

Four Fine Stories and Four Pages of Articles Inside

# THE SCHOOLGIRL

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Incorporating  
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



## "MUSIC HATH CHARMS—"

But not for Eleanor Storke!

Read about this unusual incident in  
the grand long complete Cliff House  
School story inside

# A Vivid Long Complete Story of the Famous Chums of The



# JEMIMA CARSTAIRS

## Friction in the Form

"VITAL! URGENT! SUPREMELY IMPORTANT!"

"Extraordinary V.O.C. Meeting of the Fourth Form!"

"This meeting will be held in the Common-room at 6 p.m. prompt. Every girl belonging to the Fourth is most urgently and politely requested to roll up and swell the merry old gathering. It is imperative that Barbara Redfern, captain of the Form, and Eleanor Storke, should be in attendance.  
"Jemima Carstairs in the chair."  
"(Signed) JEMIMA CARSTAIRS."

Girls in the Junior School at Cliff House read that amazing notice with a thrill of interest and a great deal of speculation.

Not as a rule was it that Jemima Carstairs, the languid, suave, Eton-cropped enigma of the Fourth Form came so boldly out into the limelight.

Points there were about that notice which intrigued everybody at once. How like Jemima to call a V.O.C. meeting—what the dickens was a V.O.C., anyway? How like Jemima to call a meeting at all—a privilege which was recognised only as belonging to captains of Forms and to prefects!

Yet because it was Jemima's meeting, it was bound to be interesting, and there was a note of urgency about it that made every girl, from Bessie Bunter to the lordly Lydia Crossendale, decide to turn up.

The workings of Jemima's mysterious mind were always a source of wonder to the Fourth. The methods of Jemima were something to marvel at. For Jemima, though she spoke absurdly at times, though she did always the opposite to what was expected, was a

popular and respected figure in the Fourth.

"Well, I'm going," Rosa Rodworth declared.

"Rather, sus-so am I, you know," Bessie Bunter announced. "Wonder what it is Jimmy has got up her sleeve now."

The whole Form was wondering that. The whole Form was excited. That

**RESOLVED** to become Captain of the Fourth, Eleanor Storke is using all her wiles to get Barbara Redfern disgraced. But in Jemima Carstairs Babs has a secret ally—who gets her own way in her own way!

"Imperative" in the notice set imaginations working, set minds excitedly speculating.

Why was it important for Barbara Redfern, the present disgraced captain of the Form, to put in an appearance along with the girl who was now known to be her enemy—Eleanor Storke?

As one, the Fourth swarmed into the Common-room, to stare at the cheerful girl, who, monocle gleaming in right eye, sleek hair boyishly brushed back on her well-shaped head, beamed at them with a welcoming smile.

Jemima obviously had been expecting a full muster. On the dais at one end of the room a small desk had been carefully placed. At each side of that desk was a vacant chair. Her eyes gleamed as she surveyed them.

"What cheer, everyone!" she greeted. "Mobilisation complete, what? Thank you, old Spartans, thank you one and all. Ahem! Is Barbara here?"  
"Yes, but what—" Barbara Redfern

asked, and amid a little silence, stepped into the middle of the room. "Jimmy, what's the meaning of this?"

"Patience, beloved, patience," Jemima soothed. "Do you sit on my right hand? Eleanor—has anybody seen the fair Eleanor? What cheer, Eleanor," and she waved gaily to the fair-haired girl with the pale grey eyes who rustled forward. "Eleanor, mine, take a seat on my left, wilt?"

"But what's the meaning of this?" Eleanor demanded uneasily.

"Reply," Jemima assured her cheerfully, "is in the future tense. Seek not to unveil the dark old mysteries of the Orient until they are revealed to you," she added sombrely, and picked up a hammer and hit the desk. "Silence everywhere! The chairwoman is now about to speak."

There was silence. Perhaps only Jemima in the whole of the Fourth Form could have commanded that so easily.

"Friends, Romans, fellow Spartans," Jemima said, "I have called this meeting because it was up to someone to call it, what? You are all aware, as Miss Primrose says, of what is going to happen at the end of the term."

Some girls looked impatient. Wasn't everybody aware of that? Wasn't the whole school, from the Sixth to the Second, just seething with excitement and preparation for the great Jubilee celebrations which were to be held to commemorate Cliff House's fiftieth anniversary as a girls' school?

"Right!" Jemima said. "Let it pass. But I'm bound to point out things for the benefit of the deaf, dumb, lame, blind, and all that, what? The Fourth has a pretty hefty job of work to do in connection with the old celebrations. Apart from an exhibition of our beautiful handiwork and what not, we've a full-sized tableau—"

## Fourth Form at Cliff House School



# CHALLENGE

By  
**HILDA RICHARDS**

Illustrations by T. Laidler

"Well?" rapped Lydia Crossendale irritably.

"It's coming," Jemima cheerfully assured the interrupter. "Let me take my own time about it, dash it. Right-ho! Follow Spartans, we're not getting on with these preparations as we should be. Other Forms are already miles ahead of us. And for why?" Jemima demanded dramatically. "That's bad grammar, but at the risk of shocking my English mistress, I repeat, for why? Simply because, ladies and Lydia, there is not harmony in the Form."

Babs flushed. Eleanor's eyes glittered. She twisted in her seat.

"Look here—" "In a minute," Jemima said, "in a minute, beloved! There is not harmony in the Form!" Jemima repeated deliberately, while an uneasy silence fell, "because there are two leaders in the Form at the moment. One, your official captain, Barbara Redfern, the other"—she turned to stare deliberately at Eleanor—"a girl who has—"

Eleanor's face flamed.

"I object!" "Objection overruled," Jemima stated calmly, and there was a titter. "Until," she went on, "we get the question straightened out, and decide who's going to lead in these merry old proceedings, we're not going to get much done. Old Spartan Babs, your captain, has been accused of being jealous of Eleanor. She has been accused of spite, of being uncharitable."

"And so she has!" Freda Ferriers snapped out.

"Eleanor, on the other hand—well, never mind Eleanor!" Jemima said. "But there's the issue. We want to get together, don't we?"

"Rather!" "We want to work under one wise head."

"Yes."

"Right! Then that's the purpose of this meeting," Jemima said. "My V.O.C. meeting, what? V.O.C. meaning," Jemima explained, "Vote of Confidence. We're all here, and now for a vote of confidence in our jolly old captain. Those who are in favour, signal in the usual time-honoured way. Show of hands—please!"

There was an instant's silence. Babs, on the dais, had flushed again. Eleanor, her eyes suddenly gleaming hopefully and eagerly, looked over the heads of the group. Whatever the Form had been prepared for, it had not been prepared for this. Characteristic it was of Jemima to bring matters to a head.

For there was ill-feeling between Eleanor Storke and Barbara Redfern, and in consequence of that ill-feeling the Form found itself divided, a great many of those girls not knowing, not understanding, some of them, only too glad to have a chance of tilting at Barbara Redfern, rejoiced because of it.

But there was no gainsaying the fact that Babs had made a dead set at Eleanor, had refused her friendship, tried, apparently, by every means in her power to exclude her from the Cliff House Jubilee celebrations, preparations for which were now going forward.

She had snubbed Eleanor; she had insulted her. She had disdained her friendship and had thrown back every offer of that friendship into her face.

Eleanor, on the other hand, had spared no effort to curry favour with

the Form and with Babs. A girl of considerable wealth, she had rapidly won her place in the Form. Her generosity, her seething enthusiasm had brought her swiftly into the limelight and had won her a host of supporters. Like mercury had Eleanor's popularity shot up. Like mercury had Barbara Redfern's dropped.

"Well," Jemima asked. "Please!"

"The hands of Mabel Lynn, Bessie Bunter, Clara Trevlyn, Leila Carroll and Marcelle Biquet shot up. Only a split second behind them were Janet Jordan, Marjorie Hazeldene, Jean Cartwright and Margot Lantham.

A pause, then Peggy Preston's hand was raised, then Phyllis Howell's, followed by Lucy Farraday, the Quiet Mouse of the Form. A wavering moment, then resolutely Elsie Effingham and Muriel Bond raised their hands, followed by Joan Sheldon-Charmant and Bridget O'Toole.

The merest shade of anxiety came into Jemima's face.

"Any more? Come on, old Spartans, rally round the merry old flag."

Lucy Morgan half raised her hand, pulled it down and then held it up again.

"No more?" Jemima asked. "There were no more. Jemima counted them.

"Seventeen," she announced, and looked rather dubiously at Babs, whose face had turned a little pale. "H'm—something gone wrong," she said. "But it's a majority, old Spartan."

Eleanor sprang to her feet.

"What's a majority?" she cried. "When fifteen girls haven't voted. It's not fair," she burst out. "Not fair! You had no right to trick the girls into this, Jemima. If—I'd known, I wouldn't have come. But as you're so jolly fond of your vote of confidence, I'm going to ask now for a vote of no confidence. Hands up all those against Barbara Redfern."

Really, Eleanor was forgetting herself just for a moment. Eleanor's role was one of friendliness, of hypocritical benevolence towards Babs. But it shocked her to find that Babs, in spite of her subtle wiles and her clever cunning, still had such a strong following, that she was still so far from her goal. In the excitement of the moment, however, nobody noticed Eleanor's temporary fall from grace.

Immediately a ~~group~~ hands went up. Lydia Crossendale, Rosa Rodworth, Freda Ferriers, Brenda Fallace and Frances Frost amongst them; followed at once by the hand of the lordly Diana Royston-Clarke, Amy Jones, Matilda Tattersall and Beatrice Beverley. A moment's hesitation, then the Terraine twins owlishly signified their vote. June Merrett reluctantly followed suit, and last of all, Gwen Cook. Eleanor counted them.

"Thirteen," she said. "Unlucky number," Jemima admonished. "Too bad, what? Still gives Babs the majority, what?"

"But does it?" Lydia Crossendale exclaimed hotly. "Wait a minute, fair's fair! Thirteen's practically half of the Form, and that means that half of the Form doesn't want to serve under Barbara Redfern. I, for one, don't acknowledge Barbara Redfern after the tricks she's played on Eleanor."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Fair's fair, Jemima!"

"Look here—"

"Tut—tut! Peace, peace!" Jemima cried. "Wait a minute—"

But Babs was on her feet. Her eyes

flashed over the room, resting for a moment on Eleanor Storke.

"Thank you," she said. "It's nice of you, Jimmy. I appreciate the motive, and all that, which made you call this meeting, but obviously the motive has failed. Half the Form prefers Eleanor to me. Well, let them! But we can't work in harmony while I've only got half the Form on my side. We're all in this. Either we work together or we don't work at all. That's all."

She sat down, leaving unease behind her. Eleanor got to her feet.

"I—I too am sorry," she faltered in that hypocritical way of hers. "Oh dear, why can't we all be friends together? Babs, for some reason, has made up her mind she doesn't like me. I—I hate to feel that I'm the cause of all this trouble."

She turned to Babs, spreading out her arms.

"Barbara," she pleaded reproachfully, "I've asked you time and time again. I ask you now, in front of all the Form. Won't you be friends?"

"A actress was Eleanor. The way she said that! The pleading in her face, her gestures, her whole attitude that of one who forgives and forgets.

Among the girls there was a moment of deathly silence. Every eye was upon Babs. Every friend of hers was hoping that for the last time she would patch up this difference.

But Babs, though she gripped the arms of her chair, made no move.

For Babs was no hypocrite. Babs was no actress when it came to her own feelings. She could not hide that dislike she felt for this girl—the girl whose nature she so well knew. This girl who whined and wheedled before the Form, who, in private, treated her like a spiteful cat. This girl whom she knew as a tormenting bully, who had terrified the life out of little Dolly Drew of the Second Form, and who, even now, was holding a dreadful threat above that hapless youngster's head.

"Babs!" cried Eleanor in a breaking voice.

"Yes, Babs! Speak up!"

"Be a sport!"

But Babs' lips curled.

"Thank you," she said. "But you can save your hypocrisy Eleanor! I've told you before, I wouldn't be friends with you if there weren't another girl in this school! I still stick to that!"

Eleanor winced.

"Oh, Babs, but why?"

"You know why!" Babs said contemptuously, and made a move as if to step down from the dais.

But there were cries of anger. Even Babs' chums looked taken aback. Lydia Crossendale jumped forward.

"Little beast!" she cried. "Yes; we know—we know what's between you! You're jealous of Eleanor!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You're not fit to be captain!"

"Boo! Resign!"

"Oh, look here!" cried Clara Trevlyn.

"Babs—"

"Throw her out!"

In a moment there was a scene of confusion, some against Babs, some clamouring for her—that faction against Babs surging towards her, Babs' own supporters pressing around her to keep them off. Unseen, unheard, in the middle of it the door opened.

"Girls!"

As everybody, turning, became suddenly as if turned to stone. For in the framework of the door, her eyes gleaming angrily behind her pince-nez, her whole attitude one of stern, outraged dignity, stood Miss Primrose, the headmistress.

"And what," she asked, staring at Barbara, "is the meaning of this hulla-balloo? Who started it all?"

Jemima groaned dismally.

"This," she said, "is where the meek little chicken gets the old chopper! Ahem—Miss Primrose—"

The headmistress stared at her.

"Jemima!"

"I'm sorry, but"—Jemima abjectly hung her head—"I'm the naughty girl, Miss Primrose—not Babs! You see"—Jemima sighed forlornly, to the headmistress' astonishment—"this is a peace meeting—a merry old effort to inspire harmony in the Form, and marshal the old forces for the common good, and all that sort of thing, you know. Something's gone wrong with the merry old works, but that's not Babs' fault. If anybody's to blame, it's me—or should one, in this home of pedantic English, say I?"



### The Parting of the Ways

MISS PRIMROSE, despite her anger, smiled faintly.

"I see!" she said. "And why, Jemima, did you call this—er—peace meeting?"

"Well, you see—" Jemima said feebly.

"Yes, Jemima?"

"Well—" And Jemima glanced helplessly at Babs. "Ahem! Well, you know—ahem—that is to say—well, it's like this—"

Miss Primrose's eyes glittered. She had taken stock of the situation now. Her lips compressed a little.

"Thank you, Jemima! I will spare you the trouble of explaining! Barbara—"

Babs flushed.

"Eleanor!"

"Yes, Miss Primrose?"

"I am not," Miss Primrose told them, "in the habit of going about with my eyes closed! As you know, I make it no business of mine to interfere in quarrels between girls, except when those quarrels affect the discipline of the school." Her lips came together. "I am reluctant to interfere now, but the time has come, as this scene has evidently proved, when something has to be done. Barbara, I address myself to you. It is true, it is not, that there has been friction between Eleanor and yourself of late?"

Babs bit her lip.

"I am not going to query the reason," Miss Primrose went on. "But I have heard things, Barbara. They are not things to your credit, and I may tell you, I am gravely disappointed. More now than at any other time it is necessary for the Form to work in complete harmony!"

Babs wished that the floor would open and swallow her up. If she could only explain! If she could only—

"Why can't you get together?" Miss Primrose asked.

"Because," Babs flashed, impelled to defend herself, "the Form doesn't want me!"

"What?"

"Yes, that's right!" Rosa Rodworth flamed out. "Miss Primrose, may I speak? We're all anxious to be getting on with things. It's only fair to tell you, I think, that Eleanor has offered to back out altogether. But Barbara—well, that was the cause of this meeting. You see, we had a vote of confidence in Barbara—"

"I see!" Miss Primrose stared.

"Yes, Rosa; please explain. You may do so with perfect freedom, I assure you."

And Rosa did explain. Somebody, obviously, had to do it. She told Miss Primrose how the Form was split—how Babs had refused to work with only a three majority. Miss Primrose frowned. Quickly her eyes ranged the faces of the girls before her.

"I thank you!" she said at length. "Now everything is much clearer. Certainly, if Eleanor has the support you mention, Rosa, she is entitled to some consideration. I think," she added thoughtfully, "I have a solution."

Every eye was upon her.

"The solution," Miss Primrose went on, "is this—that the Jubilee work be divided. Barbara, you will make yourself responsible for the pageant. Eleanor, as you are so anxious to do something, you and your friends will attend to collecting and arranging the articles for the exhibition. That will give you both some responsibility, and keep you from quarrelling. Does that meet the wishes of the Form?"

"Well," said Jemima, "natty way of getting over it—what? You know, Miss Primrose, I'd never have thought of that! Is that agreeable to the Form?"

The Form exchanged glances. On many faces there was relief. Eleanor tried hard to hide the gleam of satisfaction in her face. Babs bit her lip. But it was a good arrangement—a wise arrangement. Jemima, reviewing it, nodded her head thoughtfully.

"Well, Eleanor?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose, I—I think it's very good indeed," Eleanor simpered.

"And you, Barbara?"

"Thank you, Miss Primrose!"

"Very well. Then get on with your tasks," the headmistress instructed, "and let there be no more scenes or bickering between you."

She rustled out, followed by the glances of the Form.

"Well, well! Jolly—what!" Jemima said. "Trust our little spring flower to put her finger on the right way. All peace again, children. Ahem! Eleanor, my dear old Spartan bird—"

Eleanor eyed her suspiciously.

"Yes?"

"Just occurred to me," Jemima said, thoughtfully polishing her monocle. "One of my old brain-waves—what! Got a hefty job on, you know—digging out the old specimens; keeping girls up to the mark, and all that. I suppose Mabs will be helping Babs. Bright idea"—as Mabs nodded her head. "Ahem! I'm not one for pushing my backward old body forward; but I've got a little suggestion for you, birdie—"

"Meaning?" Eleanor Storke asked.

"Why," Jemima said heartily, "that I'm going to help you bear this dreadful old burden, you know. As Mabs is helping Babs, dear old Jimmy helps sweet little Eleanor. Good scheme—what?"

Babs blinked. More than one girl stared at Jimmy as if they had not heard aright. Jimmy, always looked upon as one of Babs' staunchest friends! Jimmy, who had called this meeting to consolidate the Form behind Babs, was now preparing to go to the enemy's side. Jimmy was throwing in her lot with Eleanor.

Eleanor stared. She looked as taken aback as everyone else. Like a good many other girls in the Form, Eleanor would have given much to have the imperturbable and unruffled Jemima for a friend. Like a good many others, she stood somewhat in awe of her—was a trifle afraid of her.

She flushed.

"You—you mean it, Jimmy?"

"On your naughty old oath, and my solemn honour, Eleanor, old turnip! Beloved, your arm!" And Jimima, with exaggerated old-world courtesy, linked her arm through that of the stupefied hypocrite. "Let us hie to Study No. 12, and commence the good work."

And Jimima, with a beaming smile, fixed her eyeglass in her eye, and arm-in-arm with Eleanor, sailed out of the Common-room.

But as she reached the door she paused. She turned, looking directly at Babs, whose face had gone crimson with humiliation.

And then, very deliberately and very slowly, Jimima closed one eye.



### Jimima Gets to Work

IT was a good scheme—a great scheme! Even Barbara Redfern, though it robbed her of half her original authority, gladly welcomed it.

It meant now that she could get on with her own work. Backed up by her loyal chums, she could make good headway.

But Jimima—  
Babs shook her head. She couldn't make Jimima out. But then, who could? That last wink of Jimmy's as she went through the door seemed to suggest that Jimmy had some scheme in view.

She had been taken aback by Jimmy's apparent championing of Eleanor's cause. But Jimmy, she guessed, would explain all that in her own good time. Meantime, there was work to do.

"All who are with me, in the music-room!" she cried boisterously.

There was a rush at once. All those girls who had given her their vote of confidence now fell behind her with new confidence.

In an excited body they swarmed after her, anxious at last to get on with the job that was most important. There and then Babs staged a meeting—a new pageant committee, consisting of herself, Mabs, Clara, and Marjorie Hazeldene was formed, and pageant plans drawn up.

Happy that meeting, with no further hint of the shadow which had so marred everything recently.

So far, no rehearsal of the pageant had taken place. Girls had been measured for costumes, however, and those measurements had been dispatched to the firm in London who were supplying them.

It was Mabs who now came forward with the suggestion—and a suggestion backed up by a script which she had written herself—that the tableau should take the form of a playlet, in which all Babs' supporters would be given speaking parts. And what better playlet could there be than the reconstruction of that memorable day in Cliff House history, when it opened for the first time as a girls' school?

Great the enthusiasm over that suggestion. Great, too, the suggestion of Leila Carroll's that the girls should learn the old-fashioned dances of the period, and give them as an exhibition.

That gave rise to the third suggestion—this time from Babs herself—that a band should be formed among the more

musical members of the cast, in order to play the necessary music. There and then the band was formed, the exhibition dancers chosen, a grouping of the pageant arranged.

Happy that meeting—yes. Everybody was happy, Babs happiest of all. Quite a great deal of spade-work had been done by the time the meeting broke up, with strict instructions to forget all on the morrow.

On the other hand, nothing at all had been done by the Eleanor faction.

That, however, was not Eleanor's fault.

For Jimima, mysterious and amazing as her conduct seemed, was working out a very set plan.

While Eleanor—

Eleanor was pleased. For the first time she was recognised somebody in the Form. For the first time she had been given a position of responsibility. She had succeeded in splitting the Form, had succeeded in dividing it into two factions, one of which she was now the acknowledged leader.

She chuckled at thought of it. By this time next week, if she knew anything about it, she would be in full control of the situation and the Form. Then, when she had gathered all the reins into her own cunning fingers, when she had finally and thoroughly disgraced Babs, what was to stop her, then, from grasping that great prize upon which she had set her mind—the captaincy of the Junior School itself!

Eleanor had a special and a very desperate reason for getting hold of that.

"Well, here we are," she said, as she entered her study. "Now, Jimmy, we've got to work. First of all, we've got to make the exhibition the biggest, the most stunning success Cliff House has

ever seen," Eleanor went on. "We've got to put the pageant completely in the shade. I've got an idea. Listen to this. We're having the exhibition in the new theatre, aren't we? Every girl is supposed to send in some specimen of school work or homework."

"True, O queen!" Jimima agreed.

"Then what about this?" And Eleanor's eyes flashed. "What about a street scene rigged up in the theatre. The scene will be Early Victorian shops. In the windows of those shops will be the Fourth Form exhibition specimens. We'll dress the girls in our crowd as Victorian shopkeepers."

"Cost a lot!" Jimima demurred.

"I'll stand the cost!"

"Well, sounds good," Jimima agreed, and it did. Eleanor, at least, had ideas, and Eleanor had the advantage of having plenty of money. "Now, what about a jolly old agenda. Shall I help you to work that out?"

"Oh, Jimmy, if you would!"

So together they sat down.

Enthusiastically Eleanor reached for paper. While she was doing that, Jimima, with swift deliberation, grabbed the ink, and calmly tossed it out of the open window. Eleanor frowned.

"Now, dash it, where's the ink?"

"Ink?" Jimima looked owlishly round. "Don't see it," she said.

"But it was on the table!" Eleanor objected.

"Strange!" Jimima murmured.

"Strange! What-ho! Another mystery, eh? Look in the bureau."

Fuming, Eleanor looked in the bureau. She looked in the cupboard. She looked on the bookshelves. Jimima, meantime, peered and prodded about.

"Well, tough luck," she said. "Have to write it out in pencil, Eleanor. But,



UNSEEN by Eleanor, Jimima seized the inkwell and calmly tossed it out of the window. While pretending to be very enthusiastic on Eleanor's behalf, she was secretly doing her best to hinder Babs' rival.

dash it, here are two pencils both with the points broken off. Where's the pencil sharpener?"

But there was no pencil-sharpener to be found. For the very good reason that that implement, at the moment, rested in Jemima's pocket.

Eleanor scowled.  
"How the dickens am I going to write?"

"Too tough!" Jemima sighed. "Too utterly tough! Still, sit still. Contemplate the big idea while I go and rustle a spot or two of ink from another study. Won't be long!"

She hurried out, waving a cheery hand at Eleanor. Rather longer than she need have been was Jemima in finding that ink. She returned to the study to find Eleanor nibbling her pen, a worried frown upon her face.

She put the ink in front of her, and then, as Eleanor commenced to write industriously, moved back the hands of the clock behind her back. Meantime, from the music-room, where the new band was in full blast, came the strains of music.

"Jolly, what?" Jemima said. "Sounds, as if the boys have just come back from the merry old Boer War. Any help, Eleanor? At your merry old service, you know."

Eleanor looked up.  
"I'm nearly finished," she said. "What about getting our crowd together for a meeting?"

"What-ho!" Jemima beamed. "Anything to keep the old flag flying. But don't hurry, old Spartan, plenty of time!"

She went out again, this time making her way to the Common-room. As she passed the music-room she glanced in. Joan Cartwright, standing on the music-stool, was vigorously conducting the band, which consisted of Bessie Bunter, Peggy Preston, Clara Trevelyn, and Janet Jordan.

In another corner Babs was earnestly grouping the crowd of girls who would form the front row of the pageant, Mabs critically giving advice by her side.

Jemima closed the door, and, with a grin on her face, went on.

In the Common-room she found Lydia & Co.

Truth to tell, Lydia Crossendale & Co. were not feeling too pleased. Eleanor, they considered, had rather left them stranded. The Hon. Beatrice Beverley, indeed, had already strolled off in company with Diana Royston-Clarke. The twins were on the point of packing up. They all stared at Jemima.

"Who's cheer!" was the importunate one greeted. "Still hanging around, what?"

"Where's Eleanor?" demanded Lydia. "Busy, old top? Frightfully, terribly, earnestly busy," Jemima replied.

"Hard and harrowing work, what; running an exhibition."

"But what about us?" demanded Freda Ferriers.

"Oh, you—yes," Jemima frowned thoughtfully. "Well, there's going to be a meeting, you know!"

"When?"  
"Oh, some time—some time," Jemima nodded vaguely. "Can't do everything in five minutes, what? Mean to say, frightful responsibility, and all that sort of rot, what? Patience, old Spartans!"

She strolled out, beaming blandly at them all. The girls looked at each other. Plainly they were impatient. Lydia shrugged. Frances Frost scowled. June Merrett, who was half repenting her support of Eleanor now, looked hesitant. In the midst of the silence a crashing blast came from the direction

of the music-room, followed by shrieks of laughter.

"Oh, come on, I'm going to see what's happening!" Gwen Cook grunted.

She expressed the impulse that was stirring in all of them. Really, they all felt, it was too bad of Eleanor to leave them hanging about like this. The sounds from the music-room were exciting, to say the least of it. There was life, gaiety, and fun. It wanted only one girl to make a move, and it was Gwen who made it. Like sheep the rest followed.

And off to the music-room they flowed, pushing open the door. Certainly the scene which met their gaze made them blink.

There was Jean conducting her orchestra, there was Babs arranging her girls. There was Joan Sheldon-Charmant, admittedly the best dancer in the Form, showing new steps to Bridget O'Toole and Leila Carroll, while Marcelle Biquet tinkled accompaniment on the piano.

Every girl looked happy and busy. But there was a pause as Lydia & Co. came in. Babs whirled round.

"Oh, hallo!" she cried. "I thought you were helping Eleanor?"

"So we were," Gwen Cook growled. "But Babs, what are you doing?"

"Grouping the tableau," Babs explained. "We're rather short of girls, though. Of course you'll be in this, naturally. If you're nothing to do—"

"And if any one of you can play a kettle-drum—well, I want a kettle-drummist!" Jean Cartwright announced. "Bessie, you're too awful for words."

"And I want at least two other girls," Joan Charmant said. "June, you're a good dancer. If you'd like to join my troupe—"

Like to join? Faces flushed. Here was something to be getting on with, at all events. The twins immediately joined Babs' tableau. June at once offered herself to the dancers. Amy Jones, who fancied herself with the drums, joined the band, while Lydia & Co., feeling savagely that Babs was getting ahead of them, stood around and watched. Meantime, Jemima reached Study No. 12 again.

Eleanor, just finishing the agenda, looked up.

"Well," she asked, "have you told them?"

Jemima looked blank.  
"Sorry, old top, they aren't in the Common-room," she said.

And that was true.

"But where are they?" Jemima shrugged.

"Ask me."

Eleanor threw her a rather hard glance. For the first time suspicion dawned upon her face; but, looking at Jemima then, so bland, so guileless, so forlornly shaking her head, it was impossible to have doubts.

She glanced at the clock, breathed a sigh of relief, and hastily scrawled a list, inspired line to her sheet.

Six o'clock. Well, that gave her a full hour before supper-time, she thought, never realising that the time then was a quarter to seven.

"Probably, Jemima decided, "in the tuckshop. You toddle off there, Eleanor. I'll bring the old notes along."

Eleanor went off. She went off anxiously. But in the tuckshop she found my one, Beatrice Beverley and Diana Royston-Clarke, utterly bored, having strolled off to senior side, where a cricket match between the first and second elevens was in progress.

She fumed. Back she went into the school, looked in the Common-room, only to draw a blank there. Sounds of

revelry from the music-room attracted her. Towards the music room she went. And then she gasped.

"Well, my hat, so here you are!" she cried.

"Here you are, you mean," Rosa Rodworth snorted. "Where the dickens have you been?"

"I've been writing out an agenda."

"What, all this time?"

"But—" Eleanor blinked. "I say, what's been happening?" she asked. "Where are the girls on my side?" she demanded furiously. "Gwen—June, what the dickens are you doing with Babs' crowd? And you, twins? Don't you know we've got to get busy?"

"Freda! about time, I must say!" Freda Ferriers said sourly. "What's going to happen?"

"I'm calling a meeting."

"What? At this time?"

"In the Common-room now," Eleanor said tartly. "Amy—"

"Thanks," Amy Jones said, "but I'm enjoying this, Eleanor."

"June!"

"I'll be along some other time."

"Twins—"

The twins looked at each other, coughed, and stepped back. Eleanor's eyes glinted.

"All right," she said. "Jolly well stop where you are. If you don't want to come to the meeting, don't, that's all!" She glared at Babs, seemed on the point of saying something; then, remembering her role, savagely bit her lip.

"Well, come on, everybody. In the Common-room."

She led the way. In a perfect fury, she led the way. Her followers, still resentful, more than a little annoyed; trailed after her reluctantly. Eleanor mounted the platform. Then she looked round.

"Jemima! Where's Jemima?"

Jemima, of course, wasn't there. Eleanor, her fury growing, flounced off to Study No. 12. She found Jemima leisurely collecting sheets of paper.

"Hallo, old top!" the monocold one greeted her.

"I say, where are my notes?"

"Just about to totter along with them—what?" Jemima returned amiably. "Here we are!"

She handed Eleanor the sheets. Eleanor almost snatched them.

"Thanks!" she said shortly. "Come on, for goodness' sake! Babs has bagged four of our crowd as it is. Know where Diana and Beatrice Beverley are?"

"Not an earthly," Jemima sighed.

Eleanor gritted her teeth. Back to the Common-room she hurried. Jemima, a slow, quizzical smile on her face, followed more leisurely, joining the disgruntled group as Eleanor mounted the dais.

To be sure, it was not an inspiring meeting. It looked rather a forlorn crowd. Four of Eleanor's supporters had already left, two more were absent, leaving only seven, including Jemima.

But Eleanor was determined to go through with it. Babs had already made a start, and, to judge by what she had seen, a very successful and flourishing start. She scanned her notes.

"Ladies of the Fourth Form—" she began.

And then stopped, spluttering. She looked up, with a glare.

"Jimmy!"

"Ann, old top!" answered Jemima languidly. "Anything wrong?"

"Wrong? Wrong?" Eleanor hooted. "These notes! You ninny Jimmy, they're blank sheets of paper!"

"Too tough, too tough!" Jemima sighed. "Seems to me," she added, with a shake of the head, "that the meeting

will have to be jolly well postponed—what? I heard the call of curfew—” And she put her head on one side, cupping her ear in her hand. “List!”

But there was no need to “list.” For plainly, indisputably at that very moment, the bell for call-over resounded throughout the school.

Eleanor jumped; her face became furious. Her cherished meeting, after all, was doomed!



At Six O'clock—

IT was, thanks to the innocent-looking Jimema.

No meeting took place that evening, while Babs & Co., on the other hand, had made extraordinary strides.

Eleanor's supporters were fed-up. Excited were Babs'. While they chattered and giggled among themselves, Lydia & Co. looked furious, and Jimema, as if wondering how it had all come about, mournfully shook her head, while in between whilst she polished her eyeglass.

Immediately call-over was finished, she thoughtfully made her way to Study No. 4.

And then, raising her hand to knock, she paused.

For from inside the study came a voice—a voice she knew and recognised at once. A rather trembling little voice it was, belonging to Dolly Drew of the Second Form.

“Oh, Barbara, daddy's coming to fetch me, to take me away on the cruise,” Dolly said. “He'll be here on Wednesday. Barbara, you won't let Eleanor say anything?”

“Of course not, kiddie,” came Babs' gentle voice. “Now don't you worry. Everything's just lovely!”

“Be because if you did—oh, Barbara, you know what would happen!” Dolly said tearfully. “I should be expelled!”

“Ahem!” said Jimema, and knocked rather loudly.

There was a moment of deathly silence. Then Babs:

“Come in!”

Jimema walked in, beaming in her usual casual way. Nobody would have guessed at that moment that Jimema had heard anything, though little Dolly flung her a startled glance and Babs looked at her searchingly.

Jimema grinned. “What cheer?” she said. “How do, Dolly, my little one? Hope I'm not interrupting, Babs?”

“No, no! Dolly was just going—weren't you, Dolly? Now cut along like a good little kiddie,” she said hurriedly, “and don't worry your head any more. I'm helping Dolly to solve a problem,” she added, as Dolly, with a wide-eyed glance at Jimema, disappeared through the doorway.

“So I gather,” Jimema nodded lazily. “Rather a tough problem—what? Peculiar,” Jimema added, with an arch glance at the captain of the Form. “What strange secrets one stumbles on when one ambles one's way along like the merry old brook—what? So that, Babs, was the reason.”

Babs stared at her hand.

“Jimmy, what do you mean?”

“Well, what should I mean?” Jimema spread her arms airily. “Just Dolly Drew. Eleanor and you are up against each other. Must be a reason—what? Dolly Drew is the wistful little

answer. Can't help but draw conclusions, you know!”

Babs bit her lip.

“Jimmy, I wish you wouldn't speak in riddles.”

“Riddles,” Jimema seriously replied. “have holes in them, Barbara, fair friend. Through the holes the truth

spread out on the table in front of her.

The time was after breakfast the following morning, and Eleanor, having called a meeting during break, was busily amplifying the agenda she had prepared the previous evening.

Secretly Eleanor was still filled with fury. She considered in some way



“UNTIL Dolly's safely away from Cliff House you're not going to leave this room,” Babs said grimly. Fury flamed in Eleanor's eyes—fury at being baffled by Babs.

slips out. Rather deep that. Must make a note of it for my next essay. Well, well, we live and learn. Pleased to hear, old Spartan, that the rehearsal was such a success!”

Babs glanced at her searchingly.

“Was it your fault?”

“In a way—in a way,” Jimema murmured. “I contributed, of course. Rather interesting—what?—being Eleanor's right-hand man?”

“But Jimmy—”

“That's all, old scout. Just,” Jimema smiled, “do as I tell you, and all will come right in the merry old end!”

And Jimema, leaving Babs more bewildered and more dazed than when she had come in, strolled lazily out of the study again.

“ELEANOR!” “Oh, what?” Eleanor Storke looked up snappishly. “What's the matter now? Oh, sorry!” she added, colouring with confusion as she saw Lady Patricia Northanson, prefect of the Sixth Form, standing at the door of Study No. 12. “I thought it was one of the other idiots—I mum-mean one of the girls!”

“I sincerely hope you did,” Lady Pat said dryly. “In any case, you can leave whatever it is you're doing. Miss Primrose wants to see you!”

“Now?”

“At once!”

Eleanor, with a sigh, rose. She looked rather blackly at the paper

that Barbara Redfern had stolen a march upon her. Babs' rehearsal was the talk of the Form this morning, and everybody was looking forward to the next, which was to take place in the music-room at six o'clock that evening.

Fuming, she rushed off to Miss Primrose.

Miss Primrose gave her a kindly smile.

“I am very interested,” she said, “in what you are doing, Eleanor. I hear Barbara has made a great start. I trust that you, too, have your exhibition in full swing.”

“Oh yes, Miss Primrose!” Eleanor lied.

“You have interested the girls? You have already, I take it, got some specimens of their handiwork?”

“Well, I've asked for them,” Eleanor said cautiously.

“That is good,” Miss Primrose said.

“I am extremely anxious to examine those specimens. You may arrange them in your own study if you like, and name your own time. You had better get the Form together—you have my authority to order a muster. When will you be ready for me?”

Eleanor bit her lip. Good gracious! And then quite suddenly a cunning gleam came into her eyes. Supposing she said six o'clock? That would put an effective lid indeed upon Barbara's rehearsal. Whatever their own private feelings about it, girls dared not ignore a summons: which bore the stamp of Miss Primrose's authority. She grinned as she thought of it. She said:

"Six o'clock, Miss Primrose. Will that suit you?"

"Very nicely indeed, thank you, Eleanor. I will attend your study at that time."  
She nodded dismissal, and Eleanor, feeling that at last she had a weapon in her hand against Babs, gaily stepped into the corridor. And then she paused, as up strolled a bland, smiling figure, monacle in one eye.

"Ho, ho! And how goes it?" Jimema beamed.

"Looking pleased, Eleanor."  
"I am pleased," Eleanor said. "Primmy's ordered an inspection of the exhibition handwork in my study to-night. And she's ordered all the Form to be present."

"So-ho!" Jimema whistled. "Looking-up-what? Means getting a pretty nifty move on, Eleanor, my fair one. What time?"

"Six."  
"But doesn't that clash with old Babs' rehearsals?"

"Well, what if it does?" Eleanor said defiantly. "Primmy told me to make my own time, and it's not my fault if Babs has her petty rehearsal at the same time, is it?"

"No, no, no; of course not! Shiver my timbers and dash the old buttons—what? But to-night," Jimema said thoughtfully, "soo utterly tough. Well, well! Meeting at break, you say?"

"Yes."  
The meeting was at break. It was a successful meeting. The idea of Eleanor's market-place caught on. At last, girls felt, Eleanor was taking the initiative.

Jimema was there, of course, as Eleanor's right-hand. Jimema, who took a grave and kindly interest in the proceeding, who button-holed Eleanor after the meeting and most seriously went off with her to write out the notice instructing all members of the Form to bring their exhibits to Study No. 6 that evening for the headmistress' inspection. Eleanor gleefully chuckled as she read it.

"Headmistress' inspection," she said. "That just about puts the kybosh on Babs, doesn't it? Girls can't be in two places at once, and as we've got the authority of Primmy, they daren't refuse to come to us. But, my hat, it wants only two minutes to lesson-bell, and here am I bleating away like this! Must get this notice on the board."

"Oh, don't worry!" Jimema said. "I'll stick that up for you."

She took the notice before Eleanor had a chance to reply. With it in her hand she ambled off. Just for a moment she peeped into Study No. 3 as she passed, ambled on again, and, reaching the notice-board, beamed at the empty green board. Then very carefully she stuck up the paper in her hands.

"Look, good—what?" she chuckled.

"Sort of distinguished."

Distinguished it did look. For the paper Jimema had pinned was just an empty sheet!



Eleanor Waits in Vain

"TEN to six!" Eleanor Storke said worriedly.

"Ten to six it is," Jimema agreed, with an admiring glance at the clock in Study No. 12. "Which means in another minute it will be nine minutes to six. Tut, tut! How the ticklets fly on the wings of space,

making us older with every minute that ever passes. Now when I think of my tottering old age—"

But Eleanor was not interested in Jimema's tottery old age. Eleanor was looking uncomfortably worried. By this time she reckoned her notice should have been read by every girl in the Fourth Form. The first of the entries, at least, should have arrived.

Five to six!  
"Jimmy, where are they?"

"Ask," Jimema replied simply, "the stars, old thing. Perhaps," she suggested brightly, "they haven't done any specimens."

But Eleanor sniffed. She knew several girls who had specimens already waiting. Her own was already in the room—a great artistic banner in raffia work, which proclaimed: "LONG LIVE CLIFF HOUSE."

Jimema's exhibit—a case of flints and fossils—was there, too.

"Jimmy, you're sure about that notice?"

"As sure," Jimema replied enigmatically, "as one can be of anything in this sad and weary life, old Spartans."

Eleanor looked worried again. She glanced at the clock. Five to six, four minutes to six—three—two— And then suddenly from the music-room came a blare.

Eleanor spun round. "What's that?"

"Sounds," Jimema opined, "like a volcano tuning up."

"It's Babs' band!"

And Eleanor looked quite startled. Babs—Babs was holding her rehearsal, in spite of her notice which bore the headmistress' authority.

The nerve, the utter colossal cheek of the girl! Sudden suspicion dived into Eleanor's mind. Common sense told her that even if Babs were willing to risk the Head's displeasure, her followers were hardly likely to follow suit. Babs had tampered with her notice!

"Wait a minute!" she said thickly.

"But whoa! I say—"

But Eleanor, for once, was deaf to Jimema's plaint. She vanished. Along the corridor like a racehorse she sprinted, down the stairs into Big Hall at breakneck speed. Right up to the notice-board she rushed, and then savagely stared at the blank sheet of paper which met her gaze.

So that was it! That was it! Babs had confiscated her notice; had put this blank sheet in its place! Her eyes flamed.

Babs wasn't going to get away with this! She jolly well wasn't! Back Eleanor sprinted to Study No. 12, to find there Miss Primrose, looking considerably ruffled, talking to Jimema. She spun round as Eleanor came in.

"Eleanor! So here you are! What does this mean? Where are the specimens you promised to show me?"

"I'm sorry, Miss Primrose?" Eleanor broke out. "I put a notice on the board, using the authority you gave me. I've just seen the board," she added bitterly. "Someone has torn it down and stuck a blank sheet of paper up in its place."

"Indeed! Who?"

"That," Eleanor said, "I don't know. But it's peculiar, Miss Primrose, that Barbara Redfern is running her rehearsal, despite the fact that she must have seen my notice."

Jimema picked up a magazine and carefully flicked the pages, but under thin eyebrows she was watching Eleanor with a covert smile.

"Well—" Eleanor stuttered.

"It doesn't occur to you that some other girl might have done it?"

"But who would?" Eleanor protested.

"Very well. We will clear the matter up," Miss Primrose said. "Let us go along and see Barbara now."

She rustled out. Eleanor, with a look at Jimema, followed her. Jimema made a face. It was intended to express sympathy for Eleanor. But secretly Jimema was grinning.



The Threat

"I MUST warn you, Eleanor," Miss Primrose said severely, "about jumping to conclusions. There is not an atom of evidence to support your charge that Barbara confiscated your notice. Before making uncontrolled accusations in future, I hope you will first examine the grounds upon which these accusations are founded. You may go."

That was ten minutes later. It was in Miss Primrose's study, Eleanor, furious, red-checked with humiliation, went.

Babs, it seemed, had scored again.

Not, as a matter of fact, that Eleanor had the slightest doubt in her mind that Babs was responsible. Not yet had she connected Jimema Carstairs with her downfall. Bitterly she flounced back to her study, and flung herself into a chair. Savage and moody was the scowl which appeared on her face. She was losing ground, she told herself bitterly, and while she was losing ground Babs was gaining it.

Carried away by their enthusiasm for Babs' programme, the Fourth Form seemed already to be forgetting the manner in which Babs had treated her; seemed, indeed, to be anxious to forget it. No doubt that Babs was winning back her support hand over hand. No doubt, if she went on at this rate, that Eleanor would find herself back in the nobody class.

She scowled as she reviewed the events of the last two days. Fortune seemed to be turning against her. She should have insisted upon taking charge of the pageant side, she told herself. It was colourful, realistic. There was more to do. The pageant rehearsals were going great guns. Every girl was on tip-toe of excitement.

To-morrow, it was said, the costumes would be arriving, giving the rehearsal a further fillip. She'd got to get busy. She must have a meeting at once.

Frantically she got busy. First Jimema—where was Jimema? And off she rushed in search of her aide-de-camp, scowling as she passed the music-room, from which came sounds of merriment and revelry. Babs, the hateful cat! Babs, who was in there, laughing up her sleeve at her expense. Well, let her wait!

Down the stairs again into Big Hall. Jimmy, she guessed, would be in the tuckshop, never guessing that Jimema at that moment was ardently and enthusiastically helping Babs in the music-room.

Across Big Hall she flashed, down the stairs and into the sunlit quadrangle. Then she paused.

Two things attracted her eyes at once. The first was the telegraph boy from the village, who at that moment was



leisurely cycling through the gate at the end of the drive.

The second was the car which had drawn up on the very edge of the quadrangle, and the little girl who was rushing towards it.

The girl Eleanor recognised at once as Dolly Drew, the little Second-Former who was the cause of the present feud between her and Babs.

Now down from the car stepped a man—a young man with fiercely waxed moustache, and a rather stern, business-like face. Dolly flung herself at him with a cry.

"Daddy!"

"Hallo, hallo!" he laughed at her. He snatched her up and implanted a kiss upon her cheek. "Well, well," he said, "you don't seem to grow much."

"Oh, daddy, have you come to fetch me away?" Dolly breathed.

"Yes, rather! That is, when I've seen Miss Primrose." He stared at her. "Or perhaps you shan't! It depends," he admonished, "on how you've been behaving yourself. If Miss Primrose gives you a good conduct sheet, you'll be leaving for your summer cruise in half an hour. But what's the matter, goose? Why have you turned so pale?"

"Nun-nothing," Dolly faltered.

He eyed her quickly.

"Not been getting into more bothers?"

"No, no, no!" Dolly almost panted. "Oh, please don't—don't frighten me," she cried pitifully. "I—I've done nothing to be ashamed of, daddy, I have!"

"Well, I hope you haven't," he said. "If you have—" He frowned. "I don't want to threaten you, Dolly, but you know what I promised, don't you? The very next time you disgrace your name, Dolly, I'm taking you away from this school, I'm going to put you in a school where they'll teach you harder lessons. But don't look scared," he added more kindly. "If Miss Primrose gives you a good character, there's nothing to be afraid of. Come along, show me Miss Primrose's study," he added.

"Yes, daddy," little Dolly gulped, and put her small palm in his. She turned.

And then she saw the girl who stood on the steps, the girl whose eyes, cruel and contemptuous, were fastened upon her, whose whole attitude seemed to breathe a threat.

For a moment little Dolly swayed upon her feet. For a moment her face turned livid. One pleading, despairing look she threw in Eleanor's direction. The look said as plainly as anything:

"Please—please don't give me away!"

Eleanor saw it and laughed. Then she looked down sharply as the telegraph boy halted in front of her. He was holding a cablegram in his hand. He extended it towards her.

"Miss Storke!" he asked. "This is for you."

And Eleanor, ripping it open, drew out the form which it contained. Then it was her turn to shake; her turn to look hunted and startled. For the message she read was:

"On board s.s. Plathian. Sailing to-day. Expect me Cliff House in two weeks' time.—UNCLE BEN."

HARMLESS, APPARENTLY, on the surface. But what that cablegram meant to Eleanor Storke!

Haggard and drawn Eleanor's face became all at once. For a moment it seemed that the ground on which she

stood reeled beneath her feet.

Her Uncle Ben—on his way here from Africa.

If Eleanor's purpose had been urgent before, all in that moment it crystallised into one of desperation.

For Uncle Ben, her millionaire relative, whose money kept her at Cliff House, whose expansive generosity supplied her with sums far in excess of what she needed, was her benefactor. Soul of honour and fairness himself, there was one thing that Uncle Ben hated and could never forgive. That was a lie.

And Eleanor had lied to him. Because she had written to her telling her that he wished her to get on, she had written back telling him that she was the captain of the Form.

Harmless that lie had seemed to Eleanor at the time. It seemed to matter nothing. No danger had there seemed of Uncle Ben bowling her out. But Uncle Ben's doctor had said that his health would never allow him to return to England.

Yet miraculously her uncle had effected a cure. And now, wanting to see her while she was on the pinnacle of her popularity, he was hurrying to England, and he was arriving in a fortnight!

Earlier than Eleanor expected—days earlier. He would expect to find her idolised, a leader, captain of her Form, of the whole Junior School. When he found that she wasn't, when he discovered how she had deceived him—

"No, no, no!" Eleanor moaned. She crushed the cable in her hand. Agitatedly she turned. Frantic she had been ever since she had received the first intimation of this visit—yet how much more frantic now!

She had to be captain before he arrived. Somehow, she must out Barbara Redfern from her position, must secure that proud position for herself. Until these last few days her schemes in that direction had persevered. Gradually she had forced Babs lower and lower into the mire of unpopularity. The captaincy, indeed, two days ago, seemed to have been within her grasp.

Now— Eleanor bit her lip. Now half her supporters had deserted her. Babs was again on the high road to becoming the Form's favourite. Yet she still had support in the Form. There were still girls who would flock to her standard if they only felt that she was somebody.

A frantic, desperate purpose came into her mind. Sudden memory of that scene she had just witnessed between little Dolly Drew and her father inspired her. She thought she saw a way.

Quickly she turned on her heel and, her quest for Jimina forgotten, vanished back into the school.

The rehearsal in the music-room was ending now. The doors were open, girls were flooding out. Happy, excited, and enthusiastic they looked. Eleanor, with a scowl, pushed past them and strode on to Study No. 4.

Babs had at that moment just come in, Babs having remained behind in the music-room to give some extra coaching in her part to Bessie Bunter. She twisted round at the other's entry. And immediately her face became like granite.

"You!" she said.

Eleanor did not reply. She turned, closing the door. Her face was purposeful as she crossed the room. Something of the desperation which impelled her reflected in her eyes. She stared at Babs.

"I want to talk to you."

Babs eyed her.

"I don't, Eleanor, want to talk to you," she retorted with a curl of the lip.

"No," Eleanor sneered. "But perhaps you will when you've heard what I've got to say. I suppose you know Dolly Drew's father is in the school?"

Babs stared.

"Dolly Drew's father has come to take her away," Eleanor sneered. "They're leaving together in about a quarter of an hour. There's his car—in the quadrangle there—and she pointed through the window. "At the moment," Eleanor sneered, "he's making inquiries of Miss Primrose about Dolly's behaviour."

Babs compressed her lips.

"Well?"

"Well?"—Eleanor showed her teeth. "You know, don't you, that one word from me and Dolly Drew will never go on that cruise. You know that if I go along now and tell about Dolly Drew stealing that half-crown she'll be expelled. You don't want to see her expelled, Barbara Redfern, do you? You've promised the kid that you'll stand by her and stick up for her. She's relying on you."

Babs' face turned a little pale.

"Eleanor, you wouldn't—"

"Wouldn't I?"—Eleanor grinned fiercely. "That's all you know. That," she added, "is exactly the intention in my mind, Barbara Redfern. Dolly's got one black mark against her for theft. If this second one is scored against her, then out she goes. It doesn't matter a hang whether you believe in the kid's innocence or not. The fact that she committed one theft will be sufficient to get her thrown out. Well, it's up to you. You've got to stand up—and you only."

Babs' face was tense.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," Eleanor hissed, "that I will keep quiet—on one condition. If you accept that condition, Barbara Redfern, nothing will happen. Dolly can go on her cruise, and there'll never be another word from me. If you don't—" Her face became flint-like. "If you don't—well, I go to the headmistress' study right now. I'll show Dolly up there, in front of Miss Primrose and her own father. You wouldn't like that to happen, would you?"

Babs stared at the girl with a mixture of disgust and horror. What hypocrisy, what a venomous spite she was! But she meant it! Every fierce line in her face showed that she meant it. No doubting the purpose in that threatening face. Eleanor would be as good as her word.

And she could do what she said. With one word she could ruin little Dolly's school-days. Dolly would be expelled. There would be no lovely fine summer cruise for the youngster—only a painful scene between herself and her father, ending up in the little one being packed off to some fearfully strict school.

The injustice of such a situation almost made Babs reel with horror. But it would be quite unlikely to affect Eleanor. The latter girl was too mean-minded, too utterly immersed in her own selfish scheming to worry about the little girl's miserable and undeserved fate.

"And what," Babs asked slowly, "is the condition?"

"You accept?" Eleanor cried.

"Not till I've heard."

"Very well!" Eleanor stiffened. "The condition is this, Barbara Redfern—that you resign your captaincy in my favour!"



## Babs at Bay



**W**IDE-EYED, Barbara Redfern stared.

"You must be mad!"

"No. Very, very sane."

Eleanor said. "I mean it, Babs. Well, what is it to be?"

But Babs shook her head. She couldn't believe it all at once.

Give up her captivity to this girl—to this double-faced hypocrite, to this traitor! She saw then, in one blinding flash all that Eleanor had been scheming for.

Her face flamed.

"I refuse!"

Eleanor showed her teeth.

"You know what it means? I'm in earnest, Barbara Redfern."

"And I—Babs began, and then stopped. "No, no; wait a minute!" Oh goodness, what could she do? Dolly! She'd got to remember Dolly. Dolly, in a quarter of an hour, or less, who would be leaving Cliff House with her father! How could she let the child down?

There must be some way out—there must!

"Well?" Eleanor snarled.

"Wait a minute—wait a minute!"

And then suddenly Babs clutched desperately at a straw. "Oh, bother it! Don't you see?" she cried. "I can't make up my mind all in a moment. Give me time. Let me think it over."

"There's not much time," Eleanor said. "In ten minutes they will be going."

"Then—then give me five minutes!" Babs cried.

Eleanor paused. She felt she had the game in her hands now, however.

"All right!" she conceded. "Five minutes! But only five, mind! I'm going back to Study No. 12. If you haven't arrived within five minutes, then I'm off to the headmistress! Remember what it means!"

She went out. But there was a grin on her face. She fancied she knew Babs. Babs, fool as she was, would sacrifice herself, of course, for Dolly Drew's sake.

Babs was made like that. She had no doubt whatever as to the result of that interview. Composedly she strolled into her own study, glanced at the clock on the mantelpiece, and then slumped into the armchair, composing herself to wait.

One, two, three, four minutes ticked away. No sound.

Eleanor's eyes gleamed. Was Babs going to defy her at the last? One more minute, and she steeled herself as she watched the second hand as it curled its way round the dial.

While in Study No. 4, Barbara Redfern paced the room desperately, agitatedly plucking at her dress. Her eyes, as if drawn by a magnet, were fixed on a waiting car outside.

What should she do? What could she do?

Tick, tick, tick! went the clock on the mantelpiece. The tiny sounds made hammer strokes in Babs' brain.

Then suddenly she started. Out from the schoolhouse came three figures. One was Miss Primrose, talking to a young, stern-faced man, who led little Dolly Drew by the hand. Miss Primrose was smiling; the man was nodding pleasantly, as if in agreement with some statement she made.

But Dolly—little Dolly's face was grey with fright. Easy to see the mental terror to which the little one was sub-

ject; easy to see the dreadful fear which was working upon her. Almost in anguish, she looked towards the doors, as if expecting her ogre, Eleanor, to materialise there. From the doors her eyes went up to Study No. 12.

Babs heard Mr. Drew's words.

"We shall be leaving in five minutes. Five minutes! And then the idea came to her. She'd got to save Dolly! She must save Dolly! Eleanor, at this moment, was probably watching the preparation for departure—was probably making up her mind—

If she could keep Eleanor in the school until little Dolly had got safely away—in that, at least, she would win respite. Not a second longer did Babs hesitate. Stepping swiftly across the room, she opened the door, almost colliding with two girls who at that moment were in the act of entering Study No. 4.

"One was Mabs, the other Jemima.

"Babs, old thing," Mabs said.

"Babs, old Spartan."

But Babs merely shook her head. There was something in her face—the whiteness, the tenseness, the unusual pallor of it—which startled Mabs and Jemima. They looked at each other.

"Now what?" Jemima murmured. "Babs!" she called, with sudden anxiety.

But Babs did not hear. If she did, she heeded not. Never had Babs been more desperate as off down the corridor she strode.

Lydia Crossendale and Rosa Rodworth, emerging from Study No. 1, stared at her, marked the tense, set look on her features, and stared at each other. Babs reached Study No. 12.

She did not knock. She flung the door open. She did not even look at Eleanor; but, turning quickly, closed the door again, and, slipping the key out of the lock, put it into her pocket.

Eleanor, starting round from the window, jumped.

"Here, what's the game?"

"The game," Babs replied, through compressed lips, "is that you're not going to play your trick, Eleanor!"

"You mean—"

"I mean, you're going to stop her!"

"You're not going to resign, then?"

"I'm not!" Babs stated firmly, and placed her back against the door.

"And until Dolly's safely off these premises, you're not going to move from this room!"

Eleanor's face turned livid. She cast a glance through the window. The window was open. Almost it seemed as if she were going to scream through it. But in a moment Babs was at her side. Babs, her face white and grim, grabbed her arm and pulled her away.

"No, you don't!" she cried.

"You dare—"

"Yes, I dare!"

Something like a flame darted into Eleanor's eyes. She swung round furiously. Outside the door, Jemima, Mabs, Rosa and Lydia had arrived now. They were staring bemusedly at each other, staring at the door. A sudden furious exclamation came to their ears.

"Hallo! my arm, Barbara!"

"Hallo! Trouble!" Jemima whispered. "Babs! I say, Babs!"

But Babs did not hear. She was dragging Eleanor away from the window. Eleanor, furious, feeling that Babs at the finish was getting the better of her, made one terrific wrench; tore herself free.

"Now, you beast—"

In a moment she had jumped upon Babs; in wildcat fury was struggling with her.

"Give me that key!" she snarled.

"I won't!"

"All right!" The breath rasped in Eleanor's throat. Her hand desperately groped towards Babs' pocket. Babs backed away. "Give me that key!"

Babs stood her ground. Whoosh! And with a rush Eleanor came for her. Again Babs nipped aside.

Eleanor, blundering on, caught her hip against the table and yelled. Fury had her in its grip now. Temper, ungovernable and overpowering, welled within her like fire as she dodged one way round the table, Babs the other. At all costs Eleanor must be kept prisoner until Dolly had got away!

But she had reckoned without the tempestuousness of the other's fury. Baulked in one direction, Eleanor tried other tactics. She stepped back, snatching a book from the rack.

Whiz! Babs ducked. Viciously the book sailed past her, missing her cheek only by a hairsbreadth.

"You fool, Eleanor!" she gasped.

"Then let me out!"

"I won't!"

Like a tiger, Eleanor showed her teeth. Mad with rage, she reached up for the vase that was on the bookcase. Her groping fingers touched the vase. At the same moment she looked behind.

Babs in a moment saw what was going to happen, and ran forward. From outside came a shout:

"Babs! Babs! Eleanor!"

But Babs did not heed. She saw the heavy vase wobbling; she saw it, and then—Oh, great goodness! Crash! And down it came, right on top of Eleanor's head.

Eleanor gave a cry, and staggered back.

But Babs, exhausted and disgusted, had had enough. At this rate the room would be a wreck. She saw that Eleanor was not hurt. She was just a little dazed, and, taking advantage of that moment, she flew to the door.

In a flash the key was in the lock; she had let herself out, locking the door again on the other side.

And then for a moment she started back at sight of the crowd of wondering-eyed girls in the corridor, who, in utter amazement and stupefaction, stared at her. Before any of them could make a move to stop her, she had slipped the key back in her pocket and fled down the corridor.

"Babs!" cried Mabs.

"Babs—Babs, what've you done?"

While Eleanor in the study took one angry pace forward and stopped. She heard those cries, heard the sound of Barbara's fleeing footsteps.

In a lightning flash she saw a new way out. She turned to the window.

And then her lips compressed sneeringly as she saw the car—Mr. Drew climbing in, Dolly stepping in after him. She saw Babs as she rushed up, saw little Dolly lean from the window and whisper something.

Outside in the corridor came a clamour. Eleanor heeded it not. With glittering eyes she watched Babs as she skinned the trembling little one, saw the car drive off, Babs waving her hand and Miss Primrose smiling a benignant farewell.

With narrowed eyes she watched the car take the turn out of the school gates and disappear from view.

So Babs congratulated her triumphant! Babs was congratulating her! That she had saved the situation! Well, that was all she knew! She'd soon find out that little Eleanor had plenty of fight left in her.

She grinned a little to herself. Then, very deliberately, as Miss Primrose swept towards the school again, she climbed out on to the sill.



## Wanted— a New Captain!

**T**HERE was a drop of some twenty feet into the flower-beds below. It was a longish drop, but Eleanor had no intention of flinging herself from the window.

More subtle and more cunning was the crafty one's stratagem.

Hand over hand she began to descend the thick ivy which grew from the ground. One eye she kept upon Miss Primrose, who at any instant must look up and see her.

Down, foot by foot, until now she was less than ten feet from the ground, when suddenly Miss Primrose, her attention arrested by the clinging figure, looked up and saw.

For a moment she stood still, her pince-nez falling from her nose in astonishment. Then she rapped one vibrant word:

"Eleanor!"  
That was Eleanor's cue. Oh, she had it all cleverly worked out! Below her was the soft earth of the flower-bed, covered with trailing rocky plants. A soft enough bed, Eleanor reckoned, to fall into.

Eleanor knew the art of falling. She could fall, and had fallen, greater distances than this without hurting herself in the slightest.

And it would be so easy, once she had fallen, to make it appear that she was hurt.

Now, as that name rapped upon her ears, she looked round. As natural as anything was the start she gave at seeing Miss Primrose. Quite naturally, too, the start appeared to unnerve her. Her grasping hand failed to grip, caught at empty air, and Eleanor, with a piercing, dramatic shriek, shot away from the ivy and fell.

Miss Primrose gave a cry. Other girls in the quadrangle, attracted towards the sound, stared in horror.

Thud! That was the sound as Eleanor hit the bed.

"Oh!" she moaned.  
But the next moment she moaned in real earnest. Oh, heavens, what had happened? The fall had been all right—she knew that. But she had forgotten that under that trailing covering of gaily blooming rocky plants, was the hard stone of the rockery itself. Not realising that in her hurry and desperation, Eleanor had jumped, not on to the tender plants, but on to the hard rock itself, inflicting an abrasion which reached from her ankle almost up to her knee.

"Oh!" she gasped. "Oh! Oh!"  
There was no pretence about that. Eleanor was not acting then. She had hurt herself—in real earnest. Her face turned white. All at once she felt dreadfully far away and dizzy as she tried to get to her feet.

Miss Primrose, distressed and fluttering, hurried up.

"Eleanor, have you hurt yourself?"  
"My leg," Eleanor groaned through white lips.

"Oh, bless my soul—bless my soul! Eleanor—no, child, don't move! Now—please! Stella! Patricia!"—this to the two prefects who had hurried upon the scene. "Fetch some water. Fetch the matron. What on earth possessed you to climb out of that window?"

"It—it was Barbara Redfern," Eleanor said faintly. "She shut me in."  
"Barbara? Why, goodness—but careful, now—careful!" And Miss Primrose

very gently assisted the injured one as she got to her feet, Eleanor standing on one leg. "Rest against me, child. Oh, your leg!" she cried in horror.

"Eleanor, how did this happen?"  
"Barbara locked me in my study."  
"Why, what ever for?"

"She—she knew I had a committee meeting on," Eleanor lied glibly. "She didn't want me to—get ahead with my exhibition. Barbara means to rule the Form, you see. She's been against me ever since you made me leader of the exhibition party, Miss Primrose. But—by my leg!" she went off into a wail.

"Bear it, my dear," Miss Primrose advised tremblingly. "Bear it, please. But, Barbara—oh, my goodness! Stella, and you, Patricia, will you please—will you please take Eleanor to the sanatorium and get this wound dressed? Meanwhile, one of you other girls—find Barbara Redfern! Tell her to come to my study at once—at once!"

## "BABS!"

"Babs did it!"  
"Babs had a row with Eleanor and locked her in her study!"  
"We all heard it!"

Wild, excited was the gossip going on in the Fourth Form corridor. The bombshell had burst!

Amazing and distressing it was. Even Mabs and Jemima shook their heads, not understanding, but feeling that something was wrong somewhere. They had heard the row, they had seen Babs come out of Study No. 12—Eleanor's study. They had seen her stamp off after locking the door.

No doubt that there had been a bitter quarrel between Eleanor and Babs. No doubt at all that Babs had made her a prisoner in her own study. But why, why, when all the trouble seemed to have been blowing over?

"There are things," Jemima said sadly, "in this sad old life which baffle even my perfect old understanding. This is one of them, forsooth."

But Mabs was looking worried. All Babs' chums were looking worried. They had hoped that the foud was ending successfully. This startling affair was so utterly unlooked for. Not their Babs to do a thing like that—oh no! But there it was.

Rumours flew thick and fast. Impatiently the Form awaited Miss Primrose's verdict. Babs at that moment was in Miss Primrose's study, facing that stern and agitated lady, with Lydia Crossendale on one side of her, and Rosa and Eleanor, her leg bandaged, on the other. Miss Primrose gazed at Barbara sternly.

"You have heard the evidence of these girls, Barbara, whom I have called to substantiate your statements. With the obvious idea of quarrelling with Eleanor, you went to her study. You quarrelled. During the quarrel you threw a vase at Eleanor—"

"I didn't!" burst out Babs.  
"The evidence points to the contrary," Miss Primrose said frigidly. "There is a cut on Eleanor's head which refutes that denial, Barbara. Either because you were afraid of what you had done, or because you were desperately anxious that Eleanor should not hold the meeting she had planned—"

"I didn't even know she had planned one," Barbara burst out.

"That, I am sorry to say, I also cannot believe," Miss Primrose said tartly. "We have the word of Eleanor that she had planned one. You regarded Eleanor as your rival in the Form. Instead of working in harmony and co-operation, you looked upon her as an antagonist. Eleanor, frantic to get to her meeting, did a foolish thing



**WITH** head bowed Babs stumbled blindly down the corridor, scarcely aware of the scathing glances which followed her, hardly hearing the hisses of contempt.

—but a thing which, in the light of her zeal, is not blameworthy. She climbed through the window; she met with an accident. That accident was indirectly your fault, Barbara."

Babs winced. Her face turned white. "I have been aware of the bad blood between you," Miss Primrose went on. "I have watched you both. I am disappointed and shocked in you, Barbara. If it were not for your past record, I should at this moment expel you. As it is—as it is," Miss Primrose's lips came together. "I must tell you now, Barbara, that I do not consider you fit for the high post you hold. Reluctantly, but firmly, I exercise my prerogative as headmistress and divest you of your captaincy. You may go."

Babs went, sick at heart. She went to find herself the object of contempt in the Form. Someone hissed as she walked down the corridor. Many the faces which were averted, many the shoulders coldly turned.

She, captain of the Fourth, was captain no longer. She who had been so popular was scorned and despised.

Heavily she made her way to Study No. 4. Four girls rose to meet her.

Those four were Clara, Jemima, Mabs and Bessie Bunter.

In silence they watched as, apparently unseeing, she staggered to her chair. In silence they shook their heads as she slumped into it. Then Jemima patted her head.

"Cheer up, old Spartan, chin up!"

"You—you believe I did that?" Babs choked.

"No, old Spartan!"

"But the rest of the Form does."

"Not all, not all," Jemima soothed. "Not by any means, old Babs. Appearances, like the weather, may be against you. But, like the weather 'tis the darkest cloud that passes before the clearing up of the jolly old storm. But we're still your pals, old Babs, and we're just waiting to hear from your own fair lips the denial—that you didn't do it."

"Well, I didn't," Babs said heavily.

"Why did you go to Eleanor's study?"

"I'm sorry, I can't tell you that."

"Then perhaps you can tell us why you looked her up?"

Babs' eyes flashed.

"I locked her in to prevent her from doing something to someone else. I locked her in because if I hadn't—but no, no," she cried. "Don't ask me—please, please don't ask me! It's not my secret to give away, and I've promised on my word of honour I won't give it away. Just—just—if you can, go on believing in me."

But no need to ask that. Those chums, loyal to the core, still believed in her, puzzled as they were.

Yet their belief made little difference to the position. The rest of the Form, with the exception of a few like Leila Carrol, Marjorie Hazeldene and Janet Jordan, had turned away.

Eleanor was an object of universal sympathy, and found solid support everywhere.

And now, to add to the excitement of the Jubilee celebrations the Fourth Form found itself embroiled in an election. A new captain was to be voted for and appointed. Miss Primrose had announced it, and Miss Primrose had announced at the same time that the new captain, whoever she was, would be responsible for all the preparations for the celebrations.

As co-chairer in the celebrations, all attention was turned to Eleanor. She became at once the Form's natural choice. On the morrow, when the list was posted up inviting candidates for

the captaincy, Eleanor was the one undisputed name which appeared there.

Out of a sense of loyalty to their fallen leader, none of Babs' chums would have dreamt of putting up.

Eleanor was gleeful. It looked at last as if she had everything her own way. The power for which she had plotted and schemed was to be hers. The mantle she had vowed to wear would be upon her own shoulders when the election took place the day after to-morrow.

No need now to fear Uncle Ben's return! No one dared to oppose her now. There would not even be an election. If no other candidate stepped forward before six o'clock this evening, then she would just walk into the captaincy.

At this juncture, of course, Eleanor should have remained quite calm and serene. She should have given the Form an example of captain-like dignity, and remained in her study, doing prep as if nothing untoward were to occur.

She had nothing to fear—nothing whatever. Her appointment as captain was "in the bag," so to speak. Nothing remained but to wait for the necessary time to elapse. Why should she worry about anything?

But the fact remained that Eleanor did worry. She was definitely nervous. The nearer the hour of six drew the more jumpy she became. Maybe it was due to the stirrings of a long-dormant conscience.

Just suppose anything went wrong? Just suppose anything came out? Supposing—

But what could go wrong? "Nothing!" retorted Eleanor, to satisfy her own qualms. But she did not sound nearly convincing enough.

She found herself unable to work. Time and again she drifted down to take a glance at the notice-board where her name still remained unchallenged on the election list. The sight of that flamboyantly scrawled signature seemed to give her renewed confidence.

After all she found herself thinking for the hundredth time, what could do wrong now?

At six o'clock she would automatically

become captain of the Form. At six o'clock she would automatically achieve all that she had set out to achieve at the beginning of her desperate campaign for popularity.

At six o'clock—  
Five o'clock came. There was no other name on the board. Half-past five. The board still contained only her name. A quarter to six—a quarter of an hour to go. It seemed all over! Then suddenly Jemima appeared.

"What cheer," she said.  
"Oh, Jimmy, halo," Eleanor excitedly cried. "Jimmy, I say, look at the board! I'm going to have a walk-over."

"Are you?" said Jimmy queerly.  
"Well, nobody else has come forward!"

"No," Jemima agreed, and scanned the list through her monocle. "Counting the old eggs before they are chickens?" she asked cheerfully. "Well, well! and likewise tut-tut! In orderly majesty thy name stands out, Eleanor, my fair one, but it looks sort of lonely, what? Now what one has to do," Jemima added, and stepped up to the board, "is to give it a little company, you know. Lend me a pen."

"But what—?"

"Jimmy, what are you going to do?"  
"Just—this!" Jemima said slowly, and under Eleanor's name on the list of candidates for the election, scrawled her own. "That's me—and that," she added, whirling round, "is a challenge, Eleanor, my old Storke bird." Her face changed. The chonchance, the urbanity, magically went; in its place came a frigid, tigerish reaction which made Eleanor quail, and brought from the assembled girls a little gasp of wondering consternation.

"Through treachery and trickery, Eleanor Storke, you've got where you want to get. But now—" and Jemima's grey eyes flashed, "you can fight me for it. If anybody's going to be captain of this Form in old Babs' place, it's not going to be you!"

And, leaving Eleanor gasping and everybody else staring in a dazed fashion, Jemima calmly walked off to join Babs and Mabs in Study No. 4.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.



## The Form DIVIDED

By HILDA RICHARDS

ELECTION fever at Cliff House! "Vote for Eleanor Storke!" "Vote for Jemima Carstairs!" Rivalry—intense and bitter—between two sections of the Fourth Form! Who will win? Impossible to say. It is going to be close—terribly close. And all the while Eleanor is working behind the scenes, desperately resolved to make certain of that vital captaincy, plotting—scheming.  
What will be the outcome?

COMPLETE  
NEXT  
WEEK.

## A Dramatic Search and Its Sequel . . . See These Exciting Chapters of this Fine Thrill-and-Mystery Serial



# THE PAGODA OF PERIL

FOR NEW READERS.

**CATHERINE STERDALE** and her cousins, **MOLLY** and **CHARLES**, are staying at a queer Chinese house owned by their **UNCLE GERALD**. Catherine makes a friend of a little Chinese girl, **KWANYIN**, whom Uncle Gerald seems to suspect. The cousins defend Kwanyin against a crafty Chinaman—**KAI TAL**, whom they strongly mistrust. Uncle Gerald, however, appears to have the greatest faith in Kai Tal, and has little sympathy for Kwanyin.

Charles is captured by Kai Tal and made a prisoner. While Molly lures Kai Tal from the scene, Catherine goes to Charles' rescue.

(Now read on.)

### The Searchers

**W**HERE was Charles? Catherine Sterndale stared about her for her cousin. She was sure that something terrible had happened to him, that he had fallen into the clutches of the evil Chinaman, Kai Tal.

But she looked in vain for any trace of a struggle.

"Charles!" she called. "Charles!" Her voice echoed back to her, but apart from that, there seemed to be intense silence. The garden of Pagoda Place seemed suddenly hushed.

She did not guess that all the while, Charles was lying securely tied, a clod of earth in his mouth, behind one of the bushes. She had already walked past it several times.

There was a Chinaman with him who crouched, watching, and making no sound.

He was waiting his chance. Presently, when Catherine's back was turned, and she seemed to be walking away, he crept into view.

Then he coughed. When Catherine turned he was coughing and patting his chest, as though a paroxysm had seized him.

"Pardon!" he purred, as Catherine turned. "I cough!"

"Oh, please, have you seen my

cousin Charles?" said Catherine anxiously.

The Chinaman, whom she had seen before, but could not recognise as anyone she knew by name, bowed and smiled.

"He go quickly—run," he said. "There—minute ago. Oh, velly quickly. Callee you by name."

He pointed to a path that ran between thick trees. It was in the opposite direction to which Kai Tal had told her.

But as Catherine mistrusted the rascally Kai Tal, she readily fell into the trap. She was sure that Kai Tal had deceived her.

"He was alone?" she asked. The Chinaman shook his head, and then looked warily about him.

"Fu Wan chase him with knife. Me not know why. Go quickly!"

Catherine turned and ran. The mention of knife made her jump with fright. For she was prepared now to believe that Kai Tal was capable of any villainy.

But no sooner was she out of sight than the Chinaman turned swiftly, went to where Charles lay, and picked him up as though he were a mere child.

By a winding path he went through the trees to the lake. At the shore was moored the old junk, which the cousins had seen once before.

Charles kicked and struggled, but he was cunningly bound, and a handkerchief over his eyes prevented him seeing what was happening.

He was taken aboard the junk and dumped out of sight.

"Lie still!" hissed the Chinaman. Then, using the long, quaint pole, he

sent the old craft moving evenly over the water.

Meanwhile, Catherine had followed his directions. She ran, calling her cousin, but without hearing any reply.

She was still roaming about when she heard Molly call.

"Here I am!" answered Catherine.

They met on the path where they had spoken to Kai Tal.

"Have you found him?" asked Molly anxiously.

"No, I haven't heard a sound in reply."

"Well, I've spoken to Kwanyin," said Molly, and Catherine could see that she looked worried; Molly was not a girl to worry about nothing at all.

"What happened?" Catherine asked.

"Kai Tal had hold of Kwanyin. Charles interfered. He hit Kai Tal, and they tied him up."

Catherine's checks paled.

"Where have they taken him?" she asked, in alarm.

"Kwanyin guesses the island."

"Then come on!" said Catherine quickly. "We're up against every Chinaman here. They're all in the plot. Two have misled me, so far. But is Kwanyin all right?"

"Yes, she's hiding," said Molly worriedly. "I say! Poor old Charles! I'm jolly glad he hit Kai Tal, though."

"Yes," said Catherine dubiously.

"But I told him it would be silly."

Filled with anxiety, Catherine hurried to the lake. Molly was by her side, and both were in very serious mood. Charles was the very last fellow to do anything reckless. He was far too serious-minded. But they both felt admiration for his courage in defending Kwanyin, the little Chinese girl whom Kai Tal was bullying.

But Kai Tal was not the sort of man to take an assault lightly.

"The junk! Look!" exclaimed Catherine, when they came in sight of the broad lake.

"The one we saw uncle taken out of," nodded Molly. "Charles is in it, all right. But who's pushing it?"

By  
**ELIZABETH  
CHESTER**

Illustrations by Baker

Catherine recognised the man's tunic. "It's the one who misdirected me," she said grimly. "Oh, the awful liars they are, these Chinese."

"Yes, and they tell them so glibly, too. But what now?" asked Molly anxiously. "We can't swim the lake. The crocodile's somewhere about."

"And there doesn't appear to be a boat," said Catherine.

Then she pointed to a spot farther along the shore.

"The junk's making for the island. It's going far more slowly than we can run. Come on! Let's cut round to the far side. I can see a small boat."

They ran as fast as they could through the trees, trying to keep out of sight of the junk. But the man was not looking in their direction.

"Ought we to tell uncle?" asked Molly.

Catherine decided against it. "No; he wouldn't believe Kai Tal would do such a thing. That would mean delay. Kai Tal might hide Charles and we couldn't find him. Now we know where he is."

It was a wise decision. For, once Charles was on the island, there was no telling where he might be hidden. The cunning Chinaman, too, would think of some plausible story to tell, and the cousins had already had proof that their uncle was willing to believe almost anything that Kai Tal said.

Crashing their way through thick undergrowth, pushing aside the low-hanging boughs of trees, they reached a spot where the small island in the lake hid the junk from view.

"There's the boat," said Catherine eagerly. "An old punt. I hope to goodness there's something to push it along with—paddles, or—"

Molly snatched her arm. "Mind, Cath. There's someone there."

Catherine, at the same moment, saw a rustle in the bushes.

She dodged aside and dragged Molly after her. Then, very carefully, she walked towards the spot where they had seen the sign of movement.

It was someone in a pale blue garment, crouching low.

"Not Kwanyin, anyway," said Catherine.

"An enemy, then," was Molly's prompt decision.

The two girls went forward carefully, their presence as yet unsuspected.

Catherine stood stock still, thinking hard. This new discovery was a setback for them. If only they could get the boat, there was nothing to prevent their reaching the island. But with a Chinaman on guard, they would have to be very crafty. And Catherine did not think that she was match for any Chinese person in the matter of cunning.

Creeping forward, she inadvertently trod on a dry twig. It broke with a sound like a pistol shot.

Instantly the figure hiding near the water's edge leaped up and ran as though in terror.

"Oh, it's Kwanyin!" gasped Catherine.

"Stop!" called Molly.

Kwanyin it was, and she turned back at their call. Her heart was pumping with fright, and there was no concealing the fact that she was afraid. But when she saw that the two cousins were alone, a smile came to her pretty face.

"Me frightened," she said. "Me tinkee Kai Tal fetchee. Me change clothes, me hidee."

"Thank goodness it is you," said Catherine in relief. "We're looking

for Charles. We think he is in that junk."

Kwanyin nodded.

"Me tinkee yes. Boat here. Me look for—"

"Things to make it go. Paddles?" asked Catherine.

Kwanyin nodded.

The two cousins searched and presently Molly gave a cry of triumph. She had found the paddles.

"Hurrah!" chirped Catherine. "Now for the island, and to rescue Charles and—"

But Kwanyin put a hand on Catherine's arm.

"No," she said, shaking her head. "No goe island—"

There was a pleading, anxious look in her eyes, which Catherine could not understand.

"But why?" she asked.

"Danger!" whispered Kwanyin.

Catherine's jaw set, and a glint came to her eyes. She did not rush heedlessly into danger. She was ready to confess her fear at Kwanyin's warning. But whatever her fear, whatever her own reluctance, she had to think of Charles. There was no telling how desperate Kai Tal was, and the sooner they intervened, the better.

"I'm going," she said.

"We've got to," said Molly. "If we can free Charles, we're three to one—"

"Four," said Kwanyin softly. "Me come, too. Flaps on island we findee illustrious father of Kwanyin."

And a moment later they pushed the old punt on to the lake.

## Island of Mystery

THE island in the centre of the lake was larger than it seemed, for the trees were tall and they gave a false impression; for they did not look so tall from the distance.

The top of a wooden building could be seen through the trees and over the dense undergrowth. But there was no indication of its purpose.

Catherine and Molly used a paddle each, while Kwanyin, acting on their advice, lay flat on the bottom. She could not then be seen from the shore, and the cousins did not want to drag her into any more trouble.

Kwanyin was in disgrace enough already. She had offended Uncle Gerald, and Kai Tal was her bitter enemy. Yet she was a guest in the house.

That fact puzzled Catherine and Molly. But they knew that Kwanyin's father was supposed to be a great friend of Uncle Gerald's.

If Kwanyin had been able to speak English more fluently, the position might have been made clearer. But the little Chinese girl knew too few English words to be able to talk freely.

She believed that her father was a prisoner. But why was he a prisoner, if he were a friend of Uncle Gerald's? Who had taken him prisoner?

The answers to these questions were wrapped in mystery. But Catherine had high hopes that now they might be solved.

The island might give the answer. Charles was there. But he might not be the only prisoner.

Actually, the girls, paddling hard, reached the island before the junk berthed.

But they were on the opposite side, and the island was more than a hundred and fifty yards across.

Catherine and Molly, with Kwanyin some yards behind, worked their way cautiously through the undergrowth. Catherine was more alarmed than Molly, for she had more imagination. She knew that there might be other Chinamen on the island.

"Carefully, Molly," she whispered, as her cousin hurried forward. "I can see the junk!" Molly exclaimed.

They stopped, and watched, as the queer Chinese vessel reached the shore. It was hard for them to believe that they really were in England, and that their own Uncle Gerald was the owner of the strange estate where every man but himself was Chinese.

In breathless silence, Catherine and Molly watched. The Chinaman, running the junk alongside the island's crane landing-stage, went ashore and mended his craft. Then he stepped aboard and returned bearing someone in his arms.

A strange thrill of excitement ran through Catherine as she saw that it was Charles that the Chinaman carried.

There was a tightness in her throat, and her hands tingled.

Even though she was prepared for the sight, it gave her a sensation of shock. Never before had she seen anyone she knew in such a plight.

She was actually watching a kidnapping!

Involuntarily she stepped forward. But wisdom checked her. If she warned the Chinaman now, he could return to the junk. He might warn others.

As she stood there, uncertain what to do, she felt a gentle touch on her sleeve. Little Kwanyin stood at her side.

"Me goee—man see me. Me lun. Bad man follow. You goe cousin."

She spoke haltingly, but Catherine swiftly grasped the simple but excellent plan. If the Chinaman saw Kwanyin, he would follow her. She could lead him away, and that would give Catherine and Molly a chance to free Charles.

Catherine nodded.

"Yes. But suppose he catches you?" Kwanyin's reply was filled with pathos. She was pleading, and yet diffident.

"You comes savee me?" she asked.

Catherine saw that she was afraid. The little Chinese girl, for their sakes, was taking what she knew to be a risk.

"We shan't fail you," whispered Catherine. "But if the risk is too great—you velly much faiddee?" she said.

She did not want Kwanyin to do anything foolish, and the little Chinese girl knew the risk better than they.

The reply was action. Kwanyin slipped away through the undergrowth.

It seemed ages to Catherine and Molly before they saw her again, and by then the Chinaman had carried Charles some yards towards the small building on the island.

Kwanyin appeared quite suddenly, and gave a sharp cry.

The Chinaman turned, saw her, and slowly and deliberately placed Charles on the ground. He spoke to Kwanyin softly in Chinese, walking casually forward.

"He's going to jump suddenly," gasped Catherine.

She wanted to cry out a warning to Kwanyin. Molly actually uttered a faint sound, but Catherine's hand was over her mouth in a flash.

The Chinaman did not hear that sound. He sprang forward with surprising speed.

But Kwanyin was prepared for that artful trick, and turned and ran as quickly as he did, weaving in and out of the bushes.

"Now!" said Catherine.

They reached Charles, and dropped to their knees.

Catherine hauled the bandage from his eyes; Molly tugged at the knots that bound the ankles. But in vain.

Seeing the earth in Charles' mouth, Catherine pulled it out, and Charles, spluttering, managed to speak:

"Penknife, left pocket!"

Catherine took the penknife and slashed at the bonds round his ankles, but at that moment there came a shrill cry of alarm.

Kwanyin had been caught!

In honour bound, Catherine and Molly had to go to her rescue.

"Molly, cut Charles free, and follow!" said Catherine.

She handed her cousin the knife, and ran as hard as she could to the place whence came the sound of Kwanyin's cries.

She soon saw the little Chinese girl. She was helpless in the clutches of the Chinaman.

Charles was free. It did not matter if Catherine made her presence known. "Stop!" she shouted. "How dare you!"

The Chinaman turned, and stared at her fixedly. But he did not release Kwanyin.

"Let her go!" said Catherine, in fury. "I shall report you to my uncle. I'll have you turned from the place."

She was amazed by the man's silence and indifference. But she went closer. Kwanyin was obviously terrified. Tears were streaming down her cheeks, and her hands were trying to fight off the Chinaman's grip.

Catherine rushed to the rescue, and took the man's arm.

Quick as a flash he twisted his arm free, and took her wrist. His hands were like steel. They gripped Catherine's wrist as in a vice.

"Why you come here?" he asked.

Still keeping his hold of Kwanyin he twisted Catherine round, and she dropped to her knees.

But Charles was free. His legs felt cramped, but desperation made him run. Molly rushed from the side, and he from behind the Chinaman.

With a snarl the man released his hold of Catherine.

Then, with a wonderful jump, Charles landed on his back, twining his arms round the rascal's neck.

Things happened in such a rush, then, that the cousins hardly had time to notice.

The Chinaman released his hold of Kwanyin and ducked forward. Charles flew over his head, thrown cleverly in jiu-jitsu manner. He landed with a crash in the middle of a bush.

Then, turning, the Chinaman dodged Molly, and ran like a hare.

Before Catherine could move more than a step, he had freed the junk, and was aboard. Thrusting the pole into the water, he pushed off.

Charles staggered up from the bush, shaken, but otherwise unhurt.

"Where is that rotter?" he demanded fiercely.

Catherine pointed to the junk.

"Well, this is his finish, anyway," said Charles, in fury. "And Kai Tai's. Even Uncle can't refuse to believe that they went for me. Gosh, I'll see that Kai Tai is flung out."

Catherine was stooping beside Kwanyin and soothing her.

"He's gone," she whispered. "Don't be frightened any more. We'll look

after you. Uncle will understand now. He must!"

"Lockee me in prison," said Kwanyin miserably. "Lockee me far away—yes. Kai Tai velly bad. Me make him velly angly now."

"Don't worry," said Charles grimly. "I'll see you aren't locked up. People can't do that sort of thing in England. Uncle wouldn't stand for that. Once we bowl out Kai Tai, all's well. And if Uncle won't believe us now, then I'm going. We're all going."

A look of dread showed in Kwanyin's eyes at the thought of being deserted, and Catherine saw it.

"Can't do that," she said.

"Why not?" exclaimed Charles.

"Because I've promised Kwanyin we'll stay."

Charles bit his lip. He could see how terribly distressed the Chinese girl was, and he had a very powerfully developed sense of chivalry.

"Well, if we go, Kwanyin would come, too," he suggested slowly.

But even as he spoke he realised the difficulties.

They could not kidnap Kwanyin. She had to stop. And, therefore, they must stay, too.

Kwanyin, drying her eyes, bravely pulled herself together. In a moment she was smiling.

"Me velly blame now you here," she said softly. "Me stayee look for illustrious father."

"She thinks her father is a prisoner on the island here," said Catherine to Charles.

"Phew! In that hot place," said Charles grimly, "where they were taking me."

The junk was now travelling swiftly across the lake, and, without doubt, the Chinaman would report to Kai Tai. But it would take him some few minutes to do that.



SUDDENLY the bank underfoot crumbled, and with a wild yell the dignified Charles staggered backwards into the moat.

**When Seconds Counted**  
 "WELL, shall we burst straight into the place? Shall we call out?"

Catherine had called a halt in front of the hut on the island; for she felt that a council of war was necessary. It would not do to rush into the place and explore heedlessly. They had learned that the Chinese guarded their strongholds in queer ways.

"Remember the crocodile!" warned Molly, with a shiver.

They stood in silence, and surveyed the small wooden building, with its queer, curved roof. Not a sound came from it, and there was no sign of life.

But it was the most likely place for any prisoner to be hidden.

Catherine would have peered through the windows, but she could not get nearer than ten yards to the place. An evil-looking moat encircled it. The water was oily looking and thick with weeds, and was too broad to be jumped with ease.

Three times they walked round it, but there was no bridge to be seen.

"The Chinaman was going to cross it, so there's a bridge hidden somewhere," said Charles, adjusting his glasses and staring about him. "He didn't mean to throw me over. It's a pity you rescued me when you did, in a way."

"Great pity," said Catherine. "We ought to have let him hide you."

"I mean," said Charles, in reproof.

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**M**Y DEAR READERS.—At the moment I feel like Patricia—who, on another page, confesses that just now she can't think of anything but holidays! Whenever I glance up from my desk and see the extremely small patch of blue (?) sky—all that is visible above the buildings—I have truant thoughts of the seaside and the country. Very remiss, when I should be concentrating upon stories for your SCHOOLGIRL!

The trouble with holidays is the difficulty of making up one's mind what to do and where to go—at least, that's what I find. The only solution I can think of—short of a magic carpet—is an aeroplane, with which one could, literally, pay flying visits to all sorts of places, and so solve the problem of having to select one particular spot.

But I have doubts about the aeroplane theory. And I'm quite certain that Chum (who of course insists on coming with me) would not make a very successful passenger. He would have to have a special sort of parachute, so that if he fell out—or suddenly saw a rabbit in a field below and took a header earthwards—he would land safely on all fours.

Alternately, of course, I could have him attached to a sort of extension lead, several miles in length, so that he could remain on the ground while I soared aloft—

Enough of this nonsense! (But it just shows what the holiday feeling can do!)

While I'm rambling on in this strain you're quite naturally impatient for news of next week's features. So let's see what there is in store.

The long complete Cliff House School story is entitled:

#### "THE FORM DIVIDED,"

and is by Hilda Richards. It brings to a thrilling climax the dramatic events which have come about at the school, owing to the election. And in it you will read how Jemima staunchly battles for Babs, in face of Eleanor's opposition.

"MORCOVE IN UNKNOWN AFRICA," Marjorie Stanton's enthralling serial of the famous chums' quest in the jungle, gets more and more thrilling with every instalment. And the same may be said of Elizabeth Chester's "PAGODA OF PERIL"—surely one of the finest mystery tales you have ever read.

Of Princess Cherry I need say little, except that she will appear again next Saturday in another rollicking complete story. And in addition to all these fine story-features there will be Pat's entrancing four pages.

Don't miss all these good things. Order your SCHOOLGIRL right away—and be one of the wise ones!

With best wishes,

YOUR EDITOR.

that I should then have learned the secret of the place."

"And a fat lot of good, if you couldn't tell anyone, with a chunk of turf in your mouth. I suppose you could have eaten it, and shouted!" said Molly, with a chuckle.

"It's no time for silly jokes!" retorted Charles. "We want to find out if this moat thing is deep—"

He stood on the edge and looked down.

Unfortunately, he stood too near the edge. The earth suddenly crumbled. He gave a yell, waded his arms, and then, before the others could help, he lost his balance.

Splash! Charles was in the moat. With a look of horror on his face he sank into it.

Catherine, kneeling down, threw out a hand, and Charles, standing with his head above water, reached out and took it.

"You can stand," said Molly.

"Good."

Charles spluttered and shook weed from his head.

"Help, me out. It's soft. I'm sinking!"

They hauled and pulled, but his feet seemed stuck.

"Of all the idiots!" panted Molly, as she tugged. "What a way of finding out how deep it is!"

"Do you think I fell in on purpose to find out how deep it is?" asked Charles in fury. "I'm sinking!"

Catherine and Molly, with Kwanyin pulling behind, managed to haul him out.

He staggered on to the bank, water and slime dripping off him.

"Ugh!" he gasped. "Ugh! How beastly!"

He kicked one foot in alarm.

"A snake or something! Quick—"

Catherine saw something caught round his ankle, and tugged it.

"It's a thick rope," she said.

"Hallo!"

She tugged at the rope, and felt a weight at the end of it. Molly gave a hand, and between them they hauled something to the surface.

"A plank!" gasped Charles.

"The bridge!" cried Catherine, in delight.

The plank they pulled out with the rope was long enough to bridge the moat, and it was obviously there for that purpose. Tracing the other end of the rope, they found that it was fastened to an iron ring embedded in the bank.

It was a slim, slippery piece of wood, but between them they managed to fix it across the moat.

"Now, over you go, Charles!" said Catherine. "Hurry!"

Charles crossed, and the others followed. In silence they reached the hut and went to the nearest window.

Gathered together, they stared through.

They saw nothing but a thick beard curtain.

"We've got to get into the place," said Catherine; "but, my goodness, we've got to be quick! We mustn't be trapped here. Someone must keep guard!"

Kwanyin was peering through the bushes towards the shore.

"Junk reachee landee," she said.

"You stayee watchee," said Catherine.

"Callee if junk come back—yes!"

"Yes," nodded Kwanyin.

The three cousins in silence went to the front of the hut. It was ornately but strongly built. The windows in the front of the hut were too high to be looked through, and the door was

"The Pagoda of Peril"

enormously thick, with iron studs. On either side of the door were carved lion dogs, old and weatherworn.

The three of them tried the door in turn. It was locked, and it would not open to their pushing.

"Well, this is merely silly," said Catherine. "The door's bound to be locked. We've got to make up our minds. Are we beaten? Are we going back? Or are we going to break in?"

Charles shook his head.

"It's uncle's property. We're spying if we break in. We ought to warn him first. It's a bit tricky, you know—"

"We might break a window," said Molly doubtfully, "although I suppose uncle would be pretty mad with us. We don't actually know anyone is locked up there—"

They stared at the solid-looking door. It could not be forced without using great strength, and, really, they had no right at all to pry.

"Pity we can't just say 'Open Sesame!' and it would—"

"This," put in Charles testily, "is no time for talking nonsense. The thing to do is to think over a plan of action."

Catherine eyed him witheringly.

"You mean, of course," she added, "that you will talk over a plan of action while we listen!"

"Now look here, Catherine—"

Charles began.

"Sorry!" chuckled Catherine. "Other things to do. That door to open, for instance."

"And how," asked Charles, with a lordly glance, "do you propose to set about that?"

"Not by listening to another of your lectures," Molly retorted, with a grin.

"Not half!" agreed Catherine cheerfully. "Why, Molly's 'Sesame' idea stands more chance of working than that."

"Course it does!" affirmed Molly. And, as if to settle the matter, addressed the door commandingly and cried: "Open Sesame—"

And then she broke off with a gasp. Her eyes widened.

For that solid-looking, formidable door, at the mere mention of "Open Sesame!" had opened.

It was slowly, very slowly, moving back.

The three cousins stood there, rigid. It was as though they had seen a ghost. Molly wanted to run, but her legs seemed made of lead.

Catherine, hands clenched, could not take her eyes off the door.

"Someone's opening it—someone's there!" she said huskily. "Oh, goodness, are we falling into a trap?"

An excited call came from Kwanyin: "Quick—junk come!"

The junk was coming. Kai Tal was in pursuit of them. With the door of the house open before them, the house ready to be explored, they would have to go.

"Come on—get off this island before he comes!" urged Charles. "If he catches us here, if he's desperate—"

The door was wide open. But no Chinaman appeared. No one was there. Only a short corridor was revealed, at the end of which there stood a large wooden idol, with bowed head.

Catherine came to a swift and daring decision. Kai Tal could not arrive for some minutes. With sudden resolution, knowing how much was at stake, she crossed the threshold of the island hut.

What will Catherine find in the mystery hut? Is she at last on the point of discovering a valuable clue? Continue this enthralling and unusual serial in next Saturday's SCHOOL-GIRL. Order your copy right away.



In the Heart of the Wild! Morcove's Famous Chums Feature in  
This Vivid Story of a Daring Quest

# MORCOVE M in UNKNOWN AFRICA



## FOR NEW READERS.

BETTY BARTON & CO., of Morcove School together with members of Grangemoor, are in Africa, seeking a mysterious Golden Grotto in the Kwamba country. They have a rival—a Frenchman named DUPONT.

Through his villainy two of the girls' fathers and Kwamba, a negro guide, are kidnapped by natives.

MADAME DUPONT, wife of the villainous Frenchman, lands near the Morcove camp on her way to Kwamba by aeroplane. Betty, Polly Linton, and her brother Jack hide on the plane, and are carried on to Kwamba where the plane crashes. Soon after, the Kwamba natives are seen approaching!

(Now read on.)

## Safe—or Not?

NOW that an encounter with the Kwamba tribe was, for good or ill, bound to take place, Polly Linton and her brother Jack knew that they must hurry back to where they had left their chum, Betty Barton.

A moment, and only a moment longer, brother and sister paused on that ledge of rock, a little way up the mountain-side, gazing at the figures which seemed to be heading a strange procession.

Then they started their urgent descent, stooping along to avoid being glimpsed by the Kwambas whenever cover was lacking.

But the craggy nature of the steep slope enabled Polly and Jack to scramble down without much risk of being seen.

Often they were so walled between one great mass of rock and another that the drum-beat of the Kwambas and their weird, low chanting seemed to die away.

That Betty must have heard those significant sounds, from where she remained near the wrecked plane, could

not be doubted. Polly and Jack could even suppose that the "prisoner," Madame Dupont, had been awakened out of her sleep of exhaustion, and this meant an added anxiety.

"Good job we've taken her revolver away," Jack remarked to Polly, as they writhed and slithered the last hundred feet to level ground. "She can't play any tricks."

"If she's wise, she'll throw in her lot with us," Polly whispered back. "I mean, if—if the Kwambas turn nasty. But here's Betty, looking out for us."

They had to risk crossing some of the level ground to rejoin their chum, for she, although eagerly awaiting them, had not let anxiety make her stray from what she considered a post of duty.

Polly and Jack got to Betty, where she was still able to keep an eye upon the woman pilot of the wrecked plane. And with relief they saw that Madame Dupont was still lying as if in deep sleep in the shade they had made for her.

"Not shamming, is she??" Jack gravely asked.

"No—I'm positive," Betty quickly answered. "I thought of that. Fact is, she was just about all in; and we know she dosed herself with something from the medicine-chest."

"Then we won't rouse her," Polly hastily suggested. "Just hark to the din now, though! The Kwambas, Betty!"

"Yes. And if they come much closer—"

"Oh, if they do that, we needn't trouble about Madame Dupont, whether she wakes or not. Those Kwamba blokes will see the smashed plane, and—well, here we'll be!"

Polly suddenly produced something from a pocket of her white tunic. It was the Ankh necklace.

"Jack, I think you had better mind

By

MARJORIE  
STANTON

Illustrated by L. Shields

this now. I'm thinking, savages always think more of men and boys than they do of women and girls. They would do that, having no brains! So you must be the one to—to deal with them."

"O.K.! Perhaps I'd better," Jack agreed, and he took the golden necklace upon which they were to rely as a wonder-working charm. "Round my neck"—and he placed it there. "Safest like that—and on show, too, which is what we want. But what's doing now amongst the Kwambas? Suddenly gone quiet!"

It was so. Not only had the weird singing ceased—the drum was silent; and over the whole place a profound stillness brooded.

"No good our hanging back," Betty urged. "We've just got to show ourselves, trusting to the Ankh. They'd only find us in the end."

Jack and Polly nodded, and he at once set off, stepping quietly. The two girls, as they followed, were just as careful not to make a noise.

Although there was to be no wavering, Betty and Polly hoped, as did Jack, that it would be possible to get a first secret look at the Kwambas—to take stock of them, as it were.

Treading past the derelict aeroplane, on went the brother and sister and Betty through knee-high scrub, with here and there some large bushes and dwarf trees to offer cover.

They realised that they could not have far to go. From that rock-ledge on the

mountainside, Polly and Jack had already made out at last the head of a slow-moving procession, and it had been then only a little way off.

By now, had the procession still come on, it must have reached the aeroplane.

Suddenly, with only a few more of the dwarf-trees to creep between, after which there was only barren ground, Jack gestured: "Down!"

He himself dropped upon his knees, to remain in a crouched and watchful attitude.

Betty and Polly were a few yards behind him. They went upon hands and knees instantly, and like that they crawled onwards to be on either side of Jack.

Then, peering over the high, coarse grass and between the twisted stems of the trees—they saw!

They saw a vast multitude indeed, stationary on a piece of ground that was as bare and level as the playground of a school. No blade of grass grew there.

Instantly the belief came to the thrilled juniors that this particular plot of level ground was a traditional place of assemblage. It had been worn bare and dusty being put to that use from time to time down through the ages.

At any rate, here were the Kwambas now—hundreds of them—thousands, perhaps! Men, women, children; the whole tribe, it might be, gathered here—but why?

Was there some ceremony yet to come? Not a voice at present harangued the crowd. So far as Jack and the two girls could tell, it was simply a patient standing about—in complete silence!

Of a sudden Betty realised that all in the silent assemblage were facing the one way—towards the mountain. Then it seemed to her that there was general steady gazing in a slightly upward direction.

She looked to see why the Kwambas were all staring so fixedly towards the mountainside; and then her heart beat violently.

The sign of the Double Hawk!

All these savages had mustered here because it was the nearest spot on the level plain from which that great graven sign could be observed.

Up there, forming a precipitous part of the huge mountain, was the "heap big cliff" which the expedition's own native guide—himself a Kwamba, although they had picked him up in the Homeland—used to speak about. An enormous wall of rock, on whose smooth surface the Ankh symbol had been chiselled thousands of years ago.

Betty nudged both Polly and Jack, then nodded to direct their attention to the sign. They nodded back, implying that they also had begun to understand why these people were here.

Then Jack whispered behind his hand. "Got an idea, girls. Let's go back—quick as we can! Gee," he breathed on, "if only there's time—what a thing we can do!"

Some brain-wave of his! But what could it be? In vain Betty and Polly racked their own brains for a possible explanation, as they stole back with him by the way they had come.

Still hearing not a sound from the crowd that had so strangely fallen silent, they returned to where Madame Dupont had been left all by herself.

She was still lying there, sheltered from the burning sun, fast asleep.

"Think it's safe to leave her"—Jack spoke under his breath to the girls—"and come on now with me—up the mountain."

"What!"

"Here's my idea," he at last explained. "Perhaps you didn't notice, but there's a ledge just under that Ankh sign up there. Mind you, I don't know if we can get to it, but if we only can—"

"Oh!" Betty jerked, in great delight. "You mean—suddenly show ourselves to the crowd—from up there?"

"To—to sort of impress them all the more?" Polly joyfully inferred. "We get you, Jack—splendid!"

"It may mean everything to us!" Betty breathed.

"Come on then, girls!"

And away they went with him to carry out the daring plan.

—

### The Coming of the Strangers

"HERE, let me go first!"

"But, Jack—"

"Come back, Polly; I've

told you before about getting in front!"

He and the two girls had climbed to a part of the mountainside where, incidentally, a too-hasty movement might easily mean a headlong fall on to jagged rocks far below.

At first they had proceeded quickly, the way up being the same as Jack and Polly had gone before. But from there, although they had no need to go higher but only to work round the broad face of the mountain, progress had been as hazardous as it was tiring.

On hands and knees now, the three of them were crawling along a burning-hot ledge of rock which was really the one that had become their daring objective. Only they were merely at the beginning of it.

Another fifty yards at least must they scramble along before reaching the exact spot. The ledge widened just there, so they could see, offering room to stand up without any risk of falling.

Meantime, they had been unobserved by the Kwambas, who were still keeping together as a silent crowd down on the plain. Observed, the daring three might easily have been, only there was the Ankh sign for the multitude to gaze at so fixedly—as it seemed to be a sort of ritual of theirs to do.

Betty and Polly, taking example from Jack, kept so close to the wall of rock, which rose perpendicularly from the ledge, that their right shoulders and hips brushed against it.

Glancing up, whilst making a kind of lizard-like progress along the ledge, Betty saw the sign again—only obliquely, and yet it was thrillingly impressive at such close range.

The device had been carved in dimensions huge enough to render it distinguishable from miles away.

And the remarkable thing was that it did not appear to have worn faint during the passage of so many centuries. Perhaps succeeding generations of Kwambas, holding the sign in such reverence because of the tradition which attached to it, had saved it from becoming obliterated?

So Betty was thinking whilst she shuffled along the ever-widening ledge with Polly's wriggling feet right in front of her (Betty's) nose! Polly was second now and complaining in a mumble:

"I ought to have gone first! Jack should be in the middle. He must be in the centre when we stand up and show ourselves. He's to be the Important One!"

"Change for me to be that when you're about," Jack whispered back to his sister. "Well, there's plenty of

room on the ledge now for rearranging ourselves without their being able to see us. Go on then, Polly—past me, now."

He rolled sideways to leave room for her to work forwards between himself and the rock-wall. With her usual impetuosity, Polly certainly was as agile as a lizard on a sunny bank, covering the last few feet in as many seconds.

She stopped, still lying flat, and Jack and Betty were instantly up with her.

Utterly out of breath, they took a minute's rest, squatting on the ledge—directly beneath the great sign.

Then Jack turned to the other two. "Ready then?" he asked, smiling excitedly. "One—two—three," he counted slowly. "Go!"

And they stood up together.

A SUDDEN shouting from the Kwambas—sheer tumult! And could it be wondered at?

Until this moment, not one of them had known that strangers from a far-distant land had come into this, their own remote dwelling-place at the foot of the giant mountains.

The hundreds of blacks had seen nothing, as yet, of the wrecked aeroplane. Silently and unobserved had Jack and the two girls made their difficult way to this eminence.

What a sensation, then, it must have been for the whole multitude down there! For all their gazing eyes suddenly to behold—three living shapes upon the ledge of rock over, which hung, as it were, the sign of the Double Hawk!

Three strange human beings, wearing apparel such as the people of Kwamba could not understand. Three young figures, their faces unlike any that had ever been seen before—not black, but white!

"My goodness, what a row they're making!" Polly excitedly exclaimed.

"As if we'd dropped from the skies!"

"As we have, more or less," Betty said, thinking of their recent flopping to earth in the aeroplane.

"Got to catch them on the hop—so here goes," Jack said, putting forth his right arm most dramatically. "Gosh, and hasn't it made a difference, girls? Look at that!" was his gasped comment on a sudden dying-away of all the hubbub. "If only I knew the lingo—what a chance for a speech!"

"But say something—anything!" Betty urged. "Shout down to them—you must!"

"Morcove!" Polly prompted, quite seriously. "You start and we'll join in!"

"Morcove!" Jack instantly vociferated. "Hi! Hurrah, boys!"

"Morcove!" Betty and Polly yelled, waving their arms about to imply a friendly greeting. "Mor-cove!"

Then Jack, advancing closer to the edge of the shelf of rock, pointed up to the Ankh symbol.

He flung his right hand towards it in an expressive way, to try to get the crowd below to understand he and his two companions really were only here because of some association with the sign.

Instantly there was more than a renewal of jubilant shouting by the Kwambas. They began to rush about in great excitement.

To the girls and Jack, with their bird's-eye view of this wild scene, it was as if a colony of black ants had been routed about.

"And if all this doesn't mean that it's all right for us—well!" Betty cried. "Considering they haven't even seen the Ankh necklace yet!"

"We've got to let them see it, straight away. Keep on whilst the going is good," Jack advised. "Are you two game to venture down?"

"Yes, Jack—yes! Soon as you like!"

"We'll go down now—before they start coming up to us!"

So, with some last expressive wavings to the blacks, they went on hands and knees again and crawled back as quickly as possible by the way they had come.

There followed a rapid, stumbling descent of the rocky slope. All the way down, they could hear a hullabaloo resulting from the tribe shouting its own gibberish.

Jack set his shirt wider open at the chest, so that the medallion part of the Ankh necklace would be all the more apparent. Also, he had drawn the sign upon his chest, the same as each of the Morocove girls had drawn it upon an arm, with an indelible pencil.

"There are some big noises amongst those people, after all!" Betty breathlessly remarked. "You could make them out from up there, by special things they are wearing, Leopard skins and ivory ornaments."

"I know," Polly nodded. "And, look here, hadn't we better get all the advantage we can out of the aeroplane? It's only a wreck now; but still—"

"That's it!" Jack heartily agreed. "That'll be something to make them stare."

Betty and Polly laughed excitedly. But in the very next moment, despite all that had happened to justify reliance upon the Ankh emblem, both girls felt their courage being put to a bigger test than ever.

With Jack, they were down to the level ground once more—close to the wrecked plane, and the spot where Madame Dupont had been placed.

And here were all the Kwambas in their hundreds; or, at any rate, scores had already got to the spot, whilst others were fast coming on, still shouting wildly, jubilantly.

Such was Betty's compassionate nature, even in such a critical time as this, she had to glance aside to Madame Dupont. The woman had not stirred. All this din was then failing to rouse her! Gravely ill, after all!

From such misgivings as these, it was a leap of Betty's mind to the decision: "See to her at once—I must! If she's really ill, she mustn't be left neglected."

### Night Must Fall!

"**B**ETTY! Don't go away—"  
"It's all right, Polly. I must—I must see to that woman."

"Oh, all right!"  
The two girls had had to shout to make themselves heard to each other. The excited Kwambas were coming at them like a "roaring tide of black humanity."

Betty, ruled by feelings of pity for the fallen, even at such a moment, ran aside to where Madame Dupont was lying.

As for Polly, she stood shoulder to shoulder with her brother, fearlessly facing the excited mob.

He held up both arms, and, as if he had been a wizard, that gesture caused all the people, instantly, to stand still. Their voices dropped to an excited murmuring, and then became quite silent.

Jack, keeping the left arm upheld, lowered his right, to take hold of the Ankh necklace by its medallion, thus drawing attention to it.



**WITH** a dramatic gesture the chief suddenly took off his own necklace of lions' teeth and gravely hung it about Jack's neck. Surely, thought brother and sister, this must be a token of friendship?

Boldly he walked forwards to confront the spellbound men who were to the front of the crowd.

"Here, take a squint at this," Jack said to them—simply as something that would go with the action, although the words, of course, must be totally unintelligible to his strange audience. "The famous Ankh, boys!"

To his and Polly's great amazement, one word was instantly echoed, understandingly, by many of the blacks. "Ankh!"

"My goodness!" Polly gasped to herself. "They know that word, then!" "Ankh!" the cry was repeated. Men and women at the back of the crowd were taking it up. "Ankh! Ankh! Ankh!"

Those men who were to the very fore, standing close in front of Polly and Jack, were obviously the tribe's finest warriors or hunters.

One in the centre of the row was even the chief of the tribe, perhaps. A huge man was he, wearing many ivory ornaments. And yet, even so swarthy and important-looking though he was, nothing in his manner was at all ugly.

Brother and sister felt him to be capable of that mild, child-like simplicity which their own dear Kwamba—the expedition's lost guide—had so delightfully manifested at all times.

Suddenly this man extended his right arm, to draw attention to a tattoo-mark. Many ivory bangles almost concealed it; but Polly and Jack saw enough to recognise it as the sign of the Double Hawk.

"Ankh!" they both nodded, and then the man threw back his head and chuckled delightedly.

Those to right and left of him offered, their tattooed arms for inspection, shouting again and again: "Ankh!"

Then, rather to Polly's dismay, these

foremost Kwambas, jabbering volubly, began to point behind over the heads of the rest of the crowd. It was an eager pointing back in the direction from which the tribe had come.

"Not so good," Jack muttered to Polly, whilst he still smiled at the friendly natives. "Want us to go to their village, and we ought to stay here. Half a sec, Polly, and don't get windy."

Now the chief and his fellow warriors were pausing, staring in a questioning way.

"Well, aren't you coming?" their excited eyes said.

Jack, striking a grand attitude, dramatically pointed up to the sign on the face of the mountain.

Then he gestured solemnly at the wrecked aeroplane. Although it was all smashed up, he succeeded in making the Kwambas understand, by signs, that he and the two girls regarded it as their home from home! He implied that they, mysterious beings as they were, must dwell apart from other mortals.

They had come to Kwamba as benign visitants, in connection with that mystery about which the tribe itself, throughout the ages, had cherished its own vague theories. The time, Jack did his best to make the people understand, had now come! Great things were to be accomplished! Meanwhile, he and his companions must be left in peace.

Suddenly the chief took off a necklace of lions' teeth, and hung it about Jack's neck. Polly and her brother both wondered if the man expected the Ankh necklace to be offered in return.

But no. Jack's extravagant smile amply rewarded the giver, who instantly turned round to shout commands to the whole crowd.

"O.K., Polly," Jack said, in relief.

"They're going back. Don't know how far off their village is. Perhaps only just round the corner, so to speak—in a valley."

"Too good to be true, anyway—this," Polly fervently explained. "We can carry on here splendidly. There are all Madame Dupont's things in the plane. I must run and tell Betty!"

But Polly's impulse was checked by a sudden facing round of the Kwamba chief, after he had started to stride away with the jabbering crowd. She hoped to goodness the man was not having any second thoughts!

All he did, however, was to make signs that food and drink would be brought to them. He went through the motions of gnawing meat from a bone, and of drinking from a wooden bowl, whereupon Jack gave pleased nods and smiles and again pointed up to the Ankh sign.

"It makes me feel terribly like a dictator, Polly, having to keep on raising my right arm. But I don't mind!"

"And I'm sure I don't!" Polly jested back.

Like her nonsense-loving brother, she was in bounding spirits now that the chief and all his people were definitely withdrawing.

She left Jack as he started to get busy, off-loading stores and equipment from the wrecked plane, and ran to where Betty was—in nurse-like attendance upon Madame Dupont.

"Still asleep, Betty? Amazing after all that row!"

"Polly dear, I don't like the look of her!" was Betty's concerned murmur. "I tried rousing her gently just then, but it didn't answer."

"She took a dose of something, didn't she? Betty, hope to goodness she didn't use the wrong bottle!"

"No. I saw the label. It was safe stuff to take, anyway, and I suppose she knew it was just what she needed. May have taken too much, though. I shall try again."

And Betty, applying a gentle rousing touch, spoke in a low, entreating tone to the sufferer:

"Madame Dupont, do you feel better now?"

Came then a long and quivering sigh, and, after the woman had slowly opened her eyes, a complaining moan.

"Oh, I do feel so ill! It is so hot; I cannot get my breath! Please, please—water!"

"I'll get some," Polly assured Betty, rising up. "There must have been some on board her plane."

Madame Dupont began to fling her arms about with the restlessness of fever. She talked to herself in French, but Betty knew enough of that language to realise that they were only incoherent utterances.

"Listen, Madame Dupont! We'll take care of you," she promised, very tenderly. "The Kwambas are friendly. All will be well. If you'll try to tell me why you're like this, then we can do all the more for you. Were you hurt, after all, when the plane came down that second time?"

"Comment?" was the bewildered response in French. "Ah, no, no!" in English. "It is that I cut my hand three days since—at M'Goya. I think it nothing at the time, but now—"

Oh, this hand! Betty jerked, seeing how swollen was the one she had taken hold of to look at it.

"Oh! That is the trouble—not a proper healing, after all!" the unhappy woman said, in a low-spirited, frightened way. "And—oh, I know what that means!"

So did Betty, and so she knew that here, in this wild place, remote from all

outside aid, they had indeed a most serious case to tend.

A life to be fought for! She and Polly and Jack—and this woman on their hands! Her illness, after its sudden onset, the very one to be so hard to combat in such a climate as this!

"But we'll manage," Betty said, more to herself than to the sufferer.

Polly came running back with an opened bottle of sparkling mineral water. Feverish thirst made the patient want to drink it all, but Betty would let her have only half.

She rationed the allowance, although Polly was thankfully remarking that there were other capuled bottles of the same drinking-water available. Madame Dupont had taken on board a dozen of them, to be in reserve for an emergency, and only a couple had been broken when the plane plumped to earth.

Presently Jack came across, to learn how matters stood. He found that Betty and Polly, between them, had done much for the sufferer. The tiny cut in the hand—one that had seemed to be a mere scratch at the time it was received, but which had since turned septic—was now cleaned and dressed.

The trained nurse could have finally bandaged the hand with greater neatness and security than Betty had achieved.

By the time all this was done, some Kwambas turned up from their village with offerings that were evidently deemed to be lavish, although the juniors found most of them to be of very dubious value.

Unfortunately, fruits and milk were absent. There were some chunks of meat, a good many hides, leopard skins, and several tusks of ivory.

But the girls and Jack took good care to appear very pleased and grateful. After the dozen or so Kwambas had gone away, Jack talked of quietly burying all the meat as soon as night had fallen.

"But be a bit secret, or they'd be mighty offended," he reasoned. "So to-night will be the time."

And Betty, thinking of Madame Dupont, said "To-night!" under her breath. Strong-nerved and self-reliant as any girl might be, she was yet bound to give a shiver of apprehension.

Night must fall—the long night that it always was in this equatorial region.

It was just before the dark that they heard a lion roaring, as he and his mate took their evening lick at a water-hole, perhaps, before seeking their prey.

The sunset-light flamed rosily for a bare minute or so longer upon the very tops of the huge mountains. Then the stars rushed out, and there was sudden darkness upon the wild.

Jack put a tiny allowance of petrol from the plane's undamaged tank into a tin, and splashed it on the camp-fire.

Up flared the spirit, raising a lightning-like flare lasting only a couple of seconds.

It was the first beacon-like signal to dear ones who were only a few miles away—and yet how far away that meant in such difficult country! Repeated at intervals during the night, the momentary flare might achieve wonders.

Polly went to lie down and get some sleep, whilst Betty took first turn on duty, and Betty took the second. Some time during the night both girls would have to be about together whilst Jack obtained a rest.

How fine he had been! Polly was thinking as she sought her make-shift refuge. Many a time, while he was chattering nonsense, his mind must have been full of grave anxiety. Even now she could hear him whistling

cheerily as he patrolled the nightbound camp.

Suddenly she heard him voice a sharp, challenging cry.

It was answered by a mumble-mumble in the native dialect. She instantly went out into the open, and darted across to him where he stood confronting half a dozen Kwambas in the light from the fire. Betty, next moment, joined the brother and sister.

Of the six men who had turned up like this, all but one were those principal warriors who had been so extremely friendly at the first encounter. The one who exceptionally had not been here before was an old and skinny man, with a wizened face and large, gleaming eyes.

He stood forward from his companions and began to jabber excitedly.

He carried a long-bladed spear, and suddenly he flourished this meaningly in the direction of the mountainside, clearly indicating that his talk was of the Ankh sign, now lost in the darkness.

Then, still jabbering viciously, he pointed the spear at Jack.

Again the dreadful meaning was obvious. Something was being demanded of them—some boon which, it had been supposed, they would be able to confer upon the whole tribe through the medium of the sign.

"Nasty bit of work, this chap!" Jack muttered to the girls. "Sort of witch-doctor."

"And it rests with him now," Polly whispered, "unless we—unless we sort of work the oracle—"

She did not say the rest. But it was there in the minds of all three juniors—a terrible certainty!

Either they must instantly make good their claim to be mysterious, living agents of the Ankh, or else the fate of dozens of impostors would be dealt out to them!

A slight trace of grimness showed itself in Jack's manner as he turned once more to confront the huge negro. The girls realised that he must, for all his show of courage, be feeling nervous and apprehensive.

"Avant, thou two-faced rogue!" proclaimed Jack, with such a sudden violence that the giant negro started back with a cry of fear. "Split my mainbrace," Jack added vehemently, "if I don't have you hanged at yon yardarm for the son of a cross-eyed sea-cook that you are!"

In spite of the seriousness of the occasion, Betty and Polly almost chuckled. The sound of pirate-like bullying—doubtless lingering in Jack's memory from some boyhood "classic"—had taken a striking effect on the blacks.

But the witch-doctor soon recovered. He began to dance wildly round Jack, waving his spear more menacingly than ever. Once it almost touched Jack's shoulder, so that Betty nearly gave a scream of horror.

He shouted as he leapt, and, reaching a climax of frenzy, stood bolt upright, one hand flung menacingly at Jack, the other holding aloft the gleaming spear.

Angry murmurs arose from the other natives.

Betty and Polly hardly dared breathe. What would happen now?

The plucky chums are indeed in a terrible plight—helpless in a hostile land, not knowing what the future holds in store for them. You will be longing to read of their further enthralling adventures, so make sure of securing your SCHOOLGIRL next Saturday, in which there will be another gripping instalment of this popular feature.