"THE IMPOSTOR AT THE WINTER SPORTS" Don't Miss This Grand Serial

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GIRLS' CRYSTAL

3D.

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"

NOEL RAYMOND'S STRANGE FIND

This Week's Long Complete Relates The Most Intriguing Mystery Ever Investigated

By June And Noel

Noel Raymond's STRANGE FIND

By PETER LANGLEY

A SURPRISE IN THE CAVE

"JUST hark at the gulls, nunky!"

June Gaynor halted in her breathless scramble over the rocks to call to Noel Raymond, her famous detective uncle.

Noel, a little way ahead, pulled up and nodded with a smile.

The gaunt cliffs of Shelwyn Cove echoed to the clamorous cries of the gulls, swooping overhead.

"Sounds as though something's startled them, June," he declared, and shaded his eyes against the glare of the setting sun. "Seem to be circling near that cave along there. Let's go and have a look at it."

Nimbly he leapt over the scattered boulders, towards the spot over which the gulls were still shrieking and wheeling. June followed him eagerly, her eyes bright with excitement.

Noel reached the cave first, and an amazed cry broke from his lips.

"Great Scott, June!" he called. "Come and see what I've found!"

Her uncle had taken out his magnifying glass and was now intently examining something standing in the mouth of the cave—something of human shape, yet stiff and motionless.

June, pausing in the act of scrambling over a boulder, gave a startled gasp.

"Why, it—it's a mummy!" she exclaimed, and then went running forward. "An Egyptian mummy! Nunky, why on earth should anyone leave a thing like that here, of all places?"

Noel ran a hand puzzledly through his hair, and shook his head.

"It beats me, June," he said.

"Could it have been washed up by the sea?" suggested June.

Noel shook his head.

"I doubt it. You notice the gilding on the mummy-case looks practically new. If it had been in water it would show some sign of erosion. It was more probably dumped here from a boat at high tide," he added. "Which would account for the lack of footprints on the shingle."

June nodded, an almost uneasy curiosity in her eyes as she stared at the gilded face—a girl's face—its lips carved in a placid, enigmatic smile.

"But why, nunky?" she asked. "Why should anyone leave a—a mummy in a cave on the seashore?"

"That we're going to find out," decided Noel. "It looks pretty valuable, apart from what it may contain inside. There ought to be some way of opening it——"

June, as he laid the mummy-case flat on the sand and examined it with his magnifying-glass, peered over his shoulder.

"Nunky," she whispered suddenly, "there's something I ought to have told you, only I thought I'd imagined it. When those gulls were crying, I fancied I heard a sound almost like a girl's scream."

"Steady, June," said Noel, darting her a swift glance. "I know those cries of the gulls sound almost human at times—but we mustn't let imagination run away with us. This discovery is pretty puzzling, but it must have some logical explanation! Ah!"

June held her breath as Noel lifted the lid of the mummy-case and peered into the interior.

Then a little sigh, almost of relief, escaped her lips. Noel's tense figure relaxed.

For the mummy-case was empty; only a faint cloud of dust now hung in the air.

"A mummy-case — but no mummy!" commented Noel. "And you see that dry dust, June—it proves conclusively that the mummy-case could not have been washed up by the sea. It was probably stolen; the thief may have panicked, having got as far as the cave."

June rose to her feet, staring rather uneasily around her. She could not rid her mind of the memory of that faint sound, so like a girl's scream, she thought she had heard. Could she have been mistaken?

"Nunky—what's this?" She suddenly stooped, and scooped up a small, gleaming object almost hidden by seaweed. "What do you make of it, nunky? Do you think it's a clue?" she asked eagerly.

Noel rose to his feet and took the object.

"A buckle," he said. "A gilt-metal shoe buckle, shaped like a coiled serpent! I wonder—no, it could hardly have any connection with the mummy-case. It's the kind of thing one would buy at a cheap bazaar——"

"But, nunky"—June's keen eyes were scanning the damp sand close to where she had found the buckle—"there's a footprint—a girl's footprint—without a heel. She was wearing sandals or slippers of some kind, with a turned-up toe."

"Let me see!" Noel bent down. "Good for you, June! You've found a clue, right enough. But—where does it lead us?" He frowned thoughtfully at the surrounding shingle and rocks. "Not much chance of following a trail here. The girl may or may not be associated with our rather intriguing discovery. She may simply be a visitor who happened to stroll into the cave before the mummy-case was left here. A bit of a job to trace her among the holiday crowds."

June's eyes flashed with determination. Her own detective instincts had been aroused now, and she slipped the small buckle into her handbag.

"I'm going to try, nunky," she told him. "My friend, Rita, from the hotel, may be able to help. If there's a shop in the town that sells these buckles, she's bound to know it. I'm meeting her on the pier this evening with some other friends."

Noel's eyes twinkled approvingly as, with June's help, he shifted the heavy mummy-case farther back into the cave, where it was hidden by the rocks.

"I see you mean to keep your hand in as a detective, June, even on holiday!" he said. "If you'll follow the mystery in your own way, I'll check up from a different angle. I'll have to report this to the police, of course, and then I'll see Professor Murray—who wants to consult me on some business matter. He's an authority on ancient Egyptian relics. I'll describe the mummy-case to him, and he may be able to give me a line."

They left the cave, and made their way to their hotel. Soon afterwards June took her leave of Noel, and hurried to the pier to join her friends.

Dusk was falling and the twinkling, coloured lights on the promenade and pier lent an air of enchantment to the scene. June was greeted by a merry crowd of young people she had met on holiday, and, laughing and chattering, they entered the rather ornate pavilion, where a concert party were giving their first evening performance.

As they waited for the curtain to rise, June turned to her friend from the hotel.

"Rita—you know Shelwyn Cove much better than I do," she whispered. "Have you ever seen a buckle like this on sale in any of the shops?"

Rita Norris examined the gilt buckle, and shook her head.

"I can't say I have. It's rather quaint, isn't it?"

At that moment the lights were dimmed, and the curtain rose to reveal the concert troupe—all of whom were dressed in attractive Eastern costumes.

As the opening chorus finished, amid a clash of cymbals, the turbaned leader of the troupe stepped forward to the front of the stage.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he announced, "I regret that our popu-

lar young pianist, Leila Charlton, has been unaccountably detained. Owing to her absence, there will be a slight alteration to the printed programme."

But June scarcely heard the remainder of his announcement. She was staring at the troupe of smiling girls seated behind the footlights, in their silken trousers and quaint satin slippers.

And on each slipper was a gilt buckle, shaped like a coiled serpent!

The girl detective's thoughts were racing. This was more than a coincidence—it must be! That gilt buckle she had found in the cave; the unexpected absence of the young pianist—

With a hasty, murmured excuse to her friends, June slipped out of the concert-hall and made her way round to the stage-door.

She found most of the troupe assembled in the wings, while a comedian cracked jokes on the stage. They stared at June in surprise as she inquired breathlessly where she could contact Leila Charlton.

"I—I've a special reason for wanting to see her," she explained.

"So have I!" declared the leader of the troupe, with a worried frown. "She's let us down badly this evening. We phoned her lodgings, only to be told that she hadn't returned for tea."

"And she acted strangely at this afternoon's show," put in one of the girls. "Not a bit like herself. Forgot her cue and bungled the closing chorus. She seemed to have something on her mind."

June thought quickly, her uneasiness deepening. She did not want to alarm the troupe and start any false rumours, but her fingers tightened on the gilt buckle in her pocket. Apparently Leila had been one of the last to leave the pavilion after the afternoon performance, and no one remembered seeing her go.

"Didn't even bother to change before she left," said the leader, pointing to a girl's frock hanging in one of the cubicles. "Must have slipped a coat over her fancy dress—as the girls often do when they're pushed for time."

June glanced quickly into the cubicle. Apart from the dress, there was a pair of walking shoes—and a spare pair of the quaint satin slippers. As the attention of the others was momentarily distracted, the girl detective quickly concealed one of the slippers in her large handbag.

A few minutes later she took her leave. It was practically dark now, and a pale moon was rising above the sea. June hesitated for a moment as she left the gay lights of the pier and stood on the deserted steps leading down to the beach.

It was scarcely an hour since she had left Noel, and even if he had already contacted the police, it was unlikely that any official action had yet been taken about the mysterious mummy-case. But there was something that she must find out—for certain!

The shingle crunched underfoot as June hurried along the lonely beach. There was not a soul about at this hour. She could hear only the ripple of the waves, the occasional cry of a sea-bird high up in the dark cliffs.

Her heart was thumping as she came nearer to the cave. A pale glimmer of moonlight crept into the opening in the face of the cliff. Taking a grip on her fears, June ventured into the cave.

The gilded mummy-case was still there, but it seemed to have shifted its position slightly. Possibly it had slipped from one of the seaweed-covered boulders against which Noel had rested it.

Turning her back on it, June knelt down and flashed her torch on the footprint in the patch of sand. Opening her handbag she took out the satin slipper, and tried it against the footprint.

It fitted—exactly! Her last doubt was banished. Leila Charlton, the missing concert-party pianist, had visited the cave late that afternoon, after leaving the pier—and just about the time June had heard that cry!

But why had the girl cried out? What had happened in that dim cave?

Suddenly June heard a sound behind her. She spun round, and then the blood drained from her face.

For the gilded mummy-case was rising slowly from behind the rocks, swaying in the pale moonlight, as, with a jerky, sliding movement, it came across the shingle towards her.

Despite her pluck, a scream was torn from the girl detective's lips as she turned to run. But she missed her footing on the slippery rocks and fell heavily, a merciful faintness sweeping over her as something touched her shoulder, pulling her back into the cave.

THE MISSING MUMMY-CASE

"I WONDER," Noel asked himself, "how June is enjoying the concert? I hope she isn't allowing the mystery of the abandoned mummy-case to spoil her pleasure!"

There was a faint smile on his lips as he rang the door-bell of Professor Murray's gloomy house on the headland.

A manservant opened the door.

"The professor is expecting you, sir," he said, glancing at the famous detective's card. "If you'll come this way."

Just then Professor Murray hurried to greet his friend.

"I'm glad you were able to come, Noel!" he said warmly. "I need your advice. By the way, didn't you say you were bringing your niece with you?"

"She had a previous appointment with some young friends," Noel explained. "And, incidentally, she hopes to gain some information about a little mystery on which we've stumbled."

"Mystery—eh?" The professor looked vaguely interested. "Anything unusual?"

"Something in your line, I fancy, professor," nodded Noel. "But I'll go into that while we're inspecting the museum. I believe you wanted to consult me about the precautions you propose taking for safeguarding your collection."

"That is so," declared the professor, as he led the way to his private museum. "On one or two occasions recently attempts have been made to break into my house. Last week a window in the museum was forced, and Walters and I chased an unknown scoundrel across the grounds. He disappeared near the cliff. The police were unable to obtain any clues."

Noel's interest quickened as he looked round the spacious room, filled with curios acquired on the professor's travels.

"This evening," went on his friend, "I'm expecting Mattersons, the local carriers, with a case of valuable carvings—and I wanted to obtain your advice about burglar-alarms, and so on."

Noel nodded thoughtfully. They had reached the Egyptian section, and the young detective glanced suddenly at his companion.

"While we're on the subject, professor, I'm going to ask your advice as an Egyptologist. I mentioned a little mystery just now. What would you say if you came across an Egyptian mummy-case, in excellent condition, in a cave on the seashore?" And Noel went on to outline his and June's amazing discovery.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the professor. "I've never heard of anything so extraordinary! You have informed the police?"

"I phoned them before coming to see you," said Noel. "They thought it some kind of leg-pull, till I gave them my name. They've had no report of any stolen mummies, but they're checking up. I asked them to contact me here—"

"Amazing!" said the professor. "A gilded mummy-case, you say? Can you describe it?"

"Easily!" said Noel. "It—"

He broke off, an incredulous expression on his boyish face as he stared across the room.

"Professor Murray, that mummy-case standing in the corner there—unless I'm crazy, it's the identical mummy-case that was lying in the cave not two hours ago!"

The professor laughed gruffly.

"You're dreaming, Raymond!" he declared. "That is one of my most prized possessions—the mummy of the Princess Cleophale!"

"But—" Noel started forward, taking out his torch and flashing it on the mummy's painted face—the likeness is almost uncanny! The gilding on the features—that smile—"

"You must be mistaken!" declared the professor, a trifle impatiently. "There is only one Princess Cleophale—I would not part with that mummy for a thousand pounds."

"Have you any objection to my opening the case?" asked Noel.

"Not in the least. The catch is on the left of the case—Allow me!"

The professor stepped forward, opening the gilded lid. Noel bent forward, staring at the swathed mummy standing motionless inside.

He hardly knew what else he had expected to see, yet his eyes were troubled. He and June could hardly have imagined that gilded mummy-case in the cave—and its amazing likeness to the Princess Cleophale struck him even more forcibly as he closed the lid.

At that moment there came a sudden trill from the telephone in the corner of the room. The professor lifted the hand-set.

"A call for you, Noel—from the police!"

Noel strode to the instrument, and took the receiver from his friend.

"Raymond here," he jerked. "Have you—eh? What's that, inspector?" A startled expression crossed his boyish face. "No—I don't understand. I'll look into it at once, and ring you back."

He slammed down the receiver and whirled.

"The mummy-case has disappeared from the cave, professor! The police have searched the entire length of the beach without finding a trace of it—or of the thief. If you'll forgive me, professor, I'll slip back to the hotel now. This affair is more important than I imagined at first—and the clue June found may have a vital bearing on it.

"Meanwhile, I suggest you take special precautions with that mummy of yours, professor," Noel added. "I'm convinced that it has some connection with the mystery, though at the moment I can't see the link."

The professor regarded him sceptically, while Noel made a hurried inspection of the window fastenings and the burglar alarm apparatus.

"Everything seems pretty safe," declared the young detective. "But I advise you not to allow anyone in your museum—not even your manservant—unless you are present at the same time. I'll call back later this evening, after I've seen June."

As the professor crossed to the door, Noel busied himself for a moment in the vicinity of the gilded mummy-case. Then he rejoined his friend, hurrying down to his waiting car.

Driving back to the hotel, the young detective was very thoughtful. His agile mind was attempting to find a missing link in the chain of strange events surrounding the mystery mummy.

He wondered whether June had learnt anything about the serpent buckle. By now she should have returned from the concert—

As Noel hurried up the steps of the hotel he saw June's friend, Rita Norris, crossing the lobby. She greeted him with a smile.

"Oh—isn't June with you?" she asked.

Noel stared at her in perplexity.

"I thought she went with you to the concert on the pier," he said.

Rita's smile faded. Rather breathlessly, she described how June had left the concert-pavilion soon after the commencement of the show.

"She seemed to be worrying about a gilt buckle she had found. I thought perhaps she'd met you. She hasn't come back to the hotel."

Noel was conscious of a sudden stab of uneasiness. He knew his young partner's daring nature. If she had stumbled on a clue in connection with the gilt buckle, she would not give a thought to any possible risk to herself.

Hurrying back to his car, Noel drove quickly down to the pier. Crowds still thronged it, and in vain the young detective searched for his niece.

He tried to imagine himself in her shoes. Supposing she had found some connection between the gilt buckle and their discovery on the seashore. She would probably return to the cave——

He looked out across the moonlit beach. The tide was coming in fairly swiftly now. The young detective ran down the steps and hurried over the shingle, making for the cave.

But the cave was empty; and, as he had been informed by the police, the painted mummy-case was no longer there.

If June had come back here——

Noel shone his torch over the rocky floor of the cave, then bent suddenly to snatch up a girl's handkerchief lying trampled among the shingle.

"It's June's!" he whispered huskily, his face paling. "Then—she came back here, as I guessed. But—what happened? Where is she now?"

He searched the cave, flashing his torch over the green walls, and up into the vaulted, funnel-like roof.

His eyes narrowed as he traced some marks where the green sea-lichen had been scraped from the rocks, as though something heavy had been dragged over them. Then, caught in a crevice among the stones, he found a scrap of paper—a billheading of some kind.

Keenly he read it.

"Mattersons — Carriers — Shelwyn Cove."

Mattersons! The professor had mentioned that name in connection with the delivery of some curios! Could there possibly be any link?

Suddenly, crushing the billhead into his pocket, Noel hurried back along the beach to his car, and drove swiftly to the professor's house.

"Bless my soul, Raymond!" exclaimed the professor, when Noel burst into his study. "Has anything happened?"

"I'm not sure—yet," said Noel grimly. "June is missing—but she may be following some trail of her own. I came back for another reason. Have the carriers called yet with those carvings you were expecting?"

The professor nodded, glancing at his manservant.

"They came about half an hour ago. Walters admitted them, and saw the men off the premises. I've not had time to unpack the carvings——"

"Where are they?" demanded Noel.

"Just inside the museum, sir," Walters told him. "The men removed the packing-case, leaving the straw and sacking wrappings."

"I suggest we go and inspect them now, professor," said Noel grimly.

The professor led the way to the museum, and switched on the lights. He crossed at once to a bundle of straw and packing material in the corner, and jerked it aside. A startled ejaculation escaped his lips.

"There are no carvings here!" he exclaimed.

"But—but I saw them unpacking something, sir!" stuttered Walters. "I didn't go close, as I was talking to the foreman at the door, but——"

"That's what they unpacked!" exclaimed Noel, pointing to a dim corner.

The professor stared, his expression blank.

"What do you mean? That's the mummy of Princess Cleophale——"

"Perhaps!" jerked Noel, as he strode towards it. "I'm no expert, professor, but that gilding looks neater than when we last examined it. And—I thought as much!—there's a trace of wet sand here on the carvings!"

The professor's face turned white.

"You — you mean——" he demanded huskily.

"I-mean," jerked Noel, "that those carriers were frauds! This is the mummy-case that June and I found in the cave on the beach. I'll stake my reputation on it."

"Then," gulped the professor, "then the mummy of Princess Cleophale——"

Noel did not answer. He was tugging at the gilded lid.

As he pulled it off a choking gasp escaped his lips.

For there was no swathed mummy in the case now. Instead, there stood a human figure—a girl's figure—bound and gagged.

It was June!

plain the plot to substitute a cleverly faked mummy-case for the valuable mummy in the professor's collection.

"June surprised them at their work," Noel continued, "and they tied her up in the mummy-case rather than leave her in the cave, where she would have been bound to be discovered. They banked on your not suspecting the fake mummy-case till they had time to get clear of the district."

"But who are the scoundrels—and what do they want with the mummy of Princess Cleophale?" demanded the professor. "It's not the kind of thing that could be disposed of easily for cash."

Noel shook his head with a thoughtful frown.

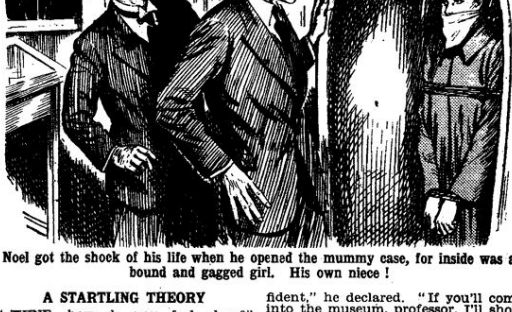
"Nunky—there's something else!" June gasped suddenly. "Leila Charlton—the missing pianist——"

"I hadn't forgotten her," said Noel gravely. "It's clear from what you've told me that she was deeply involved in this affair, June. The mystery isn't solved yet, by a long chalk. Our next task is to find Leila Charlton—and the stolen mummy."

"You'll never trace the scoundrels!" declared the professor despondently.

Noe, smiled grimly.

"On the contrary, I feel pretty con-



Noel got the shock of his life when he opened the mummy case, for inside was a bound and gagged girl. His own niece!

A STARTLING THEORY

"JUNE, how do you feel, dear?" asked Noel huskily, bending over his niece, who now lay on a couch in the professor's study.

With a tremulous, puzzled smile, June gulped the powerful restorative that Noel held to her lips.

"I'm—I'm all right, nunky," she faltered. "I can't remember what happened. I—I was with Rita and the others at the concert, and——" She caught in her breath sharply, struggling to sit up. "Nunky, that dreadful mummy! I thought—I dreamt it came to life——"

"Steady!" said Noel gruffly, and his arm tightened reassuringly round her shoulder.

"Nunky—it wasn't a dream," June gasped. "It's coming back more clearly now!"

Unsteadily she blurted out her amazing story—the story of the gilt buckle, the missing girl pianist, and the mummy that had seemed to come to life in the moonlit cave.

Noel nodded, his expression grim.

"It's as I thought, professor! That fake mummy-case was dumped in the cave at high tide, and later hauled up by a crane from the cliff above. The scoundrels were busy at their task when June surprised them. Not unnaturally, when she saw the mummy-case moving, she imagined it had come to life——"

June gave a little, unsteady laugh—but her smile faded the next moment, when Noel went on to confident," he declared. "If you'll come into the museum, professor, I'll show you the reason. Feel well enough to walk, June?"

June nodded quickly, and slid to her feet, holding her uncle's arm. Though shaken by her strange experience, all her wits were keenly alert now.

Her own miraculous escape made her all the more determined to find the unfortunate girl pianist whose cry she believed she had heard in the cave.

Curiously she accompanied Noel into the museum, followed by the professor. The gilded mummy-case still stood open, and June could not suppress an involuntary shudder as she glanced at it.

"Notice anything, June?" asked Noel, pointing to the floor.

June stared, and the professor peered over his spectacles.

"Why," breathed June, "something's been spilt there—in tiny patches. It looks almost like——"

"As it happens, it's red ink!" said Noel dryly. "I felt uneasy about the mummy of Princess Cleophale when I noticed its amazing resemblance to the mummy-case we found in the cave. Before I left the house, I took certain precautions, professor. I saturated the felt packing in the mummy-case from that bottle of red ink on the table. Where ever the mummy is rested, there is bound to be a red stain—faint, but unmistakable!"

The professor stared admiringly, and June's eyes sparkled.

"But where do we start searching, nunky?" she asked.

"We?" Noel shook his head, with a grave smile. "You've taken enough risks for one night, June. I suggest you go back to the hotel—"

"Nothing doing, nunky!" declared June, shaking her head, a determined gleam in her grey eyes. "I'm seeing this through to the end. I just wouldn't be able to sleep, worrying about Leila Charlton. You must let me come with you!"

Noel grinned resignedly.

"All right, June—if you're sure you feel quite fit. But this time you'll keep out of danger. Our first port of call is the pier pavilion. You can make a few tactful inquiries from the members of the troupe while I scout round."

Crowds were streaming off the pier when they reached it, though the coloured lights were still ablaze. The concert party's second performance had ended, but the bumper-cars and other side-shows were still in full swing.

Noel and June hurried round to the stage-door of the pavilion. It was closed, but June knocked loudly. After a moment they heard footsteps, and the door was opened cautiously.

A slender, dark-haired girl stood there, still wearing her fancy costume, with veiled headdress and satin slippers.

"Excuse me," said June, trying to keep her voice steady. "I—we're friends of Miss Leila Charlton, the pianist. We had hoped to see her this evening. Could you tell me if she has returned yet?"

The girl stared at them, then shook her head.

"I'm afraid not. Miss Charlton telephoned after the first show, to say that she's met with a slight accident. She's staying the night with friends."

The girl drew back, closing the door, but not before June had caught a momentary glimpse of her satin slippers.

"Umph!" commented Noel. "What do you make of that, June? If that phone message was genuine, it seems to rule out your theory about the young pianist."

There was an excited expression in June's grey eyes.

"Nunky—did you notice that girl's slippers?" she breathed.

Noel raised his eyebrows with a quizzical smile.

"Afraid I didn't, June. What about them?"

"There was sand on them, nunky," June told him. "Sand—and stains of seaweed. And—the buckle was missing from the left shoe!"

Noel stared at her, a sudden gleam in his eyes.

"Great Scott, June!" he ejaculated. "Are you suggesting——"

"I'm almost certain," whispered June, "that that girl is Leila Charlton herself! She looked terrified, although she tried to smile. There's something she's hiding—something to do with the mummy of Princess Cleophale!"

PERIL ON THE PIER

A SOFT whistle escaped Noel's lips. He regarded his young partner admiringly.

"Your recent shock hasn't blunted your sharp wits, June!" he said. "If you're right, this amazing mystery seems to have taken another unexpected turn. What do you propose to do?"

"Now that I've found Leila Charlton, nunky, I mean to keep my eye on her!" declared June. "I don't believe that the other members of the troupe know she's returned. She came back to the pavilion after they'd locked up for the night—either to find something, or to keep an appointment."

Noel nodded.

"I think you've hit the nail on the head," he agreed. "Well, June, you'd better do as you think best—but keep out of danger! I'm going to follow a little hunch of my own, but I shan't be far away if you need me."

Leaving June to keep watch on the door of the pavilion, the young detective made his way behind the bumper-car arcade, and down a steep flight of iron steps leading below the pier. Half-way down his way was barred by a spiked barrier bearing a notice:

"Danger! Pier Under Repair!"

Throwing his macintosh over the spikes, the young detective cautiously climbed the barrier, and continued his descent down the steps, slippery here with green weed.

There was a rusty platform beneath the pier, badly damaged by a recent storm. The sea was washing over it, with an eerie, gurgling sound, as Noel picked his way among the iron supports, flashing his torch into dark crannies.

From the loud rumblings overhead he correctly surmised that he was directly below the bumper-car arcade.

Far out across the bay he could see the white cliffs; and from where he stood he was almost in a direct line with the cave where he and June had found the mummy-case.

Noel nodded thoughtfully. A motor-boat leaving the cave under cover of dusk could swiftly reach the pier. The strains of music from the pavilion, and the incessant rumble of the bumper-cars would effectually conceal the sound of its approach.

If his theory was correct—

The young detective stiffened. The bright glare of his torch was playing on a tarpaulin, apparently covering a pile of workmen's gear. From under the tarpaulin something was oozing slowly out over the rusty grating.

Noel's eyes glittered as he stepped forward, stooping to touch the stain. Red ink!

With a grim smile, he raised the tarpaulin—and just then a sound from above made him pause and stare upwards.

In the boards of the pier above a trap-door had opened, revealing a yellow light. With a faint clatter, a rope - ladder descended; swinging within a few feet of the covered pile. Instinctively, Noel dropped to his knees, ducking behind the tarpaulin.

A burly man in seafaring attire was descending the ladder. As he reached the platform he waved, and another man appeared—a flashily-dressed individual whom Noel recognised as the manager of the bumper-car arcade.

"We've no time to lose, Hendrick," snapped the manager. "Mr. Schultz's yacht will be anchoring in the bay, and he's expecting us with the mummy. You'd better bring the launch round while I lock up the arcade and pay off the men."

"What about the girl, boss?" growled the burly Hendrick. "She got wind of what we were up to, and threatened to go to the police——"

"Don't worry," retorted the other, with an unpleasant smile. "She won't talk! When she followed us to the cave, I scared her with a tale that her father was involved in the affair, and likely to be arrested. I promised we'd take her to see him if she kept a still tongue."

"Say—are you crazy?"

The other laughed.

"On the contrary—it was Schultz's idea! He kidnapped the old man to get an expert's advice on faking that mummy-case; used his daughter as a threat to force him to speak. Now he wants to shanghai both of them on some deserted island. The girl's coming round to the arcade after we've closed. I'll leave her to you!"

The seaman's burly figure disappeared into the shadows under the pier, while his companion turned to cross to the rope-ladder. Suddenly the young detective sprang from his concealment.

But the other was more alert than he had imagined. With a startled snarl the man turned, pulling a revolver. Noel caught him by the wrist in a swift ju-jitsu hold, and the other was sent sprawling on to the grating.

He clawed the young detective by the ankle as he fell, momentarily pulling Noel off his balance. And just then there came an ominous cracking sound, and the rusty grating gave way beneath them.

There was a dull splash as, locked in a desperate struggle, the young detective and his opponent fell into the dark water under the pier.

. . . . . .

"WHAT—what was that?"

June turned from her patient vigil as she imagined she heard a distant splash—a hollow, muffled shout. But though she strained her ears, she could hear nothing but the rumble of the bumper-cars in the adjoining arcade, and the shouts and laughter of the few belated customers.

It was almost eleven o'clock now, and most of the places of amusement were closed. After a while, the clamour of the cars ceased, and the lights commenced to go out.

But still June continued to watch the stage-door of the pavilion—and at length her patience was rewarded.

The door opened cautiously, and the girl she believed was Leila Charlton emerged. The girl had slipped a light wrap over her costume, but was still wearing the eastern headdress, with a veil partly concealing her face.

She started as she caught sight of June, and made to draw back; but the girl detective caught her by the arm.

"Miss Charlton," she said impulsively, "please let us drop all this pretence! I know you're in trouble—and I want to help you!"

The girl stared at her, her face very pale.

"I—I don't understand," she faltered. "Who—who are you?"

June produced one of her cards, and saw the girl's violent start.

"I want to tell you what I know already about the mummy of the Princess Cleophale," went on June—"how it was stolen from Professor Murray. Believe me, I want to be your friend, and my uncle and I can help you—if you'll let us!"

For a moment, the girl tried desperately to bluff, but something about June's manner—the sympathy in the girl detective's grey eyes—broke down her resistance.

Unsteadily, her voice choked, she blurted out her story. Her father was the assistant curator of one of the local museums. When her troupe had come to Shelwyn Cove, she had looked forward to seeing him—only to learn that he had gone on a holiday some days previously, and had not returned or sent any message.

That night, after the concert, while walking on the pier, thinking of her father, she had accidentally overheard a snatch of conversation. Her father's name had been mentioned—and the fact that he was an authority on ancient Egyptian treasures. She learnt to her horror that there was a dastardly plot in which her father was somehow connected—a plot to rob Professor Murray.

Though she knew that her father could not be guilty, she had been scared to go to the police. Instead, acting on what she had heard, she had gone to the cave to keep watch—and had been surprised by the crooks.

"They—they threatened that daddy would be arrested if I dared to breathe a word," she gulped. "I demanded to see him, and they promised to take me to him this evening if I came to the arcade at eleven o'clock——"

She broke off. Somewhere a distant clock was striking the hour. June gripped her arm, a reckless, excited gleam in her eyes.

"Give me your veil and wrap," she whispered, "and wait here! Uncle's

(Please turn to the back page.)

NOEL RAYMOND'S STRANGE FIND

(Continued from page 48.)

on the pier, and I'll call for help if there's danger. I want to find out just what game they're playing!"

A few minutes later, wearing the slender disguise, June stole into the now deserted arcade. Her heart was beating quickly, but with excitement rather than fear. If there was any peril, she felt confident that a call would bring Noel to her aid.

She caught in her breath sharply as a figure loomed in the shadows—a burly figure in seafaring attire.

"Miss Charlton?" he asked gruffly.

"Your dad's waiting for you. He's with the manager in there."

He jerked his thumb towards an open door, but June held back.

"If my father's in there, why doesn't he come out to see me?" she demanded.

"Guess he gave me a message for you," said the man, taking a step forward. "It was this!"

An involuntary scream was torn from June's lips as he seized her by the shoulder in a cruel grip.

"Nunky! Help!"

Even as her clear treble voice rang out, a hand was clapped over her mouth, and she was lifted in the sailor's powerful arms.

She heard another distant voice and the clatter of a trapdoor. Then she was being carried down a swaying ladder and to her ears came the gurgle of the sea below.

A man was waiting on the slippery iron platform below—a man with a lantern. His clothes were dripping wet, and there was a scowl on his sallow face.

"Toss her up and dump her in the launch, Hendrick!" he snapped. "We've got to get her away before there's a hue-and-cry. That detective may not have been alone. I guess I stunned him when we were struggling in the water. I saw him go down, and there was no sign of him when I climbed back on to the pier."

June's blood ran cold. They were talking about Uncle Noel!

She struggled frantically, a dreadful fear tugging at her heart; but her legs and feet were tied, a scarf was bound round her mouth, and she was lowered into the waiting launch.

"Now, the mummy," Hendrick snarled the manager. "Hurry!"

June, stark helpless, saw the two men drag the gilded mummy-case from under the tarpaulin and carry it down to the launch. She felt the boat rock when they placed it in the bows.

"I suppose it's all right, boss," said Hendrick gruffly, as he glanced uneasily at the human-like carved face. "I ain't superstitious, but I don't like the idea of putting out to sea with that thing! Might prove to be bad luck!"

His voice trailed away in a strangled gasp, for the lid of the mummy-case was slowly opening!

Even as the two scoundrels recoiled a tall figure rose before them—a figure with water dripping from his shaft and clothes—a dangerous glitter in his blue eyes.

The figure was Noel Raymond!

The young detective leaped at the burly seafarer, and with a swing from his bunched fist sent that scoundrel toppling overboard.

June saw the white-faced manager snatch up the boat-hook, making a vicious lunge at the young detective. At the same instant she managed by a desperate twist of her head to free herself from the muffling scarf.

"Nunky, look out!" she screamed.

Noel ducked and spun round—in the nick of time. The boat-hook shimmered past his head, and he caught the manager round the waist, flinging him after his companion. The two beaten scoundrels swam desperately for the steps of the pier.

Swiftly Noel freed June.

"I thought I told you to keep out of danger, my dear," he said, with a twisted smile. "But you'll always have your own way!"

June's lips trembled.

"The—the mummy of Princess Cleophale?" she whispered.

"Is safe under that tarpaulin!" said Noel. "I realised I was up against a tough crowd, so I took my revolver in the sealed case. Hearing your cry for help, and seeing you being carried down the rope ladder, I realised that my best chance was to rely on surprise tactics—and I took a leaf out of your book!"

Smiling unsteadily, June squeezed his arm. Breathlessly she told him what she had learnt from Leila Charlton. Noel nodded.

"That links up with what I overheard. Those two scoundrels were in the pay of an unscrupulous foreign collector, who realised the value of the mummy, and evolved a cunning plot to steal it. Leila's father is a prisoner on board his yacht in the bay. We'll contact the police and stage a surprise raid. And, I suggest you hurry back to Leila and set her mind at rest!"

"And you, nunky?" asked June.

"I'm taking part in the raid!" joined Noel. "Oh, no"—he grinned faintly as June looked at him appealingly—"you're not coming on that trip, my dear! You've had more than enough thrills to last you for one night—apart from solving a baffling mystery!"

THE END.

"THEIR MEXICAN HOLIDAY OF SURPRISES"—that is the title of next week's thrilling long, complete story. Tell your friends about the GIRLS' CRYSTAL, the paper every schoolgirl should read.

HELEN AND HER COMICAL PETS

(Continued from page 56.)

"You've come about that chimp! Nearly caused a riot, she did. Got savage—"

"Never!" protested Helen. "Mollie has her faults, but she'd never turn savage."

"Well, you see the guv'nor about it."

And the man went off before Helen could say anything further. Very distressed, she went into the Big Top, awaiting Mr. Antonio.

The circus performance was in progress, and a vast, hushed audience was watching the widely advertised performance of Maud, the "Thinking" Chimp.

"Thoughts—nothing to-day. I should say," commented one of the circus employees, looking up at the trapeze.

Up there was the chimp, and Helen looked up with interest.

"What's the trick?" she asked.

"It isn't a regular trick—she's just showing-off and won't come down!"

"Here she comes!" called someone.

Swinging from a trapeze, the daring chimp came down and down and finally landed in the ring where Mr. Antonio, in red coat, white breeches, and top hat, stood with an expression of forced amiability.

"Come on, stupid!" he muttered.

He rolled his top hat down his arm. Maud's trick was to catch it, roll it up her arm and so on to her own head.

But to-day nothing went right. As the top hat landed, the intelligent performer took a kick at it, caught it, slammed a hand through the top, and then to the delight of the audience, wore it upside down.

Helen herself could not help laughing.

She let out a merry peal, and as the sound reached the ring a startling thing happened. The Chimpanzee Brains Trust whirled round with an excited chatter. Leaping up and over the ringmaster's back, the chimp swung from one wire to another and landed at Helen's feet, clasping her with affection and making noises of pleasure.

Helen gave an amazed gasp, then gathered the chimp in her arms.

"Mollie! Oh, you pet!—no wonder you didn't know the tricks!"

Mr. Antonio came running up, a stupefied expression on his face.

"Mollie?" he spluttered. "But surely—"

And then he knew that this chimp was not Maud. He had not studied the creature; it had entered the circus ring at the right time, and he had pattered to the audience in his usual way.

"But where's Maud?" he demanded. "You don't mean—we can't—it wasn't Maud we sent back to you?"

Helen's eyes were sparkling as she hugged Mollie.

"Looks as if it must have been," she said. "For this is certainly my Mollie."

Another turn was already out in the ring as Antonio and Helen and Mollie went to the menagerie.

The new keeper was turning out the magnificent cage, and Mollie, chattering excitedly, went into it, looking at Helen with something like a wink as she sprang on to the hammock.

"Well, I'll be—be bothered!" said Mr. Antonio. "It wasn't Mollie who was flung out on her neck, but Maud, and Mollie has been living here in the lap of luxury, a star performer with silly kids asking her for her autograph."

"Oh dear!" spluttered Helen, realising now what had happened. "Poor Maud! No wonder she was cross, being expelled from her own cage and there from the circus."

A warning shout came suddenly from a circus hand.

"Look out!" "Here's Maud—she's come back!"

"Mollie, this is where we do the vanishing trick!" shouted Helen.

She ran off and Mollie readily followed her. Hardly a second later Maud, red-eyed, covered with bits of hedge, tree, mud, and dust, rushed into the open door of her cage and leapt into the hammock.

Then, when the door had been slammed, she turned to glare through the bars at the retreating Mollie.

"Come, Mollie," said Helen. "I don't think you ought to listen. Poor Maud—she's saying the most nasty things about you!"

IT was a grand reunion that evening. The sight of Mollie walking in, as good as gold, made granddad rub his eyes.

Jinx and Popsy, who were with him in the office, gave glad, joyous cries, and the reunion was deeply affecting.

Yet glad though Mollie was to be home again, there were times when she thought wistfully of her luxury flat.

(End of this week's story.)

Another laughable story of Helen and her comical pets next week.

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