

MAGNIFICENT
36-PAGE

FILM STAR ALBUM OFFERED FREE

Full Details How To
Obtain It Within

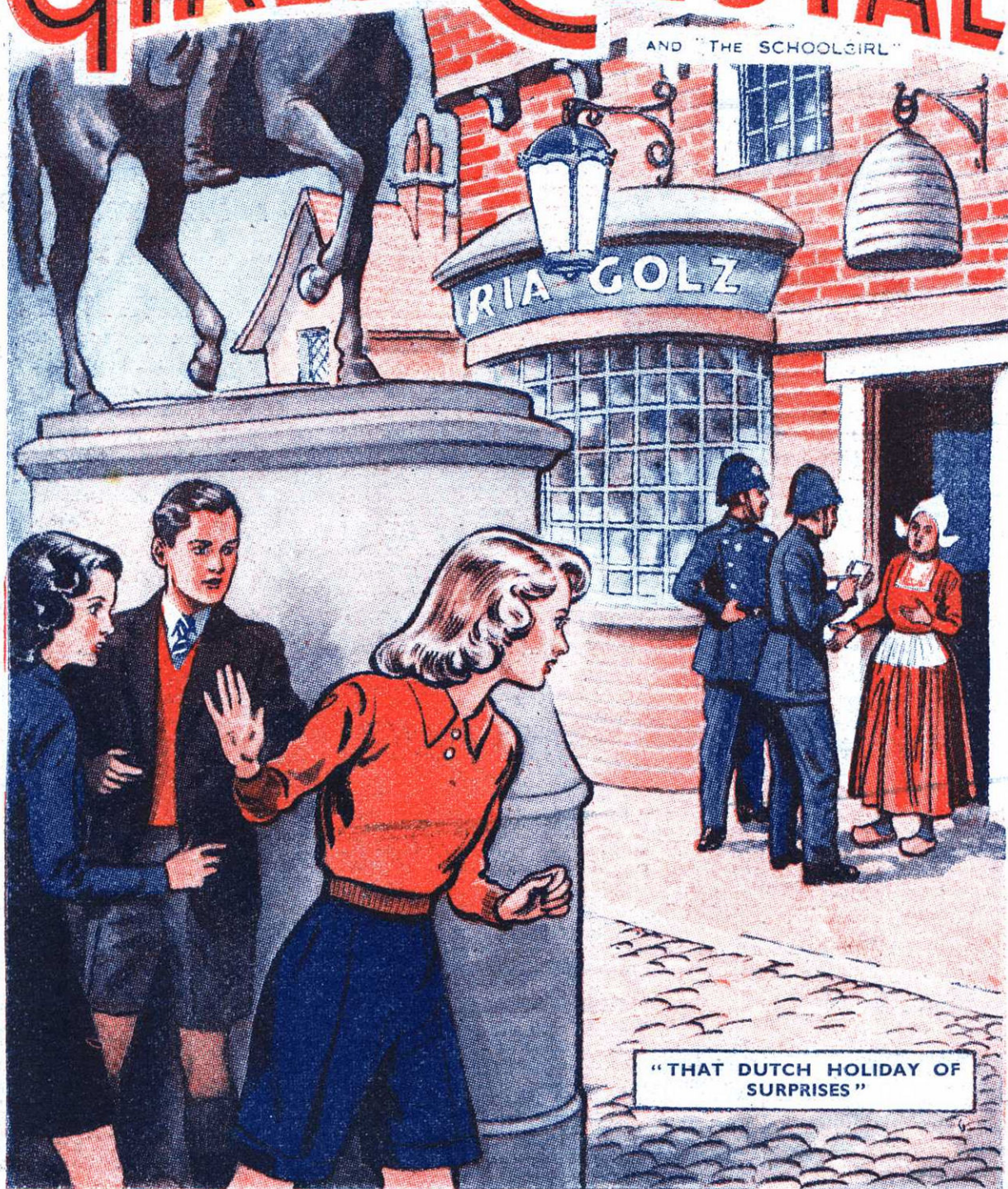
No. 753. Vol. 29.

EVERY FRIDAY.

Week Ending March 25th, 1950.

GIRLS' CRYSTAL ^{3^D}

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"



"THAT DUTCH HOLIDAY OF
SURPRISES"

THAT DUTCH HOLIDAY OF SURPRISES



By ELISE PROBYN

THE ESCAPE FROM THE MUSEUM

SHIRLEY BLYTHE and her chums, Tess and Dick Foley, were staying in Bootendorp, in Holland, as the guests of their Dutch chum, Jan.

They were helping Zella van Deen, ward of a wealthy bulb-grower, Mr. van Hagel, to solve the secret of a brass tulip bowl shaped like a clog. Zella was afraid of her guardian, who was also after the secret.

The chums were told by Mr. van Hagel that he had sent Zella to Germany to stay there.

Learning that a second bowl was hidden in the museum in Schipol, Shirley & Co. went there. The museum was closed, and they climbed in through a window. They secured the bowl, and crept back to the window. To their horror, however, on peeping out, they saw van Hagel pacing up and down the opposite pavement. Their way of escape was cut off!

"WE'VE got to get out somehow!"

Tess's voice was anxious. "If that museum doorkeeper comes down and catches us here in the boiler-room—"

"He isn't far away!" gasped Dick. "Shirley, are you sure that's van Hagel snooping around outside?"

"I tell you I saw him. But I don't think he saw me," whispered Shirley, and risked another peep through the window.

That tall, dark-clad figure was unmistakably Mr. van Hagel, Zella's guardian. He was pacing restlessly up and down on the opposite pavement. What could he be doing, snooping in this desolate side-street by the museum, unless he suspected something? Shirley asked herself.

He knew they had come here to Schipol in quest of the tulip bowl. Had he spied on their movements? Did he know or suspect that they had stolen into the museum, even though it was closed to the public, in order to pursue their search?

"But it wouldn't matter even if he did suspect—if we could get out of this place," Shirley mused. "We've got the tulip bowl and the secret, too, and as long as he doesn't get them we're all right. But if van Hagel gives the alarm, and brings that doorkeeper down on us while we're still trapped here—"

"Then we'll be searched, and we'll have to give up the tulip bowl!" groaned Tess.

"Gosh! Isn't there something we can do?" asked Dick.

The chums looked at each other. Shirley drew a deep breath.

"Let's make a dash for it! Come on! Surprise and speed—that's our only way out!"

She peeped through the window again; waited a split second until van Hagel's back was turned. Then she flung the window open wide and plunged out. Tess leapt out after her—then Dick.

Thud, thud, thud! Their feet landed on the pavement with three swift thumps, like drum-beats.

"A-ah!" Van Hagel whirled round

on the opposite pavement with a gasp.

He only had time to gasp. He saw three nimble figures, in cycling shorts and sweaters, streak across his vision. He knew he saw them. But they were gone before his senses could believe it.

"Gee! Did you see his face?"

"Was he surprised?"

"Knocked him for six!"

Gasping with laughter, the chums sprinted like hares through the cobbled streets. Bewildered Dutch folk gaped from their windows and doorways.

The chums seized their bikes from the cycle park, and a few moments later they were bowling merrily out of Schipol on the free, open highway.

It was an exuberant ride back to Breukelen. The day had ended in triumph for the chums. The tulip bowl was in their hands at last, its precious secret safe in their keeping. All van Hagel's treachery and scheming had failed to cheat Zella. Even his banishing her away to Germany had availed him nothing. They had secured that vital secret for her, in her absence, just as they had pledged they would!

"We'll celebrate this tomorrow—with Jan—when we get him to decipher that message in the tulip bowl!" Shirley said radiantly, as they pedalled home in the fast-falling dusk.

"Rather! It'll be a real celebration, too—Jan starts his holidays to-morrow!" Dick reminded her excitedly.

"I wonder if he's managed to hire that barge he was after?" breathed Tess. "It would be gorgeous if we could all do a cruise together, and I believe we shall. Judging by to-day, our lucky star's in the ascendant!"

They had all the better appetites for dinner, having missed lunch, and afterwards they stayed up in their rooms at the Beehive Café for the rest of the evening, writing letters home.

Next morning, they were out of their beds as soon as the milkman wakened them, as he always did, trundling his little dog-drawn cart along the cobbles. They bathed and

HOLIDAY-MAKERS NO LONGER

This Week
Shirley & Co.
Are Forced To
Become Fugitives

dressed with rapid gusto, eager to be off to Bootendorp to meet Jan.

A succulent odour wafted from the kitchen as they went downstairs. Shirley beamed and put her head in at the door.

"Can I smell omelettes, Mrs. Golz?"

"My favourite brekker!" sighed Tess rapturously.

Dick was gazing searchingly around the room.

"May I borrow the newspaper while I'm here, Mrs. Golz?" he asked, for he was always eager to struggle through the paper each morning in order to improve his Dutch.

Mrs. Golz turned brightly from the sizzling frying-pan and glanced at the table.

"The newspaper, mine dear?" she said. "Ah, it is not here! I think Willem has taken it. He is reading about the robbery!"

"Robbery?" whistled Dick. "Where was that?"

"In Schipol. It was a most audacious robbery," said Mrs. Golz, waxing excited. "The thieves, they broke into the Schipol Museum!"

All three chums gave an involuntary jump.

"Broke into the museum?" echoed Shirley. "Wh-when?"

"Last night!" said Mrs. Golz, enjoying the sensation her news had created. "It seems dot de museum has been closed for some days to prepare for an exhibition of precious stones not have been loaned by the diamond merchants of Amsterdam. The stones was there when the brigands broke in last night, and the paper says they've got away with a big haul of diamonds. How dey ever got in, I say, dot is astounding!"

"Astounding, rather!" mumbled the chums, wondering if the thieves had entered the museum by the same means as themselves.

"The police will soon catch them—oh, ja, ja!" declared Mrs. Golz confidently. "The newspaper says they already has a clue. Dutch police is very good. They always catch—Hok!"

She whirled back to the frying-pan in the nick of time. "Your omelettes was nearly burning while I talk. You take them with you to your table, mine dears?"

The chums took their trays, and escaped to their table in the café before they vented their suppressed excitement.

"Golly!" gasped Shirley. "Thank goodness we broke into the museum yesterday afternoon and not last night!"

"It lets us out. We can't be suspected of taking the jewels, anyway!" grinned Dick with a sigh of relief.

They changed the subject swiftly then when some customers came into the café—but they were not allowed to forget it. Each of those customers seemed to bring newspapers, and the bold black headlines blazoned from every table: "SCHIPOL SENSATION! DARING JEWEL ROBBERY. DESPERADOES—(that was the Dutch word)—DESPERADOES BREAK INTO MUSEUM!"

It was the same when the chums cycled off to Bootendorp. At every turn of the road they were confronted by posters on the newspaper kiosks, stabbing it home at them almost pointedly: "DESPERADOES BREAK INTO MUSEUM!"

They were rounding the bend of the towpath, near Jan's farmhouse, when quite a different spectacle caught their excitement. A plump, baggy-trousered figure was struggling up the gang-plank of a barge, carrying a heavy sack on his shoulders.

"Jan!" whooped the chums. They caught up with him just as he deposited his sack aboard the barge. They left their bikes on the canal bank and rushed up on deck to join him.

"Wait till I gets my breath back," puffed Jan, "then I will tell you!"

"We've got something to tell you first, Jan!" cried Dick excitedly. "We've found the tulip bowl!"

"Found it?" Jan's eyes shone. "And the secret!" burst in Shirley. "There's a paper inside it, Jan, and we want you to translate it for us!"

Dick had already whipped the tulip bowl out of his pocket. A quaint brass object, shaped like a clog, it glistened in his hand as he clicked open the spring in the heel. He drew out the tightly-folded paper secreted there and handed it eagerly to Jan.

"It must be a message to Zella—some instructions of some kind—from her brother," Dick explained. "Zella's not here; van Hagel's hidden her away somewhere in Germany and she can't do anything about it. But we can! Read it to us, Jan—tell us what it means!"

All the chums held their breath as Jan gazed, absorbed, at the thick Dutch writing and its curious figures and symbols. What were they now to hear? What was this strange secret on which Zella's happiness was said to depend? What had van Hagel to lose by it? What had he to fear that he should have gone to such desperate lengths to cheat her of its discovery?

And then at last Jan looked up, and they saw him shake his head. "I—I do not know what it means; I do not understand one word of it, mine friends—no better than you do!" he confessed bewilderedly. "It is, perhaps, vot you call a code. Only Zella could understand it."

It was a crushing shock to the chums.

"Then we're stumped!" Shirley said, aghast. "We don't know where to find Zella! And we can't do anything more to help her!"

VAN HAGEL'S REVENGE

JAN'S blue eyes were glowing. "You haf not yet heard my news!" he said. "Pairhaps we shall find Zella!"

"Jan! How?"

"I haf a clue to where Zella is gone! I got it from my friend, the postman, who owns dis barge!"

"Good old Jan!" Dick thumped him heartily on the back. They had forgotten that Jan had a valuable ally and helper in the village postman.

"Jan! Has he been able to trace Zella's address for you in Germany?" Shirley cried.

"Not ze exact address—ah, no! But he has found out ze district where she is from a letter van Hagel wrote." Jan said solemnly. "Van Hagel lied! Zella has not been sent

to Germany. She is still in Holland; she is near Winsum."

"Winsum? How far's that, Jan?" asked Tess.

"Far up north. Much too far for us to go," Jan told her. "But mine postman is very good friend. Soon he will trace Zella's exact address for us. He will put us in correspondence with her—and he will guarantee that our messages are safely delivered to Zella alone!"

"Jan! If only we can depend on that—!" Shirley began hopefully.

"He guarantees it! He will do anything for me! And thy not?" Jan faced the trio in triumph. "I am his customer. I haf hired dis barge, mine shipmates!"

The chums stared.

"Hired it, Jan?"

"Not for a whole week?"

"Just for a day, you mean? How much is it, Jan? If we can scrape up enough guilders to pay our whack—"

"Dis barge is ours for a whole week, and she is goin' to pay for herself," Jan said with rapt enjoyment. "You do not pay nixies!"

"Wh-what?" All three waited with bated breath.

Jan pointed triumphantly to a whole lorry-load of bulging sacks that were dumped on the canal bank.

now!" exulted Tess. "Jan's pulled off a corking success in getting this barge!"

The name of the barge, aptly enough, was the Viktor. The chums spent a busy morning loading its hold with the sacks of grain, and by the time the task was finished, they were ready for lunch at the café recommended by Jan.

It was a cosy wayside café, catering specially for youth cycling parties, and the buxom proprietress knew Jan well. She gave the chums a table in her own private parlour, where there was a glowing Dutch stove, a wireless, a gramophone, and everything they could want in the way of home comfort.

Jan switched on the wireless. "Music while we eat," grinned Shirley, as the strains of a dance band filled the room.

But the music did not last long. Presently it stopped, and there were three little pips. Then a Dutch announcer began to read the news. Shirley did not understand any of it until she heard the unmistakable words: "Schipol Museum."

"Is it about the robbery, Jan? What is he saying?" she asked.

She saw a queer variety of expressions chasing across Jan's plump face



Grinningly Jan surveyed the astonished chums. "I am sailing to-night," he told them, "and you are coming with me—as my Dutch crew!"

"Dot is our cargo!" he said. "Dot is grain from poppa's farm. Tomorrow we take it for him to Rotterdam—and we take it very cheap, because it is for poppa. But we bring back from Rotterdam a cargo of timber—and the timber merchant will pay us goot money! It is all fixed. We shall earn enough to pay for dis barge and go cruising the rest of the week!"

"Jan—oh, you giddy wizard!" Shirley's eyes sparkled.

It had been the dream of their lives to spend a few days cruising the canals by barge, but they had not enough Dutch money to be able to afford it. Now Jan had found a way of doing it free of expense!

"Jan, you've given us a bigger thrill than we got yesterday, when we broke into the Schipol Museum," Tess told him.

"Ven you did—vot?" gasped Jan, astonished. He had read about the sensational robbery at the museum, but it was the first he had heard of the chums' exploit there earlier in the day.

His plump figure shook with laughter when they told him how they had broken in—and how they had broken out under the very eyes of the snooping van Hagel.

"We're going to have a special lunch to-day, Jan, to celebrate our success!" grinned Dick.

"It'll be a double celebration

while he listened. Finally he switched off the set.

"The police believes," he told them in a worried tone, "that the robbery vos done by very young people."

"Well, of course it was," said Dick. "They'd have to be pretty young if they squeezed through the same window that we did!"

"They has evidence," went on Jan, "that one of them at least vos a girl!"

"I bet they're wrong!" scoffed Shirley. "Girls don't go in for diamond robberies, except in films."

"The police know it vos a girl, because they found a girl's scarf by the cases where the diamonds had been stolen," said Jan.

Dick started slightly.

"I say, you girls didn't drop a scarf there, did you?" he asked quickly.

Tess gave him a pitying look. "My dear brother, didn't you notice that Shirley and I weren't wearing scarves?"

"And I haven't got one now," said Shirley. "I lent mine to Zella that night we were coming back on the barge from Amsterdam after the dance. It was blowy on deck, and she was feeling the cold more than I did. I haven't seen her since, so she hasn't had the chance to give it back to me—!" And then Shirley paused, struck by a startling thought.

The same thought flashed upon her chums.

"Shirley!" Tess exclaimed. "If Zella left your scarf at home—at van Hagel's—he would have known it was yours, wouldn't he?"

"He couldn't have taken it! He couldn't have planted it in the museum—to frame you!" Dick jerked out, agast.

"He could—if he were wicked enough. But—Shirley gasped and shook the thought away. "Gee, don't let's get any crazy idea like that into our heads! There are millions of scarves in the world. We only know that one of the thieves dropped a scarf, and we don't know what it was like, or what colour it was."

Jan interrupted her, his face white. "But if it was your scarf, Shirley, it could be identified as yours! Van Hagel would know that. He would know it could be dangerous and terrible evidence against you! Supposing he wanted to frame you—"

"Yes. But—but there was a robbery. How could he know there was going to be a robbery in the museum?" Shirley gasped.

"He could have framed that, too. He is quite wicked enough to do it," Jan said tensely, "if you don't secret you haf found is dangerous to him! I begin to feel worried for you, mine vriends. Van Hagel knows you were in the museum; he knows you must haf found now the tulip bowl—and he would do any desperate thing to stop you giving the tulip bowl and its secret to Zella."

There was an uneasy silence. Then Dick gave a hasty laugh.

"Here, shake out of it, or we'll begin to imagine there's something in what Jan says!"

"It's my fault for suggesting that van Hagel might have got hold of Shirley's scarf!" Tess said hurriedly.

"Forget it!" said Shirley, trying gaily to change the subject. "What do we do this afternoon, Jan? We'll be taking the barge down to Rotterdam and back to-morrow with the cargo, won't we? Oughtn't we to load up with provisions to-day, all ready for the cruise afterwards?"

They spent the whole afternoon buying foodstuff and storing it aboard the barge. Jan alone still seemed quiet and worried. The chums were outwardly in the highest spirits. Not one of them would admit, even to themselves, a vague but persistent sense of apprehension.

Dusk was falling when at last they cycled back to Breukelen. Jan came with them. He wanted to do a little more shopping there—and, in particular, to buy some more of Mrs. Goiz' delicious honeycakes.

"We could bring them with us to-morrow, Jan," Shirley said. "You will haf all your luggage to bring to-morrow. You will not haf room for enough honeycakes—because I want to store some on the barge."

Shirley laughed, and the chums dismounted and wheeled their bikes round the back of the row of shops and houses where the café was situated. Then, leaving them in the little backyard of the café, they strolled back into the square. They had hardly gone a few steps when Shirley gave a sudden gasp.

"Wait a moment!" she whispered. "Look—those policemen outside the café!"

The others stopped, following her gaze. They saw two stalwart men in uniform, one of whom held a notebook in his hand, looking up at the name outside the Beehive Café.

He nodded, and the other man banged on the door. As he did so, Shirley felt a little chill of apprehension sweep over her.

"Let's get closer!" she murmured. "Quick—behind that statue in the middle of the road!"

Silently, swiftly, all four chums rushed towards the great statue in the centre of the square. In the shelter of its great stone plinth they were able to hear clearly as Mrs. Goiz opened the café door.

"Frau Goiz," said the officer with the notebook, "you have three young English guests staying here?"

Shirley's heart jumped. She heard her chums gasp.

"Ja! They stay with me!" she heard Frau Goiz reply, bewildered. "But what is it you want?"

"Where are they?" interrupted the officer.

"They have not come in yet," Mrs. Goiz replied.

Then the chums' hearts froze as the police officer rapped:

"We will come in and wait for them. It is in connection with the diamond robbery at Schiphol Museum!"

THE CHUMS IN HIDING

THE chums stood quite still as the two officers disappeared into the café. Then, as if all their thoughts were in accord, they peited across the square, and round to the backyard of the café where they had left their bikes.

"It is vot I feared!" Jan panted. "Van Hagel has framed you! He has evidence, proofs—and he has told the police!"

"But—" began Shirley.

"You must get away—quick!" Jan interrupted her. "You must hide! It is your only chance!" he went on swiftly. "I will hide you!"

"Where?" Shirley asked hopelessly.

"There's nowhere—"

"Yes, there is! Quickly—get your bikes! We will ride to Bootendorp—to the barge. There you can lie low—and leave everything else to me!"

The chums soundlessly grabbed their bikes and wheeled them from the backyard; then, once clear of the café, they mounted and rode swiftly away.

It was a nightmare ride to Bootendorp, but at last the barge Viktor hove into sight, and the chums thankfully went aboard and down into the little low-roofed cabin below deck.

Jan's face was strained in the light of the storm lantern which Dick lit, but there was a gleam of excitement in his eyes.

"I will leave you to make some coffee. I shall not be long."

And before they could question him he had hurried out of the cabin; "Jan's got some bee in his bonnet," Shirley murmured. "I wonder what he's up to now?" She sighed. "Oh, well, we might as well make some coffee. Goodness knows, I feel in need of it after all this panic!"

The chums heartily echoed that

WIN A PRIZE

WHICH of the serials published this year have you liked best?

Your Editor would like to know, and to encourage you to help him is offering a Top Prize of £1 and Five Consolation Prizes of 5s. each.

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO is to study the list of serials below, then write on a post-card the title of the story you liked BEST. Underneath, write a few lines explaining WHY you liked that serial more than the others. For example—do you prefer your favourite because of its plot? Or is it the characters which appeal to you most? And so on.

Add your name and address and age and post to:

GIRLS' CRYSTAL VOTES,
5, Carmelite Street,
London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

Entries should be written in ink and they must be received by Friday, March 31st, 1950.

The £1 Prize will go to the reader who, in the Editor's opinion, gives the best reason for her choice. Other prizes in order of merit. The Editor's decision is final.

MAKE YOUR SELECTION FROM THIS LIST:

Rosalie, Robbie and The Robot.
Colin Forrest—That Amazing New Master.

The Impostor at the Winter Sports.
That Dutch Holiday of Surprises.
Detective June's Strangest Case.
The Worst Boy at the Co-ed. School.

sentiment. The stove was set going and then they laid the little table.

It was just as Shirley was making the coffee that Jan returned. He was carrying an enormous bundle over his shoulder, and his eyes were gleaming, his face bright with excitement and purpose.

"Mine vriends, we are sailing to-night!" he announced. "Now!"

"Sailing?" The chums could only gape at him.

"Yes. The barge is not going to Rotterdam now," Jan said distinctly. "It is going to Winsum—on important business—to find Zella!"

Shirley & Co. gasped.

"Jan, don't be an old crackpot!" Dick exclaimed. "Don't forget we three are wanted by the police! You can't go careering along the canals hiding us—"

Jan suddenly grinned.

"But you will not be recognised! And you will not be English any more. You will be t'ree Dutch barges working as my crew!" he told them, and opened the bulging sack he was carrying.

Out of it he drew three barge jerseys, each blazoned across the chest with the name Viktor. Before the chums could get their breath back he produced a pair of bell-bottomed slacks, then a collection of sea boots and stockings and then—two weather-beaten serge skirts, such as were worn by every girl bargee in Holland.

"All dose is regulation—vot you might call de uniform of our Dutch barges," Jan told them. "Now, I tell you. Everything is paid for—never mind how. I haf chartered dis barge—and you are my crew. You are under my orders. Now—you change into these clothes, and we sail right away!"

The chums' hearts lifted. It was a daring risk they and Jan were taking. But what a thrilling idea! Disguised as barges they had a chance of escaping detection.

Without further ado Shirley and Tess dashed into the smaller cabin, aft, to change, while Jan filled the petrol tank, and lit the green and yellow navigation lamps on the prow.

When they came on deck again Jan gave a delighted chuckle.

"I do not know you!" he gasped. "You surely cannot be my English vriends—so different you look!"

For indeed the chums were changed. They looked as Dutch as Jan did himself.

"It is goot!" breathed Jan. "Once we are clear of dis neighbourhood ve haf a chance. So—ve sail now!" And he strode back to the wheel.

"Give us the word when you want to cast off, Jan," Shirley called, standing by the hawser.

There was a moment's breathless pause, then a call from Jan.

The engine sounded ominously loud in the night as he started her up. Shirley threw off the rope. Tess and Dick shoved with the pole against the canal bank.

Quivering, the barge pulled out. The water churned at her timbers. She was under way, heading forward into the darkness.

Out of that darkness a blue light suddenly gleamed. There was the purring hum of a motor-launch. Swiftly, incredibly swiftly, the blue light grew larger.

"What boat's that, Jan?" Shirley asked quickly.

"Canal police. Ve shall see plenty of dose," said Jan, and kept his gaze fixed steadily ahead.

Next second Shirley saw that blue light bearing down upon them. The launch pulled straight across their bows. A glaring searchlight flashed from its deck, almost blinding her.

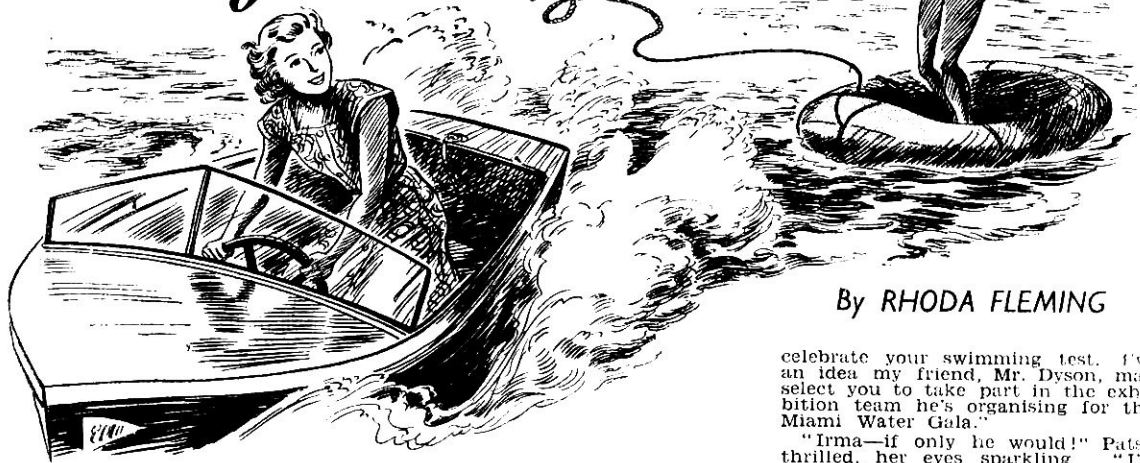
"Hold your helm, lad!" called a commanding voice.

The chums' hearts froze. Were they to be discovered before they started? With a jolt the police launch grazed alongside.

"Hold your helm!" called that voice again. "We're coming aboard!"

There will be a further instalment of this grand serial in next Friday's GIRLS' CRYSTAL.

She Wouldn't Be Bossed By Brian



By RHODA FLEMING

PATSY'S BIG CHANCE

"HERE it comes!" gasped Patsy Wray. "And—here I go!"

A curling breaker swept up on to the palm-girt beach of sunny Florida, carrying with it a slender figure clinging tightly to a surf-board.

Amid a cloud of spray it receded, leaving Patsy like a stranded mermaid on the shingle.

There came a cheer from the crowd of boys and girls enjoying themselves in the sea some distance away.

"Too bad, Paddy!" commented a pleasant voice, as a tall young fellow emerged from the waves close beside her, and splashed through the surf. "You'll soon be as good a surf-rider as you are a swimmer—if you remember to keep your head."

"On!" Patsy looked up, to meet the quizzical gleam in the other's eyes—grey eyes set in a lean, sun-tanned face. "So you're here again, Brian Travers!"

"Always bobbing up at awkward moments, eh?" The boy grinned, running his fingers through his damp curly hair. "I swam over to have a word with you."

"Really?" Patsy sat up, hugging her knees and basking in the glorious sunshine. "And what is it this time—Big Boss?"

Ever since she had come to Florida to stay with her old school-cum, Beryl Royston, at the latter's charming house near Coral Bay, this boy—a neighbour—had taken it on himself to boss her around.

It appeared that Brian had once been friendly with Patsy's brother, who had spent a year at Harvard; and he seemed to look on this distant connection as giving him a right to take her under his wing.

The youth chuckled, not a whit abashed by her challenging glance. "Got anything special on this afternoon?" he asked.

"Yes, Irma's calling for me. We're driving out to her place in the Everglades."

A slight shadow crossed the boy's good-looking face—a cloud that passed quickly, leaving his usual confident smile.

"That's too bad! You'll have to cancel the trip."

"And who says so?" demanded Patsy, her blue eyes gleaming.

"I do," Brian replied coolly. "You see, I've fixed up a bit of real sport for you. You're coming boating with me."

Patsy breathed deeply. "Sorry, Brian," she said, "but I've practically promised Irma. She's going to introduce me to an influential sports-promoter who might be interested in my swimming."

Brian raised sceptical eyebrows. "Irma," he declared, "is all talk. She's not your sort—or mine. I've warned you to have nothing to do with her."

"You've no right to pick and choose my friends," flashed Patsy. "Irma's a jolly nice girl." "Tastes differ," declared Brian, shrugging. "However, don't forget—I'll meet you at three o'clock, promptly."

"You'll be unlucky!" rejoined Patsy, tossing her head.

Brian merely grinned—a tantalising grin—as he picked up his towel and strolled away across the beach, with a cheery wave of his hand.

Patsy sprang to her feet, throwing a piece of seaweed after the boy as she heard his confident whistle.

"Brian Travers," she announced, "needs taking down a peg or two!" Yet she couldn't help liking him, despite her annoyance at his high-handed ways. He could be a really charming boy—if he wasn't so bossy.

Patsy was quite determined that she wouldn't meet Brian that afternoon; and her determination was increased when, arriving back with her chums at the delightful house overlooking the bay, she was called to the telephone.

"Is that you, Patsy?" It was Irma Morgan's gay, friendly voice, with its faint American twang. "You haven't forgotten our appointment this afternoon? I'll pick you up on my way back from Miami—with the friend I mentioned. We'll wait for you at the Coconut Grove, at half-past two. Is that O.K.?"

"I'd love to come, Irma," Patsy said gratefully, with a half-defiant smile as she thought of Brian. "Beryl and the others are playing tennis this afternoon."

"Tell them to drive over to tea after the game," said Irma airily. "Guess we'll have a little party to

celebrate your swimming test. I've an idea my friend, Mr. Dyson, may select you to take part in the exhibition team he's organising for the Miami Water Gala."

"Irma—if only he would!" Patsy thrilled, her eyes sparkling. "I'll never know how to thank you enough—"

"Forget it, honey—it's a pleasure," came Irma's silvery laugh. "Two-thirty at Coconut Grove, then—and don't be late!"

Irma rang off, and Patsy stood there for a moment in a happy day-dream. She was to be given the chance she had always longed for—a chance to make good in the world of swimming!

Her father had been a champion swimmer before his death, and Patsy had always longed to follow in his footsteps—with the idea of eventually taking up the sport she loved as a professional teacher.

In Irma Morgan, also a keen swimmer—as well as being the daughter of one of Coral Bay's wealthiest residents—she had found a sympathetic confidante for her cherished plans.

With her wide circle of friends, Irma had promised to introduce Patsy to someone who would help her with her great ambition—and she had kept her promise!

Patsy had almost forgotten the masterful Brian when she set out that afternoon to keep her appointment. It was only a short walk to Coconut Grove, along the sunlit causeway that bordered the lagoon—and Patsy had given herself plenty of time.

Suddenly, from the ornamental bushes fringing the lagoon, a bantering voice hailed her.

"Hallo, Patsy! I thought you'd turn up!"

Patsy whirled, her face flushing, to encounter Brian Travers' quizzical smile.

"I told you I couldn't meet you, Brian," she said, "and I meant it. I'm on my way to join Irma."

"Too bad. Just come and have a look at what you're missing."

He took her coolly by the arm, and reluctantly she followed him to a flight of ornamental steps, glancing down at the lagoon. Then she caught in her breath.

Moored to the steps was a gleaming new speedboat, with a rubber dinghy trailing at its stern. Next to swimming, Paddy loved the thrill of speedboats; but now she turned

Patsy Liked Brian, But—Oh, if Only He Wouldn't
Keep Trying To Order Her About!

her glance firmly away from the enticing sight.

"Well, have a good time, Brian," she said lightly. "I musn't keep Irma waiting—"

"Afraid she'll have to wait," Brian put in pleasantly, retaining his hold on her arm.

"What—what do you mean?" demanded Patsy, stiffening.

Brian chuckled, glancing swiftly along the deserted, tree-lined causeway. Then, before the astounded Patsy could find her voice to cry out, she found herself lifted in his powerful arms and carried, struggling, down the steps.

"Brian, let me go!" Patsy gasped, almost choked with surprise and indignation.

"In a minute," murmured Brian, as he lowered her gently into the speedboat and, still holding her firmly by one arm, reached out to grasp a lever.

Even as Patsy managed to break away from his grasp, the speedboat shot away from the steps and skimmed across the lagoon.

Patsy, eyes blazing, struggled to her feet.

"Brian Travers, take me back—at once!" she exclaimed.

The boy grinned coolly as he steered the boat through a gap in the reef and into the choppy waters of the bay.

"Sorry—but you're such a little hot-head, and you won't listen to reason," he said. "I had to take direct action—to prevent your going to the Everglades with that Irma girl."

Patsy clenched her hands. "I think, Brian Travers," she declared, "you've got an awful cheek! Just because I arranged to meet Irma instead of you—because she can give me the big chance I've always wanted—"

"Don't be a chump, Patsy," Brian flushed, his bantering smile momentarily fading. "I'm as keen on your getting your chance as anyone—but I don't trust Irma Morgan, and that's flat!"

"Why not?" Patsy countered hotly.

"I've my reasons," said Brian. "No need to go into 'em now—but I'll tell you some other time. Look here, Patsy," he urged, "why not admit that you're beaten—and make the best of it? As soon as we get into safer water, we can have some swimming and diving—or how would a spot of surf-skiing appeal to you?"

He pointed out a distant speedboat, towing in its wake a pair of rubber floats, on which, perilously poised, stood a daring bather, grasping a length of thin line.

At any other time Patsy would have been thrilled at this breath-taking trip across the sparkling bay—at the prospect of the exciting sport suggested by Brian. But now her blood was seething at the boy's high-handed action—and she was growing increasingly anxious about her appointment with Irma.

For a moment she toyed with the reckless idea of jumping overboard and swimming ashore; but she quickly dismissed it, realizing that Brian could easily turn the boat and overtake her.

Could she bring herself to swallow her pride and appeal to the boy's chivalry? Even as Patsy hesitated, her stubborn spirit resisting the thought, she caught a glimpse of a printed folder that must have fallen out of Brian's pocket as he bent down just then to tinker with the engine.

She glanced at it only casually as it lay in the well of the boat; then she caught in her breath, blue eyes widening.

In a moment the folder was in her hand, while Brian, his back towards her, busied himself with the oil-pump.

MIAMI WATER GALA.

GRAND SWIMMING CONTEST.

(Under Seventeens).

First Prize 1,000 dollars—and chance to star in South Sea Film."

Patsy's thoughts were racing with mingled excitement and indignation as she noticed a scribbled date in the margin in Brian's handwriting. So he knew all about the thrilling contest—though he had feigned ignorance when she had mentioned Irma's promise!

Carefully she replaced the folder, her eyes flashing as she stared at the dark curly head bent over the engine. Was it possible that Brian intended to enter the contest himself—and for that reason was out to spoil her chances?

Patsy fought against the thought that this bossy yet likeable boy could have stooped to such a trick; yet the idea could not easily be banished. And precious moments were flying; already it was past the time of her appointment—and Irma would be waiting, wondering what had happened to her.

A reckless gleam flashed into Patsy's eyes as Brian looked round with a smile.

"I think—I think I'd like to try that water-skiing, Brian," she said meekly, "if you'd show me how."

"That's the spirit! I knew you'd see sense, Patsy." He slowed down the engine and fixed the tiller on an even course. Then, peeling off his jacket and flannels, he stood up in his swim-suit in the stern. "We haven't any floats, but the dinghy will do as well. Toss over the line when I reach it, and stand by for instructions!"

Diving overboard, he swam across to the rubber dinghy and climbed aboard, balancing precariously as he stood up.

"All right, Patsy!" he called, holding out a hand for the line.

"Quite all right, thank you!" rejoined Patsy sweetly; but she made no attempt to throw the line. Instead, her fingers were busily untying the mooring-rope that secured the dinghy.

"Patsy, what are you doing?" Brian shouted.

"Cutting loose!" called back Patsy. "Good-bye, Brian! I see the dinghy's got paddles—so you'll reach shore sooner or later."

"Patsy! Are you crazy? Stop!"

But Brian's shout was drowned by the roar of the accelerating engine as the speedboat, with Patsy at the helm, headed shorewards in a cloud of spray.

BRIAN INTERFERES AGAIN

PATSY had acted without a second thought, on the spur of a reckless impulse. Her heart was beating quickly now, her face rather pale as she looked back.

She saw Brian standing up in the rocking dinghy, waving to her desperately. The boy needed teaching a lesson for his high-handed action; he could not be allowed to spoil her big chance. And yet—

Even as determination faltered, and she made to swing round the speedboat, Brian's voice came across to her, sharply commanding:

"Patsy—stop! Come back at once! I order you to!"

Patsy stiffened, her cheeks crimsoning. So Brian was giving his orders—bossing her as though he had a right. Very well!

She headed for the shore and, reaching it, moored the speedboat safely. Then she ran up the beach, turning only as she reached the fringe of palm—to catch a glimpse of Brian, paddling feverishly and still some distance from shore.

It was long past three when she reached Coconut Grove and looked round anxiously for Irma's smart grey coupe. She bit her lip, her heart sinking, for there was no car in sight.

A straw-hatted negro, leaning on his broom by the roadside, grinned affably in reply to her breathless question.

"Sure, miss! Young lady waited here long time in a car, but I reckon she got kinda tired an' drove off."

Patsy thanked him unsteadily. She wondered what Irma must be thinking. It would seem to the other

girl that Patsy did not appreciate her generous invitation—her efforts to help her in her career. And Irma's friend, the sports-promoter, would be even more annoyed!

As there was no chance of finding a taxi at this spot, Patsy set out to walk the mile to Irma's house, on the lonely road through the Everglades. Here the sunlight was almost shut out by the twisted branches of the banyan trees; there were queer rustlings in the undergrowth, and Patsy, her nerves taut, could almost imagine that she heard stealthy footsteps following her.

She quickened her steps almost to a run, her heart beating quickly. And just then, behind her, she heard the welcome screech of a car's siren—and a medley of voices hailed her as a big saloon car pulled up.

"Patsy! What on earth are you doing here? Didn't you meet Irma as you arranged?"

It was Beryl Royston, Patsy's chum, who threw open the door; and behind her peered the cheery, freckled countenance of Beryl's brother, Steve, and several of their friends from Coral Bay.

They had finished their game and were driving over to have tea at Irma's house. Flushing slightly, despite her relief, Patsy explained that she had been delayed by a trip across the bay with Brian Travers—but she did not go into details, though she was conscious that Beryl was looking at her rather curiously.

Now that she had time to cool down, it seemed to Patsy quite incredible that Brian should really have set out to spoil her chances. Perhaps, after all, his bossiness was merely due to a desire to act as "big brother" to the sister of his old friend—together with a stubborn dislike of the gay and wealthy Irma Morgan.

Dark-haired Irma was waiting in the courtyard of the palatial, Spanish-style mansion her father had built in the Everglades.

She hurried forward to meet her guests, with a quick, reproachful glance at Patsy.

"Why, Patsy, I guess I'd given you up for lost!" she exclaimed.

"Irma, I'm so sorry!" Patsy burst out remorsefully. "I—I was accidentally delayed. Perhaps if I apologise to Mr. Dyson—"

"You're too late, honey," said Irma, with a regretful smile. "Mr. Dyson left here ten minutes ago. Pop and I both tried to persuade him to stay, but he was pretty sore with you—especially after that phone message."

"Phone message?" Patsy repeated uncomprehendingly.

"It came through about a quarter of an hour ago," said Irma. "Pop took it—I guess he'll explain."

Just then Irma's father came out on to the terrace. He was a handsome man with a strong, almost ruthless face, belied by his affable manner. He shook hands with the young visitors, and turned a pair of shrewd eyes on Patsy.

"So you decided to turn up after all, young lady?" he asked. "In spite of your guardian?"

"My—my guardian?" Patsy faltered, her mind in a whirl.

"Sure—the young fellow who rang me up. Name of Travers. He asked if you were here, and said he was kind of responsible for you. Practically gave his orders that you weren't to enter any contest without his approval. When I passed on the message to Mr. Dyson, my friend just reached for his hat and drove off."

Patsy's cheeks were flaming. Brian had gone too far this time! Not content with making her late for her appointment, he had had the audacity to phone her friends, masquerading as a kind of guardian, and forbidding her to enter the contest without his sanction!

Any remorse she had felt for the trick she had played on the boy was swept away. This, she supposed was Brian Travers' revenge—and his method of ensuring that she should

not challenge him in the swimming gala with its valuable prize.

"Oh, the trickster!" she thought, the angry words trembling on her lips. "Wait till I see him again!"

Irma was staring at her, a curious expression in her dark eyes—an expression that might have been sympathy or amusement.

"This Brian Travers—he's not acting as your guardian then?" she asked.

"Of course he isn't!" Patsy burst out. "He's no right to give his orders—to prevent my taking part—"

Her voice choked. Irma exchanged a swift glance with her father. There was a look almost of relief on her pretty face.

"Couldn't we do something about it, pop?" she asked. "Isn't there time to persuade Mr. Dyson to change his mind—even now?"

"Sure!" declared Mr. Morgan heartily, as he patted his daughter's cheek. "I guess we can arrange anything to please my l'il gal." For a moment his shrewd eyes narrowed thoughtfully. "I'll ring up Dyson where he's staying—at the Everglades Hotel. And after tea you two girls can drive over there and explain in person. How'd that suit you, Miss Wray?"

Patsy's face lit up gratefully as she thanked him. There was still a chance—thanks to her good friends and in spite of Brian's high-handed interference.

After a delightful tea under the palms, Irma insisted that the chums should take a dip in the ornamental lake, artificially widened from a natural spring.

There would be plenty of time for their drive to the Everglades, she explained to Patsy, for Mr. Dyson would not be returning to his hotel till fairly late.

In the warm, sub-tropical dusk,

with fireflies dancing among the trees, the chums splashed and swam in the floodlit water. Then Irma laughingly challenged Patsy to a race.

The two girls started together, but Patsy quickly outdistanced her companion. The ornamental lake tapered into a narrow stream, glistening between banks of dark shrubs and tropical flowers.

The laughter of her chums came to her faintly through the night air; and all at once Patsy felt a return of that uneasiness that had first gripped her on the way to the house.

She trod water, and a trailing weed caught at her foot. Even as she struggled to disentangle herself there was a crashing among the bushes, and a tall figure loomed on the bank, torch in hand.

"Patsy!" exclaimed a terse, breathless voice.

The next moment her shoulders were taken in a powerful grasp, and she was lifted bodily out of the stream.

"Oh!" gasped Patsy, recovering from her startled amazement as she recognised her companion. "You!"

Brian Travers regarded her grimly. His boyish face looked strangely pale in the twilight, and there was no trace of the usual bantering gleam in his eyes as he flashed his torch across the water.

"Bathing in tropical streams, Patsy—especially after dusk—is apt to be risky," he said. "Your friends should have warned you."

Patsy confronted him, her hands clenched.

"I wonder, Brian Travers," she exclaimed unsteadily, "that you had the cheek to come here—after what you've done!"

Brian eyed her curiously, a grim smile on his lips.

"I've come to take you home,

Patsy," he said. "Better get changed. The old two-seater's waiting on the drive."

"I'm not coming home with you, Brian Travers!" Patsy flashed.

"I think you are, Patsy!" rejoined the boy coolly.

Their raised voices had attracted attention. Beryl, Steve, and the others came hurrying through the trees—and Irma Morgan, wearing a charming Mexican wrap over her bathing costume.

"Gosh! Where did you spring from, Brian?" Steve demanded.

"I just drove over to take Patsy back to Coral Bay," Brian explained.

"Patsy has an appointment with me," put in Irma sweetly, slipping a hand through Patsy's arm. "We're driving out to the Everglades—to see a friend."

Brian raised dubious eyebrows, glancing at his watch.

"Rather late, isn't it? Patsy had better get her things on and come with me." His jaw set in a determined line. "I'll give you ten minutes, Patsy," he said.

A MYSTERIOUS ATTACKER

A LITTLE gasp rose from the others, and Irma's attractive face clouded slightly.

"I think, Patsy," she murmured, "that you'd better make up your mind between our appointment—and your masterful friend."

Patsy's cheeks were flaming. "I'm coming with you, Irma!"—and she turned her back on the boy.

"Patsy, I warn you—"

Brian started forward, his voice gruff and tense. Then, as though changing his mind, he turned away and strode towards the drive.

With a faint, half-amused smile, Irma led Patsy away.

Twenty minutes later, as the sleek grey coupe purred along the dark road through the Everglades, it



FREE- This Magnificent PHOTO ALBUM of Famous FILM STARS

The album has been specially designed to hold the autographs which are being printed, week by week, on the back page of the "GIRLS' CRYSTAL." Save these carefully until you receive your album.

"GIRLS' CRYSTAL"
PHOTO ALBUM
OF FAMOUS
FILM STARS
for:—

FIX
Id.
STAMP

To secure the album, print in BLOCK LETTERS your name and address on the coupon on the right, stick on a Id. stamp and post it in an unsealed envelope bearing another Id. stamp to: "GIRLS' CRYSTAL" ALBUM, The Amalgamated Press Ltd., Bear Alley, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4. Don't delay. Post off the coupon to-day in case there are not enough albums to go round.

brilliant headlights picking out the grotesque, twisted trees, Patsy's angry feelings were still unsoothed.

And her anger was mingled with puzzlement. It seemed strange that, even for the sake of winning a big prize in the swimming contest, Brian would have gone to such lengths to spoil her chances—Brian, who was so sure of himself and who was hardly likely to fear the rivalry of a girl!

Was it possible that he had a motive she did not suspect—something more sinister?

Irma was silent and intent on her driving as the winding road grew more desolate; and Patsy was wondering how long they would take to reach their destination when, with a sudden, startled cry, her companion applied the brakes.

Patsy's heart turned cold as she saw a swarthy-faced figure leap into the glare of the headlights—a ragged, menacing figure, wearing the colorful headdress of one of the Indian dwellers from the swamps.

She knew that occasionally they would accost a passer-by for money, but there was something more ruthlessly determined about this figure as he sprang on to the step of the car and wrenched open the door.

Patsy drew back with a gasp, clutching at Irma's arm. But, with a little moan, that girl had sagged forward over the wheel, apparently in a dead faint.

The next moment a muffling scarf was flung over Patsy's head and, struggling desperately, she was lifted out of the car.

She could not imagine what was her captor's purpose—unless it was ransom. Fear tugged at her heart, despite her plucky struggles.

Perhaps she and Irma were to be hidden away among the almost impenetrable, tree-grown swamps, while their friends were contacted. She knew that such things happened—and Irma's father was known to be one of the wealthiest men in Florida.

Almost ironically into her mind flashed the recollection of Brian's warning; but, of course, he could not have suspected any real danger like this.

Just then her captor dumped her roughly on which appeared to be a pile of dry grass and, though Patsy continued to struggle spiritedly, her wrists and ankles were securely tied.

She heard a door slam, and the grating of a bolt. Then complete silence.

How long she lay there, trying with painful and desperate determination to free herself from the cords that bound her, Patsy had only the vaguest idea.

She managed to shake the muffling cloth from her face, to discover that she was in some kind of rough cabin, with a narrow window through which the pale moonlight filtered, criss-crossed with a shadow of trees.

Her heart contracted as she realised that Irma was not in the hut with her. What had happened to her companion?

An involuntary cry broke from Patsy's freed lips—a desperate cry for help.

It was answered with dramatic unexpectedness. She heard a shout—followed by the unmistakable sound of a struggle. There was a long, long pause, during which her heart thumped with sickening suspense.

Then the door of the hut was wrenched open, and a dishevelled figure stood there in the moonlight. "Brian!" cried Patsy, her voice shaking incredulously.

The boy said nothing as he whipped out a knife and bent to slash the cords that secured her wrists and ankles. Then one gruff, terse question escaped his lips:

"Patsy, did that scoundrel hurt you?"

He gave a grunt of relief as she shook her head, almost too choked to reply.

"Did you recognise him?" he demanded, assisting her to her feet.

"N-no," Patsy managed to whisper.

"He—he was an Indian—" "You're sure of that?" cut in Brian.

Patsy nodded, holding tightly to the boy's arm. She could not understand how he had come to the rescue—unless he had followed their car at a distance. With a start, she remembered her companion.

"Irma!" she exclaimed unsteadily. "Brian, is she—"

"Don't worry about Irma," interrupted Brian curtly. "She's right as rain. You're coming back to Coral Bay with me now, my young hot-head—and I'm not letting you out of my sight again so easily."

For once the usual spirited retort did not rise to Patsy's tongue. Whatever the boy's real motive—however blunt and untactful his methods—she had proved herself right this time.

Irma, unharmed, but looking pale and nervous, was at the wheel of her car. Brian's own ramshackle two-seater was drawn up near by.

Irma greeted Patsy with excited, almost gushing relief.

"I can't think why that dreadful man attacked us, money," she declared. "He hasn't stolen anything—and it was only you that he attempted to kidnap. And I'm almost certain he wasn't a real Indian," she added, looking at Brian.

The boy frowned.

"What makes you say that, Miss Morgan?"

"Oh, I don't know—but he was so determined, and he seemed to have his plans cut and dried." She laughed uneasily. "Not that he's done us any real harm—except for making Patsy miss her appointment. It's too bad, honey," she added, squeezing Patsy's arm, "but everything seems to be conspiring against you. Never mind—I'll contact Mr. Dyson first thing to-morrow, and when I explain what happened I'm sure he'll agree to give you a last chance—"

"Don't worry, Miss Morgan," Brian cut in shortly. "I've my own plans for Patsy, as it happens. I'm calling for her to-morrow myself!"

An instinctive protest rose to Patsy's lips, but she checked it as she encountered the boy's steady gaze. She could not forget that she owed Brian a debt of gratitude for her rescue.

She would argue with him to-morrow—appeal to his sense of fair play; but to-night she would not pit her will against his.

They drove back through the Everglades in silence, Irma's car a little ahead.

Irma parted from Patsy affectionately when they reached the dividing roads, leaning over to arrange the rugs round her shoulders.

"Don't forget, Patsy, phone me if you change your mind to-morrow," she murmured.

Brian smiled grimly, but he made no comment, and neither he nor Patsy spoke much as they drove on to Coral Bay.

Beryl and the others were waiting for them anxiously, for news of the mysterious attack had already reached them by phone from Irma's house. There were excited questions and congratulations as Patsy was assisted out of the car; but eventually she and Brian were left on their own.

"Remember, Patsy, I'm calling for you to-morrow at ten," he said. "And no tricks this time. Promise!"

"I promise," Patsy murmured, looking him straight in the eyes.

She wondered, as she watched the lights of the ramshackle car disappear down the drive, what had caused that strange expression to cross the boy's face as they parted—a determined, reckless look as though he were stealing himself for some task.

As she turned back to the house she noticed that one of the car rugs had been dumped in the loggia with her coat. Patsy picked it up, deciding to return it to Brian next day; but as she smoothed it out something slipped from its folds, falling to her feet.

Patsy stared at the object as it lay on the red tiles, in the light of the lamp, and her eyes widened with a growing horror of recognition.

She was staring at an Indian headdress—to which was attached a wig of lank, black hair.

There could be no possible mistake. The headdress—the lank hair—belonged to her mysterious attacker in the Everglade forest!

And they had slipped out of a rug from Brian's car. Brian Travers, who had pretended to come so gallantly to her rescue, must have been the "Redskin" in disguise!

ON BOARD THE YACHT

IT was several minutes before Patsy recovered sufficiently to pick up the hateful object—to thrust it back hastily into the folds of the rug.

She had no wish for her chums to see it—to know of the despicable trick that had been played on her by the boy she had secretly liked, despite his bossy ways. But she had finished with Brian Travers now—for good!

Patsy made an excuse to retire early. Hour after hour she lay awake, puzzling over the boy's treacherous action—wondering what could have caused him to stoop so low.

He had held her prisoner for long enough to prevent her from keeping her vital appointment; and then had staged a mock "rescue." Oh, it all seemed so clear—so hatefully clear now.

And to think that out of mistaken gratitude she had promised to meet him to-morrow—instead of Irma, her real friend! Thank goodness she had found him out in time!

The brilliant sunshine, streaming through the window of her room, awoke Patsy early the next morning. With sudden determination she slipped out of bed and hurried downstairs before the rest of the family were astir. In a few minutes she was phoning Irma.

"Irma, I've changed my mind," she told that girl. "Do you—do you think there's still a chance of making an appointment with Mr. Dyson?"

There was a slight pause, during which she heard a low murmuring at the other end of the wire.

"Sure there is, honey!" came Irma's reply then. "As a matter of fact, Mr. Dyson phoned pop only this morning. He's invited us to join him for a day's cruise to Miami on his yacht, to see the preparations for the water gala. I guess we'd love you to come along with us—and don't you worry, Patsy. Pop will fix everything. We'll meet you with the launch on the coral strand in an hour's time. And, whatever happens, don't let that cocksure Brian Travers find out where you're going."

Steve and Beryl came in a few minutes later, and both were thrilled at Patsy's news.

Half an hour later, her eyes sparkling with excitement, she stepped into the glistening launch that was already waiting for her at the strand.

"That's Mr. Dyson's yacht lying out in the bay, honey," explained Irma. "You've got your swimming costume under your wrap? Good! I guess you'll be signing on the dotted line when we reach Miami!"

Ten minutes later Patsy was climbing eagerly aboard the smart grey yacht, accompanied by Irma and her father.

A burly man in yachting attire saluted as he approached the visitors.

"Everything's in order, Mr. Morgan," he said in a low voice.

Patsy looked surprised, and Irma laughed quickly.

"Is Mr. Dyson in his cabin, bo'sun?" she asked.

"Er—yes, miss," replied the man, meeting Mr. Morgan's glance.

"Then we'll tell him we've arrived," said the latter briskly. "If you don't mind waiting on deck for a few minutes, Miss Wray, we'll ex-

(Please turn to the back page.)



The Worst Boy AT THE Co-ed School

By DOROTHY PAGE

JIMMY'S DISMAYING NEWS

PADDY DARE, leader of the riding team at Mallington Co-Ed College, was grateful to Vincent Conrad, a new boy, for having saved her horse from bolting, and she promised to put him in the team.

But the school regarded him as an outsider. He was blamed for an accident to Jo Winter, Paddy's chum, though there was no definite proof.

Mr. Voster, one of the masters, vowed to tame Vincent, and Paddy sensed the hostility between boy and master.

Thanks to Vincent, the riding team gained permission to practise jumping in Mallington Park. Paddy arranged a meeting of the team at the park, and Vincent promised to attend. But just as Paddy was about to leave the school, her boy chum, Jimmy Court, told her that he had heard that Vincent did not intend to come to the practice.

JIMMY'S angry words still rang in Paddy's ears. They shook her; caught her off balance.

"Jimmy, I—I don't understand," she stammered. "There's some mistake—there must be!"

He bit his lip, looking past her towards the stables. Good-natured Jimmy was not finding this easy.

"I'd like to think so, Paddy," he said frankly. "If only for your sake—because you believe in Vincent! But there's no mistake! Listen! Whitey—Vincent's horse—is still in his loose-box, and there's no sign of Vincent himself anywhere. No one's seen him since before lunch. He obviously had no intention of turning up—and by what I've just heard, he's arranged a cunning alibi to bluff you!"

"Jimmy—" Paddy stared at him. "Sorry, Paddy, but you've got to know. Just before lunch someone overheard Vincent talking to Jock, the groom. Vincent tipped Jock to take away Whitey's harness and hide it under the straw in Whitey's loose-box."

He paused and uncomfortably looked at Paddy's paling face.

"Don't you see, Paddy? He plans to let us down, and then when you tackle him about it afterwards he'd say he couldn't find Whitey's harness and that's why he didn't turn up. Pretty obvious, isn't it?"

Paddy was deeply shocked at Jimmy's information. In that moment she could not help remembering the warning of the unknown whisperer—a warning that Vincent would find some cunning way of letting down the riding team at the last moment. Was it true? Had the Outsider been bluffing her all along?

It seemed dreadfully like it, but— "Jimmy—no!" she blurted sud-

denly. "He promised me. And I promised to trust him—"

Jimmy was silent, uncomfortable. And in the little pause Paddy suddenly wondered who had overheard this conversation between Vincent and Jock. Who had spread the story? Was it this unknown whisperer who seemed so dead against the Outsider? Her eyes gleamed.

"Just a sec., Jimmy," she flashed. "Where did you hear this? It may well be a fib."

"No, Paddy," he said quietly but firmly. "It was young Dicky who overheard them talking, and Dicky's as straight as a die, you know that."

"Oh!" Paddy bit her lip. Dicky was Jimmy's younger brother in the Third Form, and he was as honest and without guile as Jimmy.

Jimmy watched her with real sympathy. Perhaps he was thinking then of what Paddy had said two days back, when she had told the more disgruntled members of the team that if Vincent let them down she, Paddy, would accept all blame, and be willing for a new captain to be elected if they demanded it.

"Paddy," he said awkwardly, "don't worry your head about this. And don't worry about the captaincy. Most of us are still all behind you—especially as you've now had your eyes opened about Vincent."

Paddy looked at him with a faint, warm smile.

"Thanks, Jimmy. Look—you'd better hurry off to the practice."

He eyed her with surprise and some uneasiness.

"But, Paddy, aren't you coming now, too?" he demanded. "Look here, surely you're not worrying about that Out—I mean, Vincent?"

"I'll follow pretty soon, Jimmy," Paddy assured him. "Tell the others I'll be along, there's a dear."

Jimmy hesitated, then nodded, and hurried away to where he had left his cycle resting against the stables.

"Dear old Jimmy," Paddy murmured. "He and Jo are wonderful friends. But—oh dash, I just can't believe that Vincent—"

She abruptly turned and strode towards Boys' Side.

Her faith in Vincent had received another blow—but that faith was still steady.

"There must be some other explanation—must be! Got to be!" she muttered to herself almost fiercely. "Vincent's reckless, pretty

bitter at times, but—but I'm sure he meant that promise he gave me! I'm sure he meant to come to the practice! There just must be some other explanation of his disappearance, and until I've found him and spoken to him—"

Until then she would continue to believe in him!

Paddy hurried towards Boys' Side. Although it was a half-holiday there would surely be someone about who might give her news of Vincent? Where on earth could he be?

And then, as if in immediate answer to that query, Paddy saw the boy known as the Outsider.

She halted suddenly with a gasp, her eyes widening.

"O-oh, my goodness—"

Below the third-floor windows of Boys' Side ran a narrow, ornamental ledge. It was half hidden from the ground by a mass of shrubs and tall oak trees.

But through the branches Paddy could see a red-haired, wiry figure moving coolly along the ledge, as if the forty-foot drop below meant nothing.

It was, amazingly, Vincent Conrad. Paddy did not pause to wonder at this startling appearance of the missing boy. Alarm for his safety sent her sprinting forward.

A yell trembled on her lips. She checked it—for there beneath the oaks, chatting together, strolled two masters.

"Oh gosh!" she gasped. "If he's seen! But if—if he falls! Oh, the reckless ass! What's he doing?"

Paddy changed direction towards the main doorway of Boys' Side. She was bewildered, horrified, but she knew what she meant to do—dash up to the third floor and get Vincent in through one of the windows there. That came before anything else.

She ran into the cool entrance hall. Fortunately there was no one to question her presence there. She went, two steps at a time, up the staircase, until she reached the second-floor landing.

There she checked; she had to. Mr. Voster stood at the head of the stairs, barring her way.

"What are you doing here, Miss Dare?" he demanded.

Paddy could have groaned.

"I—I'm trying to find Vincent Conrad, Mr. Voster," she said. "I want him for the riding practice this afternoon."

Mr. Voster carefully adjusted his glasses.

"Then I am afraid you will have to do without him, Miss Dare," he said. "He is detained! Most remiss—and typical of the boy—not to tell you!"

Was The Owner Of The Riding Crop Vincent's Unknown Enemy?

Paddy started. Detained! What was this?

Mr. Voster's unpleasant smile broadened a little.

"I gave him a task after lessons this morning," he said coldly. "Sorting new books in the library, to be exact. It will take him a considerable amount of time, so there is little use in your waiting. I suggest you proceed with your practice. Good afternoon."

He strode past her, gown rustling. Paddy stared after him, her brain rather in a whirl. Here was news that put a different aspect on everything—but this was not the moment to dwell on it!

Only waiting for the master to disappear, Paddy rushed on up to the third floor and looked out of the first window she came to.

Then she gave a long, long sigh of relief.

The ledge that ran below the window was deserted. She saw the drainpipe towards which Vincent must have been working.

"He—he climbed down that!" She felt a little dizzy. "The nerve of him! The recklessness of it!"

A long, searching stare below showed no sign of Vincent. He must have reached the ground safely and slipped off through the shrubbery.

Relieved, Paddy drew her head in, and began to think fast.

"Gosh, things have been happening," she murmured. "And how! So Mr. Voster gave Vincent a task, eh? After morning lessons, too!"

A rather excited look crept into her eyes.

"I'm sure he meant to come to the practice all along—whizzo! Suppose," she reasoned thoughtfully, "Vincent didn't let anyone know he'd been detained because he'd decided to break out—just so as not to let us down! Suppose the reason he arranged to have Whitey's harness in the loose-box was so that he could make a swift dash out of school! Suppose he knew Mr. Voster was about and that was why he did that—that awful climb!"

Her expression changed suddenly. For wasn't it also clear that Vincent could not possibly have finished the task Mr. Voster had given him in the time? In that case he was just building up more trouble for himself with the harsh master.

Paddy jumped into action. The boys' library was not far away, she knew. If Vincent had not finished that task—

Breathless, uneasy, she reached the library door and opened it.

One glance inside brought her up short.

"My goodness!" she gulped. "No! Oh, Vincent, how could you!"

PADDY LEARNS THE TRUTH

PADDY had good reason to be startled.

The boys' library was a large room, with bookshelves from floor to ceiling. It was also sometimes used as a lecture room, and there was a wall blackboard.

On that blackboard was a boldly-chalked notice.

Paddy stared at it, aghast.

"DO YOUR OWN ROTTEN BOOK SORTING, MR. VOSTER!"

On the floor nearby were two large crates that had obviously contained the new books Vincent had been ordered to sort. The crates were empty, but scattered on the floor as if they had been angrily jerked from the shelves were some fifty books or more.

"The reckless, crazy ass!" Paddy breathed. "Will he never learn! Those books—that notice! Why, he might have been expelled! If Mr. Voster had walked in and seen this

She breathed deeply, and suddenly felt a little angry and disappointed. She could sympathise with Vincent's dislike of Mr. Voster, but this action seemed dangerously senseless, almost petty.

"And he'd obviously sorted the new

books first, too!" she muttered. "Well, why the dickens didn't he leave it at that, instead of doing—this! Especially after his promise to go steady with Mr. Voster."

Her chin tilted. She liked Vincent; she believed he was not the outsider other people thought him. Even so, she knew she would have to have this out with him. Meanwhile—

"Can't let him get into awful trouble," she decided.

She got busy. Her first action was to wipe clean the blackboard. That done, she started on the books. It did not take her long. She soon had above half of them back on the shelves. It was then she found a silver-mounted riding crop under some of the books.

She picked it up, frowning. "Even leaves his riding crop to help condemn him!" She ruffled her fair hair. "Oh, blow! Vincent, you—you're making it jolly hard for me to stand by you!"

She had the last five books in her hand when she heard footsteps in the corridor. In a flurry of haste, Paddy pushed the books on to the shelves, thrust the riding crop under her jacket, and whirled.

The door opened and Mr. Voster entered.

"What—Miss Dare!" he exclaimed. His dark, snapping eyes flashed around the library. "Where is Vincent Conrad?"

Paddy watched him, a little tensed. "I don't know, Mr. Voster. He—he must have finished the task you gave him and gone."

Mr. Voster did not immediately answer. Again he stared round the room. He looked into the empty crates. There seemed to be disappointment in his manner.

"It is incredible he worked so quickly," he muttered, then looked up. "But you, Miss Dare—I thought I made it clear that you were not to try to see Vincent Conrad! You know you have no right to be here without permission!"

Paddy had no answer to that. "I'm sorry, Mr. Voster. I particularly wanted to see Conrad."

"No excuse," he said. "I will not tolerate interference in Boys' Side, especially when it concerns the worst boy in the school. Conrad is a bad example, as obviously you have yet to learn. Now go! You have not heard the last of this, I warn you!"

He stood aside, indicating the door. Chin up, with heightened colour, Paddy walked past him, out into the corridor and down through Boys' Side.

"Ugh, what a mean man he is!" she said fiercely to herself. "I'm glad I saved Vincent, even—even if he shouldn't have written that message and things—and even if it means trouble for me!"

She grimaced at the last thought.

"Blow! I'm not going to think about myself now!" she decided. "I've got to see Vincent and get to get to the practice. Wonder if he's reached Mallington Park yet? Wonder what reception he'll get from the others?"

That spurred her into a run towards the school cycle sheds.

Jo Winter was getting a horse from the Mallington village stables for her as Paddy was not one of the fortunates who possessed a mount of her own at the college.

But Paddy did not reach the cycle sheds for, glancing out of the school gates, she saw something that made her stop.

A little way up the lane, under the trees, was a wiry, red-haired boy, holding the reins of two horses.

"Vincent!" exclaimed Paddy.

"What the dickens—!" She ran out into the lane. The boy known as the Outsider was patting the neck of one of the horses—his own magnificent black, Whitey. The other was a chestnut.

Vincent saw Paddy. A flicker that might have been pleasure showed momentarily on his face.

"Ready?" he asked calmly. "Bit late for the practice, aren't we?"

"Vincent, what on earth are you

doing here?" Paddy demanded. "Whose is that other horse?"

"Yours."

"Mine? I don't understand."

"Simple." He shrugged. "I was riding to the Park when I met your chum Jo Winter leading this gee. She said that you were coming later, and that the gee was for you, so I decided to return with it. It occurred to me you'd prefer to ride to the practice instead of biking."

Paddy could not help showing pleasure at the thoughtful act.

"That was jolly nice of you—"

"Not a bit," he drawled. "Matter of fact it wasn't easy to persuade Jo. Probably thought I was going to pinch the gee or something! And for some reason she even seemed startled to see me."

Paddy answered that with typical frankness.

"The others didn't think you'd turn up, Vincent."

A cynical gleam showed in his green-grey eyes.

"Why not?" he drawled. "I promised you I would—and oddly enough—the Outsider keeps his promise."

"You also promised," flashed Paddy. "not to ask for trouble with Mr. Voster. Why didn't you keep that promise, Vincent?"

There was a challenging gleam in Paddy's eyes. He met it, then laughed shortly, shrugging.

"So I'm breaking promises, am I, Paddy Dare? It probably wouldn't interest you to know that I missed my lunch just so that I could complete the task that rotter Voster gave me and not let you down!"

"Oh," Paddy murmured. "I might have thought of that."

"And you wouldn't know, of course," he continued coolly, "that I did a pretty tricky climb out of school to avoid meeting Voster, in case the rotter found me another job to do. That's my idea of going steady and trying to avoid trouble—even if it isn't yours!"

Paddy crimsoned a little, but stuck to her guns.

"When why on earth," she demanded, "did you scatter those books about for Mr. Voster to find? Not only that—"

She paused, struck by his change of expression.

"Go on," he said sharply. "This is interesting. May I ask what else the Outsider did?"

"Oh, don't joke about it!" flashed Paddy. "I didn't find it funny—especially as I only cleared up just before Mr. Voster came in, and he wasn't exactly pleasant to me."

"Paddy," Vincent said, with unusual quietness and feeling, "I'm really terribly sorry if you had trouble with Voster, but—will you believe me when I tell you that I left the library in perfect order; that I purposely tried to make a good job, so as not to let you down?"

Paddy's lips parted in blank surprise. Knowing Vincent's recklessness and bitter moments, she had taken it for granted that he was responsible for those scattered books, that insulting message.

"I'd rather like you to believe me, Paddy. Do you?"

His apparent sincerity decided Paddy.

"Vincent—yes," she said impulsively. "And I'm jolly glad, too! But—gosh, if you didn't," she added eyes wide, "then who did? Who?"

He relaxed a little and shrugged indifferently.

"Just about anyone, I should say," he drawled.

Paddy was silent. She was thinking hard; felt she was on the verge of a sensational discovery.

Rightly or wrongly, she believed Vincent. He had not scrawled that message, scattered the books. Then it must have been done after he had left, done deliberately to get the Outsider into worse trouble!

Did that not point to—a secret enemy?

"Shouldn't let it trouble you," drawled Vincent. "But wait a sec—"

what sort of trouble did you have with Voster?"

"Oh, that was nothing," Paddy said quickly, and then glanced down at her wrist watch in pretended alarm. "Wow! Look at the time! We're late! We've got to get to that practice. This is where you're going to create a whizzing good impression all round. Promise?" she added smilingly. "Up to you, you know."

"I'm keen," he said abruptly. "Let's go, then."

He assisted her to swing up on to the chestnut. As Paddy settled in the saddle and felt for the stirrups, she was very conscious of the silver-mounted riding crop under her jacket. The crop dropped by the secret enemy.

Abruptly a certain name jumped into her mind. The Whisperer! That unknown person, boy or girl, who had so angered her with warnings and threats against Vincent. The Whisperer was the secret enemy—must be! But who was the Whisperer?

They trotted along the grass verge, and even in the midst of such intriguing thoughts Paddy noted the easy skill with which Vincent sat the saddle of Whitey.

She suddenly slipped the riding-crop from under her jacket and reined in her horse.

"Oh, Vincent," she called, "haven't lost a crop, have you?"

He glanced at it. His expression did not change.

"Not mine. I seldom carry a crop, anyway." His grey-green eyes flickered up to her blue ones. "Where did you find it?"

"Oh, about!" said Paddy casually. "But come on! Let's canter!"

She flapped her reins, hiding an inner excitement. She knew now that in this riding-crop she had a clue to the identity of the Whisperer, Vincent's secret enemy.

And suppose she could trace that enemy by the whip and unmask him—or her? Her eyes flashed. Suppose that crop actually belonged to a member of the riding team?

That was a fresh and startling theory, one that would surely make the first practice this afternoon doubly important!

Eager, keen, and determined to do her best for the boy known as the Outsider, Paddy cantered on.

THE MISSING RIDING-CROP

"WHERE the dickens is Paddy?" demanded Ron Bullton. "She ought to have been here ten minutes ago, at least."

"Please don't get impatient, Ron!" pleaded Josephine Winter gently. "Jimmy said that Paddy was following, didn't you, Jimmy?"

"That's right, Jo," agreed Jimmy Court. "Keep your wool on, Ron! Old Paddy wouldn't let us down, you know that."

There was a murmur of agreement from the boys and girls of the junior riding team gathered on the green grass at Mallington Park.

Their horses were tethered under the trees. Away in the sunlight before them lay the practice ground, a glorious stretch of nearly five hundred yards square, set out with different jumps—gate, pole, stile, wall, brush-wood.

"Doesn't look much like it," grumbled Ron. "Conrad's let us down, as we expected, and now Paddy's holding us up."

"Stop ticking, Ron!" snorted fair-haired Jimmy. "I've told you that Paddy's seen through Conrad. She's had her eyes opened, and it must have been a pretty rotten shock for her."

He stopped, because Dot Nelson had given one of her lively yells.

"Hold it, chillun!" whooped Dot. "Look—talking of angels—there's Paddy coming through the gate now! And—wow!" she gasped. "See who's with her! Conrad! He—he's turned up, after all!"

They all turned, and were startled into silence.

Paddy came up at a hard canter, flushed, eyes a-sparkle. A little in the

rear rode Vincent Conrad, very cool and composed.

Paddy reined in, looking down into surprised faces.

"Hi, gang!" she said cheerily. "Awfully sorry we're late! Vincent got held up by Mr. Voster—something we didn't know about. So you've got the jumps set out? Good-ho! Fine! Let's get cracking right away on the jumping! Isabella"—she glanced at the South American girl—"do a round first on your grey, will you? Ron, check her at the far gate jump, please."

Paddy kicked free her feet and slid to the ground. She knew this might be a tricky moment, and meant to surmount it quickly, and get Ron and Isabella, the potential trouble-makers, out of the way.

Jo and Jimmy caught on immediately.

"Right!" said Jimmy. "I'll check Isabella at the stile jump—"
"And I'll check at the last brush-wood," said Jo. "Isabella, your grey is a lovely horse. I'd like to see him over these jumps."

Paddy shot Jo a grateful glance. That tactful bit of flattery had the required effect on Isabella. The South American girl was an exhibitionist first and last. She passed Vincent

Jo smiled faintly, and half-wonderingly shook her head.

"Paddy," she said, "you're like a rubber ball—always bouncing up confidently. If—if you really say it's all right about Vincent—"

"I do!" Paddy said earnestly. "And now the great thing is to make a go of this afternoon—get Vincent accepted—"
She paused. She had suddenly remembered. "Jo," she asked eagerly, lowering her voice, "do you know anyone who owns an expensive-looking, silver-mounted riding-crop?"

Jo raised her dark eyebrows, but to Paddy's joy nodded.

"Why, yes, I think so, Paddy!" she said. "Do you mean a dark brown one with the silver chased into a sort of floral pattern?"

Paddy's heart leapt. It was a perfect description of the one she had found in the boy's library.

"Jo, that's it!" she exclaimed. "Gosh! Quick—tell me, does it belong to a member of—of our riding team?"

Jo was half-puzzled, half smiling. "Of course, Paddy. Surely you know that? You must have seen—" She broke off. "How silly of me! I'd almost forgotten you were away for the first half of term—"



Paddy gasped as she looked at the message chalked on the blackboard. If Mr. Voster saw it there would be more trouble for the boy she was trying to defend.

with a toss of her dark head and crossed to her grey.

Ron Bullton, rather red, glaring at Vincent, hesitated, then caught up the reins of his dark brown horse, Jig.

"Good!" said Paddy, with something of an inner sigh. "The rest of you, please take a jump each. Vincent, you at the wall jump, please!"

Vincent had been watching Paddy with a faint, twisted grin—rather admiringly, perhaps. He just nodded and whirled Whitey away.

There was a general scattering over the sunlit grass.

"Phew!" murmured Paddy, and grinned. "That's made a start, anyway."

She swung down from the chestnut; tethered him under the trees. Then a little glint came into her eyes. She carefully took out the silver-mounted crop she had found in the library, placed it on the grass, and covered it with her jacket.

"Now to try to check up," she breathed. "I wonder if—"

She paused, looking up, seeing that Jo had loitered. Her dark-haired, sweet-faced chum was looking rather anxious. Almost remorseful, Paddy hurried over to her.

"Jo, old thing, don't look so solemn! It's O.K.! Vincent's O.K. He always meant to turn up—sure of it. Gosh, I've learned things this afternoon! Must tell you later. Cheer up, Jo! Smile, now!"

Paddy seized her arm.

"Jo, come on! I want to show it to you. Quick, now!"

She dragged her bewildered chum back under the trees to where she had left her jacket. She whisked up that jacket, and then became very still, staring down blankly.

The silver-mounted riding-crop had vanished.

"What—what the dickens!" she breathed.

She stared round at the grass near by. No sign of the crop. The truth burst on her. Someone—one of the team—acting like lightning, had taken it. Who? Why?

"Paddy, what's wrong?" asked Jo puzzledly. "Why are you so excited? What's happened?"

Paddy turned to her, her eyes suddenly sparkling.

"I'm on the track of something. Jo!" she flashed. "Something vitally important! The crop I found—it's gone! But you're sure you know the owner?"

"Why, of course, Paddy!"

"Then tell me, Jo—now!"

And, with breath held, Paddy waited for her chum to answer—for the name of the Whisperer, Vincent's secret enemy, to become known.

What is Jo's reply? Who is the unknown Whisperer? Next Friday's instalment is the most enthralling and intriguing yet! You must not miss it!



Detective June's STRANGEST CASE

By PETER LANGLEY

JUNE'S STRANGE DISCOVERY

JUNE GAYNOR, niece of Noel Raymond, the famous detective, went to lonely Knoll Castle under an assumed name, Carolyn Stuart. She had been asked to go there by Ronald Garth, an author whose story about the legendary Green Archer was to be filmed there. He believed that a mysterious figure dressed as the Green Archer was threatening the film.

June received a terrific shock when she found that a man was staying at the castle under the name of Noel Raymond! She was convinced that the impostor was the mysterious Green Archer.

June believed that the mystery was connected with two green boxes hidden in the West Wing. This wing had been placed out of bounds to the film makers by the bogus Noel Raymond.

One evening June visited the forbidden West Wing and found the two green boxes. But when she opened them she discovered that they contained nothing but packets of unsweetened biscuits.

PACKETS of biscuits!

In blank amazement June Gaynor stared at the contents of the two green-painted tins.

Surely this couldn't be what the Green Archer's confederates were so anxious to secure? It seemed absurd that anyone should go to such trouble to hide innocent packets of biscuits.

Frowningly she regarded them, then caught in her breath.

A startling idea had occurred to her. Perhaps the biscuits were camouflage—put into the tins in order to divert attention from their real contents.

"Maybe there's a secret compartment—a false bottom where the real stuff is hidden," June murmured.

Excitedly she examined first one tin, then the other. She tapped the metal with her knuckles; even measured the height of the sides, and compared that of the outside with that of the inside. But all in vain. It became clear that the tins were perfectly ordinary; it was impossible for anything to be concealed in them.

Her sense of bafflement returned. "This is just crazy," she declared. "There must be some explanation. I can't believe the Green Archer is trying to smuggle biscuits out of the castle."

Frowningly, June's gaze went back to the packets. Picking one of them up, she unwrapped it and shook a biscuit out on to the palm of her hand.

It was shaped like a button—about an inch in diameter and half as thick, perfectly plain—just the sort her aunt loved to serve with cheese.

And yet as it lay there on her open

hand June was conscious of something strange about it.

Biscuits of this type were usually very light, but this one—

She gave an excited gasp. "It's quite heavy!" she exclaimed. "Golly, can something be hidden inside it?"

The very possibility made her heart leap, and, confident that she had at last discovered the secret, she raised the biscuit to her mouth. But before she could bite on it—before she could put her thrilling theory to the test—there came an unexpected interruption.

Creak!
It was one of the ancient floorboards in the outer room. Someone had stepped upon it. But who could have entered the forbidden West Wing? One name leapt instantly to her lips.

The Green Archer!
"Oh, golly, perhaps he's come to collect the tins!" she murmured, and involuntarily braced herself.

Another loose floorboard creaked, but no one appeared in the doorway. Indeed, a strange, un-nerving silence settled over the castle.

The seconds ticked by. Still the tense stillness remained unbroken. A burning curiosity replaced June's fear. Temporarily the secret of the biscuits was forgotten. She felt she had to discover what was happening in the other room.

Had the Green Archer vanished as mysteriously as he had come? If not, what could he be up to?

She re-packed the biscuits and stored the tins back in the cupboard above the mantelpiece, then on tip-toe she crossed the floor. Stealthily opening the door, she peeped out.

The first thing she noticed was a blaze of light, coming from an electric lantern. The next was a tall figure clad in a mediæval costume which glowed eerily.

The Green Archer!
He was bending over one of the large theatrical hampers, and even as June watched he dragged out the lovely costumes it contained and piled them up in front of him.

Her eyes filled with alarm. She guessed instantly that those film costumes were in danger. The Green Archer could have only one reason for entering the forbidden wing. He intended to create another scare—to

.....
**"YOU ARE AN
IMPOSTOR AND
I MEAN TO DE-
NOUNCE YOU!"**

**June's Defiant
Declaration**

.....

renew the rascally campaign which was designed to put an end to the film-making in the castle.

Another moment and her suspicions were confirmed, for from the leather pouch which hung from his belt the Green Archer took a cigarette lighter and clicked it on.

There could be no mistaking that silver lighter. It was the one which the girl detective had used to trick the fake Noel Raymond earlier in the day and which, afterwards, he had unsuspectingly pocketed.

Here then, if she wanted it, was proof that her sensational theory was right. The fact that the Green Archer had that lighter confirmed that he and the bogus Noel Raymond were one and the same person.

And it was clear what were his present intentions. He meant to set fire to the heap of costumes—to destroy them utterly.

June's first impulse was to leap forward, but she resisted the temptation. Single-handed, she was no match for the impostor. No, she must use her wits to defeat him. Desperately she looked around, and suddenly her eyes lit up.

Beside the door which gave access to the occupied part of the castle hung a rusty chain, with an iron handle at the end.

An old-fashioned bell-pull!
If only she could ring that she would sound the alarm—rouse the whole castle.

And if help was secured, then not only would the beautiful costumes be saved, but the Green Archer's real identity would be proved beyond all doubt. Clever as he was, the impostor would never be able to explain away that incriminating green costume and mask. It was a golden chance to expose him.

Hardly daring to breathe, June began to slide along the wall. Inch by inch she crept towards the dangling bell-pull.

The Green Archer, the flaring lighter held in one hand, was bending over the heap of frocks and other finery.

Another moment and he would set them alight.

Desperate, June darted forward. Creak!

She trod on the same loose boards as the Green Archer had done. In the ghostly stillness of the West Wing the sudden sound seemed to crack out like thunder.

Instantly the Green Archer straightened up, and with a startled gasp he swung round. At sight of the girl detective he recoiled in amazement.

"You!" he exclaimed. "How the thunder did you get here? I locked the door behind me, and you couldn't have sneaked in earlier, for I've got the only key!"

Despite her dismay at being dis-

covered. June could not resist a chuckle. Usually the impostor was so cool, so audacious, so sure of himself. It was a refreshing change to see him so taken aback and bewildered.

"That would be telling," she retorted. "You're not the only one."

And then she broke off and gave a scornful laugh. For suddenly the Green Archer had realized that his mask had slipped. It was now hanging from one ear and he was making frantic efforts to readjust it.

"I shouldn't bother," June said. "I know who you are—have known for some time. You may have fooled Mr. Cronberg and the rest of the film unit, but you didn't fool me. I know the truth about you."

It was perhaps unwise of her to talk like this, but she just could not help it. At last she had the impostor at her mercy, and she was human enough to revel in the fact.

He glared, but there could be no mistaking the uneasiness in his grey eyes.

"What do you mean?" he demanded hoarsely.

"I mean that your reign as Noel Raymond is about to come to an end!" she cried, and exultingly her hand closed over the iron handle of the bell-pull. "You are an impostor and I mean to denounce you!"

FIRE AT THE CASTLE

THE usually cheerful, almost boyish features of the impostor were transformed. Looking at him now, June found it difficult to believe that she had ever mistaken him for the real Noel.

His glare deepened and his lips twisted furiously.

"So you have discovered the truth, have you?" he gasped.

June nodded.

"You were clever, but not clever enough," she declared. "I've had my suspicions for some time, and they were confirmed when you accepted my little story about that lighter this morning."

"The—story about my lighter?" he stammered, and scowled at it in his hand.

"Not your lighter—mine," June told him. "It was Nunky who gave it to me at Christmas, not the other way round. So when you accepted what I told you without question—well, then I knew that you must be an impostor. I must confess the discovery came as a shock—but it's nothing to the shock the others will receive when they hear the news."

He gave a harsh laugh.

"You little fool, do you think anyone will believe you?" he cried. "It will only be your word against mine—and don't forget that you are living here under a false name yourself! Cronberg and those other fools will think you're crazy."

But smilingly she shook her head.

"Oh, no they won't—not when they see you in that rig-out," she retorted. "Even you won't be able to explain what a so-called detective is doing wearing the Green Archer's costume."

As she spoke, her hand tightened on the bell-handle. He gave an angry shout.

"Stop! Don't you dare—"

But already the girl detective had hauled with all her strength on the rusty chain.

From somewhere below came the clanging of a heavy bell. Its echoes seemed to fill the whole castle, and mingled with the sound came a medley of startled shouts.

June's eyes gleamed with triumph. The alarm had been given. In a very few moments the whole household would be surging into the West Wing. If only she could prevent the Green Archer from unlocking the door, could stop him from escaping.

But he made no attempt to escape. Now his hate-flashed features had undergone another extraordinary change. Once more he looked suave, cool, even mocking.

"You little fool, you've overreached yourself," he asserted. "It's not I who'll be caught, but you—and

it won't be easy for you to explain why you've broken orders."

June's heart gave an apprehensive leap.

"What did he mean? Was he just trying to frighten her, or—"

All at once she felt uneasy and bewildered. He seemed so sure of himself. There was not a trace of panic about him now. Indeed, as the shouts could be heard getting nearer, he actually laughed.

"I've been wanting to get you out of the castle for a long time," he declared, "and now you've played right into my hands."

With the words he leapt into action—so swiftly, so unexpectedly that the girl detective was taken completely by surprise.

Before she could move, before she could even guess his intention, he had darted back to the piled up silken finery and jabbed the still flaring lighter amongst the fragile costumes.

There came a leaping tongue of flame, and June shouted out in horror.

Some of the frocks were already alight. It could only be a matter of minutes before all of them were a raging mass of fire.

"That's fixed you!" cried the Green Archer, and, pocketing the lighter, he raced through the doorway leading to

Breaking off, she stumbled across the room, bending one arm to protect her face from the scorching heat.

Pushing open the massive oaken door, she rushed into the apartment she had left only a few minutes earlier. The light from the nearby fire clearly illumined it, and June pulled up, staring incredulously.

The room was empty. The Green Archer had vanished as if into thin air—yet the only exit was the door by which she had entered!

For a second or two she stood there, baffled, hardly able to believe her own eyes. Then she darted across to the huge fireplace and opened the cupboard above the mantelpiece.

Like the room, it was empty. The two green-painted boxes it had contained had gone.

Obviously the Green Archer had taken them, and now he had disappeared, leaving her to take the blame for his latest scoundrelly action.

But how could he have escaped?

June looked wonderingly around. "There must be some secret way out," she told herself, and then frowned.

She was remembering how just as mysteriously the impostor had vanished from Rainbow Cave. Was it possible that there was some unsuspected tunnel which connected the cave with the castle? It seemed



"Halo, halo, where have you sprung from?" asked a surprised voice, and to June's dismay Bob Staines & Co. appeared on the scene. Would they notice the open window through which she had just escaped?

the inner room and swiftly vanished from sight.

Helplessly June stared at the sizzling flames. Impossible to beat them out with her own hands; futile even to attempt to prevent the fire from spreading. Out in the corridor were fire buckets and extinguishers, but there was a locked door between them and herself.

The only hope was that the film people she could now hear pounding along the corridor would be able swiftly to batter down the door and get into action.

She made to shout to them, but the words were stifled in her throat. Abruptly she remembered the Green Archer's mocking words—remembered how difficult it would be to explain her presence in the wing which had been put strictly out of bounds.

If she were found here on her own the film-makers might believe that she herself had started the fire—might even suspect that she was in league with the Green Archer!

It was an appalling predicament in which the girl detective found herself.

In despair she stared at the raging fire, and then she gave an excited shout.

"There's no other way out of that inner room! That means the Green Archer's trapped the same as I am. If only I can prevent him from escaping—"

likely. Knoll Castle was very old, and secret doors and passages were not unusual in buildings erected during the turbulent Middle Ages.

But the girl detective had no chance to investigate, for suddenly there came an agitated knocking on the main door which gave access to the rest of the castle.

Out in the corridor was a whole host of people, amongst them Theodore Cronberg himself. The excitable little producer flung down his cigar as he smelt the smoke leaking from under the locked door.

"Sufferin' mackerel, the place is on fire!" he shouted. "Don't stand gaping there! Smash down the door! Grab those fire-buckets! Come on, jump to it!"

There came a medley of shouts, a rush of feet, then a booming crash rang out.

Some of the technicians had seized a heavy oak settle which stood against the wall and had begun to use it as a battering-ram. Under their onslaught the door quivered, while the ancient lock began to crack and break.

Hearing the commotion, June felt a sense of panic.

"Oh, golly, I daren't risk being found here!" she gasped. "Now that the Green Archer's escaped, they'd never believe anything I told them."

Realising that the bogus Noel Raymond had been too clever for her, she

decided the only sensible thing was to escape while there was yet time.

Her only hope of establishing the truth—of unmasking the impostor—was to remain on at the castle. She could not risk the danger of being driven away in disgrace.

As there came another shattering bang on the locked door, she rushed back into the outer room. It was now full of smoke, and she was almost suffocated as she groped her way towards the narrow stairs.

Clapping her hand over her mouth and nostrils, she stumbled down the stone steps, and as she went the door up above crashed open and, coughing and spluttering, the film-makers rushed in, laden down with fire-buckets and extinguishers.

THE IMPOSTOR MAKES A MOVE

"SUFFERIN' mackerel, but this is more of the Green Archer's work! By hookey, but he shall pay for this!"

Theodore Cronberg's bull-like voice clearly reached June as she gained the ground floor, and she could picture him capering with fury while the fire-fighters got to work.

"Oh, golly, it'll be all up if I'm caught now," she told herself. "The fact that I've started to run away would tell against me."

She hurried along a wide, hall-like passage, to where she glimpsed a massive oaken door.

Though by now it was getting late, she could see clearly, for brilliant moonlight streamed through the windows, but when she reached the door she received an unpleasant shock.

It was locked. She looked around, then rushed to the other two doors let into the granite walls, but they gave access only to dusty, unfurnished rooms.

Her gaze went to the windows. They were narrow and built high from the ground. Could she possibly manage to clamber up on to a sloping sill and undo one of the rusty fastenings?

Even as she considered the prospect there came another stentorian roar from upstairs.

"Hey, some of you start hunting for that darned Archer! The hoodlum must be hiding somewhere. He can't have escaped."

It was the irascible producer, and June gave a gasp of alarm. It would not be long before a thorough search was made of the ground floor.

Desperate, she rushed across to the nearest window, braced herself, then leapt upward with all her strength.

Her upflung hand managed to curl around the iron bar which protected the window. Wildly she gripped it and for a moment hung there, panting.

Scrambling against the stone wall with her feet, she next tried to clamber up to the sloping sill. It proved an exhausting struggle, but at last she succeeded.

Not daring to let go of the iron bar, she crouched on the narrow ledge and wrestled with the window fastening with her free hand. Through the dusty panes she saw that this part of the West Wing jutted out beyond the wall which encircled this side of the castle.

The fastening was stiff and rusty. At first it resisted all her efforts, and even when eventually she managed to drag down the lever the window refused to budge.

From the distance came the sound of voices, and footsteps clattered on the stone steps. The search party were making their way downstairs.

"Oh, golly!" gulped June, and madly she pressed her shoulder against the dusty window.

There was a rending crack and it flew open—so precipitately that she lost her balance and went diving forward. Her hand was torn from the bar and out into the moonlit night she plunged.

It was a five-foot drop to the ground, but fortunately she fell on a grassy patch, and, though shaken and bruised, suffered no real hurt.

Dazed, panting, she stumbled to

her feet, brushed herself down, and flung an anxious look towards the open window. Then, even as she made to hurry away—

Cheery voices sounded from a side-path, and rounding a clump of bushes loomed four figures.

Bob Staines, Tilly Norton, and Vera and Dick March.

At sight of the girl they knew as Carolyn Stuart, the four Tweenies pulled up dead. So did June.

"Well, well, well, if this isn't a surprise!" exclaimed Bob. "Where have you sprung from, Carolyn?"

Desperately June composed herself. It would never do for the young film-makers to guess her agitation.

"Oh, I'm just out for a stroll," she said.

Her voice was calm and nonchalant, but inwardly she was a prey to a dozen fears.

Suppose the Tweenies noticed the open window! Suppose they heard the voices of the searchers inside the castle! Suppose they did not accept her explanation!

But she need not have worried. The Tweenies were quite unsuspecting, and to her relief curiously grinned across at her.

"Gee, I wish I'd known you wanted a breath of fresh air," he said. "You could have come with us. We've been for a ripping walk along the cliff-top."

"Yes—nothing like a good walk to give one an appetite for supper," put in Dick March.

Plump Tilly Norton sniffed.

"Pooh! I don't want a walk to give me an appetite," she declared. "I'm always ready for my grubbins. And let's get a move on. I'm sure it's long past supper-time."

Laughingly the young film-makers made their way back to the castle, June accompanying them.

In order to reach the main entrance, they had to encircle the high wall which enclosed the courtyard, and even when they reached the gateway they suffered a fresh delay. Jordan, the lodge-keeper, had locked up for the night, and it took some time to attract his attention and lure him from his radio.

At last, however, he appeared and creakingly the ancient gates swung open. The little group crossed the courtyard and entered the castle, but once in the hall they stopped in startled surprise.

At the foot of the stairs stood Bromley, the grey-haired butler, and he had a fatherly arm around one of the maids, seeking to calm her.

"Now, now, my dear, there's no need to be frightened," he was saying. "The wretched Green Archer's miles away by now."

"How do you know? Oh, how do you know?" sobbed the maid. "It's not safe to stay here. No one ought to live in this awful castle."

Her voice rose hysterically and the Tweenies exchanged uneasy glances.

"What's the matter, Bromley?" asked Bob Staines.

The butler looked up, gave a heavy sigh, and shook his head worriedly.

"It's that rascal of a Green Archer," he said. "He's been up to his tricks again—tried to burn down the West Wing."
"What!"

.....

You will enjoy the two grand volumes of the
SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY

which are now on sale, price 7d. each.

No. 83—"Her Thrilling Continental Tour," by Elise Probyn.

No. 84—"Delia In Mystery House," by Evelyn Day.
.....

June remained silent, but Bob and his chums gave horrified gasps.

Fortunately the fire's been put out," Bromley went on, "but a lot of damage has been done. I'm afraid, and everyone's very upset. It's not only the servants, it's the film unit also. Unless that scoundrel is apprehended I'm afraid many of them will be leaving before long."

June's heart gave a dismayed leap. Was the Green Archer's cunning campaign at last bearing fruit? Would he succeed in driving away the film company?

Dick March grabbed his sister excitedly by the arm.

"Here—let's investigate!" he cried. "Yes—let's see what exactly has happened," urged Vera, and she led a rush up the stairs to the West Wing.

The large apartment where the film gear had been stored was crowded with film actors and actresses, camera crews and technicians. The girls looked pale-faced and frightened, while the men were muttering angrily amongst themselves.

In the centre of the room stood Theodore Cronberg, Chewing savagely at a cigar, he was glaring at the scene of destruction.

Though the fire had been extinguished, it was obvious that a lot of the costumes had been destroyed and much of the gear damaged.

While June and the rest of the Tweenies clustered in the doorway, gazing about them in consternation, Mr. Cronberg suddenly flung down his cigar and whirled.

"Where's that fellow Raymond?" he demanded, his voice belowing out at incredible volume. "Hasn't he got on the track o' that darned Green Archer yet? Sufferin' mackerel, but isn't he paid to guard our property? Isn't he paid to capture that cheap crook of a fire-bug? Then why the thump hasn't—"

He broke off and glared, for suddenly the crowd at the far end of the room had parted and the tall, athletic figure everyone believed to be Noel Raymond appeared to view.

Calmly he regarded the red-faced, irate producer.

"Don't be impatient, Mr. Cronberg," he urged. "I'm doing my best, and I can assure you—"

"Impatient!" Theodore Cronberg flung up his arms in a furious gesture. "Sufferin' mackerel, you tell me not to be impatient when hundreds of pounds' worth of valuable gear has been destroyed! When that scoundrel of an Archer—"
With an effort he calmed himself, and, pulling a new cigar out of his breast pocket, clamped his teeth on it. "Well, have you discovered anything?" he demanded.

The bogus Noel Raymond nodded. Looking at him June was once again amazed at his cool audacity. It was almost impossible to believe that this suave, self-possessed young man was the green-clad figure she had caught red-handed in this very room barely half an hour ago.

"Yes—I've discovered quite a lot," the so-called detective declared. "The rascal who set the place afire was clever, but not clever enough."

As he spoke, his steely grey eyes became centred on June, and there was a gleam in them that sent an icy shiver of apprehension running down her spine.

What fresh mischief was he planning? she wondered uneasily.

"You mean you've got a clue?" asked the producer.

Once again the bogus Noel Raymond smiled.

"Yes—I've got a clue," he replied. "Don't worry, Mr. Cronberg. If all goes well I hope to have the culprit safely under lock and key before another day is over."

And once more his steely eyes, a glow with malice and mockery, became riveted on the girl detective.

What is this clue—does it spell danger for June? This grand detective story becomes more exciting than ever next week.

JOY— The Girl With a 100 Voices



By IDA MELBOURNE

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

SO that's the haunted house you boys are scared of going into?" There was a note of fun in Joy Oliver's voice, and her eyes twinkled.

"Scared?" scoffed her Cousin Jack. "Who said we were scared?"

"I've never been scared of anything," said his lean, lank pal, Bannister. "I've got an iron nerve."

Joy chuckled. She liked pulling their legs, because they had a rather superior attitude to girls.

Just beyond the garden gate where they were standing was a notice-board stating that the local newspaper offered five pounds to anyone who dared to spend the night in the haunted cottage.

The house certainly did not look very prepossessing. There were large holes in the thatched roof; the windows that were not broken were dirty and cobwebbed; the door was all its hinges and banged on windy nights.

"As if we're scared!" snorted Jack. "Bannister and I are going to spend the night there and win that five. Of course, I shall have to keep it a secret from Uncle Horace."

"And my mother wouldn't agree," said Bannister quickly. "But we'll do it."

"So would I," said Joy. "Only—"

"Only your Aunt Jemima wouldn't let you," grinned Jack. "Just as well. This is definitely a boys' only stunt. Girls wouldn't have the nerve. Gee, wait till we've won that five, Bannister—we'll have a day at the seaside."

Joy eyed the two boys. They were bragging they intended to spend the night in the haunted cottage, but she suspected they were not serious.

"They were just being superior, as usual, trying to impress on her that they had more nerve than she had. The cheek of them! They were asking to be taught a lesson."

Suddenly she gave a quiet, inward chuckle and strolled boldly through the gateway.

"You're brave now," she said, "but it might be different to-night. Suppose you got scared and bolted?"

"Us bolt? No ghost could scare me!" scoffed Bannister. "Why, even if a strange howl or groan came up from the floorboards—W-what was that?" he ended abruptly.

Joy turned to the house casually.

"It sounded like a groan," she said. "Listen!"

It was all she could do not to giggle, for the groan they had heard was hers—a ventriloquial groan; a

groan that seemed to come from inside the haunted house.

As neither Jack nor Bannister knew that Joy was a ventriloquist, they had no doubt that the sound was genuine.

"Now, don't you boys get scared," said Joy, smiling and beckoning them through the gateway. "Come and investigate."

"Scared? We're not scared," said the boys. But they hung back, both looking very startled.

"I should think not," said Joy. "I'm here. I may be a girl, but ghosts, spoons, goblins—poof! If you want to earn that five to-night you'd better have me with you."

"Tsha!" said the boys, or words to that effect.

So Joy groaned again, and threw in a whimpering yelp for fun.

It was remarkable, eerie, blood-chilling, and she noticed that Bannister was gulping and his face had gone pale. Jack had a grim, set expression, and there was no longer glimmering fun in his eyes.

"Th-that was certainly a groan," he said.

"Y-yes—sus-sounded like it," admitted Bannister. "I—I say, I've just remembered. I've got to puppet a l-ul-letter."

"Oh, that'll wait! Unless you're scared?" said Joy.

"Scared? Me?" said Bannister. "Mum-me? Gosh, no—Wow!" He ended as a shriek came from the house, and caught hold of Jack's arm.

"Wh-what was that?"

Joy listened at the door. She alone was cool and calm.

"I should say that was the Headless Cavalier," she said. "He comes here looking for his head, you know; He lost it during the Civil War—"

"It's nothing to j-joke about!" babbled Bannister.

"Hark!" said Jack sharply. "Footsteps!"

Joy jumped. Footsteps? She had not made that sound!

But undoubtedly footsteps sounded hollowly in the haunted house. They seemed to be coming downstairs.

"The Headless Cavalier!" babbled Bannister. "I sus-say, I'll be back in a minute. Must post this letter."

He turned, and tripped over some weeds, and Jack fell over him. Joy,

backing away from the door, nearly went over the two of them. There came a heavy creaking sound, then suddenly the front door of the cottage was pulled open.

"So!" said a grim voice. "You are the ghost-makers, are you? Your names and addresses, please. I'll report this matter to the police."

There in the doorway stood a portly man wearing a macintosh and a red scarf.

A RIVAL GHOST-HUNTER

THIS was a nasty moment for Joy. She felt that she had got the boys into a scrape, for they had had nothing to do with the groaning.

Bannister and Jack scrambled up, and Bannister put his cap on jauntily.

"Gosh, and Joy thought it was a ghost!" he scoffed.

"Well, so did I," Jack admitted honestly.

The man in the doorway scowled at them darkly.

"Ah, but I didn't! I suppose this newspaper stunt gives you youngsters a fine opportunity for pranks. Moaning and howling—"

"But we didn't moan," said Jack.

The man made a contemptuous gesture of dismissal.

"If you lads think I'm being scared off that five pounds you're mistaken. I shall have you charged with what's called a public mischief. I have said all along that these ghostly noises are either due to people's imagination or else to mischief-makers larking about."

Joy saw him take out a notebook, and realised that he was serious. Perhaps he thought that if he made a fuss and frightened people into thinking that they could be charged in court, he would keep away practical jokers.

But suppose the sounds could still be heard while all three were facing him? What then? He could hardly blame them.

Joy threw her voice. Once again a groaning sound seemed to come from inside the house, and therefore from behind the man in the doorway.

The man dropped his notebook and jumped round.

"Wh-what was that?" he said.

"Just the Headless Cavalier," said Joy earnestly.

Fun In The Haunted Cottage—With Ventriloquist Joy

The man turned back to her and glowered in reproof.

"This talk of the Headless Cavalier is twaddle," he said abruptly. "Obviously there is one of your gang lurking in the house, making these groans. I am convinced of that. And if you haven't come here to lark about why are you here?"

Joy let Jack answer. "We're going to win that five pounds; we're going to spend the night here," he said recklessly.

"You're going to spend the night here? In this haunted house? You kids?" And the man roared with laughter.

Bannister and Jack went red. Joy chuckled, however.

"Forget the whole thing," advised the man. "I'm winning that five pounds—and to-night, too. I don't believe in ghosts. I know there aren't any. I shall make myself comfortable. Now you clear off. No one's allowed in here unless they've signed a form at the newspaper office."

The man's bullying manner made Joy & Co. determined to spend the night in the haunted cottage, so, cycling into the town, they filled in the form and parted, arranging to meet at a stile near the cottage at half-past ten.

Five pounds! That was the thought that buoyed Joy when darkness fell that evening.

Getting out of the cottage was easier than she thought, for Aunt Jemima and Cousin Hypatia always went to bed at ten.

At ten-twenty-five Joy went along the lonely lane in the pitch dark. At ten-thirty-five she looked at her luminous watch and gasped.

The boys were late. Had they failed her?

At ten minutes to eleven there was still no sign of them.

Joy frowned. Surely they hadn't farked it? Or had they thought that she would?

With slow steps Joy walked towards the dark outline of the cottage. Suddenly a heavy step sounded behind her, and Joy turned, with a start.

"Aha!" said a man's voice, and she recognised their rival. "And where are the heroic boys?"

His tone was jeering and Joy bridled. Pride demanded that she made their voices at least present.

"I'm here!" said Jack's voice.

"So am I!" said Bannister.

The man started and peered into the darkness. "Where are the boys? I can't see them?"

"It's a dark night," said Joy. "Anyway, we'll see you inside."

She gave the man a sharp look; he had a strange, worried expression.

Joy had got him rattled at the start, and she chortled with glee.

But suddenly, pulling himself together, he strode on.

And after him went Joy until, just as she reached the gate of the cottage—where a small crowd had gathered to see the fun—a figure leaped out.

"Stop!" cried a commanding voice. "Joy, I am just in time!"

Joy fell back in dismay, for the person who jumped out so dramatically was Uncle Horace, and behind him stood Jack and Bannister.

"So you are the third person in this reckless escapade!" said Uncle Horace grimly. "Jack would not give your name. I caught him leaving the house and his friend waiting for him. Now I have caught the three of you, and you can consider this crazy adventure at an end."

Joy gasped.

"Uncle, you don't mean—"

"I do mean. I give the same command that your Aunt Jemima would give were she here, and if you doubt it we will go back and ask her. None of you shall go into this cottage without my permission—and that shall not be given."

ALL FOR A FIVER

UNCLE HORACE meant what he said. He was something of a tyrant, and when he gave an order it had to be obeyed.

Joy looked at Jack and Bannister,

both glum and crestfallen. Then she decided to use her ventriloquism.

"Horace!" she called.

The voice came from the-crowd in the darkness, and Uncle Horace turned, recognising it.

"Yes, Jemima?" he called; and then added to Joy: "That is your Aunt Jemima, my girl!"

"Horace," came Aunt Jemima's voice, "for goodness' sake let Joy go into the house. She has to be inside by eleven in order to win the prize."

Uncle Horace gaped; his eyes rounded.

"You—you want her to enter the house?" he babbled.

"How can she win the prize for staying there all night if she doesn't?"

"But—but it's absurd—"

"Oh, don't you be so absurd, Horace!" rebuked Aunt Jemima's voice. "Because you're scared of ghosts and creaking boards and rattling door knobs, it doesn't mean that Joy is."

Uncle Horace stiffened. He was horrified and indignant.

"Scared? No ghost has ever scared me."

"Well, apparently it scares the boys. Girls are different, naturally. Girls are not so easily scared as boys."

Uncle Horace snorted in fury.

"I have no intention of arguing, Jemima!" he retorted. "But if Joy has your permission to enter the house—very well."

Joy marched into the house, hoping that Uncle Horace would be shamed into letting the boys follow. She took one step inside, and then paused abruptly.

From upstairs had sounded a groan, followed by a heavy, rattling noise—like the clanking of chains.

Joy's eyes rounded as she stood there irresolute. What had caused those ghostly sounds? Was the house really haunted, after all?

A little shakily, she switched on her torch and flashed it up the stairs. She was just in time to see a man dragging a chain from the landing into one of the upper rooms.

Joy relaxed and smiled. Obviously her rival competitor was playing this dodge to scare off all other prize-hunters.

"Two can play at that game," she murmured, and looked around her to see if Jack and Bannister had come into the house.

They had not; but that was no reason why they shouldn't appear to be on the scene. That man was trying to scare them off, was he? Now to give him a few scares!

Joy prepared to prove just what a clever ventriloquist and mimic she really was!

"Gosh, what's that blue, glowing shape?" asked a voice, which sounded exactly like Bannister's.

"Ooooo-er! I think it's a ghostly cat!" came Jack's voice.

"Ssh! What's that?" Now Joy was speaking in her own voice. "Thank! It's the Cavalier speaking—from behind this panelling!"

"Begone from this troubled house where ill befalls!" said a deep, hollow voice. "Who sees the Headless Cavalier has ample reason more to fear!"

The rival competitor came rushing from the room where he had taken his chain.

"Wh-what was that?" he demanded in a quaky voice.

"Sssh! The ghost is saying something!" exclaimed Joy solemnly.

The voice spoke again, seeming to come from behind the panelling.

"The stupid knave who disbelieves shall hear my voice beneath the eaves!"

"That's poetry!" said Joy in Jack's voice.

"Jolly good!" Bannister seemed to say.

The portly ghost-hunter looked about him, unable to see Jack or Bannister.

"Where are those boys?" he asked. "Here I am!" came Jack's voice.

Joy reeled back as though alarmed and afraid.

"He's turned into a ghost. He's invisible! Oh, oh!" she cried.

The man fell back, too, his eyes rounding.

"Impossible!"

"My gosh, we jolly well are!" cried Jack's voice shrilly. "Bannister, what's happened to you? I can't see you."

"I can't see you, Jack."

Joy clasped her mouth and looked as scared as she could.

"Phew! They've both turned into ghosts! It's catching!"

But the portly man gritted his teeth.

"It's a trick," he said thickly. "It must be."

A mocking laugh came from behind the panelling.

"Let not your voices rise so loud. The boys are vanished in a cloud."

The portly man seized his walking-stick.

"I'll soon find the boys," he shouted.

He rushed forward. Now Jack's voice came just in front of him; then behind him.

"It—it's uncanny!" gasped the man.

Clearly he was beginning to lose his nerve, and he became even more jittery when that hollow, ghostly voice was heard once again.

"You, fat sir, shall be the next. Your bulk and weight shall disappear."

And you stay here a twelvemonth year.

When those boys return to flesh You'll be caught within my mesh."

Joy moved back to the landing as she uttered that rhyme, for she had heard faintly Jack's voice below. The boys were coming in!

To save her trick from discovery, Joy sent Jack's voice downstairs.

"Come on, Bannister!" he seemed to shout, the sound getting fainter.

"We can only become flesh again by going outside."

"O.K., Jack!"

Joy saw the man on the landing back away from the panelling. Then he wheeled sharply as the boys' voices sounded below. He flashed his torch down—and there in the hall were Jack and Bannister.

"Look, there they are—in the flesh," said Joy, and turned to the man. "In a minute you'll be changed into cloud; you'll be here for a whole year. My goodness, how exciting for you! You'll know what it's like to be a ghost—"

But the portly man was galloping down the stairs, nearly knocking over Uncle Horace—who had just entered the house—in his eagerness to escape. He didn't believe for a moment that a ghost could turn him into a cloud, but he took no chances. He took the next train to London instead.

Joy yawned and woke up. She felt a little stiff, having spent the night on a mattress and rugs. And so did Jack and Bannister when her call woke them up. Only Uncle Horace slept on.

Last night Uncle Horace had been goaded by the crowd. They had hinted that Joy had more nerve than he had. Very well! He would show them. And he had shown them!

"Of all the stupid ideas!" he exclaimed when he woke up and looked about him in the dusty room of the cottage. "Your Aunt Jemima is responsible for this—"

"But, uncle, think—five pounds!" Joy said eagerly. "We've won it. And you said we could share it."

They had earned the five pounds, and it was theirs. But what had they done to earn it? Slept in an empty, dusty cottage.

That was all, for Joy had not used her ventriloquism once the man had gone, and a peaceful night and mid-night picnic had been enjoyed by all.

There was the honour and glory, too, of course; but what mattered to Joy and the boys was the five pounds. Now for a grand day at the seaside!

(End of this week's story.)

More fun with Joy the Ventriloquist in another delightful story next week.

The Merry-makers' Island College



By DAPHNE GRAYSON

SHOCKS FOR SALLY

"HOLD everything," smiled Sally Warner. "I'll be back with you in two jiffies."

"We're holding everything," replied Johnny Briggs, pretending to stagger under the weight of the large basket containing cut flowers, pot plants, and vases. "At least, I am!"

"I don't know that it's wise to let you go and see Jimmy on your own," said Don Weston, with an admiring smile at his girl chum. "Jimmy's always had a soft spot for you."

"You forget," dimpled Fay Manners, the fourth member of the little group known as the Merry-makers, "that Jimmy's a much engaged man, with a wedding in the offing. He has no eyes for anyone but his Sara."

Sally laughed gaily as she hurried off towards the study of James Kent, junior physics master at the International College on Waloorie Island, where she and her chums were students.

Fay was right. Jimmy, as he was popularly known, was completely wrapped up in pretty, vivacious, if somewhat stormy-tempered Sara Redway, a member of the local repertory company.

To Sally's surprise, instead of the young master's usual cheery answer to her tap on his study door, there came a morose and subdued "Come in!"

Sally entered, staring in amazement at Mr. Kent. He sat slumped at his desk, his sandy hair ruffled, his boyish, usually beaming countenance downcast.

"Oh, hallo, Sally!" he said dismally. Then, despite himself, his eyes lit up with admiration. "I say, you're looking very attractive!"

Sally did indeed, in her pretty, printed silk dress, a large, wide-brimmed straw hat on her dark curls, a dusting of sun-tan powder on her tanned face.

She dimpled, then suddenly became serious.

"That's more than I can say for you," she said. "Is—is anything wrong, Mr. Kent?"

"Wrong—ha!" Mr. Kent's exclamation was one of complete disillusionment. "Everything's wrong!" he said, with a hollow laugh.

For a moment he hesitated, obviously wondering whether to take Sally into his confidence, while Sally stood in sympathetic silence. Then he indicated a letter on his desk, with a small, open box beside it.

"It's Sara—she's sent my ring back again!"

Try as she would, Sally could not repress the smile which came to her face.

James Kent, for all his twenty-four years, was so very boyish in many ways—almost like one of the students. And though it was obvious that he and Sara were devoted to each other, it was also common knowledge that they were frequently having tiffs, and that Sara's engagement ring flew back and forth between the two like a shuttlecock.

"But, Mr. Kent," she said soothingly and tactfully, "I—I'm sure Sara doesn't mean anything—she'll soon make it up."

"Of course she will," said Jimmy confidently. "But—oh, gosh, that's not the point," he added, with a distracted groan. "You see, my Aunt Julia is coming to see me to-day—she wants to meet Sara. It's awful!"

"Awful?" asked Sally puzzledly.

Mr. Kent made two or three distracted turns up and down his study, then he turned to face Sally again.

"Aunt Julia," he explained, "is my trustee. She has control of my money until I reach the age of thirty. Naturally, I get a very small salary here as a junior master—not enough to support myself and a wife." He slumped down in his chair again, his long legs outstretched. "The point is that Aunt Julia, if she approves of my future wife, will release my capital when I marry."

Light was beginning to dawn on Sally. She nodded encouragingly.

"And this morning," announced Jimmy, with the air of a man tried beyond endurance. "I get a cable from Aunt Julia, whom I haven't seen for years, saying she will visit me at the college for just one hour before she flies on to China or Tibet or somewhere on some relief mission, from which she doesn't expect to return for about three years. And Sara," he said tragically, "has to choose this morning to throw a temperament and return my ring!"

"Oh, dear!" Sally felt rather at a

loss for words. "Couldn't you phone Sara and explain?"

"She's gone out for the day—no one knows where!"

"Then your aunt—couldn't you explain that Sara couldn't be here?"

"You don't know Aunt Julia!" groaned Jimmy. "She's got old-fashioned ideas about engagements. She'd think Sara was slighting her by not being here to meet her. And she certainly wouldn't understand that, despite our tiffs, Sara and I will make a very happy married couple."

Sally nodded. She believed that, but she could understand that an older woman wouldn't.

Jimmy was in a sticky position—but one, Sally felt, in which she could offer no advice.

She stood there hesitantly, knowing that her chums were waiting for her, yet reluctant to leave Mr. Kent to face this predicament alone after he had confided in her.

Quickly she stepped behind the screen which stood near the window, signalling to her chums below that she would be with them soon. And as she did so she heard a deep, brisk voice say:

"Good-morning, James!"

"Aunt J-Julia!" choked Jimmy.

"Oh, g-g-gee, I didn't—I mum-mean

"James!" came a stern voice.

"Stop blathering! Where is Sarah?"

"It's S-Sara, Aunt Julia," corrected Jimmy, getting a strong grip on himself. "Sh-she's not—"

"I said Sarah, and I mean Sarah!" said Aunt Julia in a no-nonsense sort of voice. "These new-fangled notions with names are quite ridiculous! And are you trying to tell me she's not here?" she asked sternly.

Sally felt she had heard quite enough. Sorry as she was for Jimmy, this was something he had to cope with alone.

She stepped from behind the screen, intending to bid Aunt Julia a polite "Good-morning!" and make a quick exit from the room. But as soon as Aunt Julia saw her she gave a snort.

"James!" she said reprovingly.

"How childish you still are, trying to pretend that Sarah was not here! I can tell you plainly," she added, looking sternly from one to the other, "that had she not had the courtesy to be here to meet me after I made such an effort to see you, not a penny of your money would you have seen until you were thirty! H'm!"

Her stern mouth relaxed into what Sally took to be a smile.

"She looks charming! Rather

What A Shock For Sally's Chums When They Saw Her Wearing An Engagement Ring!

young, of course, but time will remedy that. But why aren't you wearing your ring, child?" added Aunt Julia, her hawk-like eyes sweeping from Sally towards the ring winking and glowing in the sunlight in its box on the table.

Sally stood still, stunned into immobility. James gave a choking gasp.

"Aunt——" he spluttered. "Sus-Sally——"

"Sally?" echoed his aunt. "First Sara, now Sally! James, I will not have the good, old-fashioned name of Sarah mutilated in this way! Give me your finger, child!"

And before Sally realised what was happening, the diamond-and-sapphire ring was glistening on the third finger of her left hand.

"Golly!" she gasped. "You mustn't—you don't understand——"

"I understand," said Aunt Julia, with a penetrating look from her grey eyes. "That you and James have probably been having some silly sort of argument. But we'll have no more of that nonsense! James' letter told me he was sincere in his feelings towards his fiancée, and I shall be glad to know the foolish boy has someone to care for him while I am away. I may say I had already decided that he should have his money before I came here. Now I am glad I felt that way."

She picked up her bag, her grey gloves—for, despite the heat, Aunt Julia was clad in a mannish grey costume, a good, but shapeless felt hat, and low-heeled brogues—and turned towards the door.

"Now I shall take you both out to lunch. Come!" she said commandingly, and strode out of the room.

Sally turned startled blue eyes upon James. And then she gave a start. For Jimmy was looking at her excitedly.

"Sally, you must help me!" he whispered urgently. "It's only for an hour! I'll write and explain everything to her afterwards. My future is at stake—and Sara's as well! Sally—please——"

"But—but——" muttered Sally dazedly. "The—the garden fete! And—and this ring——"

"James! Sarah!" came the inexorable voice from the corridor. "Come!"

Rather weakly, still dazed, Sally found herself tottering about. Aunt Julia gripped her by one arm, James by the other, as they emerged into the sunshine.

"Sally!" came an impatient shout from her chums. "Come on——"

Aunt Julia bristled. "Really, Sarah," she said in her loud, carrying voice, "you must not let the students speak to you in such a familiar way. Remember, after you are married to James, you will be in a position of some authority here."

And, with a freezing glare at the stupefied chums, she jerked Sally and James forward into her car.

"M-married!" gasped Fay, as the car disappeared. "Mum-married—to Mr. Kent! What are earth——"

"Dud—did you see?" stammered Johnny. "She was wearing an engagement ring!"

"I saw! I saw, what's going on?" asked Don in bewilderment. "If this is some sort of joke, I don't get it!" he added indignantly.

Sally, in the car, was feeling in far from a joking mood. If only she had had time to explain to her chums! They would have understood, of course—would have wanted her to help Sara and James. Now, goodness knows what they would be thinking—especially Don, her boy chum!

Sally's one consolation was the thought that Aunt Julia was only here for an hour. But, just the same, it was a very subdued Sally who took her seat in the restaurant in Sarneville.

James himself was feeling no happier. He kept on looking at the clock, and at last he flashed a relieved nod towards Sally.

"I say, Aunt Julia," he said eagerly, "may I come to the airport and see you off? Sal—Sarah has an appointment elsewhere!"

Sally smiled. This delicate situation was almost at an end—and it

couldn't end soon enough for her! Then the smile froze on her lips as Aunt Julia shook her head.

"No, thank you, James!" she announced decidedly. "I've changed my mind——"

"Chu—changed your mind?" gasped Jimmy.

"Do control your detestable habit of repeating everything I say!" said Aunt Julia reprovingly. "I like this fiancée of yours. She's a sensible girl—the quiet type. Not like those flibberly-gibbets you used to admire when you were younger! I have decided to stay on, and I shall arrange for you two to have a formal engagement party at Sarneville's largest hotel to-night!"

ANOTHER COMPLICATION

THOSE words, so well-meant, so kindly spoken, fell upon Sally and James Kent like a bomb-shell.

What had at first seemed a harmless deception—started, indeed, by Aunt Julia herself—was now having startling complications. However sorry Sally felt about the repercussion it would have on Jimmy and Sara, this had got to stop right now.

"I thought you'd be pleased," said Aunt Julia rather smugly, "though I can't see why. I didn't imagine my good news would make you both so completely speechless with joy. Now," she added in her brisk, businesslike fashion, smoothing on her grey gloves, "I have a lot to see to, so I'll leave you two young things together."

She rose from the table. With a quick movement, Sally also rose.

"Miss Kent!" she cried urgently. "Wait! You must let me explain——"

"Aunt Julia to you, Sarah!" replied that woman, with a gracious smile.

"Hem! Y—yes! But I wanted to say——" And then there was a crash as Sally, in her haste to grab at Aunt Julia's arm, knocked over her chair.

"Aunt Julia, wait——" shouted Jimmy.

"Really—really!" Aunt Julia frowned forbiddingly. "Do please lower your voices! Everyone is staring at us! Now—not another word! I'll get in touch with you soon. Good-bye!"

And Aunt Julia strode purposefully from the restaurant, leaving Sally to sink back in a chair and stare in panic at young Mr. Kent.

"What a mess!" he groaned. "What a ghastly mess! 'Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practise to deceive'——"

"For goodness' sake don't start quoting now!" said Sally spiritedly. "You've got me into this, and you've jolly well got to get me out! Apart from that, have you stopped for one moment to think what Sara's reactions are going to be when she hears of your formal engagement—to another girl?"

Jimmy gave a hollow groan, which startled several of the diners around him.

"I daren't think!" he said tragically. "Gee, Sally, I seem to have got you in a fine old tangle—and myself as well. I'm awfully sorry! Goodness knows where it's all going to end! But you're not to worry. This is my headache, and I'll find a way out. And thanks, Sally, for being such a brick!"

Sally had to smile, despite her misgivings.

"I do hope everything works out all right, because I do want you and Sara to be happy," she said a little huskily. "Now I'd better get along to the garden fete. I'll have a whole heap more explaining to do when I get there," she added, with a rueful laugh.

It did not take long for her to reach the garden fete, in the taxi procured for her by James Kent. Johnny raised a cheer when she reached the flower-stall where he, Fay, and Don were standing.

"Sally!" cried Don, and his gaze shot to his girl chum's left hand, where the ring still sparkled. "Look

here—— I say—jigger, what's happen—penning? Sally, you're not really engaged——"

"Of course I'm not, chump!" said Sally, giving the morose-looking Don a melting smile.

"There, I told you so!" put in Fay. "But it's taken the combined efforts of Johnny and myself to stop him throwing these pot plants around!"

As quickly as possible, Sally told her chums the whole story. Johnny gave a gufaw when it was over. Fay giggled, and Don gave a sigh of relief.

"Gosh, so that's it!" he exclaimed. "You gave me an awful shock, Sally. But what are you going to do now?"

"We," corrected Sally, "are going to find Sara. I'm going to tell her everything that's happened——"

"And tell her it was her own fault in the first place," put in Don, with whom the morning's shock still remained.

"We all know how charming she really is," said Sally. "And I'm quite certain that under Miss Kent's grim exterior there's a very tender heart. I'm convinced that if Sara and Jimmy go along to see her together, when they find out where she's staying, and tell her the whole story, she'll forgive them—and hold the engagement party for the right pair."

They hurried along to the flat Sara shared with a girl named Barbara Dale. But Sara, they learnt, was out, and not likely to return for some time. The only thing they could do was leave a message, and this they did, telling Sara to get in touch with Jimmy as soon as possible.

After which they had tea in Sarneville, then hurried back to the college. While her chums went down to the lake for a spin in Johnny's motor-boat, Sally made her way to her chalet, intending to stow the ring away for safety.

As she reached it, a figure rose from the veranda. It was young Mr. Kent, his face one expansive beam.

"Sally!" he cried jubilantly. "Sally—great news! Sara phoned. She said she had a message from someone at the college——"

"Oh, splendid!" Sally cried. "Yes, I left the message."

"I tried to explain on the phone all that had happened," rushed on the young master happily. "I probably got it pretty muddled, because Sara sounded quite put-out. But she's coming over to see me. I'll explain the whole thing properly to her——"

"And then you must see your aunt," put in Sally eagerly. "I'm sure she'll understand if you explain the whole thing to her. Oh, everything's going to work out splendidly!"

"It is, indeed!" cried Mr. Kent. "And thanks, Sally, for standing by! Bless you! And, his boyish exuberance suddenly overcoming his sense of decorum, he seized Sally round the waist and gave her a grateful hug."

"Well!" said a voice, which sounded like chipped ice. "I could hardly believe Barbara when she told me some other girl was wearing my ring—when other friends told me of the cosy little party at the Ivy Restaurant this morning!"

"Sara!" yelled Jimmy, swinging round and staring at the pretty, but stormy-faced little person standing at the foot of the chalet steps.

"But when I see you with my own eyes," continued the remorseless voice, "behaving so shamelessly, for everyone to see, then—then——" Her voice broke. Tears welled into her large blue eyes. "I—I hate you, James Kent. I—I never want to see you again!"

And before the young master or Sally could recover from the shock she took to her heels and fled towards the drive. A moment later a taxi sped out of the gates. Sara had gone!

THE ENGAGEMENT PARTY

"WELL"—the word came explosively from James Kent's lips—"that finishes everything! That's the girl who's supposed to be fond of me! And she doesn't even trust me—wouldn't even stay to listen to an explanation!" He drew

a deep breath. "If she's finished, then so am I!"

Sally looked at him sympathetically as she heard the rather uneven tremor in his voice.

"You don't really mean that," she said quietly. "Why should she get so upset if she doesn't care about you any more?"

"Well, whether she does or not," said Jimmy dismally, "she's completely scuppered the whole works. I'll have to find aunt and cancel all to-night's arrangements— Oh gosh, what a mess!"

He began to mooch down the veranda steps, but Sally caught his arm.

"Wait!" she said, a gleam beginning to shine in her blue eyes. "Mr. Kent, don't cancel anything. I've got an idea. When your aunt phones, let her think everything is still all right."

"But, for goodness' sake," bleated Jimmy, "which fiancee am I taking to the party?"

"You're taking me," said Sally. "Now, no more questions! I'm going out again. And this time you can do something for me. Go down to the lake and tell Don I'll have to see him later. And be careful," she added, with a chuckle. "He'll be so annoyed he may forget you're a master!"

Puzzled, but with a look of hope beginning to dawn in his eyes, James Kent wandered off. And a short while later Sally, looking bright and pretty in a fresh linen dress, was once again knocking at the door of Sara's flat.

The door was opened by Sara herself, her blue eyes red-rimmed, the tip of her pert little nose a bright pink. She positively bristled when she saw Sally, and quickly made to slam the door.

"Sara," said Sally quietly, but there was something in her voice that stayed Sara's hand. "I know you're angry, but you're quite wrong in what you're thinking. And if you don't listen to what I have to say, I honestly believe you'll spend the rest of your life regretting it! Now, may I come in?"

For a moment longer Sara hesitated. Then something in the steady honesty of Sally's gaze convinced her that this was no trick. She swung the door open, ushered Sally inside.

And some half-hour later, when the door was once again opened, a very different Sara stood there.

"You're a brick!" she said fervently. "I'm sorry I ever thought any differently. Oh, Sally, I do hope your plan works out all right! Though after being such a little beast to Jimmy

"Forget it—he will," smiled Sally. "No, my way's got to work! I'll phone and let you know where my engagement party is being held," she added, with a chuckle. "And don't forget to be there! Everything depends on our acting ability to-night!" And, with a gay wave, Sally hurried off.

GAY music, the sound of happy laughter and excited voices filled the restaurant of the Palm Hotel that evening. At the head of a long table sat a very nervous-looking James. On his right was Sally, positively scintillating in a lovely, frothy dress of pale blue tulle, and on his left Aunt Julia, whose only concession to the evening's festivities had been to change from her severe grey suit into an equally severe grey silk dress.

But this was a vastly different Sally from the demure, nervous-looking girl Aunt Julia had met that morning. And Aunt Julia was not pleased with the change.

"W-what about this dance, Sal-Sarah?" asked Jimmy, nervously fingering his tie. "You like rumbas, don't you?"

"I do, but not with you, old thing!" replied Sally pertly.

"Sarah!" said Aunt Julia sharply. "This is the third time James has asked you to dance, and you have refused!"

Sally sighed; shrugged petulantly. "Oh, I know, but he's so hopeless! And why should I dance with blundering old Jimmy when a divine dancer

like Don is only too willing to be my escort?" And she gazed across at a rather pink-faced Don Weston, and tucked her arm into his.

Don, aware of Aunt Julia's gimlet glance, gave a chuckle.

"Don't overdo it, Sally," he said warningly. "You're doing fine so far. Now, if only Sara does her stuff—"

Sara was. Small, sweet, and wistful in her very pretty white dress, she moved into the chair on the other side of Jimmy and laid a timid hand on his arm.

"Jimmy," she whispered, and the tremor of her lips, the sparkle of unshed tears in her eyes, were real. "w-won't you dance with me—the way we used to before that—that girl came between us?"

Aunt Julia stiffened.

"Do you mean," she asked brusquely, "that you and James were friends before this fiancee of his appeared on the scene?"

"We were more than friends," murmured Sara. A spasm of pain passed over her face. "Oh, I feel it was more my fault than Jimmy's. If it hadn't

"Oh, Don, it's worked!" said Sally, tears of joy in her eyes. "I'm so happy. Or I would be," she added ruefully, "if I hadn't had to give Aunt Julia such a bad opinion of me!"

"But even if you had changed your mind," came Sara's tremblingly earnest voice, "it wouldn't have mattered. Jimmy and I would have got along together somehow. I would have kept on my job—"

Aunt Julia sat back in her chair.

"That's what I wanted to hear!" she said approvingly. "Now I know I'm doing right! Sally!" she called loudly, so that that girl, just disappearing through the doorway, jumped violently. "Come back, child! You've forgotten to congratulate Jimmy and—Sara," she said deliberately, "on their resumed engagement!"

It was Jimmy's turn to jump. He turned scarlet to the tips of his ears, while Sara clutched his hand.

"You—you mean you know?" asked Sally dazedly, as she returned to the table; stared at the twinkling grey eyes which were turned towards her.

"Know? That you're not, and never have been, the girl Jimmy wants to marry?" asked Aunt Julia calmly. "Of course I know! I may be old, but I'm not such a fool as my nephew here!"

"But—but how long have you known that?" blurted Don.

"Not long," admitted Aunt Julia.



"I shall arrange a formal engagement party for you," announced Aunt Julia. Sally groaned. Her position was becoming more and more difficult.

been for my temper we wouldn't have parted—he'd still be fond of me."

Aunt Julia gave a sniff.

"If you want my opinion, he still is," she said decidedly. "And who could blame him?" She gave a deep sigh. "That other girl's a puzzle to me—she seemed so charming this morning. But now— James, my boy," said Aunt Julia suddenly in her loud, commanding voice, "you're a fool! It's perfectly obvious to me and to everyone else with any sense that you and this girl here are still in love with one another—"

There was an electric hush as the words rang through the room. And in the silence Sally swept up her head in offended dignity.

"Is that so?" she demanded indignantly. "It's strange, but I've thought the same thing for a long time. Very well, James; that suits me! Here's your ring!" She drew off the engagement ring and threw it dramatically on the table. "You can carry on with the engagement party, but with some other girl for the central figure!"

There was an undertone of excited whispering as she strode towards the door, and then Aunt Julia's voice was heard.

"Well, child, put it on. That's where it belongs, isn't it?"

With a hand that shook, Jimmy caught up the ring; slid it on to Sara's small finger.

"Though I still think you're a fool, James," said Aunt Julia, "I shall not change my mind about your money

"I've just been sitting here putting two and two together. Now," she said to James, "perhaps you'd like to tell me the whole story."

Red-faced, hesitant, Jimmy blurted out the story. And at the end of it Aunt Julia sat back and laughed until the tears streamed down her cheeks.

"It serves me right for being a domineering old woman!" she chuckled. "Oh, James, I shall have something to laugh about during the years I'm away from you! But," she added, fixing Sara with a stern glance, "no more tantrums, mind! And you, James, be more strict with her!"

"Yes, aunt!" said James meekly. "As for your child—Aunt Julia took Sally's hand; pressed it affectionately—you've been a good friend to these two—it's my dearest wish that you should continue to be so in the future. I knew I couldn't be wrong in my first impression of you. I'm glad I wasn't!"

"So am I," said Sally warmly.

"And now let's get on with the party," said Aunt Julia. "James and Sara, you can dance this together. And you, my dear," she added, turning to Sally and Don, "can dance with that nice young man you're so fond of!"

And she gave a little chuckle as Sally and Don blushed crimson.

(End of this week's story.)

There will be another entertaining story featuring the ever-popular Merry-makers in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.

SHE WOULDN'T BE BOSSED BY BRIAN

(Continued from page 188.)

plain to our friend that you've changed your mind. You'll be setting sail at once, bo'sun?"

"Ay, ay, sir!"
Happily Patsy waited on the sunlit deck, listening to the sounds of the yacht getting under way.

And then she heard another sound—a faint splashing and a scraping at the side of the yacht. Even as she turned, a head and shoulders, dripping with water, appeared above the rail—and a stifled cry was torn from Patsy's lips.

"Brian!" she gasped, drawing back.

The boy's face was grim as he sprang to the deck.

"So my news was right!" he panted. "You broke your word to me, Patsy. But you're coming away with me right now—while there's time!"

He strode forward to grasp her

arm, and Patsy gave a broken, almost unthinking cry.

"Help!"
"Oh, heck! That's torn it!" growled Brian, as there came a sound of shouting and footsteps pounding across the deck.

He whirled, his hands clenched, to confront Mr. Morgan and Irma, accompanied by the muscular bo'sun and another member of the crew.

"Hold that young scoundrel!" rapped Mr. Morgan, taking in the scene at a glance.

Brian fought desperately, but he was no match for the two powerful seamen and was quickly seized.

"What's the meaning of this, you young rascal?" barked Mr. Morgan. "How dare you force your way on to Mr. Dyson's yacht?"

Brian gave a short, scornful laugh. "Fatsy," he said, meeting her anxious, reproachful glance, "I'm going to tell you something! This yacht belongs to Mr. Morgan himself. There's no such person as 'Mr. Dyson'—there never was! He was just a myth, invented by your so-called friends to lead you into their snare!"

"Why, you lying young scoundrel—burst out Mr. Morgan.

"Brian, what do you mean?" gasped Patsy.

"I mean," snapped the boy, "that the Morgans planned to kidnap you—bribed a second-rate actor to do their dirty work. When you were missed, they'd have sworn they knew nothing about it, and the blame would have fallen on an unknown 'Indian'—supposedly in the pay of the elusive Mr. Dyson, who would never be found."

"But—why?" gasped Patsy, her mind in a whirl.

"Because," jerked Brian huskily, as he struggled to prevent the bo'sun from clapping a hand over his mouth—"because Irma was afraid you'd carry off the prize in the swimming contest, and win the chance of starring in a South Sea film—"

"How dare you!" gasped Irma, her dark eyes blazing. "It was I who persuaded Patsy to enter—"

"Because you knew that I'd already applied for the entry form for her to sign!" rapped Brian. "You decided to get in first with your fake sports-promoter, and then arrange for her to be spirited away to your father's Pacific island till the contest was over. I've got the proof here, in my oil-skin wallet—proof I found when I boarded your yacht in the early hours of this morning. I meant to warn Patsy, but she gave me the slip."

With a little gasp of remorse Patsy started forward, but Irma caught at her arm.

"Not so fast!" hissed that girl. "Pop, you're not going to let that boy ruin our plan? You promised—"

"Take it easy, honey!" drawled Mr. Morgan. "I guess we've got the pair of young fools where we want them. They'll both vanish for a few days, and it'll be young Travers who'll be blamed—when they're found—"

"You—rotter!"

The angry shout came from Brian as, with a desperate struggle, he broke from his captors.

Mr. Morgan took an unwary step towards the boy, to be sent sprawling to the deck as Brian's head rammed his ample waistline.

For a second the bo'sun and the other seamen were too astounded to make a move—and Brian, seizing his opportunity, caught Patsy up in his arms and made for the rail.

"Stop 'em—guard the launch!" roared Mr. Morgan.

The bo'sun sprang to the ladder, waving a boathook. Brian climbed on to the rail, Patsy clinging to his shoulders.

"We'll have to swim for it, Patsy!" he gasped. "It's the only way. Hold your breath—for a double dive!"

Overboard they went. Gasping, Patsy reached the surface, to find Brian swimming close to her.

"Straight for the reef!" he panted. "By the time they get the launch going, we'll be well away—and they won't dare follow us into the lagoon for fear of being seen from shore. This is your big test, Patsy, and if you can make it, my money's on you for Miami—and film fame!"

And Patsy made it—swimming neck and neck with Brian, and as they climbed to safety on the reef they waved defiantly to their chagrined pursuers.

"Sorry to boss you around, Patsy," gasped Brian as he gripped her hand, "but I just couldn't let a girl like you be taken in by a pair like that!"

Patsy smiled tremulously as she returned his grasp.

"I—I think I rather enjoy being bossed, sometimes," she rejoined breathlessly, "by—a boy like you!"

THE END.

"Sheila's Mystery Birthday Present"
—that is the title of next week's intriguing long complete story.

AUTOGRAPHS FOR YOUR FREE FILM STAR ALBUM

This week's autographs are of Clark Gable, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Eric Portman, Michael Wilding, Joan Crawford, Orson Welles, David Niven, Patricia Neal, Alan Ladd, Joseph Cotten, Errol Flynn, Gary Cooper, Lana Turner, Danny Kaye, and Alastair Sim. Eight more autographs will appear next Friday. Make certain of obtaining them by placing a regular order for your GIRLS' CRYSTAL.

Clark Gable Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.

Eric Portman Michael Wilding

Joan Crawford Orson Welles

David Niven Patricia Neal

Alan Ladd Joseph Cotten

Anna Neagle Errol Flynn

Gary Cooper Lana Turner

Danny Kaye Alastair Sim