

*Revised*

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# GIRLS' CRYSTAL <sup>3¢</sup>

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"



"HER DANCING DAYS IN MEXICO"



# Detective June's STRANGEST CASE

By PETER LANGLEY

## REUNITED

UNDER the name of Carolyn Stuart, June Gaynor, niece of Noel Raymond, the famous detective, joined a film company staying at lonely Knoll Castle. A mysterious figure, known as the Green Archer, was plotting to drive the film company out of the castle.

Also staying there was a man who was masquerading as June's uncle, and the girl detective discovered that the impostor was also the Green Archer.

June was forced to become a fugitive by the Green Archer, and learnt of a great coup he was planning which he called Operation Van Dyke. She believed that the solution to the mystery lay hidden behind a locked door underneath the castle.

June returned to the castle disguised as a maid, and found an iron-glove curio which she believed would open the locked door.

She was on her way to Rainbow Cave to investigate when she saw a figure she believed to be the impostor stumbling along the beach. But all at once she realised that it was not the impostor, but—Noel Raymond himself!

**"NUNKY! It's Nunky!"**

Joyfully though June Gaynor cried out, that look of incredulity remained in her eyes.

"Surely there must be some mistake! Her uncle was a prisoner—in the power of the confederates of the audacious rascal who was masquerading up at the castle!

Torn between amazement and delight, the girl detective stood there in the shadow of the cavern entrance, staring wonderingly at that tall, athletic figure which was stumbling up the beach towards her.

In the fading light his face looked thin and white, and his clothes were dishevelled and torn.

Her last doubts vanished.

This was certainly not the debonair impostor who was secretly plotting against the film company.

"Nunky!" June cried again, and now there was nothing but uncontrolled delight in her voice.

The stumbling figure came to a halt and peered uncertainly at her. One hand was pressed to his head, and he looked dazed and bewildered.

June, suddenly remembering she was disguised, whipped off her horn-rimmed spectacles and wig.

"Nunky, don't you recognise me?" she gasped. "It's me—June!"

Still that tall figure did not speak. As if unable to believe his own eyes, he stared. Then he started forward, an excited cry breaking from his lips. "June!" By all that's wonderful—it's you!"

His arms went out, and in a moment June was in them. Half-sobbing, half-laughing, she returned his fond hug.

"Oh, Nunky, but this is simply

super!" she declared. "The best surprise ever! At first I thought I must be dreaming."

"So did I, my dear," Noel said huskily. "It seemed too good to be true, but—" Breaking off, he regarded her in bewilderment. "Whatever are you doing up here? And in disguise, too!"

Her new-found happiness found vent in a teasing laugh.

"I came up here to keep an eye on you—at least on the fellow everyone thinks is Noel Raymond."

He caught in his breath in a startled hiss.

"You mean that you've been working on this Green Archer case?" he ejaculated.

She nodded.

"Yes—I joined the film company specially so that I could spike his guns. You see—but that can wait." Suddenly realising how pale and ill her uncle looked, June regarded him anxiously. "But what's been happening to you, Nunky? You're—you're all right, aren't you?"

With his fingers Noel combed back his untidy hair and grinned a trifle ruefully.

"Right as rain," he assured her, "though I expect I do look a bit of a scarecrow. You see, it wasn't easy to escape."

"Escape!" June gave an uneasy gasp. "Then you really have been a prisoner?"

He nodded and, turning half-round, gestured towards the dark sea to where, almost on the horizon, could be seen the dark shape of an anchored steamer.

"Yes—on that old tramp. They took me aboard almost as soon as they captured me down on the Riviera. But let's make ourselves a bit more comfy. Then I'll tell you all about it."

Leading the way across to two flat-topped boulders, he seated himself on one and June perched herself on the other, cupping her chin in her hands and gazing at him eagerly.

It was a strange story which Noel had to tell her.

While convalescing in the South of France, he had visited Monte Carlo, and there his attention had been attracted by a man seated outside a café, talking to a companion whose seafaring clothes showed him to be a ship's captain.

The man was the detective's double and, astonished by the uncanny re-

**What A Dramatic Meeting  
It Was When Noel  
And His Double Came  
Face To Face In The  
Secret Room**

semblance, Noel had edged nearer. A few scraps of conversation he had overheard had made him suspect that his double and the seafaring man—from Noel's description June realised that the latter must have been Captain Kummel—were planning some rascality. The result was, he had decided to keep the two men under observation.

Secretly, during the next few days, he had shadowed them, and bit by bit he had learnt that their mysterious plotting was to be directed against the film unit which was to take up residence in far off Knoll Castle.

Before he could discover the full truth, however, he himself had been trailed and overpowered. Dumped into a boat, he had been rowed across to an old tramp-steamer which, a day or two later, had set sail for the North English coast.

During the absence of Captain Kummel and most of the crew, Noel had managed to wriggle out of his bonds and escape from his cabin.

"I had a tussle with the chap they'd left in charge," he concluded, "but managed to get the better of him. I then grabbed one of the ship's boats and rowed for the shore. I'd just landed when you came along, and—great Scott! What a shock you gave me!" Noel grinned and gave June's arm a fond squeeze. "But now it's your turn, my dear. Exactly what have you been up to?"

It took June longer to recite all the astonishing adventures which had befallen her since that never-to-be-forgotten day when she had motored to Folkestone to greet joyously the man she had believed to be her uncle.

Noel listened in growing admiration, and as she paused he regarded her proudly.

"Well done, my dear!" he cried. "It's simply terrific the way you've stuck to your guns. That rascal certainly met his match when he met you."

His warm praise made her heart glow, but it was ruefully that she shook her curly head.

"I deserve kicking for ever allowing myself to be taken in," she declared. "Looking back, it seems absurd that anyone could ever have believed that impostor was you."

"Nonsense, my dear!" The famous detective gave her arm another fond squeeze. "You've no need to reproach yourself at all. You've done splendidly. But carry on, my dear. What's this about there being a secret room under the castle?"

June felt her pulses race as she explained what she had heard about the mysterious Operation Van Dyke, and how she believed that the solution to the mystery lay hidden behind the locked door of which she had managed to secure the "iron glove" key.

"This Operation Van Dyke is connected with your visit to New York, Nunky," she concluded. "That's the chief reason why the Green Archer decided to impersonate you. He's going to masquerade as you in America. Oh, what's it all mean? What's going to happen in New York?"

To her disappointment Noel shook his head.

"I'm afraid I'm as baffled as you, my dear," he said. "While I was in the South of France I accepted an invitation from Mr. van Dyke, the famous American art collector, to visit him at the end of the month, but what exactly the Green Archer is planning is not clear. Perhaps he's got his eye on Van Dyke's valuable collection, though I don't for the life of me see how any attempt on that can be connected with this business at the castle."

He frowned wonderingly, and for a few moments they were silent, both intrigued by the mystery. Then, as June's hand encountered the queer "iron glove" key in her pocket, she jumped excitedly to her feet.

"Come on, Nunky!" she cried. "We'll soon discover the truth. I'm certain we'll get to the bottom of things once we see inside that secret room."

Only too willingly her uncle followed her into Rainbow Cave, and he whistled as he watched her open the slab of rock which guarded the entrance to the underground passages.

"This is certainly a place of surprises," he commented.

June's eyes were dancing. "You haven't seen anything yet, Nunky," she declared, and led him up the steep, stone staircase.

Noel whistled again when, clicking on a torch, she let its bright light shine on the strangely carved door, and in silent wonderment he watched her produce the "iron glove" key from her pocket.

June's heart was pounding, and she was so excited that her hands quivered as she raised the mailed glove and fitted its spike in the recess hollowed out in the oak.

Hardly able to breathe, on tenterhooks of anxiety, she twisted at the queer-shaped curio. To her delight it swung round at her touch. There was a muffled click, and slowly the ancient door swung open.

June could hardly suppress a whoop of triumph, and feverishly she clutched at her uncle's arm.

"Come on, let's investigate," she urged, and eagerly she led the way into the secret room, the beam of her torch cleaving the inky darkness like a sword.

### IN THE SECRET ROOM

**E**XACTLY what June had expected to find she hardly knew, but certainly she was unprepared for what was revealed.

The torchlight showed the secret room to be a vast, crypt-like chamber, with stone walls, flagged floor and arched roof. Dust and cobwebs were everywhere, and the air was damp and stuffy.

But what held the girl detective's gaze, what made her stare in astonishment, were the objects ranged around the walls.

There was a miniature blast furnace; a small printing press; a forge; a massive mechanical hammer—an array of machinery whose purpose she could only dimly guess at.

"Why, it's like being in the machine shop of a factory!" she gasped.

Noel Raymond made no comment. Thoughtfully, shrewdly, his gaze went around the underground room; then, noticing a lantern standing on a desk, he crossed over and lit it.

There were test tubes and a Bunsen burner on the desk; a sheaf of papers, too. Some had coloured drawings on them; on others were precisely worded descriptions.

Silently the detective studied them, and wonderingly June darted to his side.

"What's it mean, Nunky?" she cried, unable to contain her curi-

osity any longer. "Exactly what game is the Green Archer up to?"

Noel's face, white and pinched from his long imprisonment, was grim as he looked up and surveyed her flushed, bewildered features.

"His immediate game is crystal clear, my dear," he said quietly. "It is at all costs to drive the film unit out of the castle."

"But why?" asked June. "With an expressive wave of one hand her uncle indicated the array of machinery."

"He couldn't possibly operate this while the castle was occupied. The noise would lead to instant investigation. No doubt when all this stuff was fitted in here the castle was empty. The Green Archer and his men hoped to be able to work undisturbed. It must have been a terrific shock for them when they learnt that Theodore Cronberg was coming here to make a film. No wonder they decided to revive the legend of the Green Archer in order to drive him away."

"But why, Nunky?" gasped June. "What do they want to use this machinery for?"

Silently Noel handed over the sheaf of papers. With wondering eyes June

Wide-eyed, June stared. "Worthless fakes?" she ejaculated.

Her uncle gave another grim nod. "Yes, that's the purpose of all this machinery. To make perfect copies of all the priceless pieces comprising the Van Dyke British collection, and to manufacture replicas of the four embossed copper caskets in which they are stored."

Once again June's heart began to pound. Noel's earnest manner was very impressive. She began to feel overwhelmed by the stupendous nature of the coup which had been planned.

"But how can the fakes be substituted for the real curios?" she asked. "If Mr. van Dyke's collection is so valuable, surely it will be well guarded?"

Noel frowned. He realised that, though they had made many important discoveries, the main key to the audacious plan was still missing.

"I'm afraid I can't answer those questions, my dear," he said.

"No—but I can!" The voice, cool, mocking, came from the doorway.

Round June and her uncle whirled, and then they both gasped, for standing there, his hands nonchalantly



June gave a gasp of dismay as the rock door swung open and Captain Kummel and two seamen from the tramp steamer loomed before her. She was trapped.

stared at them. Some of the drawings consisted of pictures of jewelled ornaments, so vividly painted that they seemed to sparkle and gleam. On others were pictures of elaborately embossed metal caskets. Each sheet was numbered, and against each number were printed the words:

"VAN DYKE BRITISH COLLECTION."

Though she still did not fully understand, June felt a thrilled shiver grip her, for obvious it was that these coloured drawings and the machinery in this secret room were connected vitally with the mysterious plan the Green Archer had titled "Operation Van Dyke."

"It's this British collection which the Green Archer's out to steal, isn't it, Nunky?" she cried.

Grimly he nodded.

"Yes—practically everything is now clear," he replied. "Now I've seen this room, all the little bits I ferreted out in France fall into place. But the audacity of the plan—its stupendous nature—makes me gasp. I suppose you've never heard of Van Dyke's collection of British curios, my dear?"

June shook her head, and Noel frowned, as if he found it difficult to explain.

"Imagine what a sensation there would be if the Crown Jewels were stolen," he said at last. "Van Dyke's British collection isn't as valuable or as unique as those, but—well, it would certainly cause a wide world stir if they went missing—especially if subsequently it was found that worthless fakes had been substituted for the real jewelled curios."

thrust into his jacket pockets, was a tall, athletic figure.

The bogus Noel Raymond! There was an amused gleam in the impostor's blue eyes, and he made an ironical bow in the real Noel's direction.

"At last we are face to face," he murmured. "Charmed. I'm sure! Really, but the resemblance is remarkable!"

Noel, his face grim and angry, clenched his fists and strode forward.

"You impudent trickster—" he began, and then pulled up abruptly.

Like lightning the Green Archer's right hand had whipped from his pocket, and in the lantern light something cold and metallic gleamed.

A revolver, and its deadly muzzle was pointing straight at the famous detective.

"Shouldn't risk any argument with this if I were you," the impostor snapped, and he brandished the gun threateningly. Then his gaze fastened on the startled June, and once again a mocking smile curved his lips.

"You were very clever, my dear," he said, "but not clever enough."

"What do you mean?" gasped June. He chuckled.

"You overlooked the fact that that fool Cronberg might quickly discover the loss of the library key and report the loss to me. You also overlooked the fact that already I was beginning to suspect that our new maid was not all she appeared to be. A pity—otherwise you and your respected uncle might have won the final round. As it is—"

He paused, and his fingers tightened over his grip on the butt of the pistol. "As it is, I'm afraid you lose. Not only will the Green Archer bring off his coup, but the real Noel Raymond will have to shoulder the blame!"

### A DESPERATE SITUATION

THERE was a wealth of sinister meaning behind the impostor's cryptic words, and June felt icy fingers clutch at her heart.

What did he mean? How was it possible that her uncle should be blamed for the gigantic robbery the Green Archer was planning?

She did not know, but instinctively she knew the man in the doorway was not bluffing, and another uneasy shiver ran down her spine.

Seeing her distress, the real Noel put a soothing arm around her shoulders.

"Don't let what this rascal says worry you, my dear," he urged. "He's only bluffing."

The impostor laughed. "That's where you are mistaken, my friend, as you would realise if you knew the real reason why Van Dyke has invited you to New York."

"The real reason!" Noel frowned. "What do you mean?"

The impostor laughed again. "That our American friend wishes you to take charge of his collection of British curios."

Noel gasped. "How do you know that?" he demanded.

Mockingly the impostor's eyes twinkled.

"From the correspondence, my dear sir. During your—er—unfortunate absence from the country Van Dyke has written several times, making everything clear."

He paused, and, as if sensing that he might goad the detective too much, he curled his forefinger round the trigger of his gun.

"As you know," he went on, "all the priceless curios in the collection once belonged to this country. They were sold during the war, and Van Dyke—a sentimental fool if ever there was one—has decided to present them to a famous British museum. Naturally they are too valuable to send over in the usual way, so he is going to entrust you to convey them safely across the Atlantic."

Noel gave another gasp. So did June.

Obvious now was the solution to the problem which had baffled them.

If the Green Archer, still masquerading as the famous detective, journeyed to America, the priceless collection would be handed over to him, and during the voyage back he would have plenty of opportunity to substitute the worthless caskets for the real ones.

The British authorities would accept the fake curios without question, and long before the substitution was discovered the real curios would have been broken up and sold, and the Green Archer and his men would have vanished beyond all trace.

The scheme was remarkable both for its simplicity and its audacity. Providing the Green Archer could keep up his pose as Noel Raymond, it must succeed, and—

June felt the blood drain from her cheeks.

Suddenly she had remembered the impostor's declaration that the real Noel would be forced to shoulder all the blame. Like a hammer blow the meaning of those cryptic words now became clear.

Until long after the coup was completed, she and her uncle would be kept imprisoned. By the time they were released it would be too late.

June's eyes filled with horror. "And when the substitution's discovered everyone will think Nunky is the thief!" she told herself brokenly.

"His story about having a double will never be believed. Nunky will be ruined—may even be sent to prison!"

Hot, stinging tears rose to her eyes. How correct had been that strange premonition which had seized her on the very day when she had first met the bogus Noel Raymond! The fact

that the future happiness of the uncle she loved and admired was at stake was now proved beyond all doubt.

The arm about her shoulders tightened its grip, and sternly, even scornfully, the real Noel surveyed his double.

"A very clever plan," he commented. "But its success depends upon two factors."

"And what are those?" asked the impostor, his lips curling into a sneer.

"First that you succeed in driving the film unit out of this castle, so that you and your gang can get to work here undisturbed."

The man in the doorway laughed.

"Don't worry. That will be soon accomplished. As soon as Captain Kummel and his men arrive to take you two to his ship I mean to create a really sensational fire. A fire which will not only burn up all the film gear and costumes, but which will apparently destroy the necklace which has been lent to Cronberg. That will mean ruin for the company—an end to all this film-making."

June stared in helpless despair, but her uncle's expression did not change. As if his rascally double had not spoken, he continued:

"Secondly, you will have to make sure that June and I are not rescued," he declared.

Utterly contemptuous was the laugh with which the impostor greeted this statement.

"Rescue! That's out of the question," he declared.

But to June's surprise her uncle shook his head.

"Oh, no, it isn't!" he said quietly. "Apparently it has not occurred to you that my first job after escaping from the ship might have been to send off a telegram to the authorities."

The impostor's grin vanished as if by magic. A startled gasp left his lips.

"A—a telegram?" Noel gave a calm nod.

"Perhaps you would like to see a copy of it," he murmured.

Apparently oblivious of the pistol which was aimed at him, he thrust a hand into his jacket pocket and produced a folded sheet of paper.

"Just read what it says," he invited, and tossed the paper towards the doorway.

June's eyes were ashine; her heart was thumping.

"Oh, Nunky, how clever of you!" she exclaimed. "If rescue's on the way—"

A furious shout from the impostor cut her short.

"This is a trick!" he snarled, yet he could not help glaring uneasily down at the folded paper which had fluttered to the floor at his feet.

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Noel smiled. "Read it and see," he suggested again.

For a moment his double hesitated; then, glowering, he bent to pick up the paper, and in that split second when his gaze was diverted the famous detective acted.

With one lightning grab of his hand he picked up a wooden box from the desk and hurled it with all his strength.

Flying through the air, the missile cracked the impostor over the knuckles, and, howling with pain, he let the revolver clatter to the stone flags.

Instantly Noel hurled himself at his double, and next moment both of them were rolling over and over, locked in a fierce, desperate grip.

June, bewildered and startled by this unexpected turn of events, saw her uncle staring urgently up at her as he battled with the impostor.

"Run off and fetch help!" Noel panted. "Quickly! That telegram was only a trick. I haven't sent one off!"

For a moment the girl detective hesitated. She hated the idea of leaving her uncle, yet his instructions were sensible. Their one hope was to secure the assistance of the police before Captain Kummel and his rascally crew arrived on the scene.

One last uneasy look June cast at the two savagely fighting men on the floor, then she darted past them and went racing down the underground tunnel.

Panting, she reached the top of the steep stone staircase. Down it she plunged, but at the foot she pulled up, her heart hammering.

What was that?

From behind the slab of stone came the crunch of footsteps; it was a mumble of men's voices.

Panic seized her.

"It must be Kummel and his gang!" she gulped, and, turning, made to flee down the second tunnel.

But too late.

The secret doorway at the rear of Rainbow Cave clanged open and there, in the light of a ship's lantern, stood the burly captain of the tramp steamer, with two blue-jeerseyed figures ranged behind him.

At sight of the girl detective Captain Kummel gave a furious bellow, then his hand lunged out. Before she could escape she found herself seized and dragged forward.

"The girl detective!" Kummel exclaimed. "The Green Archer, he warn me to look out for you. But where is the man he is impersonating—him they call Noel Raymond?"

June did not reply. Despair had engulfed her. It looked as if her uncle's daring trick had been played in vain. Escape for either of them now seemed impossible.

And that would mean—

June gave a groan.

The triumph of their enemies! The success of the stupendous plan known as Operation Van Dyke!

The hand on her wrist tightened its grip. Captain Kummel's eyes blazed into her own.

"Answer, girl! Where is this Noel Raymond? Where—"

His bellowing voice broke off, and the two seamen stiffened and went tense. From above they had heard the sound of struggling. Wonderingly they listened. June listened, too.

Who was winning—Noel or the Green Archer?

Not that it mattered, for, even if the detective succeeded in knocking out his double, he would find himself cornered.

Suddenly all noise in the secret room came to an end, and his hand still clutching June's wrist, Captain Kummel strode forward.

"Come! Let us investigate!" he ordered.

And he half-led, half-dragged June up the stone steps. Behind them came the members of his crew, one carrying a lantern, the other grimly clutching a marline spike.

Don't miss the thrilling climax in next week's concluding chapters of this grand story.



# The MYSTERY Which CAME BETWEEN THEM

By RHODA FLEMING

## TERRY'S BIG SACRIFICE

"I've got the part—I've got it! Oh, it's too good to be true!" Terry Esmond almost sang the words, as she clattered down the narrow stairs that led from the producer's office. Through her mind ran the lilting refrain of the seamstress' song from the "Wayward Princess"—the musical hit of the year.

Even now she could scarcely believe her amazing luck. Yesterday she had been an obscure typist in a big London firm—and a spare-time pupil at the local dramatic academy. Tomorrow, all being well, she would be the youngest actress in the company that was taking the "Wayward Princess" on tour—chosen from scores of applicants for the small yet important role of the young seamstress, with a haunting theme song all to herself!

Down the winding stairs she hurried, feeling as though she were treading on air.

"I must tell Joyce!" was her first coherent thought. "She'll be thrilled, I know. She always teased me about taking up acting seriously—but that was just her fun. She and her mother have been my best friends since—since Phil went away."

For a moment her eager smile faltered, and she quickly swallowed the little lump that rose in her throat.

The joy of her success would have been even greater if her brother could have been here to share it. But Phil's dismissal from the post of chauffeur to wealthy Cyrus Morgan, the art-collector, had forced him to seek a job far away from London.

Her brother had been falsely accused of the loss of some valuable paintings—and the mystery remained unsolved despite all the efforts of the police. Some day, Terry felt convinced, an opportunity would come to help him clear his name.

Meanwhile, she knew he would be delighted to hear of her thrilling new chance to make a name for herself—and the money they both needed. And so would Joyce Gayford, her talented, vivacious chum.

After leaving school, she and Joyce had joined the same amateur dramatic society, and Mrs. Gayford had always made Terry welcome at her home, treating her as if she were Joyce's sister. And though rumours must have reached Joyce, and her mother, neither of them had ever breathed a word about Phil's disgrace.

Terry could never forget the kindness they had shown her when she had been almost friendless; and she was determined that Joyce and her mother should be the first to hear her good news

The Gayfords had a small but pleasant little house in the suburbs, and Terry could reach it by tube within an hour of the girls' hostel where she was staying.

As she gained the street, she could see the winking coloured lights of the theatre sign opposite—advertising the very show in which she was soon to appear!

Some day—dreamed Terry—some day, when Phil's name was cleared, and she was a famous actress—

Roughly she was brought back to earth, as someone almost collided with her on the pavement.

"Can't you look where you're going—clumsy?" demanded a bad-tempered voice.

The speaker was a girl, a year or so older than Terry. She stood revealed in the light of the theatre sign, tall and smartly dressed, her dark hair drawn back from a pale, good-looking face.

Terry's good-natured retort was frozen on her lips, for there was something remarkably familiar about the other girl! Where had she seen her before?

Even as she grappled with an elusive memory, the girl had entered the theatrical agency Terry had just left—flaunting past with a swish of a stylish coat and a waft of expensive perfume.

Then Terry remembered!

The girl was Claire Silverton—daughter of the man who had denounced her brother to the police!

Hands clenched, Terry's mind flashed back to that dreadful evening at Mr. Morgan's house. She had gone to meet her brother—only to learn that there had been a daring robbery; that Phil was under suspicion.

She had caught a glimpse of Mr. Morgan's secretary—sleek, dark-haired Vernon Silverton, and his elegant daughter. They had been doing most of the talking, Terry remembered.

Feeling suddenly choked, she gazed through the doorway and up the stairs after the girl. What was Claire Silverton doing here? For no reason at all she suddenly felt uneasy and on the journey by tube to Joyce's suburb she found it difficult to shake

off the worried impression left by the unexpected encounter.

Thank goodness the girl had not recognised her! On the threshold of an exciting new career that might mean so much to both her and Phil, it would be bad for rumours to get around—and Claire Silverton was just the kind of person who would delight in spreading them.

At last Terry managed to dismiss the incident from her mind, and turned her thoughts to the friends she was going to see—gay-hearted, loveable Joyce and her mother. She had not breathed a word to them, yet, about her application for a part in the musical play.

She knew that Joyce would have ragged her good-naturedly—and she had hardly dared to hope that she would actually succeed. It had been a close thing! Another girl had almost been decided on when Terry arrived—one of the previous day's applicants. But struck both by Terry's ability and her appearance—which ideally suited the role—the producer had finally made up his mind.

Her eyes shining, Terry hugged her handbag which contained a copy of the precious contract she was to sign to-morrow. The wheels of the train seemed to beat out the haunting air of her theme song—and her footsteps on the pavement leading to Joyce's house echoed the same lilting tune.

When she knocked at the house the door was opened by Joyce's mother—grey-haired, and a little careworn, but with her usual charming smile.

"Why, come in, dear! It seems ages since we saw you. Joyce will be delighted. She was just going to write to you about her new plans."

Terry's eyes sparkled.

"I've got some plans, too—but I'll hear Joyce's, first—" she began.

"Ter-ry!" A door was thrown open at the end of the hall, and a slim, radiant young figure was silhouetted against warm light. "Terry—you dear—you're just the person I wanted to see!"

Terry And Joyce Were Inseparable Friends. It Seemed Impossible That They Could Ever Quarrel And Yet— But Read For Yourself What Happens In This Enthralling Long Complete Story

Joyce ran forward to hug her chum in her usual impulsive fashion.

"Such news, dear!" she exclaimed gaily. "I hardly know where to start."

"Well, let Terry sit down and have a cup of tea, first," put in Mrs. Gayford, smiling. "She looks tired."

"I'm not," Terry denied happily, as she accompanied them into the cosy sitting-room. "I just couldn't be tired to-night."

"That's good," laughed Joyce, perching herself on the arm of a chair, her auburn hair reflecting the firelight, "because I'm going to talk you silly in a minute! My news just won't keep—will it, mums?"

"Now, don't get Terry all worked up with suspense," reproved Mrs. Gayford, as she poured out tea. "Let me explain something first. You know, Terry, dear, that I lost a great deal of my savings recently. Some investments went wrong, you know."

Terry's eyes were filled with quick sympathy.

"Joyce did mention something about it in her last letter. I'm terribly sorry!"

"Of course, dear, it might have been worse," went on Mrs. Gayford, smiling unsteadily, "but it was a great blow to Joyce, who had hoped to stay on at the academy. But"—she glanced proudly at the charming young figure on the armchair—"my little daughter had her own ideas."

"Let me tell her, mums!" Joyce cut in, laughing. "You know, Terry, I was always pretty good at acting—though I used to rag you for taking it so seriously. Well, I heard through the school of a part that was vacant in a touring company—and I went for an audition yesterday. And I got it, dear! At least"—as Terry stared at her in amazement, her heart beating quickly—"it's almost as good as mine. The producer said he'd a few more applicants to interview, and he'd let me know to-morrow for certain—but I'm sure there won't be a hitch. Terry—you'll never guess what part it is!"

Somewhere at the end of the street a barrel-organ was churning out a haunting little refrain. It seemed like an echo of Terry's own thoughts as, her face rather pale, she met her chum's gay, confident smile.

"Joyce, you don't mean—" she faltered.

"Hark!" exclaimed Joyce, her eyes dancing as she held up her hand. "Do you recognise that tune? That's my theme song, Terry—the seamstress' song in the 'Wayward Princess'—the part I'm going to take!"

Terry rose abruptly to her feet, hardly daring to look at her chum. She crossed to the open window, staring unseeing into the deserted street—deserted except for the barrel-organ.

"Why, Terry—what's the matter?" Joyce's smile had faded, and she was looking at her chum in hurt bewilderment. "Aren't you pleased?"

Terry turned quickly, forcing an unsteady laugh as she took a grip on her feelings.

"Of course I am, dear! It—it's wonderful news! But I was so astounded for a minute that I hardly knew what to say."

"I knew I'd surprise you!" Joyce laughed, her gaiety recovered. "I wanted you to be the first to congratulate me, Terry, old thing!"

"You look quite pale, Terry," said Mrs. Gayford, with motherly solicitude. "It's all this office work that has been tiring you. Do sit down and have another cup of tea."

Gratefully Terry seized at the excuse, but her hand trembled as she raised the cup to her lips. Her thoughts were in a whirl.

How could she break the news to her chum? The news that she, Terry, had been offered the very role on which Joyce had set her heart!

The contract was in her handbag, now, ready for her signature. By a cruel stroke of fate she had obtained her most thrilling chance—at the cost of unhappiness to these two friends to whom she owed so much.

Before the strains of the distant

barrel-organ had died away, Terry had made up her mind.

Soon afterwards she made an excuse to leave, pleading that they had some late work to do at the office. Both Joyce and her mother urged her to come to tea next day, to hear the latest news.

"A celebration tea, old thing!" Joyce declared confidently. "Just the three of us—to mark the great occasion!"

Terry's eyes were smarting as she left the house, turning to wave to the two smiling figures in the doorway. The chance had meant so much to her—but it meant even more to Joyce and her mother.

She still had her job—and Phil! Between them they would fight tooth and nail to clear his name.

Deliberately she crushed her own eager ambitions, as she turned to wave again to her chum. Then, a determined smile on her lips, she made her way to the telephone-booth at the corner of the street, and dialed the number of the producer's office.

"ALL right, Miss Esmond—that will be the last letter for to-day."

Terry gave a little sigh of relief as she closed her notebook and replaced the cover on her typewriter.

It had been a tiring day, but Terry welcomed the hard work. Yesterday she had imagined that she had finished with typing, for good—but a lot had happened since then.

And not for a moment did Terry regret her impulsive decision.

In her handbag was a torn-up contract, and a little note from Mr. Hartley, the producer, regretting that she would be unable after all to take the part—and promising not to mention her name to the fortunate girl who would step into her shoes.

Terry's heart warmed at the thought of Joyce. She could imagine her chum's delight when she received the message that morning—the message that she had been finally selected for the role on which she had set her heart!

And Terry was going to be the first to congratulate her at that little celebration tea to which she had been invited.

When she knocked at the suburban villa an hour later, it was Joyce herself who opened the door; Joyce, looking more radiant than ever, and dressed for going out.

"Why, Terry," she exclaimed, "didn't you get my phone-call?"

Terry shook her head in surprise.

"I've been terribly busy all day, taking letters for the manager, I expect the office-boy forgot to give it to me."

"That's too bad, old thing!" Joyce bit her lip, but recovering quickly, she slipped a hand chummily through Terry's arm, and led her into the lounge. "Never mind—you can have tea with mums. I've got to dash out to meet some important people. You don't mind, do you?"

For a moment Terry was conscious of a little pang, as she stared at her chum. Could anything have gone wrong?

"But—but aren't we going to celebrate?" she asked, smiling tremulously. "Didn't you get the job?"

"But of course!" laughed Joyce, squeezing her arm. "That was in my phone message. I signed the contract this morning! There was some other girl that the producer had in mind—but she backed out at the last moment—a bit of luck for me! I meant to tell you all about it this evening—but something even more thrilling cropped up!"

"Even more thrilling?" Terry echoed, a little blankly.

There was a mysterious elation in her chum's manner that baffled her.

"You'll never guess!" declared Joyce breathlessly. "When I left the office, I met someone who'd come specially to see me—a charming girl, whose father is a well-known film producer on the Continent. They'd been at the audition—and they want me to sign on for a film they'll be making in the near future! Terry—

isn't it just too marvellous for words!"

Eyes dancing, she seized Terry's hands; and Terry stared back, her mind in a whirl, conscious of an uneasiness she could not explain.

"Who—who did you say this girl was, Joyce?" she asked.

"Dolores Duval—her father's Mr. Ramon Duval, and he's quite famous abroad. Goodness—I'd almost forgotten—I've got her signed photo with me!"

Excitedly she opened her bag, thrusting an expensive-looking portrait into Terry's hand.

Terry stared at it—and a cold hand seemed to grip her heart, as her premonition was confirmed.

She was gazing at the cool, insolent face of the girl she had met outside the theatrical agency—the girl she believed to be her brother's enemy!

### TERRY'S SUSPICIONS DEEPEN

"ISN'T she lovely?" asked Joyce. "And wasn't it a stroke of luck that she and her father should have seen me at the audition? You don't really mind my not staying for tea—do you, old thing?"

She looked at her chum in that half appealing, half confident way that Terry always found so hard to resist.

But now Terry's heart was beating quickly, and her hands were tightly clenched. She wanted to blurt out that the girl was an impostor—that her father had never been a film producer—that the whole thing was a cunning trick.

But—supposing she was mistaken? Apart from that meeting on the pavement, she had only seen Claire Silvertown once—in a crowd—and at a time when she had been distraught by anxiety for her brother. The likeness might be a coincidence. And, in any case, she had never told Joyce about that dreadful evening—and her chum had never asked.

"Why, Terry, I do believe you're cross with me!" Joyce said, pouting. "You don't look a bit pleased at my news!"

Terry gulped, forcing an unsteady smile.

"But I am, Joyce! That is"—she hesitated—"if you're quite certain this girl isn't—isn't just trying to gain your confidence for some purpose of her own."

"Terry! How can you suggest such a horrid thing? A little frown had crossed Joyce's attractive face, and instinctively she withdrew her hand from Terry's. "Why, if I didn't know you so well, I'd think you were jealous of my chance!"

Terry winced, biting her lip. If Joyce had known the true facts of how she came to get her chance—but that was a secret her chum must never guess!

"Of course I'm not, Joyce!" Terry said hastily. "I'm thrilled to think you've got the part in the 'Wayward Princess'—but this new offer seems so—so sudden. You haven't even started rehearsals, yet—"

Joyce waved her hand airily.

"The first rehearsal's to-morrow morning. I've got to be at the Belle Vue Theatre at eleven—just to read through the part. Dolores has promised to bring her father along to meet me after the rehearsal—and they're taking me to lunch, to discuss the new film. And now, I must really be dashing to keep my tea appointment with Dolores! So long, old thing—and tell mums I won't be late!"

There was a lump in Terry's throat as she watched her chum's slim, attractive figure hurrying down the road, turning to blow a merry kiss as she reached the corner.

Joyce was feeling on top of the world—and no wonder! If it hadn't been for that hateful doubt, Terry herself would have shared in her chum's excitement.

But she could not rid her mind of the cool, mocking face of the girl Joyce knew as Dolores Duval! If the girl was really Claire Silvertown, what could be her game?

Terry's brown eyes flashed.

The Silvertons had done their best to ruin Phil: not if she could help it were they going to get a chance to spoil Joyce's car!

Mrs. Gayford's warm, motherly greeting almost broke down Terry's control. She longed to blurt out her tears—but it seemed cruel to spoil the other's delight in her daughter's new success.

There was one person alone in whom Terry could confide; and, returning to the hotel, she put through a trunk-call to her brother.

Phil was amazed at her news. "I say, old girl, be careful!" he urged. "I know what a one you are for jumping off the deep end. The Silvertons left their employment soon after I was dismissed; I heard they'd gone abroad. This girl is probably some quite charming person who happens to look like Claire. For goodness' sake don't go running into any scrapes!"

"Don't worry, Phil!" Terry retorted lightly, though her pulses were racing. "What—what did Claire's father look like? I only saw him once."

"Dark, handsome, clean-shaven—with a slight scar on his chin," replied Phil. "He had a way of plucking at his ear when he was annoyed. But why—"

"Just an idea, Phil!" cut in Terry mysteriously. "Look after yourself—and don't be surprised if I send you a wire one day soon!"

Cutting short her brother's puzzled questions, she affectionately bade him good-night and rang off.

But her smile faded as she left the phone-box. The mystery surrounding the girl on the stairs must be solved—both for Phil's sake, and for the safety of her chum.

And Terry had a plan for solving it!

Next day, Terry surprised the office chief by asking for the morning off. It was something she had never done before, and her request was readily granted.

Just before eleven she turned up at the stage-door of the Belle Vue Theatre, and when she mentioned that her friend was a member of the new cast she was admitted without further question.

But Terry had come to watch, and not to be seen. Standing unnoticed in a shadowy part of the wings, she looked on with excited interest not unmixed with a stifled longing as the parts were read.

Her pulse quickened when Joyce stepped forward to read her lines—the lines that Terry might have been reading herself. Her chum's clear, musical voice and expressive acting did full justice to the appealing role—and Terry could hardly refrain from joining in the little burst of clapping that followed.

"I'm glad I let Joyce have the part!" she breathed softly. "And nothing—no one must spoil her success!"

Just then there came a slight disturbance at the stage-door—and Terry, hands clenched as she recognised a girl's cool, insolent tones.

"Please tell Miss Joyce Gayford that her friends have called. The name is Duval."

Terry drew back instinctively in the shadow of the scenery, as Joyce, her attractive face flushed with excitement, hurried from the stage.

Then Terry heard a man's deep, suave voice:

"Ah, Miss Gayford! This is a pleasure I have been looking forward to!"

Cautiously Terry took a step forward—and her heart missed a beat as she caught sight of the speaker. For the grey-bearded, distinguished-looking man bending over Joyce's hand was a complete stranger!

In Terry's mind, relief and disappointment conflicted; relief on her chum's account—disappointment that, after all, she was no nearer to solving the mystery that clouded her brother's name.

In broad daylight, the dark-haired, stylishly dressed girl standing beside Joyce looked quite charming and friendly. Terry wondered if she could

have imagined the hard, almost ruthless gleam she had seen in the other's eyes when she had met her on the pavement last night—

At that moment, the bearded man straightened himself to avoid a heavy piece of scenery that a stage-hand was carrying along the passage. He frowned in annoyance, and tugged irritably at the lobe of his ear.

Terry almost betrayed herself by her excited gasp. That was the gesture that Phil had mentioned—a characteristic of his enemy! Perhaps, after all, the bearded stranger was an impostor!

But—how could she make sure? Even now, Joyce's new friends were leading her out to the smart car waiting at the kerb.

Terry threw all caution to the winds. Now, if ever, her flair for acting must come to her aid!

Hardly pausing to draw a breath, Terry sped out of the stage-door, seizing her chum effusively by both hands.

"Joyce—darling!" she exclaimed. "What luck, running into you like this. You simply must introduce me to your friends. I've never met a real, live film producer before!"

to meet her chum's reproachful glance.

"I'm so sorry I can't stop now," Terry, said Joyce, rather hastily, "but my friends are taking me to lunch at Martelli's—"

"Why, I was thinking of going there myself!" Terry declared recklessly, thinking of the slender paycheck she had collected that morning. "They serve such super meals! Would you mind awfully if I came along with you?"

And once again she turned a dazzling smile on the bearded Mr. Duval. Unflinchingly she met the searching glance of his rather cold grey eyes.

"Not at all!" he murmured gallantly, as he held open the door of the car. "Any friend of Joyce Gayford's is a friend of ours—eh, Dolores?"

"Of course, father," drawled that girl, though the swift, forced smile she shot at Terry held unmistakable suspicion. "We'd better hurry, before the place gets too crowded."

Terry was conscious of the strained atmosphere as they drove to the restaurant, though she pretended not to notice anything amiss.



In consternation Terry stared at the photograph. Joyce's new friend was the girl who had helped to ruin Terry's own brother.

And she turned a dazzling smile on the bearded gentleman.

The latter raised his eyebrows, exchanging a glance with his daughter. Joyce's attractive face had turned pink with surprise and embarrassment.

"Why, Terry," she faltered, "I thought you were at the office—"

"I got the morning off, dear," said Terry airily, "and I couldn't resist the temptation to slip round and see you. Especially as you'd told me that you were meeting the famous Mr. Duval!"

Mr. Duval coughed, fingering the lobe of his ear. His daughter was eyeing Terry in a puzzled fashion.

"Haven't I met you before somewhere?" she drawled.

Terry's pulses quickened, and she was instantly on her guard.

"I shouldn't be surprised! The world's a small place, isn't it? I'm Terry—and Joyce and I have known each other for ages. I was thrilled to hear of her wonderful chance to go on the films!"

Terry was deliberately adopting a vivacious, scatter-brain manner to divert suspicion from her real purpose—her intention of finding out more about this couple!

Joyce was staring at her in bewilderment, and Terry hardly dared

to meet her. It was clear that she was both bewildered and annoyed by this surprising behaviour on the part of her usually self-effacing chum.

Mr. Duval made a few polite remarks about the weather, and his daughter busied herself in powdering her nose.

Arrived at the glittering restaurant, beneath the roaring streets of London, Mr. Duval went to see about a table, while the girls removed their coats. For a few minutes Terry and Joyce were left on their own. Her blue eyes full of reproach, Joyce turned on her chum.

"You may have spoilt everything for me," she declared. "Though they are too nice to show it, I'm certain the Duvals are annoyed. You shouldn't have—"

"Father's ordered lunch," drawled the dark-haired girl, linking her hand through Joyce's arm and ignoring Terry. "We'd better join him."

It was a delightful lunch that awaited them, but Terry was hardly conscious of the food. Mindful of her purpose, she kept up a running flow of gay small talk—mainly about films—hoping to draw Mr. Duval or his daughter into some unwary admission.

But by the time the ices were served, she had completely failed to confirm

ner suspicions. The orchestra struck up for dancing, and several couples moved out on to the floor. Mr. Duval rose gallantly to his feet. "May I have the pleasure?" he asked pointedly, as he bent over Terry's chair. "I believe my daughter has a little business matter to discuss with Miss Gayford."

Terry's eyes flashed. So this was his polite way of preventing her from finding out too much. Very well! It was her wits against his—and Terry was confident that she could turn the tables. "I'd be delighted, Mr. Duval!" she declared.

They glided out to the floor. Mr. Duval danced perfectly—a distinguished figure with his greying hair and beard. But his shrewd eyes were disconcerting.

"You're an unusual young lady, Miss—er—Terry," he said. "By the way, I didn't catch your second name."

"Esmond," replied Terry, flashing him a smile. "You wouldn't know it, of course. I'm quite an ordinary person—not famous, like you. But we've got one thing in common."

"Really?" Mr. Duval raised his eyebrows. "And what is that?"

Terry drew a quick breath. "We're both interested in—pictures!" she replied daringly.

She felt the other stiffen; saw the suspicious hardening of his grey eyes. Then he gave a short laugh.

"I see—you mean the movies, of course?"

"Of course!" replied Terry innocently. "What else could I have meant. My brother's interested in pictures, too—the other kind, you know. Did you ever read in the papers about some valuable paintings that were stolen from Cyrus Morgan, the art-collector?"

The other's cold grey eyes narrowed a little.

"I can't say that I did, Miss—er—Esmond," he replied.

"Well, my brother believes he knows who stole them," went on Terry, gaining courage. "And one day he'll find proof. The man is tall, handsome and clean-shaven—and he has a scar on his chin."

Mr. Duval laughed, fingering his beard.

"Quite like a film-story, Miss Esmond," he remarked.

"Quite!" agreed Terry, her heart beating quickly. They were dancing away from the others now, beneath the softly shaded lights.

And suddenly Terry appeared to miss her footing on the polished floor. She gave a little gasp, her hand flying out as though to save herself—her fingers closing recklessly on Mr. Duval's beard.

She heard his stifled ejaculation, and the beard seemed to give way in her grasp.

And just then the lights in the restaurant went out as, quick as thought, her companion brushed against the switch.

### FOR THE SAKE OF HER CHUM

"THAT was a dangerous thing to do, Miss Esmond!" came his deep, unruddied voice from the darkness. "You might have had us both over!"

Her wrist was held in iron grip, while a clamour of voices arose in the darkened restaurant. Next moment the lights flashed on again—and Mr. Duval stood there, smiling down at her reproachfully, smoothing his grey beard gently with his fingers.

"A little accident," he explained to the agitated waiter who hurried up. "My young friend slipped, and fell against the switch. I take full responsibility. Come, Miss Esmond."

He led her back to the table, blandly explaining the "accident" for the benefit of Joyce and his daughter.

But Terry's pulses were racing madly as she tried to catch Joyce's eye. Her suspicions were confirmed! This man was a false friend. He was Vernon Silvertown—her brother's enemy—in disguise!

But what new, scoundrelly game

were he and his daughter playing? What lay behind their pretended interest in her chum?

Terry's hands were clenched. What ever their plot, she was determined to expose it.

Her chum's face was flushed with excitement, now. It was clear that Dolores had been spinning some feasible story.

"Everything's arranged, father," remarked the girl in a low voice, with a meaning glance in Terry's direction. "Joyce has agreed to sign the contract when she joins our party tomorrow evening."

"Splendid, Miss Gayford!" said Mr. Duval, smoothing his beard. "The party commences at seven—and you will be able to hire a 'Maid Marian' costume and mask. You have the address safely?"

Joyce nodded excitedly, as she picked up a slip of paper that lay on the table and dropped it into her handbag.

Terry saw the swift, cunning glance that passed between Mr. Duval and his daughter. She started forward, feeling that she must at all costs try to warn her chum that trickery was afoot. "Don't trust them! They aren't the people you think they are." They—they're out to trick you!"

There was a sudden, tense silence at the table; only the blare of the orchestra had prevented Terry's excited accusation being heard by the other diners.

In shocked surprise Joyce looked across at her chum.

"Terry! What do you mean? You don't know what you are saying!"

Mr. Duval gave a smooth laugh, his hand closing warningly on his daughter's arm.

"Miss Gayford—I'm sorry. I was half afraid your friend might cause a scene. I had not meant to tell you—but my daughter recognised her when we first met. She is the girl who so nearly robbed you of your part in the 'Wayward Princess.' She was at Mr. Hartley's office yesterday evening, trying to persuade him to take her on in your stead! When she failed, she determined to do her best to get the film contract. While we were dancing, I tumbled to her little game—"

"Oh!" cried Terry, her eyes blazing. "Joyce—that isn't true!"

Joyce was on her feet, her face deathly pale, her blue eyes fixed in wondering reproach on her chum's face.

"Terry—were you at Mr. Hartley's office, yesterday?" she asked. Then, as Terry was silent, she added brokenly: "So that is why you weren't pleased when I told you my news—why you acted so strange! You were jealous!"

"Joyce—" Terry started forward appealingly. "Joyce, you don't understand! I—"

But with a bitter glance, Joyce had turned away.

"Please—please let's go!" she whispered, slipping her hand through Dolores' arm.

Dolores flashed a triumphant glance at her father as they left the table. Mr. Duval lingered to pay the bill. He tapped Terry lightly on the shoulder.

"I suggest, Miss Esmond," he remarked pleasantly, "that in future you mind your own business. It really doesn't pay to meddle!"

Terry felt too choked to reply. Her eyes smarting, she stared after him as he followed Joyce and his daughter out of the restaurant.

"Joyce," whispered Terry brokenly. "Joyce—they shan't get away with this! I'm not beaten, yet!"

THAT night Terry came to a reckless decision. She knew that it would be useless to warn Joyce, now. After what had happened, her chum would never believe her.

But there was one last chance of foiling the tricksters—of discovering their mysterious plot, before it was too late.

Mr. Duval had mentioned a costume—and a mask. That suggested

a masked ball, of some kind. And she had caught a glimpse of the address on that slip of paper.

If her daring plan failed, she knew that she would be estranged for ever from her chum; but it was a risk she must take—for Joyce's sake—and for Phil's!

After tea, next day, she rang up Joyce's house. It was Mrs. Gayford who answered—and Terry was conscious of a little pang at the thought of the trick she intended to play on her chum.

In a disguised, affected voice, she gave her message. Would Mrs. Gayford please tell Joyce that Dolores had rung? The time for the party had been changed. It would be half-past seven, and not seven.

Terry repeated the time, so that there could be no possible mistake. Then, a little lump in her throat, she rang off.

She had already hired the costume mentioned by Mr. Duval. Why he should specifically have mentioned a "Maid Marion" outfit she could not understand—but she felt confident that, with her ability as an actress, she should easily be able to pass herself off as Joyce!

At seven o'clock precisely, she dismounted from a taxi outside a big house in one of London's more exclusive squares. The house was ablaze with lights, and there was obviously an important function taking place.

From the taxi-driver she learnt that this was the town residence of a famous diplomat—a man noted for his priceless collection of pictures.

Terry's pulses quickened. Pictures! Could that be a coincidence? She was more than glad, now, that she had decided on her daring masquerade.

And just then a slender, dark-haired figure in a shepherdess costume and mask came hurrying down the steps.

"Joyce, my dear! You look entrancing! And you're just in time!" Terry's heart missed a beat, as she forced a gay little laugh—a laugh exactly like Joyce's.

"But what a grand affair, Dolores! I didn't dream it would be anything like this!"

Dolores laughed carelessly, as she linked a hand through her arm.

"Oh, father gets lots of invitations to important houses," she said. "He'll be waiting for us in the ballroom, now."

An important funkey barred their way. He was accompanied by a burly, thick-set man who looked like a plain-clothes policeman.

The latter scrutinised Dolores' card, and then, with a smile, allowed the two girls to pass.

In the magnificent ballroom an orchestra was playing softly, as Terry and her companion mingled with the gaily attired guests.

A quarter of an hour passed and then she felt Dolores' hand tighten on her arm.

"Here comes father, now!" breathed that girl.

She spoke almost nervously, with a quick glance at the tall figure who had stepped through one of the side doors—a handsome figure attired as Robin Hood, but unmistakable with his grey hair and pointed beard.

A quiver of arrows was slung on his shoulder, and he walked with a careless swagger, the object of many admiring glances.

"Ah, Miss Gayford!" he murmured, as he bent gallantly over her hand. "Maid Marian, I should say! You look charming! But business before pleasure—eh? If you girls will find yourself a table on the terrace, I'll order coffee and ices, and we'll discuss that little contract. By the way"—he eyed Terry quizzically—"your attractive costume seems to lack a finishing touch."

With a bantering smile he unslung his quiver of arrows and slipped it over Terry's shoulder.

At that moment there came a sudden stir in the ballroom—an indignant shout from the funkey at the door.

(Please turn to the back page.)





# HER DANCING DAYS IN MEXICO

By DENISE COWAN

## THE FIRST DANCING LESSON

**L**ESLEY BRAILSFORD arrived in Mexico to stay with her father's old friend, Don Ramon. She intended to organise a dancing school for the Mexicans.

She expected to meet her brother, Jim, who was ranch foreman for Don Ramon, but, to her horror, learnt from Kirk Denby, Don Ramon's nephew, that Jim was now an outlaw—a rustler!

Lesley, however, did not believe this, and suspected that Kirk was against her brother. She was convinced that she could find a clue to Jim's innocence at Bare Pine. Don Ramon, thanks to Kirk, asked her to promise not to go there without his nephew.

"SENORITA, our guests are waiting. Hadn't you better get changed?" Kirk's soft reminder brought Lesley to herself with a start.

"Kirk is right. I would like you to hurry, my dear," Don Ramon said sharply.

"Of course, Senor Ramon—I'm sorry!"

Lesley, her cheeks burning from a sense of rebuke, slid from the saddle and hastened to her room to get changed.

"Kirk lied—he meant to get me in trouble," she murmured. "And now I can't go riding without him."

Then how could she get to Bare Pine? How could she discover its secret? A sense of urgency came with the question. Intuition cried out that the secret was linked with the mystery surrounding her brother.

"Kirk's against Jim—I know it," Lesley thought. "He doesn't want Jim's innocence proved!"

She knew that the young rider, for all his gay boyishness and charm, was a rival; a dangerous, formidable rival—the pleasant manner was only a cloak.

"But I'm not scared of Kirk, and he hasn't taken me in, either!" Lesley breathed.

She was determined to fight—determined to clear her brother's good name of the outlaw charge which Kirk took such great pains to stress. Her eyes suddenly sparkled.

The great thing now—the first thing of all—was to make the dancing lesson a success; to prove to Don Ramon her keenness. Kirk had tricked her, but that did not mean she was beaten.

"I'll show him!" Lesley decided. With a growing excitement she changed into a charming, simple gown, and hurried down to the white "dobe hall. From inside came the lilt of stringed harmony, violins, and guitars. The sweet scent of honey-suckle and jasmine filled the air with their perfume.

"It's wonderful, almost like magic," Lesley breathed. "I know I can do it. I know I can make this school a success!"

She entered the hall and drew a quick breath at the scene. On the raised platform a band of ranch hands provided the music; dark, picturesquely clad señoritas and riders swirled to the strains of a tango.

"Good, so you are ready, my dear," called Don Ramon.

The dancing stopped as the tall rancher came forward, and every glance went in Lesley's direction. Kirk, a half smile on his lips, waited for the commencement of the lesson.

"We will start with the simple waltz," Lesley smiled. "I'll ask Kirk to be my partner as I show you the steps. I'm quite sure he is bound to be clever!"

An amused smile on his face, Kirk came forward.

Quietly, simply Lesley explained every point, then the music struck up afresh; her own gay and light-hearted manner made it all seem ridiculously easy. Now there was no buzz of conversation at all.

At last the whole class was circling the hall, Lesley herself taking the lead. There was laughter at the little mistakes—flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes; everything seemed to be fun. And Lesley's enthusiasm, her own love of dancing, seemed to infect even the clumsiest.

The lesson finished with much clapping and merry excitement. Don Ramon came forward to take Lesley's arm.

"Excellent, my dear. I'm proud of you—proud of my own idea," he said gently.

Lesley's heart leapt, for the pleasure on his face was unmistakable; all the earlier disappointment had gone. He was satisfied—glad he had given her the chance! Relief and joy overwhelmed her for the moment.

Amidst eager questions and congratulations the time for the next lesson was arranged, and the riders and señoritas from the neighbouring haciendas at last left the gay, lighted hall. There was the jingling of harnesses and the clatter of wheels.

Lesley, a shawl thrown round her shoulders, gazed into the moonlight and watched them depart—they were

her class! It was like a dream coming true.

"That's one thing Kirk didn't spoil," she thought merrily. "And he's not stopping me helping Jim, either."

Sleep was difficult for Lesley that night, and she was glad when the warm Mexican sunlight streamed into the charming little room she had been given. Downstairs the motherly Rosa already had breakfast prepared.

"I've heard you do great things last night, señorita," Rosa smiled, when Lesley entered the room. "I think Senor Ramon 'ave much surprise for you."

"A surprise? Oh, Rosa, be a darling and tell me!"

Lesley's excitement made her finish breakfast only with the greatest of efforts, and Rosa watched her with twinkling eyes. Both started guiltily when a faint ringing of spurs heralded the approach of Don Ramon himself. He smiled when he saw Lesley's flushed cheeks.

"So the good Rosa has been talking, señorita?" Don Ramon said. "My dear, I have something I would like you to wear for the next lesson to-night—something to be worn now whenever you dance."

Lesley glanced up quickly, for Don Ramon's fine face had grown sad. The white head bent as he laid a polished sandalwood box on the table.

"It is an ornament that will make your appearance more like that of my own people," he added. "It was last worn by"—he hesitated—"someone else who loved dancing. Lesley, won't you open the box?"

Lesley nodded. For some reason she found it difficult to speak; the slight hesitancy brought a lump to her throat. The content of the box, whatever it might be, must have once belonged to someone Don Ramon held dear.

Then she opened the lid and an incredulous cry burst from her lips. Glittering stones burned in the light of the sun, flashing and glinting from a background of velvet. She gazed awe-stricken at a beautiful tiara fashioned as a tall Spanish comb.

"You like it?" Don Ramon asked gently.

"It—it's wonderful. I don't know what to say," Lesley faltered.

"It's for you, my dear, to wear when dancing," Don Ramon smiled. "I think someone else would have liked that as well. Go to your room and try it on now."

Lesley tried to smile back, but her eyes were blurred and the smile rather shaky. She could only squeeze

**Kirk Was Gay, Handsome And Popular. Only Lesley Knew What A Crafty, Treacherous Plotter He Was.**

the rancher's hand, then fly from the room. It was a tribute such as she had never been paid before in her life.

Before her own full-length mirror she tenderly arranged the shining comb in her hair.

"It's beautiful!" Lesley breathed.

"I shall be afraid to—"  
She broke off with a start, for another reflection shadowed her own in the mirror. A reflection of bronzed, daredevil features surmounted by curly brown hair.

"Oh!" Lesley whirled.  
"Yes, it is beautiful—and very valuable, too," Kirk grinned boyishly. "Lesley, you are honoured indeed."

"Thank you, Kirk. And now would you mind going?"

Kirk shrugged.  
"All right, I only came to warn you," he smiled. "Still, I suppose uncle takes it for granted that even an outlaw wouldn't stoop to robbing his sister. Or isn't that why you just said you'd be afraid?"

Lesley's cheeks flamed, then went white.

"Get out, Kirk!" she blazed. "Jim's innocent—you know it! You're against him! You're deliberately trying to—"  
She bit back the direct accusation in time.

"Quien sabe—who knows?" Kirk mocked. "But I should look after those jewels all the same, Lesley. The tiara is valuable enough to tempt even a brother," he said slowly.

The young rider swung from the room and Lesley's anger chilled to misgiving; from misgiving to fear.

Supposing someone did steal the tiara—someone unknown? The blame would be put on Jim right away. Behind Kirk's hinting lay something much grimmer.

Lesley's hands clenched at the thoughts, and fears raced through her mind. She recalled the secret—the possible clue—hidden at the first rock near Bare Pine.

If only it would give proof of Jim's innocence!

"I must find out right away. I don't waste any more time," she determined. "I'll have to chance it—get to Bare Pine alone!"

### A VISIT TO BARE PINE

LESLEY sighed with relief when the jewelled comb had been safely returned to Don Ramon. Once again she was clad in riding clothes.

"I'll lock this away with the rest of the family treasures," the old rancher told her. "You see, in Mexico, my dear, we try to keep up tradition—that's partly why I want you to wear this. Out here we take dancing seriously."

"I'm serious about it, too," Lesley answered.

Her smile vanished directly Don Ramon had gone. With swift, decisive steps she stepped into the bright sunlight outside; the general noise and flurry showed ranch life had been in full swing since dawn. Tethered horses stood by the hitching-rail.

Lesley moved to the rail and glanced towards passing riders and ranch hands; no one seemed to pay any heed. A dust-stained Mexican driver nearby was preparing his loaded horse-buggy for a return to the town.

"It's a risk, but I'll try to slip away now," Lesley decided. "I can lead my horse to the cover of those trees over there—they often let horses graze loose—then I'll mount out of sight of the buildings."

Her heart beat faster when she reached the chestnut horse, which was hers for the duration of her stay at the ranch. Again she thought of Don Ramon's order that she was not to go riding alone.

"I hate to have to disobey him," she murmured. "Oh, why does everything have to work out like this? It's Kirk—Kirk who's at the back of it all!"

The very recollection of Kirk made Lesley look about warily; she half expected to see him behind her. Her pulses raced when she made certain he was nowhere about. With grow-

ing excitement she untethered the horse.

"I thenk the senorita forget," a sharp voice rang out. "Eef you ride, then Ricardo come, too!"

Lesley wheeled with a gasp of dismay. From the shadow of one of the buildings a tall, scar-faced Mexican rider stepped forward.

"I—I'm not going riding," Lesley said. "Not just now."

She eased the tethering rope and stood back from the chestnut, a feeling of despair making her fumble. Of course, she should have known Kirk would never take chances—he had left Ricardo with orders to watch her.

"My apologies, senorita!" Ricardo shrugged, and strolled across to lean on the hitching rail. "Eet is better I stay here in case you should need me."

Inwardly, Lesley frowned, but managed to force a smile and walk away carelessly.

How could she get to Bare Pine? The question seemed to ring in her ears.

The mental image of Kirk's mocking smile stung Lesley to anger; determination grew into recklessness. The sudden clatter of wheels made her turn swiftly—the horse-buggy was starting out for San Redas.

Through a rising screen of grey and red dust Lesley could see the team being urged forward; the loaded buggy swayed and bounced across the uneven trail.

"The buggy!" Lesley tensed, her eyes shining. "I wonder—"

Inspiration sped through her mind; the very daring of it held an appeal in itself. In a second she was running fast to where the buggy was beginning to turn. The choking cloud of dust from the wheels completely hid her from view.

The swinging, clattering tailboard seemed to rise up in front of her and Lesley made one frantic grab; her fingers chafed on rough wood. The next she knew, she was perched precariously over the tailboard and drawing herself on to the cart.

"Golly, I've made it! What a jump!"

Breathless and dishevelled, Lesley rolled amongst the roped crates and cases; she rather felt she wanted to laugh. The noise of the iron-shod wheels and jolting cargo drowned any sound she might have made in her scramble. The driver remained staring ahead.

Lesley kept down out of sight and made herself comfortable against the largest of crates. The buggy was already clear of the ranch and ascending the slope, which formed the one made trail into town. They would pass within a quarter of a mile of Bare Pine.

"Even Kirk could hardly have done better," Lesley pondered triumphantly. "I almost wish he could have seen me do that!"

She hugged her knees and watched the purple outline of the beautiful Sierra Madre mountain chain; forest and woodland stretched away in the distance.

At long last the gaunt outline of Bare Pine rose clearly against the background of sky, and Lesley eased herself to the edge of the tailboard again. Her cheeks flushed with excitement and the cool beat of the wind.

"Sapristi!" the astonished driver gasped, suddenly turning.

"Thank you, senor," Lesley called merrily, and slid neatly from the back of the cart.

She landed gracefully on the trail with both feet and commenced running into the scrub. The bewildered driver shook his head, shrugged, and turned his attention back to the team.

"It's a pity he had to see me, but it can't be helped," Lesley thought gaily. "Anyway, I haven't exactly ridden alone."

She ran between the boulders and clumps of prickly pear, making her way to the pine. What would she find there? Would it help clear her brother? Whatever the secret, she

knew it must be of vital importance to Jim.

At last Lesley reached the great pine and carefully determined which rock her brother had meant by the "first."

"It must be this one—this great boulder here!"

Lesley stooped by the rock and, her heart beating wildly, studied every inch of its surface. Nothing hidden there, anyway. If only she knew just what to look for! The note had simply stated: "FIRST ROCK—BARE PINE."

"There's certainly nothing written on the boulder," she murmured. "Hallo, what's this?"

Lesley's keen gaze sped to disturbed earth under the boulder, although the rock itself appeared bedded firmly. More as an experiment than anything else, she suddenly leaned all her weight on the rock.

"Oh!" she gasped.  
For the great boulder had yielded quite easily; it rolled back—to reveal a hole hidden beneath.

In a flash Lesley was on hands and knees, cautiously exploring the aperture. The hole, part rock, part earth, was two feet deep and roughly as wide—but sunk in the side of more rock. She could only feel for what it contained. Then she tensed.

All Lesley's hopes seemed to die. To her astonishment and bitter dismay the cavity appeared perfectly empty. No, not perfectly empty. There was a single green kerchief, a silk bandana similar to the one Kirk and his men had already recovered.

The bandana was down a crack in the rock.

"That's all. But Jim wouldn't have scribbled a note for just this," Lesley murmured despairingly.

She pushed the bandana into her pocket and knelt without moving. What could have happened? What else had the cavity hidden?

Again Lesley reached out to explore, but she already knew it was hopeless. A light movement made her turn round.

"Kirk!" she burst out.

Kirk Denby, his sombrero tilted from his unruly curls, stood beside his horse and smiled down at her.

"Well, are you satisfied, Lesley?" he asked mockingly. "You look a little disappointed about something."

Lesley did not answer at first, but understanding came with a rush. Suddenly she knew why the cavity had contained nothing except that bandana. The angry colour swept to her cheeks.

She was too late, she realised with horror. She had been outmanoeuvred after all. The smiling Kirk must have reached Bare Pine first. He had already removed what had been hidden there!

### A HOLD UP

"KIRK, it was you! You've taken out what was under the rock!"

Lesley blurted the accusation almost before she realised she had done so—blurted it furiously.

Of course it was Kirk! Kirk, who was against her brother, wished to see him condemned. In her anger and bitter disappointment Lesley saw everything clearly. Now she knew that the secret would have helped Jim to prove his innocence!

"You think you can do as you like, Kirk—that everyone's under your spell!" Lesley blazed. "Well, I'm not! I'm not taken in by you!"

"No, I can see you're not! My charm seems rather wasted!" Kirk grinned. "I wish I quite understood all you meant!"

He suddenly threw back his head and laughed boyishly, the broad shoulders shaking with mirth. But his eyes were mirthless when he looked back to Lesley.

"Why should I take anything from beneath the rock?" Kirk asked softly. "My poor Lesley, you let your imagination run away with you! The senorita finds an empty hole—probably the lair of some animal—and then jumps to stupid conclusions!"

"That's where you're wrong!"

Lesley flashed. For one moment she very nearly showed him the bandana, which she now guessed had been overlooked when everything else was removed.

Caution prevented her barely in time; she glimpsed a slight tightening of Kirk's lips. His eyes narrowed dangerously.

"Go on, senorita," he drawled. "I—I don't know what to believe," Lesley countered.

She was relieved when she saw his handsome features seem to relax. The young rider was his "devil-may-care" self once again.

"And now all the compliments have been paid," Kirk said gaily. "I suppose you'll rely on me to take you back to the ranch? It'll be an awful long walk, you know, Lesley!"

"I'll manage." Lesley bit her lip when she thought of the long trek back over uneven ground to the ranch-house.

"But I really couldn't allow that," Kirk smiled. "A vacquero is supposed to be gallant, and my uncle lays great store by that. Senorita, my horse will take two."

He bowed laughingly, then his face hardened.

"Of course, but you may have something else on your mind," Kirk said slowly. "I shall believe you have if you dislike me too much."

"I accept—vacquero!" Lesley laughed.

She must play up to Kirk, she decided. She had to find out what his game was—how he fitted into the mystery. For that reason she dared not antagonise him too far at present.

Lesley mounted Kirk's horse and glimpsed the young rider vault on behind her. He hummed merrily whilst they returned to the ranch, his deft hands wheeling the roan between boulders and scrub.

"Adios, till the lesson to-night!" Kirk doffed his sombrero and slid down to help Lesley dismount. His eyes twinkled. "May the senorita be an even greater success!"

Once in her own room at the ranch-house, Lesley drew out the bandana and studied it. Why should it be almost identical to the one normally worn by her brother? Was there some particular meaning behind it? An excited cry rose to her lips. She stared at the bandana, wide-eyed.

"It's been worn as a mask! The way it's been folded shows it's been drawn tight across someone's nose."

Lesley experimented, testing the folds against her own face to make sure. Two ends of the silk bore deep creases where they had been knotted many times in exactly the same spot, and the width was too great for anyone's neck.

"It's been tied round the head!" Lesley breathed. "It would cover the wearer's face to the eyes."

Then who had worn the silk mask? She ruled out her own brother at once. Who but an outlaw or rustler would have any need to go masked? "Could it be—Kirk?" she asked herself wonderingly. "Oh, if only I could be sure!"

Supposing the young rider were linked with the rustlers, who came from the hills? Lesley's eyes shone, for a way of testing her theory occurred to her. She was in a fever of impatience until the time of the dancing lesson that evening.

"My dear, the tiara looks wonderful on you!" Don Ramon smiled, when he led Lesley into the hall. "It ought to inspire you to-night!"

Again laughing senoritas and riders swirled to the strains of the music, Lesley's faultless tuition overcoming their slips and mistakes. The flickering flames from a small log fire threw shadows across the white adobe walls.

"The good Rosa's work," Kirk grinned when he entered. "I warned her the dancing would beat the night chill."

He looked more handsome than ever in full Spanish costume with bolero jacket embroidered in gold. "Kirk, you're just in time to prove exactly how much you've learned."

Lesley regarded him with a thoughtful expression. "Could you do the first waltz steps without watching your feet—do them blindfold?"

"The senorita mocks me!" Kirk joked.

"No, I'm not," Lesley declared, holding out the green bandana. "Come on, let me see if you can dance blindfolded!"

To her delight Kirk nodded and tossed his sombrero aside.

Lesley held her breath. Only the fact that her colour was a little higher than usual might have given away what she felt. Would the bandana come exactly to the deep creases of the knot marks? Her hands shook slightly as she placed the scarf around Kirk's head and started to pull it tight.

"Lesley!" Kirk hissed.

With a cat-like movement, all the the more startling because it was so unexpected, he ripped the bandana away from his face. Whirling on his heel, the young rider sprang to the fire and hurled the strip of silk into the flames.

a bad friend," he whispered. "Senorita, you have made one to-night!"

The lesson took a more practical side and everyone joined in dancing again. Then someone begged for the traditional rumba.

"Thees ees where we show the senorita!" laughed a rider.

"And I love to learn!" Lesley sparkled.

She danced with the rest, Don Ramon himself becoming her partner. The flames of the fire—the colourful dresses—gave a romantic, exotic effect. Suspended baskets of flowers vibrated on their slender chains from the ceiling beams.

But Lesley's gaze was seeking for Kirk; for once even dancing could not hold her. She wondered what he was thinking and planning; their antagonism had now reached a climax.

Kirk was lost to sight in that gay, whirling throng, however, and with an effort she recalled her attention to dancing. The tiara in her hair burned like fire.

Suddenly a blast of cold air warned that the doors had been hurried open wide. Everyone turned. There were gasps—a scream from a girl.



"Come on, let me see if you can dance blindfolded," said Lesley, and she held out the folded silk bandana. Little did Kirk realise the grim purpose behind her laughing challenge.

"Kirk!" Don Ramon burst out in astonishment.

Lesley went white, her gaze on the blazing silk neckerchief. Kirk must have recognised her intention in time. For that split second she noted the cruel set of his mouth—the cold eyes.

"I was right, then. The mask would have fitted him," Lesley breathed. "It was his!"

The incident had passed in a flash, Kirk's expression changing again. He was smiling and collected as usual when he turned to his uncle and guests.

"My apologies. Now I shall have to give Lesley my own bandana for a blindfold," Kirk said. "There was a poisonous spider on the other! Lesley, you had a closer call than you know!"

He grinned shakily and pretended to shudder, whilst one or two of the guests gasped in horror. Don Ramon, grave-faced, strode to the fire to snatch up a poker and press the neckerchief deeper in the blaze.

"Good going, Kirk," congratulated an American rider. "I guess we've got to hand it to you for nerve!"

Laughter and chatter broke out once again, Lesley having to go through the pretence of testing Kirk's steps. Her gaze met his for a second.

"I once warned you about making

"Stay where you are—and keep your hands up!"

The harsh order rang out over the hubbub. Framed in the open doorway stood a tall figure: a figure in a cream, high-crowned stetson, a black mask covering the lower part of the face. In the gloved, unwavering hands glittered two levelled six-guns.

Now there was a startled silence.

Then one of the men—an American cowboy employed on Don Ramon's ranch—made a movement to reach down to his hip.

Again that voice rang out, grim and steely.

"Reach up, I said, or I'm warnin' you there'll be shooting!"

The hubbub broke out again.

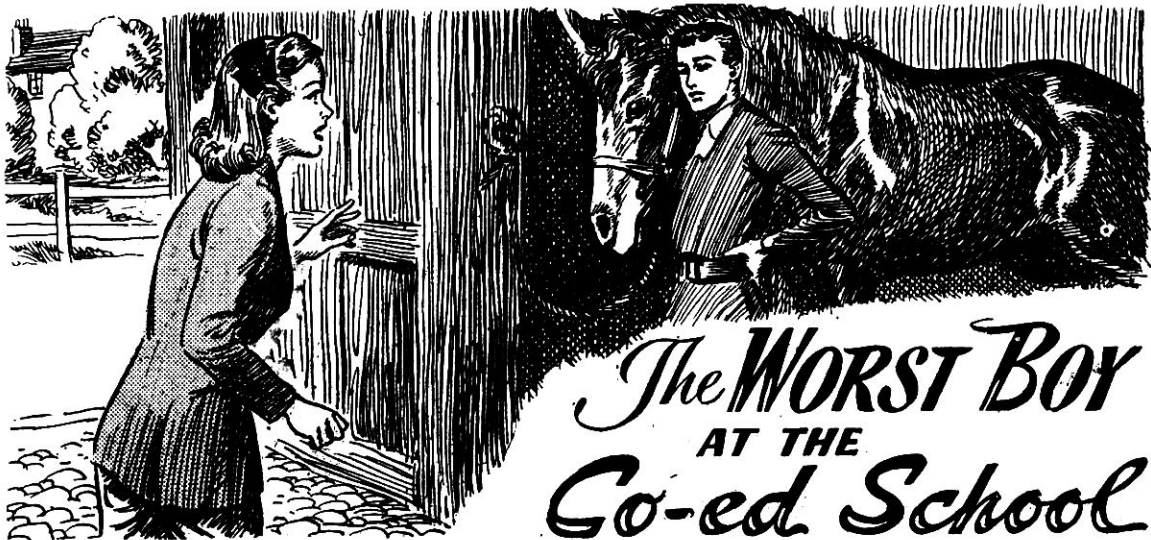
"The outlaw!"

"It's Brailsford—Jim Brailsford!" Lesley was staring at that masked figure dazedly.

The colour had drained from her face, for the voice—like the clothes—had been familiar. From beneath the down-turned brim of the stetson there showed a stray lock of blond hair. A murmur of horror came from her lips.

The masked intruder's general appearance was that of her brother!

Is Lesley's brother a thief after all? See next week's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** for more chapters of this exciting new serial.



# The Worst Boy AT THE Co-ed School

By DOROTHY PAGE

## VINCENT THOUGHT HER A SNEAK

THOUGH the rest of the riding team at Mallington Co-ed College believed Vincent Conrad to be an Outsider, Paddy Dare, their captain, trusted him. She was certain that Vincent had an unknown enemy in the school working against him, and declared that if Vincent did anything to prove she was wrong to trust him she would resign her captaincy.

When it appeared that Vincent had been to a local bookmaker's Paddy challenged him. He arranged to meet her in Balton Woods, which were out of bounds, and explain.

Paddy expected him to send her a note, telling her the time of the meeting, but was imprisoned by an unknown enemy whom she had nicknamed the Whisperer. She was released by Isabella Rocco, the South American girl, and hurried along to the practice ground at Mallington Park.

But before she reached it she met Derek Mallard, captain of Boys' Side. He was leading Whitey, Vincent's horse, and behind him was Vincent.

It appeared that someone had sneaked to Mr. Voster, one of the masters, that Vincent was breaking bounds. And Vincent believed that it was Paddy's doing!

"YOU can all go to the dickens—all of you!"

Those last, furiously bitter words of Vincent Conrad still rang in Paddy's ears as she stared in dismay down the lane after him.

"Oh gosh," she breathed unhappily. "Vincent thinks I gave him away to Mr. Voster—that he was trapped out of bounds because of me!"

It hurt Paddy. Not that she blamed Vincent. In the circumstances he had made a very natural mistake.

"Paddy, dear, please don't be upset. This was bound to happen."

Jo Winter was at her side, gentle and sympathetic.

Paddy glanced at her chum.

"Jo, he may be expelled—"

"But, Paddy, he asked for trouble—he always has!" Jo pointed out. She lowered her voice so that the rest of the riding team grouped at the gates did not overhear. "I'm only thankful that you didn't go to meet him as he wanted you to. Then you would have been caught out of bounds, too!"

Paddy bit her lip.

"Maybe, Jo. But you don't understand—"

"All I understand," said Jo with firmness, "is that you've been saved an awful row with the Head. That's what matters to me—not Conrad!"

Paddy was silent. She could understand Jo's point of view and she valued her chum's concern for herself. But Jo did not appreciate the

full circumstances. Neither did the others for that matter, as their different comments proved when they came up.

"Rotten biz, this, Paddy," said curly-haired Jimmy Court. "At least, though, you're wise to the fellow now."

"About time!" grunted Ron Bullton in his aggressive, tactless way.

"Well, let's drop the matter," suggested Dot Nelson. "Blow Conrad! Don't forget we came out here to practice—"

"And don't forget," put in Isabella Rocco, the South American girl, softly, "that Paddy made a promise about resigning the captaincy if Vincent did another shady thing!"

"Oh, don't talk about that now, Isabella!" cried Jo angrily.

"Yes, we can surely discuss that later," put in quiet Max Midden. "I wonder, though," he added thoughtfully, "who gave Conrad away to Mr. Voster? Not that it matters, I suppose."

But it did matter, tremendously, to Paddy. It exercised her mind above all else just then—that and the possible punishment awaiting Vincent Conrad back at the college.

She made a quick decision.

"Look, everyone," she said, "this—this has all been a bit upsetting. Do you mind awfully if I don't take part in the practice just now?"

"Of course not, Paddy," said Jimmy instantly, and most of the others nodded. "And we can talk about the captaincy later," he added, with a slightly hostile glance at Isabella.

"Thank you," said Paddy. She turned and picked up her bicycle.

"I'll see you all later."

"Paddy," called Jo, "there's something I want to say—"

"Later, Jo, please," said Paddy, and swung on to her cycle and pedalled away down the lane. She was conscious that they stood in a group, staring after her. She pedalled hard, lips set.

"They think I'm against Vincent

## FORBIDDEN TO RIDE— HIS HORSE TO BE SENT AWAY

That Is The Drastic Punishment Meted Out To Vincent Conrad. Read How The Fiery Rebel Of The College Reacts To The Ban.

now," she muttered. "I'll have to tell them later that I'm not—I'm jolly well not! But Vincent thinks I'm against him, too! He thinks I sneaked on him! Oh gosh, that's just awful!"

She reached the college, and dismounting from her cycle, marched towards the school, wondering what was going to happen to Vincent, wondering what she could do.

She knew she wanted to put herself right in his eyes; she sensed that beneath his fury and bitterness he had been deeply hurt at the supposed discovery that she had turned against him. She had been his only friend in the whole school.

Would he hit bad trouble? That worried Paddy. There was no doubt that Mr. Voster would take pleasure in punishing Vincent—and if the matter came before Dr. Heron Ames, the Headmaster, expulsion was possible.

Paddy winced. In her mind's eye she saw again Vincent's twisted grin, his blazing green-grey eyes; heard again his bitter: "Paddy's against me, too! Well—you can all go to the dickens! It doesn't matter now."

"He doesn't care what happens," Paddy muttered. "He thinks everyone hates him. But I jolly well care! He's not going to be thrown out just because of the plotting of this awful Whisperer!"

The Whisperer! The unknown! So clever, so deadly cunning! Yes, the Whisperer was at the root of so much. The Whisperer! A member of the riding team, she felt sure—but which member? If only she could unmask him—or her! That would help, surely?

And then Paddy paused. Her roving eyes, looking for some sign of Vincent, caught sight of a tall, gowned figure stalking from Boys' Side.

It was Mr. Voster. He was alone.

On swift impulse, Paddy leant her bike against the school wall and ran to intercept the master.

"Mr. Voster—please, could I speak to you?" she called breathlessly.

He stopped, turned, and regarded her coldly.

"Well, Miss Dare?"

Paddy stopped before him. She disliked this cold, harsh master, but she strove to be as polite as possible.

"I know I really have no right to ask you, Mr. Voster," she panted. "But—have you seen Vincent Conrad yet?"

"You certainly have no right to ask, Miss Dare," he agreed. "But as a matter of fact I have seen the boy—and dealt with him summarily!"

Paddy bit her lip. "Dealt with him summarily?" What did that mean?

Mr. Voster knew that Paddy cham-

pioned Vincent. His small mouth held a tight smile.

"As a friend of his," he said, "you may be relieved to know that he is not faced with expulsion. His conduct merited it, I think, but I am determined to tame that rebellious boy, and I believe the punishment I gave him will bring him to heel."

Paddy gave a tiny gulp. So it was not expulsion—or the threat of it! She knew relief, then uneasy anxiety.

"May—may I ask what punishment you gave him, Mr. Voster?"

"You may, Miss Dare," he said calmly. "And I shall tell you." He paused, watching her with that unpleasant little smile. "I have forbidden him to ride again this term!"

Paddy's jaw dropped. If there was one thing that was supremely important to the Outsider it was horse riding!

"And I am now on my way," continued the master, "to see the Head and arrange with him that the boy's horse—its name is Whitey, I believe—shall be sent away from the college as soon as possible!"

"Whitey—sent away!"

"Exactly!" He nodded.

"Oh, Mr. Voster—no!" she burst out impetuously. "He's terribly fond of Whitey! It would break his heart to lose him. Please! It is the worst possible punishment—"

"Naturally," cut in the master curtly. "That is why I chose it. It will, I trust, teach the boy the lesson he needs."

He turned away. Paddy was appalled. This was no way to handle Vincent! If anything, it would make him break out and do something really reckless, lawless. She was about to protest, whatever the consequences to herself, when behind the master, by the entrance of Central Hall, she saw a burly boy standing.

It was Guy Quist of the Fifth Form. A startling thought—a flash of inspiration—made Paddy call out.

"Mr. Voster—please listen!" she cried. "If I could prove that Vincent Conrad has an enemy who has made things worse for him, has been plotting against him all the time, wouldn't that make a difference? Wouldn't that alter his punishment?"

The words came out in an impulsive rush. The tall master turned, plainly startled. He stared at her.

"What nonsense is this, Miss Dare?" he demanded. "An enemy—plotting against Conrad? Rubbish!"

"But it would make a difference, Mr. Voster?" Paddy pressed.

He frowned, puzzled, annoyed.

"Possibly," he said curtly. "However, I do not credit the idea for one moment—and I have no more time to waste."

He stalked on. Paddy hardly saw his going. She whirled and started to run—run towards Guy Quist.

For sight of Guy had given her a sudden hope right out of the blue! "I believe," she whispered, "there's a chance to help Vincent, a chance to unmask and bowl out the Whisperer—now!"

### VINCENT DOESN'T BELIEVE

PADDY was afire with eagerness and hope.

Everything depended on Guy Quist—for Guy had been in Central Hall near the letter rack after lunch, and wasn't there an excellent chance that he had been there when Vincent's note to Paddy had been removed? That he would know who had taken it?

"Oh gosh, if only he does know!" Paddy had spoken to Guy earlier, but had only asked him if he had seen Isabella in Central Hall. Paddy, suspecting Isabella to be the Whisperer at that time, had not questioned him further. But she would now. She certainly would!

"Guy—please, just a sec!" she called.

The burly boy turned. He was a bully by nature and not popular.

"Well, what is it?" he grunted.

Paddy reached him, eyes gleaming excitedly.

"Guy, you know I asked you if you'd seen Isabella Rocco in Central

Hall while you were there after lunch?"

"And I told you I hadn't."

"Yes, I know, Guy. Forget about Isabella—but listen: did you notice if there was a note in the letter rack for me?"

His answering nod made her heart leap.

"Matter of fact there was a note for you," he said. "I spotted it when I was looking for a letter I was expecting."

Paddy grew tensed. So much depended on his next answer.

"That note for me wasn't in the rack when I came in," she said, trying to speak calmly. "You didn't happen to see anyone take it?"

"Yes, I did," he said instantly. "What's wrong, anyway? Didn't you get the note?"

Paddy drew a long quivering breath. This was it! Triumph! The Whisperer had tripped up at last! Possibly the Whisperer had not noticed Guy sitting reading in the alcove near by. But Guy had seen the note taken. And although he did not realise the

"Hey, what the dickens! Of all the nerve—of all the cheek!"

With a great effort, Paddy got a grip on herself.

"I'm sorry, Guy," she gasped. "I didn't mean to say that. But you must have made a mistake—just must! When you saw Jo she was probably just—just collecting a letter that had arrived for her."

Guy Quist glared at her in annoyance.

"No, she jolly well wasn't!" he snapped. "Think I can't see the difference between a letter that's come through the post, and an envelope with just your name on it?"

And, very huffily indeed, he turned and stamped away.

Paddy made no move to stop him.

"Oh, no! Jo—you couldn't!" She stared unseeing at the ground, shocked as never before, seeking some explanation.

Jo did not like Vincent. Jo did not trust Vincent—but to take Paddy's note and pass on the information it contained secretly to Mr. Voster—that was the act of the Whisperer!



"It was Jo who took your note," declared the Fifth Former. Paddy was stunned, for if this were true then it looked as if her chum was Vincent's secret enemy.

significance of it, he had the vital information so necessary to Paddy.

Now she could unmask Vincent's enemy! Now, surely, she could do something to minimise his latest punishment, and save him from going completely off the rails!

Flushed, thrilled, she stared at the Fifth Former.

"Oh gosh, this is terrific! Guy—tell me! Who took my note?"

He regarded her blankly.

"Hey, mean to say she didn't pass it on to you?" he demanded.

"She!"

"Of course! Your chum's a she, isn't she?"

Paddy's lips slowly parted. A strange chill seemed to strike at her, and she found it an effort to speak.

"My—my chum! You mean—"

"Josephine Winter, of course! It was Jo who took your note."

Here was the answer, the answer she had awaited so eagerly and excitedly!

Paddy stood stunned.

Jo—the Whisperer, the deadly, cunning secret enemy?

It horrified Paddy, and for seconds she could not speak but stood staring wide-eyed at Guy Quist. Then everything in her rebelled against the thought, and almost furiously she blurted out words of denial and protest.

"No! You're wrong! You—you're making it up—"

she stammered in her agitation. "You know it wasn't Jo! You know it!"

Guy Quist's rather small eyes bulged.

Jo Winter—the Whisperer?

Jo Winter who had locked up Paddy to prevent her getting the note?

"No!" Paddy exclaimed, pale-faced.

"Rot! Impossible!"

And then she remembered one significant fact. She had told Jo—and Jo alone—that Vincent was going to send her a note.

Apart from Vincent and herself, only Jo had known about it!

The evidence was strong, yet Paddy shook her fair head fiercely.

"I can't—I jolly well won't—believe it!" she muttered. "Not Jo! There's some awful mistake somewhere. There must be. And once I've seen Jo it will all be cleared up—I'm sure of it!"

Paddy found herself drifting towards Girls' Side. In that bad moment she had temporarily forgotten Vincent, his troubles, and her recent high hopes of helping him, but now she suddenly saw the boy himself.

Impulsively Paddy hurried after him. Whatever her own problems, she had to put herself right in his eyes.

And he just mustn't think that everybody's against him now," she murmured. "Gosh, how awful he must be feeling!"

She reached the stables. The main door was open. Vincent was obviously

inside. Paddy, usually so confident, entered slowly. It was not going to be easy to convince the boy that she had not given him away to Mr. Voster. She glanced along between the rows of loose-boxes. Whitey's double doors were open. Paddy walked towards them. She suddenly heard Vincent speaking.

"Whitey, old chap, this is just about the finish."

How quiet his voice was! Quiet and husky, with a deep emotion that Paddy had never really suspected to be in Vincent Conrad. Something made her move cautiously. She peered into the loose box.

Vincent stood with his back half towards her. He had one hand on the dark glossy neck of his horse. Whitey's ears were pricked forward, listening as his young master spoke.

"The whole lot of them hate me," Vincent muttered. "Even—Paddy, now. You're my only real pal, Whitey. You're the only one who doesn't think of me as the Outsider—"

Whitey dropped his head against the boy's shoulder.

That simple action, the boy's whispered words, brought a lump to Paddy's throat. Here was a side to his character that Vincent had shown to no one; the gentle and affectionate side that must always have been there beneath a cool, bitter exterior.

Vincent spoke to Whitey.

"And now—that rotter Voster's forbidden me to ride again! He's going to arrange for you to be sent away, Whitey!" A change came into his voice; it strengthened with blazing fury. "Well, I'm not standing that! They all think of me as an Outsider! They think I do rotten, caddish things. O.K.! Well, I'll give 'em something reckless—something to talk about! And if I'm expelled—"

He stopped. His whole frame stiffened. It was as if he had sensed someone behind him, for with a fierce abruptness he whirled, staring at her, his green-gray eyes cold and hard.

Her Vincent. Paddy started, almost timidly. "I'm sorry."

"Do you have to spy on me?" he blazed. "Haven't you got what you wanted? All right! Then please leave me alone!"

Paddy flushed, but she guessed how he must have hated to be caught like this.

"I had to speak to you, Vincent," she said. "I've heard about your punishment. I think it's awful, but—I didn't sneak on you!"

He was silent, his face coldly hostile now.

"Honestly, Vincent. Look I meant to meet you this afternoon, but I didn't get your note. Someone—she hesitated—" someone else took it."

Her slight, uncomfortable hesitation gave him the wrong impression. He gave a twisted, sardonic grin.

"Why worry about explanations?" he said. "It hardly matters now."

"It does!" Paddy flashed instantly. "I'm terribly sorry about your riding, and about Whitey—but for goodness' sake don't let it make you go all reckless and do something crazy! I'm sure there's a chance even yet to put things right!"

He stared, then laughed derisively. "That's fine—coming from you!"

Paddy breathed hard, but kept control. For his sake she must make him believe what had really happened, and that he had in fact one dangerous secret enemy who might perhaps be unmasked.

"I tell you, Vincent, that I never saw your note. Someone else did take it. On my honour!"

A pause. The sincerity in her voice brought the bitter look out of Vincent's eyes. He drew a slow breath. It was as if he wanted to believe, but was afraid to.

"If you really are sticking by me, Paddy, then"—he stopped, gazing at her intently—"prove it!"

"And I jolly well can!" she cried impulsively. "That note—"

Abruptly she snapped short, realising that she had gone too far. She could convince him—yes; but in so doing—

"Paddy," he said, "why don't you answer?"

She nearly groaned. For how could she convince him without bringing Jo's name into this—without, in effect, accusing her own dearest chum of being his secret enemy?

### A SHOCK FOR PADDY

VINCENT waited, watching her. A flicker of eagerness in his lean face died then. His lips twisted.

"So it was just a yarn, eh?" he said, his voice low and biting. "Well—O.K. You needn't have troubled to try to make excuses. I was a fool even to think that you—"

With a sudden movement he left the loose box, slammed the doors and strode past Paddy and out from the stables.

Paddy half raised a hand to check him, she let it fall. His footsteps rapped sharply away outside.

"Oh, dash—dash!" she exclaimed. "But what could I say? I just couldn't clear myself by putting the blame on Jo, even for Vincent."

And now he had gone, convinced that he was indeed a boy without one single friend in the whole of Mallington College.

"Idiot me! I did it wrong!" she decided. "Perhaps if I'd asked Vincent to wait until I'd spoken to Jo, we could have cleared everything up. But even to suggest to him that Jo's the Whisperer—impossible!"

She hurried into the sunlight. Vincent had vanished, however. Perturbed, Paddy wandered through the trees nearby.

"I've got to put things right—somehow," she told herself. "In his present mood, he's reckless enough to do the most crazy things!"

She glanced quickly at her wrist watch.

"The riding team will soon be back. Now, if I can see Jo and clear up this note business—find out exactly how Guy Quist made that mistake—"

Her brow cleared suddenly. If Jo had been in Central Hall, perhaps Jo herself could give her some line on the Whisperer!

"This awful Whisperer!" Her eyes glinted angrily. "Why on earth is he or she—so against Vincent? It's more than just dislike. There's something big behind it. Must be. But what?"

It was then that Fate played a queer trick on Paddy.

Wandering through the trees, her toe stubbed a ridge of hard mud. Instinctively she glanced down and saw a piece of folded notepaper. There was writing, in a firm hand, on one side only.

Paddy nearly passed on, but three or four words caught her idle glance. With a catch of the breath she lifted the paper.

It was dirtied and had been half covered by earth for perhaps a day or so. But the writing was easy enough to decipher:

as I have told you, you must make sure. I need hardly point out that this is vitally important to yourself as well. Nothing less than expulsion will meet the case! With a boy of that type, and your own shrewdness, it should be—

Paddy reached the bottom of the page. The strangest of feelings swept over her. She re-read the words intently.

"M-my gosh," she breathed. "Why, this—this is—"

Could there be any doubt that it was one page from a letter written to the unknown Whisperer? Could there be any doubt that the secret enemy was aiming at one thing—Vincent Conrad's expulsion?

Who had written the letter, and why Vincent's final disgrace was so important, Paddy had no idea.

Slowly, rather dazedly, she put the page into her pocket.

"It's amazing! Almost incredible! So that's it! A beastly plot."

She paused, breathing fast, excited. To her, with her knowledge of the Whisperer, this was conclusive evi-

dence of a deliberate campaign against Vincent. It would not be so to others' eyes.

"No matter!" Paddy told herself. "I know! So that's the game!" Vincent's expulsion was aimed at And how near to expulsion the boy had been—and was! His present mood was a deadly danger to himself. Paddy strode swiftly towards Girls' Side.

Now I've got to discover the Whisperer! And my first move must be to have a word with Jo."

Very determined, Paddy hurried to Study B in the Fourth Form corridor and plumped herself in the armchair and set herself to wait for her chum.

Hardly a moment later, however, she sprang to her feet, hearing well-known footsteps hurrying along the corridor.

Jo came in with a rush.

"Paddy dear, so there you are!" she cried. "Listen, I think it's going to be all right about your captaincy of the riding team. I simply had to dash and tell you before changing!"

"Jo! That sounds wonderful, but just a sec—"

"You see, Paddy," Jo rushed on. "Jimmy, Dot and Bette and I had a word together at the end of the practice. The four of us agree that despite Isabella and Ron and one or two others we just can't have a better captain than you, especially now that you've given up Vincent Conrad—"

"Paddy had to butt in then."

"But I haven't," she said firmly. "I believe in him more than ever!"

Jo stopped, drew back, startled and anxious. Paddy saw her look, but with enthusiasm caught her dark-haired chum's hands.

"And you've got to believe in him too, Jo," she cried. "Even if you don't like him very much, I'm going to prove he hasn't had a fair chance."

Jo did not respond to her enthusiasm.

"Paddy! Oh, we've been through this before, and you're wrong—"

"I'm not, Jo. I'm jolly well not! Just wait until you hear all I have to say. But first, you may be able to tell me something frightfully important."

All Paddy's excitement was back. She impulsively hugged her chum.

"Don't look so solemn, Jo! This is big! Now listen. I'll give all the dope later, but here's the point. An enemy of Vincent's hit against him this afternoon, and you may be able to tell me who!"

Jo started.

"I—I don't understand."

"You will, Jo!" in her excitement Paddy strode up and down the study.

"Now—this awful enemy is someone I've got to unmask for Vincent's sake. This enemy took a note meant for me from the letter rack this afternoon."

Jo stiffened, listening intently.

"Guy Quist of the Fifth was in Central Hall at the time," continued Paddy. "The silly ass made an awful blunder and thought he saw you take the note. Now, Jo, the thing is this—when you were in Central Hall, did you see anyone—"

She paused, surprised, for Jo had turned away.

"Hey, old thing," she blurted, "you must listen. Honestly, this is all jolly important."

Jo, without moving, answered in tones that were queerly strained.

"I know that," she said.

"Well, then, Jo, don't you see—we've got to find out who really took the note, and why Guy made that mistake."

Jo suddenly whirled. Her face was pale and set.

"But Guy didn't make a mistake, Paddy."

"Jo!"

Jo looked at her steadily.

"I'm sorry you've found out," she said. "I didn't want you to know, but if Guy saw me, then it's no good."

She paused. "Yes, I took the note Vincent Conrad left for you!"

What a terrific shock this is for Paddy! Can Jo, after all, be the Whisperer, Vincent's enemy? There will be a further enthralling instalment in next Friday's

**GIRLS' CRYSTAL.**



# JOY—The Girl With a 100 Voices

By IDA MELBOURNE

## A DISAPPOINTMENT FOR JOY

**T**HERE, Hypatia, that's the frock I want. Isn't it lovely?" Joy Oliver stopped in front of the shop window, and took her Cousin Hypatia by the arm. To make sure there was no misunderstanding, Joy pointed to the pretty blue-and-white summer frock that a model was displaying.

Cousin Hypatia's learned face creased in a smile, and she took Joy's arm. It was her turn.

"Look!" she said, and pointed skywards.

Joy, perplexed though she was by this odd behaviour, looked up at the sky in the direction indicated. She saw a large yellowish-greenish object far, far away.

"That's the moon," she said. "What about it?"

"I'd like it," said Hypatia humourously.

"You're not likely to get it!" frowned Joy.

"I'm as likely to get it as you are to get your frock!" smirked Hypatia. "He, he, he!"

If she expected Joy to collapse helplessly with laughter, she was disappointed. Joy did not raise even a ghostly smile. In fact, she was not amused.

"Joking apart, Hypatia," she said, "I'm having that frock!"

"You have the money with you?" Hypatia asked loftily.

"I haven't—but you have. I happen to know," explained Joy, "that aunt said I could have a frock this morning!"

Joy was standing no nonsense. She had heard Aunt Jemima say that she, Joy, had better have a frock to go to the garden party next week, and that Hypatia could choose it. But Joy meant to choose her own frock—and she had chosen it. The blue-and-white one. That was what she wanted, and what she meant to have!

Hypatia adjusted her glasses. She was a few years older than Joy, a prefect at her school, and so she always adopted a superior attitude.

"I'm afraid, Joy," she said, "that your taste, discrimination, and judgment are inadequate to cope with the delicate task of choosing a frock. If you are to have a frock I will choose it!"

"Oh!" "But," continued Hypatia, "your having the frock depends upon your continued good behaviour. Mother is not at all satisfied that you are well-behaved enough to go to the garden party, and it might be throwing

money away to buy a frock for the occasion if at the last moment she is compelled to forbid you to go!"

"Bah!" said Joy. "Twaddle, bosh, and rubbish!"

Joy said that, but not in her own voice. Nor did the words seem to come from her mouth, for Joy had more sense than to speak openly in such a manner to Cousin Hypatia.

Those critical comments came—or seemed to come—from a sour-faced woman who was glaring into the shop window.

As Hypatia did not know that Joy was a ventriloquist, naturally she did not suppose even for one wild moment that Joy was responsible for the words.

"Indeed, madam?" said Hypatia coldly to the surprised woman.

The woman looked at her, and frowned.

"Were you addressing me?" she asked.

"Were you addressing me?" returned Hypatia. "I distinctly heard you say 'Twaddle, bosh, and rubbish!'"

The woman looked Hypatia up and down.

"As the cap evidently fitted, you had better wear it, my girl," she said.

"Doubtless the words were used as a fair comment on some utterance of yours—but not by me. Good-morning!"

She strode off and left Hypatia pink-faced and gasping.

"Well, really—a complete stranger—daring to—having the cheek to designate my remarks rubbish and twaddle!" she cried.

"Oh, well, some people are good judges of character and can sum a person up in a flash, Hypatia," said Joy with a faint grin.

"That," said Hypatia, a glint in her eyes, "is merely being rude!"

She swung round and carelessly collided with the arm of the shop blind.

"I beg your pardon!" she snapped. "Not at all," said the blind.

Hypatia passed on, only to pull up sharply almost at once and blink back at the blind.

.....

**Joy Had Set Her Heart On The Pretty Blue-And-White Frock—And With The Aid Of Her Ventriloquism She Meant To Get It!**

.....

"Extraordinary!" she gasped. "I—I thought I heard someone say 'Not at all!'"

"Perhaps it was one of the models in the shop window," said Joy.

"Rubbish! They are all made of wax!"

She looked at one of the models, and it looked back at her with large glassy eyes.

"That's all you know," it said.

Hypatia drew back. If she could believe her ears—they had never failed her yet—the voice undoubtedly had come from the wax model. Joy, of course, had seen to that; her ventriloquism had failed her less often than Hypatia's ears had let that learned girl down.

"This is truly remarkable," frowned Hypatia. "Surely a girl cannot stand in the window as still as that? It seems almost incredible!"

"Oh, a lot of odd things happen these days. She may be doing it for a bet or a competition or something," said Joy. "Let's go in and ask."

Joy went into the shop. She could not resist having fun with Hypatia. But this was not idle fun. The suspicion had taken shape in her mind that Hypatia wanted to avoid this shop and go to another—just in case Joy became insistent about the frock. Joy really did want that frock, and she meant to take no chances. Any excuse would do to get into the shop.

She walked up to the floor-walker, a sleek man who stood rubbing his hands ingratiatingly.

"My cousin here thinks one of the models in the window spoke to her," Joy said. "Is that possible?"

The shop-walker beamed in a bland smile and gave a little giggle.

"Oh, quite impossible," he said. "They are made of wax."

"Ha, ha, ha! There, Hypatia! You were wrong!" said Joy.

Hypatia's face was crimson.

"I—I—er—it was just a fleeting thought," she said.

"What can I show you, ladies?" asked the shop-walker.

"There's a blue-and-white dress in the window," said Joy. "We should like—"

"We should like a packet of pins," interrupted Hypatia firmly.

"A packet of pins?" exclaimed the shop-walker, looking down his nose. "Indeed!" He clapped his hands to summon help. "Miss Jones! A packet of pins," he said in an aloof tone, scorning such a trivial sale himself.

Miss Jones, a pale-faced assistant, came hurrying to the counter to serve, and as she looked in a drawer for the pins, Joy took Hypatia's arm.

"Hypy, aren't you even going to ask to see the frock?" she pleaded in an anguished tone.

"No!"

"But—but just to look at it?" urged Joy. "No harm in that!"

"No! You have made me look absurd—and, in any case, as I've told

you, the matter is not settled!" Hypatia said angrily. "I will not be bullied into buying a frock—or even looking at one. As soon as we have the pins, we'll leave this shop!" Joy set her lips. That was what Hypatia thought. But Joy had other ideas. Walk out of the shop indeed! Hypatia had the money with her to buy the frock, and she had the authority to buy it, too. She was just being difficult and obstinate.

"Whoa, Hypatia!" Joy said desperately. "I think you're right. Listen! That model in the window!" Joy threw her voice to the nearest model.

"It's a secret," the model seemed to say. "Don't let anyone know!" Hypatia, startled, was suddenly filled with resolution. She would get to the bottom of this mystery!

Before Joy could guess her cousin's intention, Hypatia strode forward, grasped the model by the arm, and gave it a slight tug.

The model swayed, rocked. "Oh, look out!" wailed Hypatia, in horror. "It's falling!"

Crash! The model tottered, and then fell full length.

Hypatia, white-faced, looked down the shop. The shop-walker had turned, but did not see what had happened; nor did Miss Jones, who had been peering into a drawer.

"Run! Bolt!" panted Hypatia. "Oh, this is awful! I'll never come in this shop again!"

Dragging Joy by the hand, fearful that the fallen model would be discovered, Hypatia strode to the door.

Joy gasped in dismay. In another moment they would have left the shop—for good. It would be good-bye to the blue-and-white frock she had set her heart on having.

"Stop!" It was the shop-walker's voice, and it spoke in a tone of command that could not be ignored.

### UNHAPPY HYPATIA

HYPATIA stopped, pale and shaken. Slowly, she turned her head. "They—they know?" she gasped fearfully.

Joy looked down the length of the shop. The sharp, angry voice that had sounded so exactly like the shop-walker's had not been his. Joy herself had uttered the warning cry, imitating the man's voice perfectly and ventriloquising at the same time. "Shush!" she now said. "I don't think he realises!"

But the shop-walker was peering round suspiciously.

"What was that crash, Miss Jones?" he asked.

Joy bobbed down, and Hypatia readily did the same. They were not visible in that position, for Joy moved back so that a show-case hid them.

"We can't hide like this!" chattered Hypatia.

"Of course not. Nip into the window and pick the model up," urged Joy.

Hypatia ground her teeth. "I—I dare not. You nip in!" "No, you nip!" insisted Joy. "You knocked it over. I don't think the model's damaged. Of course, if it is, it might set you back ten pounds or more, perhaps."

"Don't!" begged Hypatia in horror. "What would mamma say?"

Joy almost pushed Hypatia into the window. Her eyes were shining and her heart was thumping. She felt that she had Hypatia in the hollow of her hand once she got her into that window!

Hypatia herself had only one concern—to get out of this mess, and then out of this shop.

Nervously she crawled into the shop window. No sooner was she there than Joy gave a warning gasp. "Look out! Hide!"

"Hide? Oh dear, where?" "Pretend to be a model!" hissed Joy.

"How?" "Stand still. Borrow that other model's sunshade. Here comes the shop-walker!"

The shop-walker was indeed approaching, and Joy looked away from the window where Hypatia, having borrowed the sunshade, was now posing as a model—to the delight of two shop gazers.

"What is going on here?" snapped the shop-walker fussily. "I heard a crash!"

He looked about him, frowning, and Joy realised that the time had come to divert his suspicions. Throwing her voice, she made it seem that an angry, haughty woman had appeared on the scene. And what better voice than Aunt Jemima's? Joy could imitate her Aunt Jemima's voice so well that it would baffle anyone—even Hypatia.

"Am I never going to receive attention?" demanded Aunt Jemima's voice.

The shop-walker wheeled, purring and rubbing his hands. "But certainly, moddom. What is moddom's pleasure?"

"I like ice-cream with strawberries, sugar almonds, peaches, and a really good play," said Aunt Jemima's voice.

The shop-walker looked a little dazed.

"Er—this is only a draper's and ladies' outfitting establishment, madam. We do not sell ice-creams or—er—peaches." Then, speaking from behind his hand, he addressed Miss Jones anxiously. "Where is this—er—lady?" he asked, staring about him in perplexity.

"I can't see anyone," blinked Miss Jones. "But I can hear her voice!"

Joy, still imitating Aunt Jemima, now made the voice come from just outside the shop door.

"Of course you cannot see me. I am here. Please get me—" It was a brilliant idea Joy had then. "Please get me the blue-and-white frock from the window. I want it for my niece here—this good-looking girl with the pleasant smiling expression!"

Joy giggled as she thus described herself, but the shop-walker was not at all taken aback.

"Certainly, moddom. Miss Jones," he added imperiously, "bring the blue-and-white frock from the window for moddom!"

Miss Jones went to the window, and Joy gave a sudden gasp. Hypatia! There she stood as a model, carrying the sunshade. The assistant must surely see her.

"Wait!" Joy exclaimed hastily. "I will get it myself—"

Then her voice trailed away. For the shop door opened—and in walked Aunt Jemima herself in person!

### SHOCKS IN THE SHOP

AUNT JEMIMA! Joy nearly collapsed.

"Oh, gig-golly!" she gasped. "Ah, you are here, Joy! But where is Hypatia?" Aunt Jemima demanded, striding into the shop.

Joy met Hypatia's round, goggling eyes. That girl was still in the shop window, holding a sunshade and supporting the fallen model, which she had half raised. The appearance of Aunt Jemima had startled her as much as it had Joy. Hypatia did not want her mother to find out what had happened.

Meanwhile, the shop-walker was beaming at Aunt Jemima.

"I am glad to see you, moddom. It was odd hearing your voice without seeing your—er—person," he smirked.

Aunt Jemima stabbed him with a piercing glance.

"What's that?" "Er—nothing," he said, taken aback.

"I am looking for my niece. She came here to buy a frock."

"Ah, the blue-and-white striped frock, moddom?"

Joy pulled herself together. "That's for me aunt," she said.

"For you, Joy? Whether or not you have a frock depends upon Hypatia's opinion of your behaviour."

Joy jumped. This wasn't so good!

"Oh golly!" she gasped. "I—I'm sure Hypatia will say I've behaved jolly well—"

"I shall prefer Hypatia's own verdict of that. Now, where is Hypatia? I foolishly gave her my note-case without extracting some notes for myself. I can do no shopping until I find her!"

Joy stole a glance at Hypatia. She saw the sunshade in the window twitch. At any moment, Aunt Jemima would see Hypatia in the window, or Miss Jones would, or the shop-walker would.

And then—alas! Joy knew who would be blamed then—Joy! The good report from Hypatia on which she depended would not be given, and that wonderful blue-and-white frock would remain only a dream.

But Joy had her wits, and she had her power of ventriloquism. Now was the moment for action—desperate but purposeful action.

Suddenly, Hypatia's voice came from the window—thanks only to Joy's wonderful gift.

"Here I am, mamma! I am looking at Joy's blue-and-white frock she so well deserves!"

"In the window?" gasped Aunt Jemima, staggered.

"Good gracious! Customers are not allowed in the window!" protested the shop-walker.

Hypatia, the game being up, dropped the sunshade and anxiously erected the fallen model.

"I—I—er—" she faltered. "I—"

Aunt Jemima went to the window. She was utterly amazed.

"Hypatia, what ever are you doing here?"

"She's looking at my new blue-and-white frock," said Joy, and winked at Hypatia meaningly.

"Yes—er—I—er—that's it!" said Hypatia feebly.

"Well, dear, I'm not wholly in agreement with your going into the window, my pet," said Aunt Jemima.

"Oh, she's welcome," the nearest model seemed to say.

Aunt Jemima jumped and blinked.

"Good gracious! I thought these were wax effigies!" she exclaimed.

"They are wax effigies," said the shop-walker.

"But that one spoke to me!" declared Aunt Jemima, pointing.

"Spoke to you, moddom? Impossible!" He stepped into the window.

Joy knew that her fate—the fate of her frock—was as suspended by a thread.

As the man stepped into the window the model which Hypatia had picked up and rested against the back window frame swung round and fell again.

"Owowowowowoo!" it seemed to yelp.

"Pick me up, silly!" it called in a shrill tone.

The shop-walker stood there dazed and baffled. He could not deny that it spoke! He could believe his own ears. Yet—

Joy had stepped up to the blue-and-white frock, and while the others were dithering and the shop-walker was recoiling from the inert wax model, Joy unbuttoned the frock down the back, zipped the zip, and removed it.

"This is the one I'm having, aunt," she said.

They ignored her. Aunt Jemima was staring at the shop-walker, and he was staring back at her. It was the mystery of the talking dummy that baffled them.

"This—this model is only a dummy," he chattered. "But—but I heard it speak!"

"And I—I heard it speak!" faltered Aunt Jemima.

They were silent; but Joy was not. She gave a sudden squeal of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There were some people peering in at the window, and a man who had been staring with the others had just turned away.

"That man!" Joy cried.

"What about him?" asked Aunt Jemima.

"Don't you see?" asked Joy ex-

(Please turn to the back page.)



# The Merrymakers' Island College



By DAPHNE GRAYSON

## A SURPRISE FOR SALLY & CO.

"WHAT we want," said Sally Warner thoughtfully, "is a girl who can dive like a swallow and cut through the water like a seal—"

"In other words, a winged fish," said Don Weston with a smile. "Can't say I've seen anyone in the club answering that description. Sally. Looks as if we'll have to give the Sarneville Junior Swimming Club a walk-over in that event." "Not likely!" snorted Johnny Briggs. "Why, before I'd let that happen I'd jolly well take it on myself."

"Apart from two small points you'd do splendidly, Johnny," said Fay Manners dryly. "One, you're not particularly elegant at high and fancy diving. And, two, you don't look even remotely like a girl!" Sally, as president of the Merrymakers' Club, had been delighted to receive a challenge from the Sarneville Junior Swimming Club for an aquatic contest on Saturday afternoon.

The winners of the greatest number of points were to receive a handsome challenge shield, besides various individual prizes to be presented by local celebrities, and the members of the Merrymakers' Club were very keen to see that shield decorating the wall of their new club-house.

Their team was complete now, except for one event—the girls' high-and-fancy diving contest. And, try as they might, Sally & Co. could think of no one to fill the bill.

"Well, I suppose we'd better enter someone," said Sally with a little sigh. "Fay or Linda or myself—"

"Hallo, there!" broke in a pleasant voice. "You all look unusually gloomy! Anything wrong?"

"Oh, Mrs. Elton!" Sally & Co. jumped to their feet, smiling. "We're just— But, I say," said Sally, eyeing the suitcase in the woman's hand. "You're not leaving?"

Mrs. Elton's sweet, grey eyes clouded a little, and she nodded.

"Yes," she said heavily. "I'm just off. I—I left Wynne resting. There's no point in my staying any longer. I— But never mind that," she added, forcing a bright smile to her face. "Walk up the drive with me and tell me what's worrying you."

While Don grabbed the suitcase, Sally took Mrs. Elton's arm. Though Mrs. Elton had only arrived at the International College to see her daughter yesterday, and had stayed overnight, she and the chums already felt themselves to be old friends.

"We'll tell you," smiled Sally, "but I'm afraid you won't be able to help."

And while Mrs. Elton listened interestedly, she told her of their dilemma. Sally was quite startled when, at the end of her recital, Mrs. Elton gripped her arm.

"I can help you," she said vibrantly. "There is one member of your club who could win that event for you—my daughter, Wynne!"

"But—but she—," began Johnny, then stopped abruptly, turning red.

"She cannot walk properly," finished Mrs. Elton, in a low, pain-filled voice. "I know! But that is why I came down here— She looked round quickly, spotted a collection of deserted chairs beneath the huge, shady gum tree just off the drive. "Sit down for a moment," she urged, "and I'll explain."

And, while the chums listened in ever-growing amazement and excitement, she told them how Wynne had earned nation-wide fame as a swimming and diving champion; how, some months ago, just as she had dived from the highest board, someone else had dived in from the side of the swimming-bath.

To avoid the collision, which would injure them both, Wynne had somersaulted. But she misjudged her distance and crashed on the side of the bath, badly injuring her knee.

"I expect you read about it at the time," said Mrs. Elton, "but, as she always entered as Mary Elton, you would not connect the two."

"She—she's never mentioned it," said Fay in pitying tones.

"No," agreed Mrs. Elton. "Wynne spent many months in hospital, in great pain—and, worst of all, she lost hope. She felt she would never swim again, so she cut all thought of it right out of her life."

"And she's wrong?" asked Sally eagerly.

"Quite wrong!" said Mrs. Elton. "We sent her here originally because we were told that mixing with other boys and girls might alter her outlook. And then yesterday I came down here with the great news that there is nothing wrong with her now—that all her knee needs is exercise. Swimming, diving, running—anything! I—I thought she would be delighted, but—but—"

"She wouldn't believe you?" Sally asked quietly.

"No," said Mrs. Elton. "She—she

thought I was just trying to cheer her up. If only she could forget herself only for a few moments and run, jump or swim, and find she suffers no ill-effects, her cure would be complete."

"And that's where we come in, eh?" asked Don eagerly. "Gosh, we'll see what we can do, Mrs. Elton—for Wynne's sake and for our own. Mary Elton—here! Who would have believed it?"

"If you could do it—oh, if only you could do it!" murmured Mrs. Elton chokily. "But, remember, Wynne must not know I have told you anything—she must not suspect that you know who she really is. And you must tell no one else."

"Leave it to us, Mrs. Elton," said Sally quietly. "And don't worry!"

A little later, after having seen Mrs. Elton off, the four chums made their way to Wynne's chalet.

They found her lying on a long chair on the veranda of her chalet. She looked a little surprised as they hailed her.

"Hallo, Wynne," said Sally cheerfully. "We need some help. We want you to help us decide which girl we should choose for the high and fancy diving—"

Wynne drew in her breath sharply. She flinched as if with pain, her hands clenching convulsively. It took all Sally's self-control in that moment to stop herself from uttering words of sympathy and pity. But that, she knew, was the last thing she should do. That wouldn't help Wynne at all.

"Of course, we realise you know nothing about such things, but that doesn't matter. You'll be able to get some idea of whether Fay or myself is the better of the two." Sally smiled brightly, noting with a pang how pale Wynne's face had turned. "If you could come along to the swimming-bath now, Fay could take her turn before the first lecture."

Wynne shrank back a little, nervously biting her lip.

"I—I don't think—" she began.

"It's jolly good of you to be so helpful, Wynne," said Don breezily, and, almost before the girl realised what had happened, she found herself with Don on one side and Johnny on

In This Week's Grand Story You Will Meet The  
Champion Swimmer Who Was Terrified To Go  
Into The Water

the other, being half-lifted down her chalet steps and escorted across the campus.

The open-air swimming-pool looked deliciously sparkling and enticing in the bright morning sunshine. High above were the diving-boards, and at sight of them a look of infinite sadness, of yearning desire, crossed Wynne's attractive face.

The two boys gently helped her into a chair while Fay, discarding her shorts and jersey to reveal a trim bathing-suit, began to climb the ladder leading to the diving-boards.

"I don't know why Sally and the others are so worried," she called gaily to Wynne. "I know we're up against stiff competition, but I'm sure I can show our rivals a thing or two!"

Which was a remark so unlike the modest Fay that Wynne frowned in amazement, whilst the chums quickly turned aside to hide their grins.

Fay, still acting a part, proceeded to demonstrate what she would show the rival club—a lesson in the worst possible diving. For one usually so graceful, she managed to land in the water with the most elephantine splashes. But she was smiling complacently as she climbed out.

"It was a pretty good dive," she said smugly. "Bet none of you could have done better!"

"Good!" Wynne's voice was horrified. "It—it was awful—awful!" Unconsciously she had jumped to her feet, the first spontaneous movement the chums had ever seen her make. "Why, you can't realise what you're up against! Those Australian girls are marvellous divers."

"Wynne—please!" chided Sally. "Don't you think you're exaggerating slightly. After all, you know nothing about diving—"

Wynne swung round, lips compressed, eyes flashing.

"Oh, don't!" she cried. "That's what you think. Just find me a swim-suit and I'll jolly well show you how that dive ought to be made!"

For a moment the chums stared open-mouthed, completely bowled over by the fact that their scheme should have met with such quick success.

"Well, if you really want to, Wynne," said Sally with a pretence of indifference, though inwardly she was bubbling over with elation as she held out her own swim-suit.

Wynne almost snatched it and then went off towards the girls' cubicles, while Sally & Co. watched delightedly.

They had hurt Wynne's pride by doubting her ability to pass judgment on Fay's diving, and she had momentarily forgotten her injury. She had only to make one dive, realise it had no ill-effects, and the fear which had lurked for so long at the back of her mind would be gone for ever!

But even as Wynne reached the cubicle there came the patter of hurrying feet. Sally & Co. saw a girl dart from behind the cubicles.

"Wynne!" she cried. "What are you thinking of? Sally, how could you—you know how dangerous it is for Wynne to do anything active! Wynne, dear, let me help you over to your chalet right away—you must rest!"

In helpless dismay the chums saw Wynne herself, so startlingly reminded of her accident, suddenly wilt.

Dropping Sally's swim-suit with a little shudder, giving the chums a look of reproach, she limped off more heavily than ever on the arm of Ellen Chandler, a spare-time secretary employed at the college.

### THE CHUMS TRY AGAIN

"WELL!" exclaimed Sally, bitter disappointment in her blue eyes. "Why couldn't Ellen have stayed away just a few minutes longer?"

Morosely the chums wandered into college for first lecture. Wynne was not in her place, Sally noticed. Probably out of mistaken kindness Ellen had persuaded her to cut lecture and rest. And as she thought of that, Sally's brow furrowed deeply.

Ellen, though she probably thought she was doing what was best for Wynne, was in reality giving her the worst possible treatment.

The sooner Wynne could be made to forget all about the accident, the sooner she could become once again a normal, active, happy girl.

If only they could tell Ellen that—but they couldn't. Wynne's mother had bound them to secrecy. But at least they could make their peace with Wynne; and so, after lecture, Sally collected a lovely bunch of flowers. Don contributed two new and exciting books he had just received from England, and Fay and Johnny clubbed together to buy a box of candies. Armed with their gifts, they made their way to Wynne's chalet.

But as they reached it, Sally gave a muffled exclamation of impatience. For, seated beside Wynne, who was once more reclining in her long chair with a rug wrapped round her legs, was Ellen Chandler. And Ellen, apparently, was no more pleased to see the chums than they were to see her.

"I think Wynne is still rather tired," she said pointedly.

"We thought she might be—of lying here and doing nothing," said Sally sweetly. "Don's brought you a couple of his new books, Wynne, and here are some candies and some flowers for you."

Wynne, after one wary glance at the chums, swung herself upright, her eyes beginning to sparkle.

"Oh, you are kind—," she began.

"We've also brought you some work to do," twinkled Sally. "I thought you might like to help me with the list I've got to make out. It's the competitors' names and the events they're appearing in—"

She pretended not to notice the way Wynne suddenly stiffened, but prattled gaily on. And she was rewarded by the girl's gradual relaxation, the interest she began to show. Until once again Ellen, who had been shifting restlessly, broke in:

"Sally, aren't you being unkind to ask or expect Wynne to take an interest in something in which she can't hope to join?"

"Ellen!" cried Don sharply. But the damage was done. With a little gasp, Wynne drew back, Sally's papers fluttering from her hand.

In that moment Sally felt very near despair. Why—oh, why, had Ellen decided to appoint herself Wynne's protector?

Don saw the dismay on Sally's face, knew what she was thinking. With a muttered excuse he slipped away. A few minutes later a small page boy arrived and handed a note to Ellen. With a frown, she opened it, then gave a petulant exclamation.

"It's from Professor Willard's secretary," she explained. "She needs some help with a mass of correspondence." She glanced suspiciously as Don strolled up. "I—I have to go. I'll be back as soon as I can, Wynne dear—and do remember not to tire yourself in any way while I'm gone." She glared at the chums. "Perhaps it would be better if we all left her now?" she suggested.

Her words were ignored, but Sally did not miss the angry set of her lips, the peculiarly apprehensive look in her eyes. And for the first time suspicion began to creep into her mind. Was there any underlying motive for Ellen's sudden interest in Wynne? Had she any reason for not wanting the girl to become interested in the forthcoming contest?

It seemed ridiculous, yet the suspicion rankled in Sally's mind as she turned once again to Wynne.

"I'm glad Ellen's gone," she said with a smile. "We wanted to see you alone. You see, Johnny's borrowing a car this afternoon, and we're going for a drive. We'd love you to come along—will you?"

Wynne hesitated, looking rather questioningly at the chums. She had never been a close friend of the merry crowd, though in her innermost heart she had longed to be.

"I—I'd love to come," she said with sudden excitement.

"Then we'll pick you up when we're ready," said Don, and, beaming with delight, the four chums scurried off.

"Thanks for getting Ellen out of the way, Don," chuckled Sally. "How did you manage it?"

"I just subtly suggested to the professor's secretary that she was doing more than her fair share of work while Ellen was loafing," grinned Don. "It worked like a charm!"

The car drive that afternoon worked like a charm, too. Wynne became gay and vivacious, revealing to the chums for the first time the real Wynne, who had so far remained hidden from them under the shy, aloof manner she had adopted.

They were whizzing gaily on their way back when the car began to make peculiar noises, finally coming to a halt.

"What's wrong, Johnny?" asked Sally. But Sally wasn't really anxious, for she and the chums had arranged beforehand that this should happen!

"Out of petrol," said Johnny with a grimace. "Gosh! What an ass I am—and not much time to go before gates are closed, either!"

"What can we do?" asked Fay in pretended alarm.

"Easy!" said Don. "If we run across that field we'll be on the main Sarneville Road. There'll be a bus along soon, and we'll just about catch it if we hurry. Johnny can phone the garage from college and arrange to have the car collected. Come on!"

Wynne jumped out of the car with the rest as they began their dash down the road.

How right Sally's mother had been, Sally was thinking. Even now Wynne was running with only the slightest trace of stiffness—quite natural after her long inactivity. In a few moments even that would disappear. She would realise then that her fears were groundless—

"Peeep! Peeep!" a car came to a halt beside Wynne. A woman leaned across and opened the door.

"How dare you drag that poor girl along in such a fashion?" she asked angrily. "It's perfectly obvious she is in no fit condition to be rushing around. Get in, my dear. I'll take you back to college!"

At her words the old fearful look flashed back into Wynne's face. She seemed to wilt, stumblingly climbed into the car.

"What about my friends?" she cried, struggling to open the door. "You must take them, too. You can't leave them behind—"

But even while she was protesting the car glided off, leaving Sally & Co. standing dumbfounded in the cloud of dust which blew about them.

As she rubbed her eyes, stared after the disappearing car, Sally suddenly gave a cry of amazement.

That figure which had been crouched back on the rear seat—surely it was Ellen! But why had Ellen appointed herself Wynne's protector, and why she was always around just when they had worked Wynne up to the pitch when she had forgotten all about her accident?

### THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS

SALLY was still asking herself those questions when finally she and her chums returned to college.

And the more she thought about it the more puzzled she became. If it didn't seem so fantastic, she would really begin to believe that Ellen had some reason for not wishing Wynne to enter the aquatic contest on behalf of the Merry-makers' Club.

The next morning Sally went into Sarneville, and asked the captain of the opposing team if she had yet drawn up her list, and if she might see it.

And as that pleasantly smiling girl agreed, and Sally ran her eye down the list, she felt her heart give a terrific thump. For suddenly a name seemed to leap out of that list and hit her.

"Edith Chandler—girls' High and Fancy Diving Contest." So her suspicions had been justified.

"Thanks, Laura!" said Sally quietly, and returned to college. There she poured out the news of her discovery to her waiting chums. "She's not thinking of Wynne at all," Sally said indignantly. "She just wants to stop her entering the contest, because she's afraid if Wynne enters her sister will stand no chance—"

"But why is it so important?" asked Fay bewilderedly.

"Probably something to do with the prizes," suggested Don. "But, whatever the reason, we can't let her get away with it. Maybe she doesn't fully realise it, but she's being cruel to Wynne—"

"Can't we tell Wynne?" suggested Johnny.

"Out of the question," replied Sally. "It would only draw her attention to something we're trying to make her forget. No, we've got to make one more effort to help Wynne."

"But how? That was the question which racked the chums' brains. Then, just after lunch, Sally's eyes suddenly lit up.

"Got it!" she cried. "Listen—"

Eagerly her chums listened, and as they did so approving smiles spread over their faces.

"Just the job, Sally," enthused Don. "And this time—it's got to work!"

"MM! This is so peaceful!" Sally stretched on her back under a shady tree, sighed happily. "Glad we persuaded you to come picnicking here, Wynne!"

Wynne's gaze swept over the sun-baked grass to where it sloped gently to the lake edge.

"It's a lovely spot," she agreed. "But—but why is this piece of ground wired in? It seems strange. Is it private?"

"Sort of," admitted Don. "But the farmer's a friend of ours. And he had the paddock wired in because he used to keep a bull in it—"

"A bull?" Wynne sat up, looking suddenly nervous. "It—it's not here now, is it?"

Sally shook her head, turning away to hide her smile. For only too well she and her chums knew there was nothing to fear from Felix the bull. The look of him was enough to scare anyone, but in reality he was as gentle as a kitten and immensely enjoyed being fussed.

But Wynne did not know that yet. And she did not know that she and Felix were destined to meet very soon; for the chums had chosen this picnic spot carefully, a quick glimpse having assured them that Felix was cropping peacefully in the next paddock.

Even now, unknown to Wynne, Johnny was swinging open the communicating gate, making signs to Felix. And if the first fearsome sight of that animal was not enough to make Wynne forget her stiff knee and run for safety, then the chums' last trick had failed. Drastic treatment, perhaps; but, because of Ellen's bad influence, drastic measures were now necessary.

As Sally slowly straightened up there came a sudden shout from Johnny as he came rushing across the paddock.

"The bull!" he cried wildly. "It's loose—run—run!"

Wynne gave a startled cry and scrambled to her feet. Rather more leisurely, the chums also rose. And then, another glance at Johnny's white face set their hearts racing.

"Run!" he roared. "We made a mistake—it's not Felix! Run!"

Sally's own face turned white as she saw the angry black beast pounding towards them, head down—a bull that unlike Felix, plainly meant business.

"Wynne—run! Run!" she cried. And then her heart seemed to sink like a stone. Obviously Ellen's crafty work had done more damage than they had realised.

"I can't run—you know I can't!" Wynne said in a stricken voice.

"Oh, my goodness!" Fay stared from her to the rapidly approaching

bull with fear-distended eyes. "Wynne, you must try—"

"All right, Fay—leave it to us," muttered Don. He and Johnny grabbed Wynne one on either side, half-carried, half-dragged her down to the lake, Sally and Fay running alongside.

The bull was almost on their heels as they reached the water's edge. And there another shock awaited them. For, to prevent the escape of this new and ferocious beast, the farmer had carried his wire fence right up to the thick, impenetrable brush which stretched on either side of the paddock.

"Make for the island," puffed Don, pointing to the rocky eminence some little way out in the lake. "Swim for it, quickly! Wynne, do you think you can manage on your own?"

"I can't—I can't!" cried Wynne frantically. "Please—I know I can't!"

"There wasn't a moment to lose. "Fay and I will help you," Sally gasped.

Thankful that they were wearing their shorts and blouses, they



"It was a pretty good dive," said Fay, as she climbed out of the water. "Believe none of you could have done better." To her delight her ruse succeeded. "Good? Why it was awful!" Wynne exclaimed. "Just find me a swim-suit and I'll show you how that dive ought to be made!"

plunged into the lake, while the frustrated bull pawed and snorted at the edge. Towing Wynne, who seemed completely helpless, the two girls supported her across to the island, with the boys help somehow lifted her to the top of the rocks overlooking the lake.

"Sure to be a boat along soon," puffed Johnny. "They'll take us back to college. Gee, am I exhausted—"

All, except Wynne, were in the same state. And glancing at them as, with strained faces, they fought for breath, a shamed look began to creep into her eyes.

"I—", began Wynne, and then stopped as a shrill scream echoed across the water. She turned sharply, her face paling as she saw the white-clad figure of a girl who, unaware of the danger from the bull, had come charging down to the lake. "Ellen!" she shouted. "Go back—go back!"

It was too late! Ellen, cringing back against the brush, was trapped. If the bull saw her—

"Swim for it!" shouted Don. And then another shriek—a cry that filled them with dread!

"I can't swim! Oh, help me—help me!"

Exhausted as they were, the chums realised that only they could save Ellen.

"I'll go!" panted Don. "Splash! Even as he started forward a figure leapt off the rocky eminence on which they were standing, dived neatly and cleanly into the water, and shot with astonishing speed towards the terrified girl at the lake edge.

"Wynne!" gasped Sally unbelievably. "Wynne—she—she did it!"

The chums were still staring in awed wonderment when Wynne returned with Ellen. Unaided she scrambled to the top of the rocks.

"Sally! Sally—I did it!" she cried, her face radiant. "I forgot all about my knee for a moment, and I dived—I swam—I climbed. And it doesn't hurt—it really doesn't hurt! Sally, mummy was right—I'm better! I'm well again!"

"Well enough to enter for the contest as our diving champion, Wynne?" smilingly asked Fay.

"Sure—and well enough to win," replied Wynne with a wonderful, new-found confidence.

"And just imagine," said Sally, glancing sweetly at the dripping, but furious Ellen. "It was all due to Ellen here! If she had not followed us, Wynne, and got herself trapped by the bull, you'd never have believed you could swim and dive again! Ellen, our most grateful thanks!"

At which Ellen glared furiously! And she glared even more furiously

the following Saturday when, after a fierce and exciting ding-dong battle, with the two teams equal on points, Wynne managed to snatch victory from her opponent in the high and fancy diving contest—Edith Chandler, Ellen's sister.

Her victory brought the challenge shield to the Merry-makers' Club for one year; it brought a part in a film, being made locally, to Wynne as her prize—the prize Ellen had coveted for her sister.

But, what was better than anything else, it brought complete confidence back to Wynne, and overwhelming happiness to her mother.

"And if it hadn't been for you," laughed the glowing Wynne to the equally glowing chums afterwards. "I'd have been moping and creeping around for the rest of my life! Thanks, all of you! But there's just one thing. If ever you think I need jerking up in future, promise you won't think up another wheeze like being chased by a wild bull!"

A promise which the chums willingly gave!

(End of this week's story.)

Another entertaining story featuring the popular Merry-makers in next Friday's issue of GIRLS' CRYSTAL.

## THE MYSTERY WHICH CAME BETWEEN THEM

(Continued from page 68.)

Terry turned, and her heart missed a beat. Pushing her way through the gaily attired crowd, her attractive face white with anger, came—Joyce!

And her accusing gaze was fixed on the masked Maid Marian.

### ROBIN HOOD'S SECRET

TERRY felt too stunned to move. How Joyce had come to suspect her trick, she could not imagine. But her chum was here—and there was bitter denunciation in her blue eyes.

Mr. Duval gave a startled ejaculation, and Dolores turned pale. "Joyce!" exclaimed that girl. "Then—then who—"

Joyce ran forward, snatching off Terry's mask. Her eyes were blazing through her tears.

"You!" she sobbed. "Terry—how could you? You came here to steal my chance!"

"Joyce—you don't understand!" Terry exclaimed desperately. "I came here because—because I knew these people were impostors! They're trying to trick you, in some way—like they tricked and ruined Phil—"

"You're crazy!" interjected Mr. Duval harshly, as he gripped her arm. "You can't make a scene like this, in here. Dolores, take her out into the grounds, till she cools down and decides to apologise—"

"I'll never apologise!" exclaimed Terry recklessly. "You're not Mr. Duval. You're Vernon Silverton—the man who denounced my brother to the police for stealing those paintings from Mr. Morgan's house—"

"Just a minute, miss!" cut in a gruff voice.

A burly figure had appeared suddenly on the scene—the plain-clothes detective!

"Excuse me, sir," he said, addressing the glaring Mr. Duval. "but I couldn't help overhearing what the young lady said—"

"A pack of lies!" exclaimed Mr. Duval.

"Possibly, sir," agreed the detective, "but as it happens we've been looking for this Vernon Silverton. We

weren't satisfied with his story at the time of the Morgan robbery, but he and his daughter escaped abroad."

"What's that to do with me?" demanded Mr. Duval. "Surely you don't believe this crazy girl? Her brother was suspected of that robbery—"

"Precisely, sir," admitted the detective. "But her brother isn't here to-night—and so he can't be the person who removed a valuable painting from the art gallery barely half an hour ago!"

There was a sudden sensation in the crowded ballroom. Terry's heart was pounding, and instinctively she clutched the quiver of arrows that was still slung on her shoulder.

"Wait!"

The unexpected cry came from Terry. Her brown eyes were shining—her face was flushed with excitement. The detective stared at her.

"I—I've thought of something," Terry breathed. "Mr. Duval must have had some reason for asking my friend to come here to-night, dressed as Maid Marian. He gained her confidence by offering her a film contract, and suggesting she should come here to sign it. But that wasn't the real reason!"

"Terry! What—what do you mean?" faltered Joyce, staring in amazement at her chum.

"I mean," said Terry breathlessly, "that he planned that you should help him in the theft—without realising it! He knew that there was bound to be a hue-and-cry as soon as the robbery was discovered—and both he and his daughter were wanted for questioning by the police. But you, Joyce—an unknown young actress—would never have been suspected, or searched. And afterwards, either he or Dolores would have met you—and asked you to return the quiver of arrows—"

There came a sudden shout from the detective, as the supposed Mr. Duval made a sudden dive for the door.

"Oh, no, you don't!" he rapped, seizing the impostor by the shoulder. "Carry on, young lady—let us see what that quiver really contains!"

Her hands trembling, Terry pulled out the arrows and thrust her hand into the quiver. Then an excited shout went up as she pulled out a tightly rolled canvas—the stolen masterpiece!

The impostor struggled furiously in

the detective's grasp, but the next moment his beard was pulled off—revealing a handsome, clean-shaven face with an unmistakable scar on the chin!

Terry gave a little sob of relief, as she clutched Joyce's arm.

"Phil's innocence is proved!" she whispered. "And now that the mystery's solved you and I can be friends again."

IN the cosy parlour of Mrs. Gayford's suburban house, Terry looked across the table at the two people who, next to Phil, were the dearest to her in the world.

"So everything turned out for the best, Joyce," she said, "and very soon you'll be singing your theme song in the 'Wayward Princess'!"

Joyce shook her head, meeting her mother's smiling glance.

"Oh, no, I won't, Terry! You'll be singing it!"

Then, as Terry stared at her in bewilderment, she added softly:

"I had a long talk to-day with Mr. Hartley. He told me everything, Terry—"

She gulped, holding out her hand to her chum. "Terry—I don't know what to say! You've been wonderful! I arranged with Mr. Hartley that you should have the part that is really yours—and he's going to let me take a minor role in the same play. We're going on-tour together, Terry—and mum's coming, too, to keep an eye on us!"

Terry was speechless, as she caught at her chum's hand, but her heart was aglow with delight.

THE END.

**GHOST RIDER OF THE MOOR**—that is the title of next Friday's thrilling complete story.

## JOY—THE GIRL WITH A 100 VOICES

(Continued from page 76.)

citedly. "You thought the model spoke?"

"Well?"

"Well, that's the answer."

"What is?"

"Ventriloquism!" said Joy truthfully.

"You mean that that man is a ventriloquist?" gaped the shop-walker with sudden enlightenment. "Great goodness! Well, that explains it! Ventriloquism! Ha, ha, ha! And for a moment I really thought the model spoke!"

Aunt Jemima's face cleared and she, too, laughed.

Joy winked at Hypatia, who was still panting with fright in case it became known to her mother how she had knocked over the dummy and might have broken it.

"Isn't this blue-and-white frock nice, Hypatia?" Joy was saying brightly. "I'll try it on, shall I?"

Without waiting for the answer, she hurried off and tried it on.

There was no doubt that that blue-and-white frock suited Joy.

"Hm, quite nice!" admitted Aunt Jemima when Joy reappeared.

"Quite suits you," agreed Hypatia.

Joy strolled away, doing a little step of glee, and looked at herself in the mirror; and when Hypatia tried on a frock she wanted for herself, Joy said it was lovely.

"Thank you, moddom, thank you!" beamed the shop-walker when the purchases were complete. "A happy ending after all—despite the ventriloquism!"

"Yes, indeed," said Aunt Jemima, paying the bill and looking pleasant. "Despite the ventriloquism."

"Or because of it!" said Joy softly to herself.

(End of this week's story.)

Another amusing story featuring Joy and her ventriloquism next week.

## FILM STAR AUTOGRAPHS FOR YOUR ALBUM

This week's autographs are those of Doris Day, Greer Garson, Van Johnson, Bob Hope, Jack Warner, Myrna Loy, Lauren Bacall and Robert Mitchum. Another eight next Friday. Make certain of getting them by ordering your "GIRLS' CRYSTAL" now.

Doris Day

Greer Garson

Van Johnson

Bob Hope

Jack Warner

Myrna Loy

Lauren Bacall

Robert Mitchum