the big, powerful hand of Bob Gower.

No. 1 sat down again; they all followed suit. The atmosphere grew easier, more friendly. Eagerly Penelope waited.

"No. 4," said Hugh, a slight laugh in his voice, "you'd better get your proper number up on that cowl as soon as possible. And now—first, would you like to tell us how on earth you got hold of this plan?"

They all watched her curiously. Penelope caught her breath.

"I have taken the vow," she murmured, "but I cannot tell you that, for it is vital that my identity remains a secret—even from you!"

The boys looked swiftly at each other. Bob Gower made a slight, aggressive move. Hugh checked him, staring keenly at Penelope.

"Very well," he said slowly. "You have proved yourself by getting that plan. We will respect your secrecy." Penelope's eyes shone with relief, then eagerly she bent forward.

"Now I'm a member, won't you tell me about the plan?" she asked. "Your note said it gave a vital clue."

No. 1 nodded and withdrew the envelope from his pocket.

"I have examined this quickly," he said, "and by what I have found I am convinced the secret room we're looking for is in the old belfry by Little Chapel!"

"But what," asked Penelope eagerly, "do you expect to find there?"

"Proof," came the lightning reply, "that Glynn Tracy was wrongfully expelled last term!"

"But—how do you know all this?" Penelope asked.

"I know," was his startling answer, "because Glynn Tracy, the finest fellow Harcourt ever knew, is my cousin!"

Penelope sank back. Here was something she had not suspected for one moment.

"Later, No. 4," continued Hugh steadily, "I'll tell you all I know and

why we seek this secret room. It is enough that we must find it to clear Glynn. We must find it swiftly—before anyone else does so."

Penelope sat still, strangely moved by the earnest, almost fierce, ring in his voice. And then, stealing back into her mind, came her suspicions that Mr. Aspell himself was strangely interested in the plan.

"No. 1," she said quickly, "I discovered that Mr. Aspell borrowed that plan from the Head. I suspect the excuse he gave was a false one. I suspect he wanted the plan because—is it possible," she finished eagerly, "that the Wasp guesses what we're after? It sounds crazy perhaps—but is it possible that he might want to find the secret room himself for some reason?"

She was startled by the effect of her words. From the robed figures of Harvey and Bob there came a gasp—while Hugh jerked upright.

"You—you think the Wasp was after the plan?" he breathed. His eyes blazed in the yellow candlelight. "No. 4, I wonder if you've struck something vital! The Wasp always hated Glynn, because Glynn stuck up for the Juniors against his tyranny. Can it be—"

He drew a deep breath. They were all tensed.

"By gosh, it's possible!" he flashed. "No. 2—3—we ought to have suspected. Don't you see—Glynn was accused of thieving. It was the Wasp who piled up the evidence against him—"

"You—you mean," caught up Penelope breathlessly, "that Mr. Aspell might have deliberately faked evidence to get him expelled? That he's now afraid something might be found that would bowl him out?"

"Yes! And that would explain the frantic efforts he's making to trap us!" Hugh's figure straightened. "Grey Ghosts," he cried, "we not only fight against the Wasp's tyranny—we may be fighting against him to save Glynn Tracy!"

His voice died away and he looked almost sheepishly around.

"Sorry, I got carried away," he said quietly. "But thanks, No. 4—you've opened our eyes. We may be wrong; it seems incredible, I know. But we must take no chances; we must watch the Wasp like hawks. And now—the sooner I tell you about this plan, the better. The full story about Glynn will have to wait, No. 4."

He produced the envelope, and Penelope leant forward eagerly. As she did so, she became aware of a parcel she had brought tucked under her robe. A smile touched her lips and swiftly she produced it.

"While we're examining the plan, No. 1, what about a little feed?"

They stared. They stared even more when Penelope deftly opened the parcel to reveal a tempting array of cakes she had cooked herself that day. Their surprise and pleased murmurs was reward enough.

"I say—they look wizard!" exclaimed Bob Gower. "No. 4, my opinion of you goes up every moment!"

"Definitely," drawled Harvey. "You didn't get those at the tuckshop!"

"Can't a chap have a tuck parcel from home?" retorted Penelope, her eyes twinkling. She turned to Hugh's robed figure, a hint of mischief in her voice. "No. 1, you try those jam ones. You'll like those. I haven't forgotten the jammy thumbprint you left on that note you put into the fountain!"

No. 1, hand outstretched, abruptly stiffened.

"Jammy thumbprint!" he repeated in a strange voice. "No. 4, have you got that note on you? Quick, man—quick!"

Startled, vaguely uneasy, Penelope produced the note. Hugh almost snatched it from her hand, bending to examine it by the candlelight. When he straightened and spoke his voice was tense with alarm.

"Grey Ghosts," he hissed, "I wrote this note on a clean sheet of paper just before I put it into the fountain. That jammy mark couldn't have been made by me!"

"Then—then—" stammered Penelope.

"It means," cut in Hugh, "that between my putting in the note and you taking it out, someone else examined it! Someone else—an enemy—knows we're meeting here to-night!"



THEIR MEETING] PLACE SURROUNDED

Penelope broke the tense silence with three whispered words.

"Smeeke! Harold Smeeke!"

She knew now, and her heart sank in horror. The sneaking Fifth Former! It was he who had handled the note! This explained only too clearly why he had seemed slow in getting to the fountain.

He had in fact been leaving the fountain when she had stopped him; his impatience to get away from her had been for another reason!

"Smeeke, No. 4? What do you mean?"

Hugh had stepped nearer, clutching her arm.

"It—it must have been Smeeke," she faltered huskily. "I—I saw him hanging around the fountain just before—just before I collected the note!"

She heard their indrawn hiss of breath. Instinctively they looked towards No. 1. He acted like lightning, reaching down and snuffing the candles.

"Quick—up on to the roof!" he rapped. "This may be a trap to capture us."

As he spoke he crossed to one corner, reached up and pushed on a square trapdoor. It creaked up, revealing the night sky above. The moan of the wind increased.

"On to the roof—quietly—"

One by one they climbed up through the trapdoor, Penelope going last.

"Follow me," came Hugh's voice from the darkness. "To the side—"

They were on the flat roof of Clock Tower, high above the school grounds. Hugh moved forward. Together they lined the low, ornamental parapet and cautiously peered downwards.

Penelope strained her eyes through the slits in her cowl. Far below, to the right, was the fountain in the Cloisters. Farther round was the shrubbery by the school gardens, and—

She caught her breath, staring intently.

"No. 1! Look! Are—are those figures?"

They stepped quickly to her side. In breathless silence they peered down to where she indicated. They all saw them—figures very slowly moving forward towards the tower. A ring of them, closing in—a dozen at least, Seniors, and perhaps Mr. Aspell was with them!

Penelope bit her lip to keep back a gasp of dismay.

They were surrounded.

"There's one chance," whispered Hugh. "Quick, chaps—"

Penelope turned, staring in wonder at his dim, robed figure. A chance? What chance could there be?

"No. 1, what—what do you mean?" she muttered.

He did not answer. He was crossing the flat roof to the far parapet. Without question, Harvey and Bob followed. Wondering, Penelope came behind.

She saw Hugh leaning over the parapet. He seemed to be fumbling with something, but he turned as she joined them.

"No. 4," came his voice, amazingly steady, "you don't know about this, but in case of emergency, we prepared a way of escape."

Penelope's heart leapt with hope.

"No. 2 borrowed one of the old ropes from the gym," continued Hugh, his voice half lost in the whip of the wind. "It's risky—but our only chance."

Not understanding, Penelope peered over the parapet. Then her heart lurched. By straining her eyes, she could make out a stout rope, tied just

(Please turn to the back page.)



The COWBOY Who Mystified Merle

By GAIL WESTERN

THE SHERIFF'S CRUSHING BLOW

MERLE WASON believed that a secret, vital to the future of her home, Happy Valley Ranch, was hidden in a trophy called the Gold Rider, to be raced for at Red Hill Rodeo.

Larry Denvers, a strange young cowboy working on the ranch, entered Merle's name for the race. He also told Merle there was a traitor on the ranch.

As a result of the scheming of Nathaniel Garsten, a rascally neighbouring rancher, Larry was arrested.

Merle took his horse, Prince, which she was to ride in the Gold Rider race, to her ranch. But when she went to see the sheriff, he told her that Nathaniel Garsten was at that moment on his way to collect Larry's horse, which was to be impounded.

THE sheriff was going to impound Larry's horse!

The news filled Merle with consternation, then indignant colour flooded her cheeks.

"It's not fair!" she cried. "Prince belongs to Larry. He wasn't stolen. Mr. Garsten only said so because he doesn't want me to ride the horse in the relay race on Thursday."

Sheriff Johnson looked shocked. "Now, now, Miss Merle, you mustn't slander Mr. Garsten!"

Merle's eyes flashed. "I'm not slandering him. I'm telling the truth. He's been lying to you!"

But the sheriff was not impressed and impatiently he cut short Merle's protests.

"I'm sorry, but I can't let anyone ride Prince until his ownership has been thoroughly investigated," he said. "But I didn't bring you here to discuss that young rustler's horse. My object was to get you to enter a formal charge against him."

As he spoke, the sheriff produced an official looking form and held out a pen. But Merle shrank back.

"No—I won't do it!" she cried. "Larry's innocent. I've got nothing to complain about."

The sheriff regarded her in bewilderment.

"But he trusted you up this morning, didn't he?" he asked.

"Yes, but—"

Merle broke off, realising the futility of trying to explain the reason for the young cowboy's strange action. Then, dismayed and angry at the news about Prince, she rose to her feet.

"I won't testify against Larry!" she gasped and rushed out of the office, leaving the sheriff gaping.

There were tears in Merle's eyes when she rejoined Pommie outside and her hand quivered as she stroked the chestnut horse.

"It was grand of Larry to take all the blame," she whispered. "But it looks as if his sacrifice will be all in vain. Unless I can ride Prince—"

She broke off and into her eyes crept a fierce, reckless look. Suppose

she could get back to Happy Valley ranch before Nathaniel Garsten called to collect Larry's horse! Suppose she could smuggle Prince away and keep him in secret until the day of the race!

For a moment she hesitated, then grimly she nodded.

"I'll do it," she muttered and, leaping into the saddle, sent Pommie galloping through the town.

It was dark when she reached the ranch and it was anxiously that she made for the stables. Was she in time? Was Prince still in his stall? As she made to open the door and investigate, Mammie, the Negro housekeeper, appeared in the yard and she looked concerned as she saw Merle's agitation.

"Lawks sakes, what am the matter, Missy Merle?" she asked. "Am it anything to do with those Garstens comin' here?"

Merle whirled, her heart leaping in alarm.

"The Garstens!" she gasped. "Do you mean that Celia and her father have been here?"

Mammie nodded. "Yaas—not two minutes ago, Missy Merle. They come to collect Prince for the sheriff."

Merle's cheeks paled. So she had arrived back too late to put into action her reckless scheme. Larry's horse—the horse which she needed for the all-important relay race on Thursday—was already on his way to the sheriff's.

For a few moments she stood there in consternation, then gradually that fierce look returned to her eyes.

"Mammie, is that old macintosh of uncle's still in the hall?" she asked unexpectedly.

"Yaas, Missy Merle."

"And his revolver?"

"Yaas, Missy Merle, but what—"

"No time to answer questions, Mammie. Go and get them, there's a dear. There's one chance—and one chance only—of getting Prince back."



THE HOLD-UP

"Guess we're sittin' pretty, Celia. Larry Denvers is under arrest and now we've made doubly sure that Merle Wason won't

ride on Thursday."

As he spoke, Nathaniel Garsten chuckled and looked across at his daughter who, riding beside him, was leading a reluctant Prince by his reins.

Celia nodded, but for once she did not echo her father's rascally chuckle. She was a nervous girl and this section of the road had a rather bad reputation.

"Let's get a move on, dad," she urged. "The sooner we get to the sheriff the better I'll be pleased."

And, tugging at Prince's reins, she urged her horse into a canter. Her father, however, continued to ride at a leisurely jog-trot.

"Aw, there's no hurry, my dear. And quit bein' so scared. Guess the only outlaw around these parts is the traitor at Happy Valley and he isn't likely to—"

He broke off, for from the girl in front there had come a startled scream.

"Dad, look—oh, look!" With a trembling hand Celia pointed to a sinister figure on foot that had just emerged from the trees ahead. The rancher gave a startled gasp, as he saw that the newcomer wore a long macintosh and black mask. Then he laughed, for he thought he recognised the figure.

"It's all right, my dear. It's only that darned traitor we keep on Happy Valley, though what the fool wants here—"

He broke off. Celia had given another scream, seeing for the first time that that grim-looking figure in the mask was holding a gun in one hand—a gun levelled at her!

"W—what do you w—want?" she stammered, involuntarily reining in her horse.

The masked figure strode sternly forward.

"That horse!" And the reins were torn from Celia's hand.

"Why, you treacherous coyote!" cried Garsten, galloping forward. "I'll teach you to double-cross me."

And he made a grab at his own gun, but at that moment the masked figure gave Celia's horse a slap, and, startled, it reared up, bumping into the rancher's oncoming mount.

For a second or two all was wild confusion. Celia screamed; her father roared and their horses plunged up and down. And then came the clatter of galloping hoofs. The masked figure had seized the opportunity to leap astride Prince, and now the black horse came plunging by. But the mask had slipped out of place and suddenly Celia's panic-stricken screams were replaced by a shout of fury.

"We've been tricked, dad! That isn't an outlaw. It's a girl!"

"What!" Her father peered incredulously, then, as he also glimpsed girlish curls he gave a furious bellow. "It must be Merle Wason! Hey, come back! Don't you dare—"

But Merle—for, of course, it was she who had so daringly held up and discomfited her rascally enemies—paid no heed. On she galloped.

"Come back! I shan't warn you again—"

The shout was punctuated by an ominous crack and something went whistling over Merle's head.

Frantically she tugged at Prince's reins, sent the horse plunging right across the road. Before them loomed a high, prickly hedge.

"Up!" she panted. "Over you go, honey!"

Gallantly Prince obeyed. Up he soared, and he just managed to clear the forbidding barrier. Merle gave a gasp of delight.

"Oh, you darling! Thanks to you, I'm safe!"

For she knew the Garstens would not dare tackle the high hedge. Indeed, she could already hear them galloping up and down, savagely seeking an opening.

From the trees higher up came a

plaintive whinny. It was Pommie. Before staging her hold-up, she had left him to await her there. She whistled, and as the chestnut came cantering into sight, she sent Prince pounding on.

Quickly the night swallowed up both the horses, and Merle's eyes gleamed with triumph as the Happy Valley range loomed ahead, for still there came no sounds of pursuit.

"First to take you to your new home," she told Prince, fondly patting his sleek neck. "Then to fix an alibi."

She had already decided where to hide the black horse—in the cave in Broken Canyon. Larry's old hide-out would be just the place, for its entrance was well screened by rocks and bushes and no one ever ventured into the lonely canyon.

Having made Prince comfortable there, she rode back to Happy Valley on Pommie. Mammie was delighted when she heard how successful had been Merle's daring plan, but as they stood talking outside the stables they heard the rat-a-plan of galloping hoofs.

Turning, Merle was dismayed to see three figures riding down the trail towards the ranch.

"The Garstens!" she exclaimed. "And the sheriff's with them! Gee, they mustn't find Pommie saddled up, or they'll know I've been out. Quick—Mammie, you must keep their attention occupied."

And as the housekeeper hurried away she led Pommie into the stables and with frantic haste began to unsaddle him and rub him down.

LARRY ESCAPES

"This am a fine time for visitin'!"

Arms akimbo, Mammie glowered at the three visitors at the front door. Celia

and her father, exasperated because their impatient knocks had not been answered for some time, glared back, but Sheriff Johnson smiled apologetically.

"Sorry ma'am, but an officer of the law sometimes has to call at awkward times. We'd like to speak to Miss Wason."

"Yep—where is she?" barked Nathaniel Garsten.

"Where all gals should be," retorted the housekeeper. "Missy Merle isn't like some folks—with a scornful snift in Celia's direction—she doesn't gallivant about at all hours. She goes to bed at the proper time."

"You mean she's in bed now?" asked the sheriff.

"Where else should she be?" demanded Mammie.

"That's what we mean to find out," shouted Celia. "It's no use you trying to bluff us, you old fool. We know what Merle has been up to."

"Fool, am I!" shouted Mammie. "I'll teach youse to insult me on my own door-step."

And, snatching up a besom broom, she made grimly at the rancher's daughter. With a squeal of fear Celia darted behind her father, and the rancher made a snatch at the broom, only to receive a buffet over the head. For several minutes the three figures scuffled and dodged about, but at last Sheriff Johnson managed to separate them.

"Stop this foolery!" he roared. "I'm here on serious business. I've come to question Merle Wason."

"Merle Wason? Is someone calling me?" inquired a sleepy voice, and there in the hall stood Merle herself, engaged in tying the cord of the long dressing-gown she wore.

"So you were in bed after all!" the sheriff ejaculated.

In innocent wonder Merle returned his probing look.

"Where else should I be at this hour?" she asked, and pulled the ends of her dressing-gown closer together.

It would be disastrous if the sheriff discovered that she was really fully clothed, if he suspected that actually she had only thrown on the dressing-

gown as she had run in from the stables!

"It has been suggested that you have been staging a hold-up," was the stern reply.

"A—a hold-up?" Merle's heart was thumping, but the expression on her face suggested that she could hardly believe her own ears. Grimly Sheriff Johnson related what the Garstens had told him and Merle shook her head amazedly.

"Well, of all the extraordinary stories!" she gasped. "Does a big, able-bodied man like Mr. Garsten really suggest that he was held up and robbed by a girl? It's too fantastic. Anyway, I can't think why he should accuse me. You certainly won't find any stolen horses hidden here."

"You mean that?" demanded the sheriff.

"You're welcome to search wherever you like," said Merle. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll get back to bed."

And with an air of nonchalance she was far from feeling, she turned and made for the stairs.

Nathaniel Garsten gave a savage exclamation.

"Wait, you little trickster! We haven't finished with you yet!"

And he made to plunge into the hall after her, but the sheriff caught him by the arm.

"Now then, cool down," he barked. "We can soon put Merle Wason's story to the test. Let's have a look in the stables, and see if any of her horses have been out recently."

As he spoke, he went striding across the yard. Reluctantly the Garstens followed him, and with a triumphant grin Mammie slammed the front door.

For the next half-hour she and Merle stood there in the dark hall, listening anxiously, but to their relief there at last came the sound of horses riding away. The sheriff, having failed to discover any trace of the missing horse and having found Pommie unsaddled and bedded down for the night, had departed.

Mammie grinned across at Merle. "That's fooled them," she declared.

"Now we have no need to worry, Missy Merle. They will never discover Prince now."

But Merle was not so sure. She could not forget that Happy Valley harboured an unknown traitor. He would be bound to be on the watch and it would not be easy to smuggle food and water out to the hidden horse without arousing suspicion.

This became evident during the days that followed. Slim Harris, the young foreman, reported the strange disappearance of a sack of oats from the stables. Merle did not dare confess that she had taken it, nor dared she satisfy the curiosity of Jake Binns and the others who were obviously puzzled by her frequent and unexplainable absences from the ranch.

On several occasions she narrowly escaped being seen entering Broken Canyon, and as the day of the rodeo drew near she felt more and more that her every move was being secretly watched.

Knowing that the unknown traitor must be making desperate efforts to find out where she had hidden Prince, she became doubly cautious, but the strain began to tell and one morning Mammie regarded her sternly when she entered with the breakfast.

"Now, Missy Merle, youse got to quit fretting," she declared. "Everything am going to be all right. No one knows where Massa Larry's hoss am vanished to, and as for Massa Larry himself—he shore will prove his innocence before long, you mark my words, Missy Merle."

Merle forced herself to return the motherly housekeeper's confident smile, but more and more she found herself thinking of the captured young cowboy, now in the lock-up; more and more she began to imagine that the mystery traitor was dogging her footsteps every time she went out.

And then came the morning before the rodeo.

When Merle went downstairs she was surprised to find her breakfast laid, but could find no trace of

Mammie. Without saying a word she had gone out and it was not until after lunch that she returned, carrying an empty basket. In surprise Merle greeted her.

"Wherever have you been?" she inquired.

"Aw, jest visiting a mutual friend," Mammie replied.

"Some instinct made Merle's heart leap.

"You—you don't mean Larry!" she gasped. Mammie nodded and Merle gasped again. "But the sheriff said he wasn't to receive visitors!"

Mammie, now busy putting on a white apron, chuckled.

"That shore am right, but the young feller on guard happens to be an acquaintance o' mine, Missy Merle, and he shore am partial to my fruit pies, so when he see the basket of goodies I brought for Massa Larry—"

—she showed her teeth in a broad grin—"why he agreed to strike a bargain. For half my pies he'd let me have a bit of a talk with Massa Larry."

"And what did Larry say?" asked Merle eagerly, full of admiration for Mammie's resource.

"That youse not to worry, Missy Merle. That youse got to win the race to-morrow. Massa Larry say that he hopes to prove his innocence very quickly now, and he also says that he fix things so that there will be no trouble about you riding Prince. But that am not all—"

The plump negress paused and smiled mysteriously.

"Massa Larry shore hopes to be present when you win the Gold Rider," she added in a husky whisper.

"But that's impossible!" Merle gasped. "Larry's locked up."

"Maybe he escape. Ma fruit pies are mighty strong," Mammie declared mysteriously, "and one of them was shore very extra-special."

Merle stared in bewilderment, but before she could question the chuckling housekeeper the door burst open and Ted Gardner looked in, his weather-beaten face aflame with excitement.

"Gee, have you heard the news?" he shouted. "It's just come through on the phone. That pesky rustler, Denvers, has escaped!"

"Es-escaped?" Merle stammered.

"Yep—sawed through the bars of his cell. Apparently someone must ha' smuggled a file to him."

"Lawks sakes!" cut in Mammie. "Now I wonder who that could have been?"

But one look at her grinning black face told Merle the truth. The file had been hidden in the "extra-special" pie of which the housekeeper had spoken.

"Mammie, you darling!" she cried and, rushing forward, gave the plump negress a delighted hug. Then, conscious that Ted Gardner was regarding her curiously, she hurriedly snatched up her Stetson. "But I must be off. Got to practise for the race to-morrow," she said.

But though she saddled up Pommie and rode off, it was for Prince's secret hide-out that she headed. Her heart was singing as she galloped towards Broken Canyon. Several cowboys on the outer range turned to stare as she sped by, but Merle was, too happy to heed them.

If Larry was free and if he was confident of proving his innocence, then she had nothing to fear.

On reaching Broken Canyon, she dismounted some way from the secret cave and eagerly went striding on on foot. Suddenly she paused, for from the cave came the sound of a man's voice.

"It must be Larry!" she whooped and excitedly broke into a run.

But abruptly she pulled up as she passed the screening rocks and bushes, her new-found happiness draining from her. It was not Larry who stood in the cave, but a sinister figure wearing a macintosh slicker and a black mask.

The mystery traitor! And he was about to lead Prince away!

This enthralling serial gets even more exciting in next week's chapters. Don't miss them!





The Merrymakers Afloat

By DAPHNE GRAYSON

DODGING THE PROFESSOR

"HOT!" puffed Johnny Briggs, mopping his brow.
"Yes, hot on the trail now!" said Sally Warner eagerly.
"I mean the heat—"

"I mean our man-hunt. Phew! Golly, but you're right, Johnny!" added Sally, herself becoming aware of the burning tropical sun overhead. "Slow old Percy down a bit, Don. Any sign of Kohler yet, Fay?"

Sally and Johnny, with their chums, Don Weston and Fay Manners, were making their way along one of the paths which radiated from the waterfront on Taniki Island, in the South Seas. The College Ship, on which they were students, had anchored there for a brief call of twenty-four hours.

And with the four chums was a fifth figure, dressed in flowing scholastic gown and mortar-board. This was Percy.

Percy looked like Professor Willard, the headmaster of the floating college, but, in reality, Percy was a robot, constructed by Slick Kaplin, the boy inventor.

"O.K., Sally!" said Don, pressing one of the switches which regulated Percy's speed. "Gee, he was striding out like a policeman!"

"Well, he is like a policeman on this trip," put in fair-haired Fay. "We're all tracking down a suspicious character— Goodness, there he is! There's Kohler!"

The chums tensed as they followed the direction of Fay's pointing finger.

Some distance ahead, making his way along another path through the palms, was the figure of a bearded man in a white linen suit. It was Carl Kohler, the mystery man whom they suspected of being a crook.

"Follow him!" said Sally, her blue eyes bright with excitement. "But don't let him see us— Oh, golly!"

Sally's tone changed to one of consternation.

For suddenly another figure had appeared in sight—a figure in flowing gown and mortar-board.

"The Head!" gasped Don. "Gosh, we didn't know he was ashore! If he sees us—"

If Professor Willard, the headmaster of the floating college, saw them, there was going to be trouble—big trouble.

For one thing, Sally & Co. had broken bounds to come ashore and follow Kohler. And another reason for their dismay was—Percy, the robot! It was because of Percy, who was so amazingly like Professor Willard, that the chums had been able to wangle their way off the ship. It would be a calamity if the real headmaster discovered the existence of his robot double. For that was a secret known only to Percy's inventor and the four chums.

"You're right, Don!" exclaimed Sally. "Right wheel and scoot!"

Don had already swung the robot round and set it going at full speed

among the trees. They all followed pell-mell. From behind them came a shout.

"Stop!" Professor Willard, who had come ashore to have a look round the island, rapped out the command angrily. "Bless my soul!" he muttered. "I believe they were some of my students!"

But Sally & Co. did not stop. They put on speed, plunging deeper amid the trees and luxuriant tropical vegetation. At last, pantingly, Sally pulled up.

"O.K.! We've dodged him!" she said breathlessly. "But—look, there's Kohler over there! Stop old Percy and duck down among these bushes."

Their dash to dodge the headmaster had taken them ahead of Carl Kohler and brought them close to a white-painted bungalow which stood in a clearing.

Peering through the dense foliage, they saw their bearded quarry striding towards that bungalow.

Sally's heart thumped; her thoughts raced. Kohler moved with the confidence of one familiar with his surroundings; yet from the story he had told after being picked up at sea, he was a stranger to the island.

"He's going into the bungalow!" hissed Johnny. "Let's creep nearer and see if we can spot what he's doing."

They moved forward, keeping under cover, carefully steering Percy and letting the robot go first to force a way through the thick undergrowth. And then they came to a high fence, placed at the rear of the bungalow as if to keep back the jungle, and looking as if it was fighting a losing battle, for it was creeper-covered and leaning over at a crazy angle.

Quickly moving along this fence, they came to the bungalow, and then to a window. The faint whirr of Percy's mechanism died away as Sally pressed a switch and left the robot leaning against the wall. Cautiously she raised herself to peer through the window, then quickly ducked down again as she saw Carl Kohler in the room beyond.

He was talking over the telephone, and his harsh, grating voice came to the chums as they crouched outside beneath the window.

"Yes, I'll be at Martelli's Dive. But it'll be better if we're not seen together, savvy? No talk—just slip me a message Savvy all this? Right! Then get busy! Move plenty quick!"

There was a clicking sound as Carl Kohler replaced the receiver. Then the chums heard him give a gloating chuckle.

"It's working!" came his muttering voice. "I fooled everybody on the ship, and I'll fool everybody here!"

Again they heard him laugh in self-satisfaction, then followed the thud of his footsteps. A few moments later he was leaving the bungalow.

Peering cautiously round an angle of the wall, they saw his burly figure striding away through the trees.

Excitedly they looked at each other. They hadn't overheard much, but it had been sufficient to confirm their suspicions and convince them that Carl Kohler was playing some deep, underhand game.

"What do we do now, Sally?" It was Fay who spoke, a quiver of excitement in her usually quiet voice.

"Follow him—to this Martelli's Dive—and see what happens there," decided Sally.

But even as the chums and Percy moved away from the bungalow, they received number two shock that afternoon. And again it was Professor Willard who provided it. Suddenly he hove into view. The trackers had themselves been tracked!

"Dash!" growled Johnny in dismay. "You've said it!" hissed Sally desperately. "Dash—into the bungalow!"

It was their one hope of avoiding disaster. Into the bungalow they scuttled. Percy, his mechanism switched off, flopped down on the floor. Sally risked a peep through the door. She didn't think the headmaster had seen them, and as soon as he had gone by—

But Professor Willard didn't go by. He stopped. Then he spoke.

"Have you seen any boys and girls in this vicinity?" he asked.

Sally's heart thumped, for now another man had appeared on the scene.

"Why, sure I have!" he responded genially. "Noticed them just now through the trees. They went into the bungalow!"

Sally & Co. looked at each other in consternation, then stiffened as ominous footsteps approached. The Head was coming!

Wildly, desperately, Sally looked around her. She saw Percy sprawled against the wall in his gown and mortar-board. He was going to be discovered, too. The robot's resemblance to the Head had got them out of scrapes before, but this time it was only going to add to the crisis.

And then Sally's blue eyes gleamed. Staring into a near-by cupboard, she had spotted some clothes lying there—a pair of trousers, a jacket, and a Panama hat. And on another shelf stood a theatrical make-up box and a false black beard. Sally was too excited to wonder what these were doing here. She gave an excited gasp.

"A wheeze!" she whispered. "I don't know if it will come off—"

Bang-bang!
Professor Willard had arrived, and was thumping at the door.



PERCY EARNS A REPUTATION

Bang-bang-bang! Again the headmaster of the floating college thumped on the door panels.

"Open up!" he shouted. "I know you are inside there!"

The door opened, and there appeared a bearded figure in a dishevelled suit of khaki drill, with a creased panama hat pulled down well over the face.

"Ah!" said Professor Willard. "Good-afternoon! I have reason to believe that a number of my students have come in here—"

"Go!" exclaimed the bearded figure in the doorway.

Professor Willard jumped. He was startled by this abrupt greeting, and also by the fact that the voice sounded curiously familiar—which was not really surprising, considering that it was a reproduction of the Head's own voice.

For the figure leaning against the door was Percy, the robot, minus his scholastic attire, and now looking rather like a down-at-heel beach-comber in the clothes and false beard which Sally & Co. had frantically substituted.

While Sally herself, heart thumping, was concealed behind the door, one hand holding up the dummy, the other hovering over Percy's array of switches and levers.

"Hem!" The headmaster coughed politely. "I am sorry to trouble you, but—"

"Go!"

Again Sally had pressed a switch, setting off one of the innumerable records by which the robot appeared to talk.

Professor Willard frowned. "I really must insist on seeing these students! They have no right to go ashore, and, as their headmaster—"

"Ridiculous! An absurd story! Go!"

"Go? I will not go!" The professor was beginning to fume. "You are hiding these students, I can see. Very well. I shall come in and find them myself!"

Fay and Don and Johnny, hiding in a dim corner of the hall, stiffened apprehensively. Sally gulped in desperation. This time she pressed two switches.

"Go!" ordered Percy yet again, and up jerked one of his arms.

It jerked up just as Professor Willard stepped forward, and the hand—a very life-like hand made of a special wax—caught the headmaster under the chin.

Sally's eyes popped. The professor, shaken to his depths—especially around the teeth—roared furiously.

"How dare you! You go too far, my man! I make a reasonable request and you assault me. Very well—"

The infuriated headmaster drew a deep breath. Without warning, he hit back. His fist thudded into Percy's chest, and the jolt caused Sally's fingers to press at least half a dozen switches all at once.

"A disgraceful scene! Good-morning! Outrageous behaviour! Good-afternoon! Go! Ah, good-evening! A perfect evening—perfect!"

Half a dozen records were being reeled off one after the other. At the same time Percy whirred into terrific activity. Both arms flailed up and down, and he shot forward at full speed ahead.

Sally stood as if transfixed. But not so the Head. Professor Willard felt as if he had been caught up in a hurricane as Percy, striding full-tilt into him, swept him backwards relentlessly.

"Control yourself, sir! Bless my soul!" panted the headmaster. "Stop immediately! Good gracious! The man is dangerous! He is a menace!"

Shaken and alarmed, convinced the man had gone berserk, Professor Willard suddenly turned and took to his

heels with more haste than dignity. And after him went Percy, stalking on relentlessly, arms still flailing.

Back in the doorway, Sally watched with dilated eyes, not quite knowing whether to hoot with mirth or collapse with shock.

"Gosh!" gurgled Johnny. "Let's go while the going's good!"

The headmaster had vanished from sight. Percy, having knocked against some obstruction, had swung round, and was now charging back. They got him under control.

"Good old Percy!" chortled Don. "He shook the Head that time—"

"And shook me, too!" put in Sally. "Golly, more than ever we'll have to steer clear of the professor now. If he was to realise what had happened—"

The chums shuddered. Then they grinned. And then they pressed on, eager once more to get on the trail of Carl Kohler. Eventually they struck a well-defined track, with a glimpse through a palm-grove of the sparkling blue sea and the College Ship at anchor in the natural, deep-water harbour.

Martelli's Dive, they learned from a passer-by, was a cafe situated on the edge of the small township which nestled around the waterfront.

"Lead me to it!" grinned Johnny. "We missed lunch on the ship, and I'm jolly hungry!"

The cafe stood in the shade of a spreading ceiba-tree. It had a palm-thatched roof, with a veranda on which were marble-topped tables under a faded awning. Sally & Co. approached cautiously. First, they wanted to be sure Professor Willard wasn't there, and also they did not want to be seen by Carl Kohler.

"All clear!" whispered Sally, excitement once again gripping her.

She guided Percy into the cafe. He still wore the khaki suit, panama hat, and false beard, Sally having tucked his headmaster's rig-out into her hold-all. It was safer for the robot to stay "disguised"—just in case Professor Willard made another of his disconcerting appearances.

Stares from the few men seated on the veranda greeted the arrival of Sally & Co. Sally promptly led the way inside, choosing a table near one of the windows, where they wouldn't be so conspicuous. She was just propping Percy in a chair, making him look as life-like as possible, when up came a fat, Italian-looking waiter.

"Good-afternoon, signorinas—signors!" he greeted them affably. "What you have?"

He began handing a menu to the bearded Percy. Sally hastily took it.

"What do you all say to a ham-and-mushroom omelette," she asked, "with an iced pineapple crush?"

"Rather!"

"Four," added Sally, smiling at the waiter.

"Four?" he repeated in surprise, staring round the table.

"Hem! Five," Sally amended. The waiter went off.

"No sign of Kohler yet," whispered Don.

The waiter came back with a loaded tray. He set out the food and drinks, then once more went away. Sally & Co., all feeling hungry and thirsty, began to enjoy their meal.

"Scrummy!" said Sally, and then gave a gulp.

The waiter had once more appeared, and was staring at the untouched plate in front of Percy.

"Signor not like it?" he inquired. "Hem! Signor—I mean Uncle Pip-Percy's tired!" Sally stammered, wishing the waiter wouldn't stare so intently. "Aren't you, Uncle Percy?"

"Yes," said the robot faithfully in response to the touch of a switch.

"You see?" Sally beamed. "But he'll eat it."

And she gave Johnny a tap under the table, swivelling her eyes to the untouched omelette and then back to him.

"Eh? Oh! But I'm getting full up—Ouch!" exclaimed Johnny, as Sally tapped harder. "Of course I'll eat it—I mean, of course Uncle Percy

will eat it! Gosh, you should see him when he gets started!"

The waiter was still staring. Then he turned away. Hastily Johnny transferred half of the untouched omelette to his own plate, while Sally took a hurried gulp at the pineapple crush.

But she was beginning to feel a little uneasy. She could see the fat waiter muttering to another and even fatter Italian. They both kept looking into the inner room and staring at Percy. One of them pointed and began jabbering again. On the veranda the men there were also beginning to mutter among themselves and they, too, stared towards the robot. Then suddenly the fat waiter closed the door.

"I don't like the look of this," said Sally anxiously. "They're giving old Percy too many suspicious looks."

She tiptoed across to the door. Her chums, startled, followed her. On the other side the mutter of voices continued, and then there was a clacking sound.

"Is datta da police commissioner? Dis is Emilio Martelli, and I speak from the cafe."

"Gee, what's he phoning the commissioner about—" began Don.

"Sssh!"

"You come—you send plenty men!" Martelli went on agitatedly. "Datta wild man who attacked da headmaster from da ship—he is here. Yes, yes, yes! I say he is here. I recognise heem from da description that—"

Sally & Co. jumped, looking at each other in wide-eyed consternation. Sally had feared complications—but not on like this, with Percy, the robot, being mistaken for a dangerous man who went around attacking people.

"He is here with four of da students!" babbled on Martelli.

"Oh, golly!" groaned Sally. "Oh, help! This has caused it! We're on the run again, Merrymakers!"

"But Kohler—" began Don, and then stopped, staring.

They all stared. For as they turned they saw a black arm suddenly being withdrawn through the open window; saw a fuzzy-headed native running away.

"Who was that?" gasped Sally, and rushed across to the window. And then her eyes opened wide as she saw something in the palm of Percy's hand—Percy, who was seated there with his back to that window. "Look! A slip of paper with some writing on it."

Her chums crowded round, reading the message scrawled there:

"Massa-boss,—You say not speak, so me write messages. Haunted Caves close sunset. Me watch, me follow."

"Gosh! What's that all about?" And then Johnny's face went red with excitement. "I say, d'you know what I think—"

"The same as I'm thinking, I expect," whispered Sally, as excited as he was. "This message was intended for Carl Kohler and that native mistook Percy for Kohler, because of those clothes and false beard we took from the bungalow."



SALLY'S BLUFF

Shining-eyed, a-quiver with excitement, Sally & Co. regarded each other. They were sure they had hit on the right explanation. It all fitted in. Percy's clothes could easily be Kohler's; and they remembered how he had spoken over the telephone, as if talking to a native rather than to a white man.

"Good old Percy!" chortled Johnny. "He gets us into jams, but he gets us out of them again. And now he's got the very thing we came here to discover. Gee, the haunted caves, eh? This sounds exciting—"

"Come on!" hissed Sally urgently.

(Please turn to page 11.)

When Rosina

BAFFLED THE SCHOOL



By PETER LANGLEY

THE NEW GIRL

IT seems incredible, Miss Gaynor—and rather frightening! You believe that this audacious girl crook, Rosina Fontaine, may actually be hiding here in the school?

The white-haired headmistress of Abbotsfield School glanced anxiously at her attractive visitor. Very young June Gaynor looked, in a tunic-frock, her fair hair drawn back neatly under a band, her school tie evidently brand-new.

Her grey eyes were serious. "Rosina has no need to hide, Miss Marley! She is an accomplished actress—and is quite capable of gaining access to the school in the guise of a servant, a new mistress—or even as one of the senior girls."

"Good gracious!" interjected Miss Marley, in shocked tones. "Surely you're not suggesting—I mean, it's too fantastic—"

"Nothing is surprising where Rosina is concerned," put in June, with quiet emphasis. "A charred letter, bearing a fragment of her handwriting, was found among the salvage collected from this school. My uncle, Noel Raymond, approached the school governors, and at their suggestion you very kindly offered to enrol me as a senior pupil."

"Quite so," agreed Miss Marley, nodding. "And I shall give you every assistance possible, Miss Gaynor. I have not informed the other girls of your real identity, as it would cause an unwelcome sensation. But I still do not understand what there could be in this school to tempt so daring a thief."

"Rosina never acts without a motive," declared June. "If only I could discover what—"

Her words were interrupted by a light knock on the door.

"Come in!" called Miss Marley. "One of the seniors entered—a tall, dark-haired girl, wearing spectacles. With a curious glance at the attractive visitor, she placed a sheaf of papers on the headmistress' desk."

"The Sixth Form essays, Miss Marley," she said in a soft, rather husky voice.

"Thank you, Brenda!" Miss Marley smiled. "Before you go, let me introduce you to June—er—June Saunders, who will be joining the senior examination-class. June, this is Brenda Hudson."

A slender hand touched June's—a trifle reluctantly, it seemed to the girl detective. Then, with a polite murmur, the senior left the room.

"A very clever girl, Brenda," said the headmistress, meeting June's questioning gaze. "A trifle reserved—but then she only came this term. Why, dear me! She has dropped her handkerchief."

Miss Marley bent to retrieve a

wisp of cambric that must have fallen to the floor unnoticed. June stiffened suddenly as she detected a faint waft of elusive perfume.

"Excuse me—may I see that handkerchief?" she asked quickly.

Surprised, the headmistress passed it to her. The girl detective examined it keenly. There was no initial—but that perfume was strangely like that which normally Rosina Fontaine used. Her pulses racing, she looked quickly at the school register on the table.

"Brenda Hudson—Sixth Form," she breathed. "The scent might be just a coincidence. I wonder—"

Her thoughts were interrupted by the headmistress, who had risen and crossed over to a glass-fronted cabinet.

"I've been thinking of what you were saying just now, Miss Gaynor—no, I must call you June! I've been thinking, June—" Almost apologetically she unlocked the cabinet, displaying a number of silver cups. "Do you suppose this unscrupulous young woman might have designs on the school trophies? Some of them are real silver, and their loss would be deeply felt by the girls."

June tried to look serious, anxious not to hurt the headmistress' feelings. To Miss Marley the trophies were of great value, but Rosina, who rarely took a chance unless a small fortune was at stake, would look on them with amused contempt. Precious stones were more in her line!

"It's possible, of course, Miss Marley," agreed the girl detective gravely. "In any case, it would be wise to lock them up more securely."

The headmistress nodded. "I shall put them in the safe with my private papers," she declared. "And I should be most grateful, June, if you would take charge of the key. The cups will be on show at Speech-day, to-morrow, when our generous benefactress, the mayoress, will be here to present the prizes."

She unlocked the safe, putting the silver cups away, and handing the girl detective the key. June slipped it into her pocket, her mind still busy with her suspicions.

Could Brenda Hudson possibly be Rosina in disguise? It seemed incredible, but then Rosina could play any rôle at will!

"Don't worry, Miss Marley!" she smiled. "The cups will be safe when you require them. And now—if you don't mind—I should like to meet some of the other girls."

"Of course! I was forgetting." The headmistress pressed a bell. "I still can't get used to the thought that you are really a detective, June—Yes, come in!" she added, as there came a heavier knock on the door.

It opened to admit one of the maids—a rather foreign-looking girl, with a pale, expressionless face.

"Elise, please ask Doris Weatherby, the head girl, if she would kindly step into my study for a moment."

A few minutes later the head girl appeared. June liked her at first sight. Doris was about her own age, auburn-haired and vivacious. She shook June warmly by the hand.

"Come on," she said gaily, "and I'll introduce you to the others! They're all in the 'Rag' now—busily swotting, or pretending to!" she added in a laughing whisper, not intended for the headmistress' ears.

Followed by Miss Marley's benevolent smile, June accompanied her vivacious guide to the senior Common-room, Doris giving June a breezy outline of school activities.

A dozen or more seniors were assembled in the pleasantly furnished Common-room, where a fire blazed cheerfully, and heavy curtains were drawn against the gathering dusk.

June was introduced all round, and her keen, practised glance summed up each one of her companions: tall, short, dark and fair—could any of them be the audacious girl crook in disguise?

Then the door opened, and the new girl, Brenda Hudson, came into the room, a book under her arm. By the sudden silence June guessed that Brenda was not exactly popular.

Without a glance at the others, she crossed to a chair by the window and opened her book.

"A strange girl," Doris confided in a whisper to June. "She seems to live for her studies, and isn't keen on making friends. She's fond of taking solitary walks in the grounds after dark."

The girl detective pricked up her ears, but she made no comment. Instead, she took out an autograph-book and held it out smilingly to the captain.

"Please!" she said. "I'd like the signatures of all my new friends."

Doris obligingly scrawled her name, and June made her way round the room, finally pausing by Brenda Hudson's chair.

"May I have your autograph, Brenda?" she asked, smiling.

The girl raised her dark eyes almost resentfully from her book, and a refusal seemed to hover on her lips. Then, on an impulse, she took out her fountain-pen and wrote her name in a bold, slanting hand.

June thanked her, and strolled across to the table where, under cover of glancing through a magazine, she quickly compared the signatures in her book with a fragment of writing on a charred scrap of notepaper.

Not one of the signatures bore any likeness to Rosina's characteristic flourish. But the girl crook was

astute enough to have disguised her style—

June stiffened suddenly as she glanced across the room, for Brenda Hudson's chair was now vacant.

Then she noticed something else. The heavy curtains screening the french windows were swaying slightly, as though in a draught.

Most of the other seniors had their chairs drawn up round the fire, and Brenda's absence had attracted no attention.

Unobtrusively June crossed the room, parting the curtains. The french windows stood slightly ajar. Quietly she stepped out on to the terrace, closing the windows behind her.

It was a gusty autumn evening, and fallen leaves rustled eerily on the paths, effectually deadening the sound of her footsteps. Then abruptly the girl detective stopped.

From somewhere in the shrubbery, not far distant, came a soft, mocking laugh—a laugh she could never mistake.

"Rosina!" she breathed. The laugh was repeated, though farther away, as June snatched out her torch, flashing it on the bushes.

Rosina was here in the grounds—and by her amused laugh it seemed clear that she was aware of her tracker.

The girl detective broke into a run, taking a short cut across the flower-beds, in an attempt to cut off her quarry. Once again she heard the laugh—to her right, this time—and a swift dash through the shrubbery brought her close to a wing of the school building.

A flickering red glow showed between the curtains of a window on the ground floor. Struck by a sudden, uneasy thought, June flashed her torch on the sill.

She drew in her breath sharply as she saw unmistakable muddy footmarks—and the window was open at the bottom.

In a moment June was over the sill, and inside the cosy room. It was Miss Marley's study.

Except for the flickering glow of the fire, the room was in darkness, but as June's torch flashed across the floor and walls, a horrified gasp escaped her lips.

Drawers and cupboards had been ransacked, their contents scattered over the carpet. The glass cabinet had been smashed, and the headmistress' safe wide open—and empty!

June flashed her torch on a sheet of paper fastened to a clip on the inside of the safe door. Across it, in a characteristic dashing hand, was scrawled:

"Dear Miss Marley,—Forgive me for helping myself. One of these cups is more valuable than you or Miss Gaynor supposed. Please give my love to June—and tell her not to waste her time!

"Yours regretfully,
"ROSINA."



WHERE WAS ROSINA?

Pale with chagrin, June re-read the mocking note—so characteristic of its elusive writer. She blamed herself for not having paid more attention to the silver cups.

Not for a moment had she supposed that the audacious girl crook could be seriously interested in the school trophies.

June bit her lip, wondering how she could face Miss Marley. It was clear that Rosina had contrived to open the safe with a duplicate key—but that was no excuse. Knowing Rosina's skill, she should have taken more stringent precautions.

But even now a strange doubt was tugging at the girl detective's mind. If Brenda Hudson was Rosina, as she half suspected, how had that girl carried out her daring theft so swiftly—encumbered with a quantity of silver cups?

Just then a key turned in the

study door, and the light was switched on. There came a bewildered cry—and June whirled, to confront Miss Marley.

The headmistress stared round in dumbfounded horror.

"Miss Gaynor—June—what has happened?"

June drew a quick breath, facing the other unflinchingly.

"I'm afraid, Miss Marley, that Rosina has been here—and I take full responsibility. I might have guessed that she wouldn't waste time. But even now it may not be too late to stop her!"

She crossed to the telephone as she spoke, dialling the local police station, while the headmistress, pale and shaken, sank into a chair.

June replaced the hand-set and turned, a gleam in her eyes.

"The police were given orders to keep watch on all the roads adjoining the school. No report has come in of anyone having left the premises in the last hour. Rosina must still be in the grounds!"

Miss Marley started up. "Then—then what do you suggest that we do?"

June, who had been staring at the floor, looked up with a reassuring smile.

"I want you to take an immediate roll-call, Miss Marley," she said, "of every senior girl in the school. After that I should like you to check up on the mistresses and the servants."

Though obviously shocked at the thought, the headmistress complied with June's wish. Urgent messages were sent round the school, and very soon all the seniors were assembled in Big Hall.

Amid bewildered, horrified murmurs, the headmistress explained that the school trophies had been stolen. Then she called on Doris Weatherby to read the roll.

The school captain obeyed, and a significant whisper went round when one girl failed to answer to her name.

"Brenda Hudson!" called Doris again, amid a tense hush—but there was no reply.

The headmistress, obviously distressed, conferred with June and Doris. The amazed head girl learnt for the first time of June's real identity—and the reason for her presence in the school. Her vivacious face looked pale as she glanced at the girl detective.

"June—do you really think that Brenda can be this Rosina Fontaine in disguise?"

"It's possible," said June quietly, "but we must check up without delay. Miss Marley, have I your permission to organise a search of the grounds?"

"Why, of course!" declared the headmistress. "To think that I should have been taken in—that we should all have been taken in—by her studious ways! It is fortunate that the juniors are at prep; I would not like them to be scared."

The excited seniors trooped out into the grounds, led by June, Doris, and Miss Marley—whose first shocked disbelief had given place to righteous anger. The girl detective led the way to the study window, pointing out the marks on the sill, but it was the headmistress herself who made the next discovery.

"Why, look!" she exclaimed, pointing. "There are footprints on that flower-bed—a girl's footprints!"

June flashed her torch, and an excited murmur went up as the footprints were seen, the imprints of a girl's high-heeled shoes.

June's grey eyes were puzzled. "I wonder why Rosina was so careless," she murmured. "She might just as well have kept to the path—the leaves would have left no marks."

"She must have been in a hurry to get away," put in Doris breathlessly. "Anyway, let's follow them!"

That seemed the obvious course, and June swiftly mapped out a plan of action. The seniors were divided into two parties; she, Doris, and three of the others would follow the incriminating footprints—while the

remainder would keep watch on the paths leading from the school. Meanwhile, the headmistress agreed to question the other mistresses and to check up on the servants.

Amid a silence broken only by the soft tread of their footsteps, June led her little party across the grounds. Not once did they lose sight of the plainly marked trail—till it vanished, at length, close to a postern-gate in the high brick wall.

"So—that's the way she escaped!" gasped Doris, while a chagrined murmur went up from the others.

June flashed her torch on the gate. The rusty bolt was drawn back and the latch raised—but the girl drew in her breath sharply, a strange gleam in her eyes.

"Rosina did not escape this way," she declared, "though she wanted us to think so!"

"Why—what do you mean?" gasped Doris.

"I mean," said June, "that this gate was never opened—though the bolt was drawn. The woodwork's swollen by the rain, and there's an unbroken cobweb still clinging to the latch."

She turned swiftly, pointing to the footprints.

"Those are fakes!" she declared. "Rosina's far too clever to have left a trail like that knowingly. She faked it purposely—probably before she carried out her theft—to make it appear that she had escaped from the grounds!"

"The others gasped. "Then where is she?" demanded Doris.

June did not reply at once. She was studying the footprints and the trodden leaves. She bent suddenly to examine a few tiny, reddish grains.

"Red gravel!" she murmured. "I noticed a trace of it on the study floor. But the gravel on the drive isn't that colour—"

She broke off as Doris gave an excited exclamation.

"There's a red gravel path by the old lodge!" she declared. "But no one ever goes that way—"

"We're going there—now!" declared June softly. "Keep together, girls!"

Doris led the way through the tangled shrubbery to a secluded part of the grounds. There stood the old lodge, almost hidden by rank weeds and nettles. June tried the door, but it was securely locked—and might have been locked for years.

"There's no one here," breathed Doris.

"I'm not so sure," said June quietly, as she took a bunch of keys from her pocket and tried one after another in the lock. It gave suddenly, with a faint click, and the girl detective pushed open the door, flashing her torch.

There came a horrified cry from Doris and the others, as they peered over her shoulder. A single step led down into a tiled kitchen, and huddled on the stone floor was a girlish figure, her face deathly pale against her dark, rumpled hair.

Near her lay an open sack, the silver contents of which reflected the light from June's torch.

"Brenda Hudson!" gasped Doris, her voice shaking. "Then she was—she is Rosina!"

June, who had dropped on her knees beside the unconscious girl, looked up.

"No," she said quietly, "Brenda tried to save the school trophies, but Rosina struck first!"



SENSATION IN BIG HALL

"June, this is terrible!" exclaimed the headmistress, twisting her hands agitatedly as the seniors told their excited story. "I have visited Brenda in the sanatorium, but the poor girl is not well enough to talk. What do you suppose actually happened?"

The girl detective's eyes were grave as she looked round at the anxious group assembled in Miss Marley's study. There were one or

two junior mistresses present, as well as the prefects, and in the doorway hovered several curious, wide-eyed servants.

"I think it's quite plain," said June quietly. "Brenda always took a walk in the garden about that time, but Rosina wasn't aware of that. Having laid the false trail to deceive us, she was making her way to the lodge with the sack of trophies when Brenda saw her in the dusk and challenged her. Rosina acted swiftly—and ruthlessly. She realised that if Brenda disappeared at the same time as the trophies it would help her in her daring bluff."

"Bluff?" echoed Doris. "But I don't understand. Surely, if Rosina had got what she wanted, the obvious thing was to escape—"

"But she hadn't got what she wanted!" put in June unexpectedly. "Rosina has no use for the trophies—or she wouldn't have left them in the lodge. She merely took them as a blind."

A stunned, bewildered silence greeted her words. Miss Marley passed an unsteady hand over her forehead.

"I—I'm afraid I'm very dense, June. Will you please explain?"

"Rosina didn't want those cups, Miss Marley," said June gently. "She wanted something far more valuable—but she knew that her presence was suspected, and that I was here to keep watch. So she committed a fake burglary, with a faked escape—hoping that I'd leave the school to get on her trail."

"A faked escape?" breathed Doris. "Then—then you mean that she is—"

"Rosina is still here—in the school," put in June, with emphasis. "With your permission, Miss Marley, I'd like to stay on for the Speech-day to-morrow."

"Of course—if you really think it necessary, my dear," said the headmistress.

That night, from the prefects' room, June telephoned her famous uncle in London, informing him of the result of her investigations—and asking him to make certain inquiries.

Over the wire came Noel Raymond's surprised whistle:

"If your suspicions are correct, June, this is Rosina's most audacious game as yet! I'll do what I can. Good luck to you—and take care!"

THERE was an excited hush in Big Hall the following evening as the headmistress mounted the rostrum, to introduce Mrs. Ranleigh, the mayoress, who had come to present the prizes.

Miss Marley tapped on her desk for silence.

"Girls," she said, smiling round at the attentive rows of faces, "before we commence I have an announcement to make that will delight you all. Mrs. Ranleigh—an old girl of this school and its generous patron—wishes to mark this occasion by a magnificent gift, to enable us to build a new wing."

There was a burst of excited applause as the mayoress stepped forward smilingly, and opened a leather case—revealing a solitary diamond pendant that flashed and scintillated.

Graciously she handed it to the headmistress, while everyone craned forward. And at that instant the lights in the hall went out.

June's voice rang out, cutting through the startled cries:

"Silence, please! See that all doors are guarded. Rosina Fontaine is here among us!"

Moments of tense suspense passed before suddenly the lights flared up again. A horrified shout arose. On the platform lay the open jewel-case, its precious contents gone.

Doris and several of the other seniors raced forward.

"Wait!" called June. "I'm sorry, Miss Marley—Elise, the maid, put the lights out on my instructions! I knew Rosina was here, and I wanted to trap her into acting. She fell into my trap."

"I—I don't understand," gasped the headmistress. "Where is Rosina—and where is the jewel?"

"The jewel," said June quietly, "is here!"

In one swift movement she took the mortar-board from Miss Marley's white hair and jerked at the tassel.

A portion of the top of the mortar-board came up like a lid—revealing a cunningly arranged cavity, in which lay the diamond pendant.

A stupefied gasp rose from the watchers in the hall, a gasp that faded into incredulous silence as June stepped closer to the headmistress.

"The game's up—Rosina!" cried the girl detective.

Her hand flashed out, seized the headmistress' white hair and pulled it away—revealing dark, close-cropped hair, the hair of Rosina Fontaine!

"You've failed, Rosina," said June. "The real Miss Marley has been found—imprisoned in her country cottage, guarded by one of your confederates. My uncle found her. You were a little too clever."

"How?" asked the girl crook.

"Apparently," said June calmly, "you had eyes that could see in the dark—for you pointed out those fake footprints before I flashed my torch on them. That aroused my suspicions—and they were clinched by a few white hairs clutched in Brenda's hand. I remembered, then, how anxious you had been to direct my suspicions to Brenda in the first place—when you pretended to find that handkerchief."

Rosina laughed softly. "It's your win, June," she admitted, and she turned towards one of the constables who had hurried up on to the platform.

"Look out!" cried June, starting forward, but too late. Rosina's foot kicked the easel of the near-by black-board, and the heavy board toppled, crashing on to the constable's arm. In a flash Rosina had dived across the platform, evading the startled seniors.

The door at the back slammed, and the key turned in the lock.

By the time the door could be opened, Rosina, the audacious, had made her escape—but she made it empty-handed, her cunning plot foiled by the girl detective!

(End of this week's story.)
"FLOWERS FOR DANGER" is the intriguing title of next Friday's Noel and June story.

THE MERRYMAKERS AFLOAT

(Continued from page 8.)

"We'll talk about that later. What we've got to do now is to get away from here—before we're caught. Out through the window, everybody! Help me with Percy, Don!"

Even as they were scrambling through the window, one after the other, the door opened. Emilio Martelli peered cautiously in. Next moment his eyes popped, and he let out a bellow:

"He go! He escape! After heem!" "Run!" gasped Sally. "We mustn't be caught now!"

They ran, with Percy striding out between them at full speed. From the cafe came sounds of commotion. Emilio Martelli, trying to squeeze himself through the window to give pursuit, had become jammed there, holding up everybody else.

"Make for the jungle!" cried Don. "Once we get there—"

But next moment, with a groan, he realised that they wouldn't be able to get there. More figures had appeared—in front of them. In the lead was a white man in an immaculate linen suit, and with him were a number of natives in uniform.

"The police commissioner and his men!" Sally panted. "We've stirred up a hornets' nest this time! Down here, shipmates! You, too, Percy! Dodge between these huts!"

They dodged and turned and doubled back on their tracks. After them, like a pack in full cry, came their pursuers. And suddenly Sally realised the full complications of the situation. It was Percy, the robot, branded as a danger to the

community, whom the authorities were really after. And the chums themselves, having been seen with him, had also become involved.

"Put on speed!" Sally panted.

"I've thought of another wheeze!" They put on speed. By twisting and turning between the bungalows and huts, they managed to draw ahead of their pursuers. But suddenly, to her chums' amazement, Sally pulled up and switched off Percy's whirring mechanism.

"What—" gasped Johnny. He broke off, staring. Sally was zipping open her hold-all and pulling out gown and mortar-board.

"Take off Percy's clothes and beard!" she said swiftly. "Percy's going to become headmaster again!"

"But what—" "Get cracking!"

They did. In a few seconds the robot had become transformed and was once again looking like the headmaster of the College Ship. Then, just as Sally had rammed the discarded clothes into the hold-all and was closing it, the pursuers surged into view.

"Oh, dear!" panted Sally, looking as if she were near to collapse.

"Grooooh!" groaned Johnny, swaying limply—and wondering why all this play-acting was necessary.

"So here you are!" panted the commissioner. "A fine dance you've led us. Where's that man who was with you— Oh, good-afternoon!" he added, glancing at that figure in gown and mortar-board. "You'll be the headmaster from the College Ship."

"Yes!" said Percy, at a touch of a button.

"Sorry about that assault. But we're after the man now. He was with these youngsters—"

Sally gave a shudder.

"It was dreadful. But he rescued us!" And coolly she looked at Percy.

"Your headmaster rescued you?"

The commissioner gave a start.

"Rescued you from what?"

"That man you're chasing!" Sally replied—which was true enough. Percy the headmaster, she hoped, would rescue them from the rumpus which had been created by Percy the wild man! "Oh, dear, it was terrible! That man—" Unseen, she pressed a lever.

"Hammer!" said Percy.

"You mean he had a hammer?" asked the startled commissioner, who wasn't to know that Mr. Hammer was the sports and classics master on the Floating College. "Great Scott, the man's more dangerous than I thought. But we'll get him. Say, though, Martelli was babbling something about this fellow being your uncle—"

"Oh, we had to call him that," Sally said calmly. "Had to humour him, you know."

"Fair enough! Which way did he go?"

"That way," Sally pointed between some huts. "Didn't he, professor?"

"Yes," said Percy, and up jerked his arm in response of Sally's manipulation of a switch.

"Right. Thanks! We'll get him."

The commissioner, accompanied by his uniformed men, hurried off. After them surged the rest of the crowd.

"Percy's saved us again!" chuckled Sally. "Now for the Haunted Caves. I've a hunch they're the place marked on the chart we found. Come on!"

And off they hurried.

(End of this week's story.)

Next Friday you will read of the Merry-makers' surprising adventure in the Haunted Caves.

LEADER OF THE ALPINE REVELLERS

(Continued from page 2.)

ski tour to Havensburg Castle. We should be very grateful if you would coach us, and we suggest a meeting at ten o'clock to-morrow at the foot of the bob run, to discuss plans for training."

And then followed the six signatures.

Surely that letter would make up Hans' mind for him!

Jill took the letter when she went to her room to change for the evening, slipped it into an envelope, and addressed it to Hans, leaving it on her dressing-table.

There was to be a dance at the hotel skating rink that night. Just before it started she would run across and deliver the note at Hans' cottage, which wasn't far from the hotel.

"And he'll agree!" she breathed hopefully. "I know he will! He'll keep that appointment at the bob run to-morrow."

She was humming a gay little tune as she ran lightly down to the dining-room.

And she didn't see a shadowy figure creep along the corridor, glance quickly around, and then enter her room, where she had left the all-important letter.



THE INTERRUPTED DANCE

The stars twinkled over the pinewoods. The moon was peeping above the mountain peaks to the eastwards.

A single light burned in Hans Peterson's little cottage in the clearing.

Jill had slipped a warm wrap over her skating frock and made her way to the cottage with the letter, which had still been lying on her dressing-table when she had gone up to her room after dinner.

She drew a deep breath as she pictured the boy guide sitting alone, brooding over his undeserved disgrace.

"But I won't disturb him," she told herself. "He may be in one of those queer moods of his. He might bite my head off! Better let him read the letter quietly on his own."

She tiptoed to the porch, pushed the envelope through the letter-box, then hurried back to the hotel. Half an hour later she was dancing on the ice with cheerful Tony Barnes, while the hotel orchestra played the dreamy strains of the Blue Danube Waltz.

It was a gay, colourful scene. Jill thrilled to the music and the rhythmical swish of the skates as the couples whirled gracefully by.

"Jill! You look on top of the world!" grinned red-headed Tony.

"I feel it!" she laughed.

"Getting all het-up about the Havensburg Test, eh?"

"Rather!" chuckled Jill. "We're going to give you boys a run for your money, Tony, so look out!"

"Jolly good luck to you!" Tony smiled. "Some of the fellows think you've bitten off more than you can chew, but I say it's a jolly sporting idea."

The waltz came to a graceful end, and there was a burst of clapping as the skaters glided to a halt.

And then—

There came a sudden loud knocking that echoed strangely across the rink, and caused all eyes to turn in one direction.

There was a connecting door at one side of the covered rink which led straight into the hotel buildings, but on the other side was an outer door opening on the snow-covered grounds, which wasn't used very much, and was kept locked as a rule.

It was on this door that someone was hammering—loudly, furiously.

The gay chatter on the rink died away.

"Sounds as if someone's in a mighty hurry," grinned Tony. "Wonder who it can be?"

Already a uniformed attendant was stepping forward. For a moment he fumbled at the lock, then threw the door wide open.

A sturdy figure stood there, outlined against the starry night. A boyish figure, in wind-jacket and ski trousers, his hair ruffled by the breeze.

"It's—it's Hans!" breathed Jill. She knew a sudden throb of dismay.

What did it mean? Why had Hans interrupted the dance in such an unceremonious way?

He was striding forward now, his jaw set, an odd brooding light in his deep-set eyes. The attendant would have questioned him, but he thrust the man aside.

He scarcely seemed to be aware of the lights and the dancers and the orchestra and the gay streamers that festooned the ice-rink. For a brief moment he stared around him till his gaze settled on Jill.

His frown grew deeper, the set of his jaw more grim and rugged, as he strode towards her.

"Why, Hans—" she faltered.

Sombrely he gazed at her, while the silence around them grew deeper.

"I want you to know," he cried loudly, "that I don't like being insulted. I don't like girls who pretend to be friendly while all the time they are laughing up their sleeves!"

Completely taken aback, she could only stare at him.

"I—I don't understand—"

The boy guide gave a bitter laugh. Then from his pocket he brought out a sheet of paper.

Still he seemed to be unaware of the curious glances that were directed towards him from all sides. His eyes were fixed on Jill, as if they were the only two in the building.

"Perhaps you understand this!" he cried.

He crumpled the paper in his hand and flung it contemptuously on the ice at her feet.

"That's what I think of your letter, Miss Jill Gardiner!" he exclaimed. "And of you and your precious friends!"

Jill's cheeks had paled. Her heart was throbbing wildly. And around them the silence grew more tense as everyone peered curiously.

Until suddenly Gerald Clarke's rather lofty tones were heard, as he stepped closer.

"I say! What utter cheek, barging in here like this!" he pronounced.

"It's that guide fellow—that chap who ratted when the avalanche fell in the ravine and—"

Smack!

Gerald said afterwards that he never quite knew what hit him! Actually it was Hans' fist, which shot out and caught him on the shoulder so that he spun round and tumbled back on the ice.

The boy guide shot one more brooding glance at Jill. Then he turned on his heel and marched steadily to the door, slamming it behind him with a thump that seemed to shake the whole building.

And then a chorus of amazement broke out.

"Golly! What a strange boy!"

"Jill! Is that really Hans Peterson—the boy who was going to coach us for the test?"

"What's upset him?"

"What's wrong?"

Jill hardly heard the excited chatter. Her lips were trembling. She felt as if this was some strange nightmare as she gazed at the crumpled paper at her feet—the letter on which she had based such high hopes.

Mechanically she stooped and picked it up, opening it out.

Then, as her troubled glance fell on the writing, her expression changed. A cry of utmost dismay broke from her.

What is the reason of Hans' startling outbreak? See next Friday's dramatic instalment. It will be packed with surprises and excitement.

THE FOURTH GREY GHOST

(Continued from page 4.)

below the parapet and stretching away in the direction of the roof of the nearest part of the Cloisters.

"You—you mean—"

"We swing along it to the Cloisters," said Hugh quietly. "We're not likely to be seen against the sky." He paused; she could almost feel his eyes intently regarding her. "Nerve's all right, isn't it, No. 4?" he added swiftly. "You don't funk it?"

Penelope gulped. Staring into the dark depths her brain began to swim. Then she clenched her hands fiercely. "Of course not," she muttered.

"O.K., then. Bob, you first. You're the strongest and you can steady the rope the other end. But quick—if they rush the tower now—"

He said no more. Breath held, Penelope watched in dread fascination as Bob Gower, without a word, swung over the edge of the parapet. She forced herself to watch him. She saw him grasp the thick rope and begin to swing himself out into space, hand over hand, robe fluttering.

He battled on doggedly, getting dimmer and dimmer to their intent gaze. There was no sound of alarm from below.

"The rope's slackened—he's there," whispered Hugh. "Next—"

Penelope nerv'd herself. But Harvey Doane was before her, already swinging over the parapet with almost lazy ease.

Tense these moments, but Penelope felt an involuntary thrill of admiration and respect for these daring three. What a nerve they had!

And then suddenly Hugh gave a hoarse exclamation.

It made Penelope jump, tensed.

"What—what is it, No. 1?" she gasped, peering towards him in the darkness.

He did not answer at once. He had leant forward over the parapet. He seemed to be fumbling for the rope. Suddenly he jerked upright, his voice strained.

"The rope! It's broken—this end's fallen! Harvey—"

Penelope nearly screamed. Her blood was chilled; she closed her eyes, heard a very soft bump—then a faint, but steady, call.

"I'm O.K., No. 1! I held on to my end when it broke—"

Penelope leant against the parapet, weak with relief. She felt Hugh's tensed figure slacken beside her.

"Thank goodness," he breathed. "He'll be O.K. He was nearly there. He'll climb up his end to the Cloisters' roof—"

He paused, staring down into the darkness, before turning. The thing that had come into his mind came frighteningly into Penelope's.

"No. 4," he said in a strange, tense voice, "I'm sorry, but—you see what this means?"

Penelope was still, slumped against the parapet. She saw—only too clearly.

Harvey and Bob were clear, but the rope was gone, snapped. There was no escape for herself and Hugh. They were trapped in the tower, while the silent ring below closed in. Capture—and unmasking—was but a matter of time!

What a nerve-racking plight Penelope and Hugh are in! Is there no way of escape? See next Friday's thrilling chapters.