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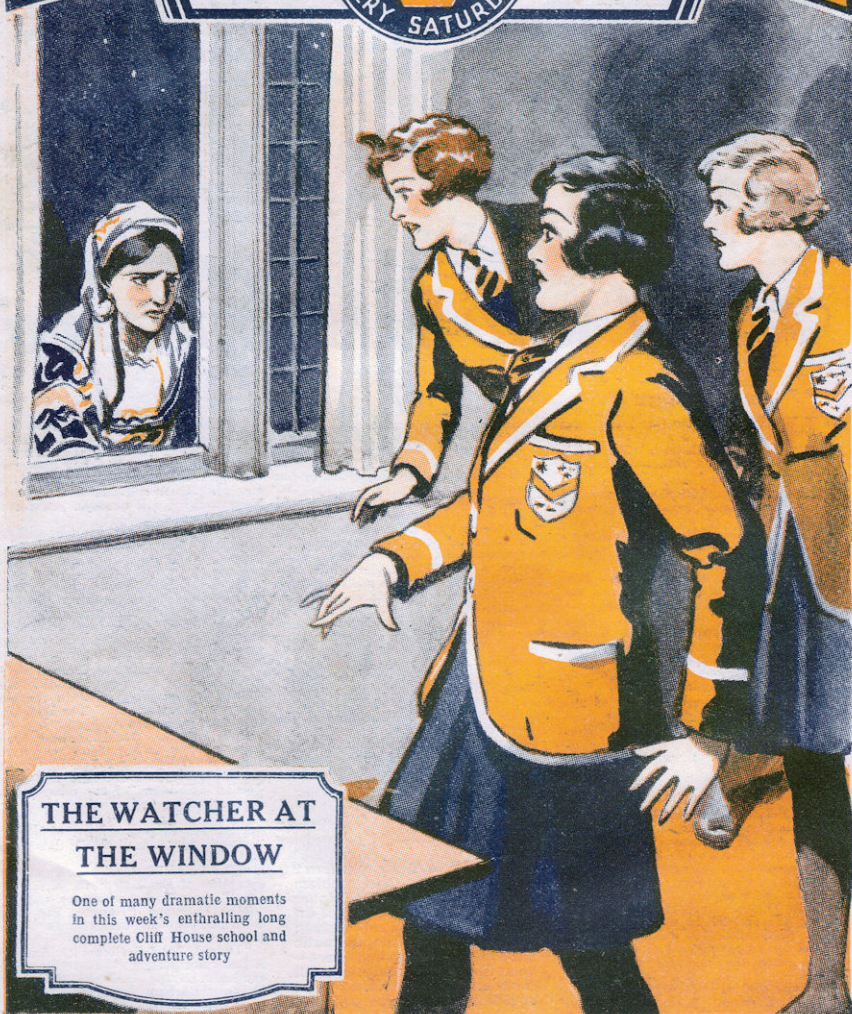
Starts Inside: "THE HOUSE OF BYGONE DAYS": Great New Serial

# THE SCHOOLGIRL

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EVERY **2<sup>D</sup>** SATURDAY

Incorporating  
"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



## THE WATCHER AT THE WINDOW

One of many dramatic moments  
in this week's enthralling long  
complete Cliff House school and  
adventure story

## COMPLETE THIS WEEK: A Story of Thrilling Adventure and Mystery, Featuring Barbara Redfern & Co.



# The Girl who Disappeared

Drama at Assembly

**"HALLO!** Where's Doris got to?"  
And Barbara Redfern's blue eyes reflected the surprise in her voice.

But Mabel Lynn, standing beside her leader and Form captain, chuckled softly.

"What, Doris not here? Goodness! That'll please the Bull so early in the morning—and I don't think!"

The Bull—or Miss Mary Evelyn Bullivant, the angular mistress of the Third Form at Cliff House School—certainly looked far from pleased. Not that she ever looked otherwise. Uncertain of temper, sour of disposition, she ruled her Form with a rod of iron, and was, without doubt, the most unpopular mistress in the school.

Now, peering over the top of the register which she held, her grey-green eyes glittered like ice behind the pince-nez she wore.

"Doris Redfern!" she snapped for the second time.

But from the ranks of the Third Form no voice answered to that name.

Miss Bullivant frowned blackly. Her expression grew grimmer. Barbara, watching from where she stood among her chums of the Fourth Form, saw the Bull begin to tap one of her feet on the floor. An ominous sign.

It was morning Assembly in Big Hall at Cliff House. Every Form was present. Every girl in the school, save those unfortunates in the sanatorium, should have been present to answer her name when the registers were being called.

But one girl, at least, was not there. Doris Redfern, Barbara's younger sister, and one of the leading lights of

By

**HILDA RICHARDS**

the Third Form, was conspicuous by her absence.

"The goose!" muttered Barbara. "I wonder where Doris is—"

She was not the only one to wonder. Miss Bullivant, her eyes narrowed to pin points, was asking the same question—in a voice of thunder which rose above those of the other mistresses who were calling the registers of their own particular Forms.

"Madge, can you give me an explanation of Doris Redfern's absence from Assembly? Where is she? Why is she not here?" demanded the Bull. And in the same breath: "Answer me, child!"

Madge Stevens, unofficial captain of the Third jumped. "There was a worried expression on her face as she stepped forward a pace.

"Please, Miss Bullivant," piped Madge uneasily. "I—we—haven't seen Doris since last night in the dormitory."

Barbara, hearing that, started.

But Miss Bullivant glared.

"What? Good gracious!"

"And—and, please, Miss Bullivant," added Madge timidly, "I reported her

absence to you first thing this morning—"

"Thank you. I am quite aware of that!" snapped the Third Form mistress acidly. "I assumed that Doris had risen early and was engaged upon some task or mission outside the school precincts! Then she has not returned? Very well. I will question you further after roll-call, Madge!"

And Miss Bullivant, her foot still tapping the floor, drew a deep, angry breath. She went on calling the register.

In the Fourth Form ranks, curious glances were being thrown at Barbara, who was looking both puzzled and concerned. She was feeling worried for her sister's sake. Being absent from morning Assembly was a serious offence.

"My hat!" whispered Clara Trevlyn, giving Babs a nudge in the side. "Doris is going to get it in the neck when she does turn up! The Bull looks like a storm at sea!"

Babs sighed. Golden-haired Mabel Lynn glanced at her chum sympathetically. So did plump Bessie Bunter and gentle Marjorie Hazeldene and Janet Jordan and many of the other Fourth Formers.

Snap!  
That was Miss Bullivant closing the register. She turned to the dais at the end of Big Hall.

"The Third Form all present with the exception of Doris Redfern, Miss Primrose!" she reported in an icy voice.

Miss Penelope Primrose, the rather stern but very just headmistress of Cliff House, raised her eyebrows.

"Indeed, Miss Bullivant! And why is Doris not present?" Her gaze darted suddenly to the ranks of the Fourth Form. "Barbara, have you any idea of your sister's movements since last night?"

**WHERE** is Doris Redfern? That is the problem which baffles Cliff House—which sends Babs & Co. off to gaunt, rock-bound Belwin Island on a desperate, dramatic quest. What they find there—what fantastic adventures befall them among the shadowy ruins of Belwin Castle—you will read in this powerful story.

"I'm afraid not, Miss Primrose," Babs replied worriedly. "I saw Doris after tea yesterday, to show her a letter from home, and I did not see her again."

"Can you suggest any reason why Doris should have absented herself in this strange manner, Barbara?" questioned Miss Primrose. "Was there anything in this letter you mention which might have upset your sister?"

A shadow crossed Babs' pretty face. "The letter certainly contained bad news, Miss Primrose," Babs confessed. "It was from daddy, to say that mother is very ill—"

"I am extremely sorry to hear that, Barbara," the headmistress cut in, and paused thoughtfully. "Thank you, Barbara, that will be all for the moment."

Babs stepped back into the Fourth Form ranks. Ten minutes later, after the headmistress had delivered her morning address, the school dismissed.

Babs, looking very troubled, immediately left her chums, and hurried off down the corridor in the direction of the Third Form quarters.

But even as she reached the door of the Common-room, it opened, and a figure came running out. It was Madge Stevens, so excited that she didn't see Babs at first, and almost bumped into her.

"Madge," gasped Babs, "has Doris returned?"

"The Third Former seized Babs' arm. Babs saw that she was holding an envelope in her other hand.

"No; but here's a letter from her!" panted Madge. "I found it on the Common-room mantelpiece, and I was just coming round to see you, Babs. It's addressed to you—"

But Babs had already grabbed the letter, was tearing open the flap. Swiftly she drew out a sheet of paper, unfolded it. She saw a few lines of writing—Doris' handwriting, round and scrawling. Then, as she read that letter, Babs' blue eyes opened wide in amazement.

"Dear Babs," Doris had written,—"Don't be alarmed, but I have run away from Cliff House. It's nothing serious, so don't worry—and please don't try to find me.—Love, "DORIS."

THE LETTER fluttered from Babs' suddenly nervous fingers. Almost stupidly she watched it float to the floor, and was aware that Madge had picked it up and very wonderingly was reading that extraordinary message.

"Run away!"

"Oh, my goodness!" gasped Babs. "But—but what's it all mean? Why should she run away?"

Babs tried to collect her bewildered thoughts. She took the letter from Madge and read it again. It had obviously been written very hurriedly. Doris' handwriting was usually neat, if childish, but here it was simply atrocious. Babs knew she must have pinned it in a very agitated state of mind. But, if that were so, what had happened to make her so agitated?

"Madge," said the Fourth Form captain quickly, "was Doris in any sort of bother with the—Bull, or something like that? I know you wouldn't like to tell Primmy if she were; but I'm her sister, and you must tell me."

Madge, however, shook her head vigorously.

"No trouble that I know of, Babs," she replied at once. "Doris was full of beans yesterday. It was a halfer, of course, and we had a lovely picnic on Belwin Island, with lots of fun and

swimming, and we played hide-and-seek among the rocks, and we lost Doris for quite a long time—"

"But you found her?"

"Oh yes!" said Madge eagerly. "And nothing had happened to her?"

"No—" Madge broke off abruptly. "Well, only that Doris had lost her ring—you know, the one that she bought abroad during the summer hols."

Babs nodded thoughtfully. Yes, she remembered that ring—one shaped like a coiled snake. Doris had been very proud of it, displaying it to everybody in the school. She had bought it in distant Turonia, through which country she and her parents had passed during a tour of the Balkans. The ring had been rather too large for Doris' slim fingers, but having bought it out of her own pocket-money, she had insisted on wearing it.

But Doris surely wouldn't have run away in order to search for the ring! Even as Babs was pondering this point, however, little Ida Jackson, also of the Third, came hurrying down the passage.

"Look what I've found!" she piped, extending an arm. "It's Doris' handbag, and I found it under her pillow."

Quickly Babs took the handbag. Perhaps this would contain a clue to account for her sister's remarkable behaviour. Much as she knew Doris valued that ring, she could not credit that her sister would deliberately cut morning assembly to search for it, when she would be able to cross to Belwin Island after lessons that evening without breaking school rules.

Babs opened the handbag, diving her hands into the various compartments. There was a packet of needles, two reels of cotton, a bag containing a few assorted toffees, a nail file, a letter from Mr. Redfern—Babs hurriedly read it, but it was a week old—and some money. Babs started as she saw the money.

Doris, in her letter, had said she was running away from Cliff House, yet here was her handbag, containing all her treasures and her money. Only three shillings and sevenpence, but that

was all Doris could have possessed, because the previous day she had said she was down to her last sixpence, and had borrowed four shillings from Babs. No doubt the other elevenpence had gone in the cost of hiring a boat across to Belwin Island with her chums, and buying those sweets.

"Funny!" murmured Babs. "Why didn't she take her handbag—or, at least, this money?" Another thought came to her. "Madge, did you notice if Doris' attache-case is missing from the dormitory, or any of her clothes?"

Madge looked surprised. "I don't know, Babs. I never thought to look. But why—"

Babs, leaving the two Third Formers staring after her, was already racing off upstairs to the Third Form dormitory. A maid was making the beds, but Babs hardly noticed her.

Under Doris' bed she found a small attache-case and a large suitcase—the only two her sister possessed. A glance in the locker, and, as far as Babs could see, none of Doris' clothes was missing.

In running away, then, Doris had apparently taken neither money nor any clothes.

Downstairs again ran Babs, this time to the Third Form lobby. On a peg she found Doris' hat, a light coat, and her macintosh.

Babs' anxiety increased. "I'll have to tell Primmy," Babs decided, and, her pretty face more troubled than ever now, thoughtfully wended her way to the headmistress' study.

Miss Primrose, when she read Doris' letter, was startled.

"Bless my soul!" she exclaimed agitatedly. "But this is incredible, Barbara! I cannot understand it. Why should the foolish child wish to run away? Where has she gone?"

"I only wish I knew, Miss Primrose," said Babs distractedly.



SWIFTLY Babs pounced upon the shoe; her face was white and tragic as she held it up. "Doris' shoe!" she whispered. "She would have been wearing it when she ran away from Cliff House!"

"We must institute inquiries immediately," Miss Primrose declared firmly. "And perhaps I had better inform your parents—"

Babs looked at the headmistress quickly.

"Please don't do that, Miss Primrose—not yet, anyway," she pleaded. "As I told you, I had a letter yesterday to say that mother is very ill. If she were to hear that Doris is missing the shock might seriously affect her."

"Yes, yes, Barbara. Of course, I understand. But we must do something, Barbara, to locate your sister. She may be miles away from here by now."

"Yet she took no money with her," Babs pointed out. "She may still be in the neighbourhood. Miss Primrose, may I make a suggestion?"

"Certainly! What is it, Barbara?"

"Will you please give me permission to search for Doris this morning?" the Form captain asked eagerly. "Oh, I know it will mean missing lessons, but I think I might be able to find Doris—or at least, find some trace of her—if you would allow one or two of my friends to accompany me, Miss Primrose—"

"The headmistress did not hesitate. "Very well, Barbara," she acquiesced. "In the circumstances I readily give you the permission. I will speak to Miss Charmant, explaining matters. Whom do you wish to accompany you?"

"Mabel, Clara, and Marjorie, Miss Primrose, if you have no objection."

"None at all. And I most sincerely hope you are successful in your mission, Barbara," said the headmistress. "Doris must be traced. You must do your very best to find her. But if she is not found by this evening—" Miss Primrose shook her head gravely, then, with an abrupt change of tone: "Very well, Barbara, you may go. You will, of course, inform me of any developments immediately."

Babs went. Straight along to Study No. 4 she flew, there to find quite a little gathering. Besides Mabs and Bessie, who shared the cosy little apartment with Babs, there were Clara Trevlyn and Marjorie Hazeldene from Study No. 7, and Leila Carroll and Gemma Carstairs.

They all looked up as Babs hurriedly entered the room.

"Ah, just the girl we're waiting for!" said Tomboy Clara breezily. "We're just discussing the hockey team for the Whitechester match, Babs—"

But Babs waved her hand impatiently. "Another hockey!" she exclaimed. Clara looked surprised.

"Why, what the dickens—" And then, seeing the troubled look on her chum's face, enlightenment came to her. "Oh, sorry, Babs! Heard bad news about Doris?"

Quickly Babs explained the situation, and there were sympathetic nods from her chums. Then Clara's eyes lit up as she heard about the search-party.

"Good idea, Babs!" exclaimed the Tomboy. "And when do we start?"

"Now—as soon as we're ready," Babs said.

The meeting broke up hastily. Marjorie, Clara, and Mabs dashed off to get their hats and coats from the lobby. Bessie, Leila, and Gemma drifted off with rather anxious glances at the others, in the direction of the classrooms, where morning lessons would shortly begin.

Babs, pausing only to gather up a number of impositions which she had collected the previous night, and were due to be handed to Miss Valerie Charmant, the pretty mistress of the Fourth Form, started towards the door.

But before she could open it a step sounded outside. Then the door swung back and a girl entered.

Babs, impatient to be gone, did not look pleased.

"You want me, Lydia?" she asked, and added pointedly: "I'm in a hurry."

Lydia Cressendale, the tall and supercilious snob of the Fourth, grinned unpleasantly. She sauntered into the room, and, to Babs' astonishment, coolly shut the door behind her.

"Too bad!" she drawled. "Off, so I hear, to search for dear little Doris?"

Babs' face flushed.

"Any business of yours?" she inquired shortly.

Lydia shrugged.

"Well—yes, and no." A pause.

"Perhaps I can give you some news about Doris which will interest you. On one condition," she added, as Babs stepped eagerly forward.

For a moment Babs eyed the snob of the Fourth suspiciously.

"What do you mean? What do you know about Doris?"

Lydia's pale grey eyes narrowed cunningly:

"Quite a lot," she said slowly. "For instance, I know where she is—"

and Babs' heart took a sudden bound.

"Lydia!" she exclaimed excitedly. "Where? You must tell me—"

"Certainly. On one condition," Lydia repeated. "That is, that you promise to include me in the hockey team playing against Whitechester next Saturday!"



### The Finding of a Shoe

FOR a moment, after that startling ultimatum, there was silence in Study No. 4.

Babs blinked bewilderedly. Then, as the full significance of those words came home to her, her blue eyes blazed with scorn and indignation.

"Lydia!" she exclaimed, her voice vibrant with anger. "How can you ask me such a thing. You know very well you can't be included in the team. But—but—oh, do you really know what has happened to Doris? Please tell me—"

Lydia sneered. With her back to the door, she looked mockingly at the Form captain.

"Listen, Barbara Redfern," she snapped. "I want to play in that hockey match. You want to find your sister. The minute you tell me that I'm included in the team, then I'll tell you what I know—and not before!"

Babs' hands clenched. Her mouth set in a straight line.

"I don't quite know what your game is, Lydia Cressendale," she said, "but I think you are behaving in a despicable fashion. It's mean of you to try to take advantage of me like this. Anyway," added Babs sharply, "you've never interested yourself in hockey before. Why should you wish to play now?"

"That's my affair," returned Lydia coldly. "But for reasons of my own I am anxious to play, and you're the one who can get me into the team."

"Your mistake!" said Babs. "I wouldn't, even if it were possible—"

Lydia laughed challengingly.

"Not even if I told you," she said slowly and deliberately, "that Doris was in—danger!"

Babs started. Her pretty cheeks went white.

"Lydia!" she cried frantically. "What

are you getting at? What do you know about Doris' disappearance?"

Again that mocking smile from Lydia.

"I just know. That's sufficient for you—until you promise to do what I want. Now, how about that place in the team, Barbara Redfern?"

Babs stood stock-still, distractedly wondering how to act.

"Lydia," she said quietly, "I can't do as you ask. You know I can't. But if you know anything about Doris, please, please tell me."

The pleading in those blue eyes, the anguish in her voice, would have melted a heart of stone. But Lydia Cressendale, thinking only of her own selfish ends, remained unmoved.

"Cut out the soft soap!" she snapped. "I've given you your chance. It's up to you now. Just think it over. But remember, while you're thinking, Barbara Redfern, that I know your sister is in peril!"

And with that cruel parting shot, Lydia turned on her heel to go. But that sneer seemed to goad Babs. With a sudden cry she leapt forward, interposing herself between Lydia and the door.

"Wait a minute, Lydia Cressendale!" she almost panted, her voice quivering with passion. "You're not leaving this study yet. You're going to tell me what has happened to Doris—"

"And if I don't?" Lydia asked sneeringly.

"Then I'll jolly well make you!" blazed Babs.

She sprang forward, gripping Lydia by the arm. The imposition she had been holding fluttered to the floor. So fierce was her grasp, so wrathful the look upon her face, that Lydia involuntarily stepped back a pace.

"Now will you tell me, Lydia Cressendale?" Babs almost choked.

Neither of them had seen the figure who had this moment entered.

"Barbara! Lydia! What is the meaning of this disgraceful scene?" And Miss Charmant, shocked expression on her face, came farther into the room.

With a gasp Babs spun round, releasing her grip on Lydia. But her eyes still flamed angrily as she faced the Fourth Form mistress.

"I—I'm sorry, Miss Charmant," Babs panted, "but—but—Lydia has just told me that she knows something about Doris. She wouldn't tell me what it was. I—I was trying to make her tell me."

The mistress swung round upon the snob of the Fourth.

"Lydia, is this true?"

Lydia, momentarily alarmed as Babs had explained, recovered her composure and smiled coolly.

"Oh, but Miss Charmant, I was only joking. I never dreamed Barbara would take it seriously—"

"Joking!" The exclamation left Babs' lips in a shout. "Why, you—"

"Barbara!" rapped Miss Charmant. "You forget yourself. And you, Lydia. Your sense of humour is evidently a little misguided if you can joke about so serious a matter. You assure me you know nothing about Doris?"

"Nothing at all, Miss Charmant!" lied Lydia easily.

"Thank you, Lydia. You will write me fifty lines by this evening. Now please leave this study."

Lydia, with a glance at Babs, went. But Babs' heart was heavy within her. She thought she saw Lydia's game. That story about Doris was all lies—just a fabrication of Lydia's to wheedle her way into the hockey team.

A little shamefacedly she looked at the Charmer.

"I admit you had great provocation for acting as you did, Barbara," said the mistress, "but you really must try to control your temper. I was coming to see you," she went on more kindly, "to collect those impositions. Have you got them ready, Barbara?"

Very red of face, Babs picked them up from the floor where she had dropped them, and handed them to the mistress. "Thank you," smiled Miss Charmant. "And I do hope, Barbara," she added as she turned to the door, "that you will soon find your sister. Miss Primrose has told me that you will be absent from class this morning."

And with a kindly nod she disappeared. Babs, looking after her, gulped. How sweet the Charmer was! Another mistress would have lined her for that episode.

With a sigh, Babs herself quitted the study and made her way down to the lobby, where her chums, clad in their outdoor clothes, were ready and waiting. She said nothing to Mabs, Clara, and Marjorie of what had happened. Truth to tell, Babs was anxious to forget. Yet Lydia's remarks had caused a sudden wave of uneasiness to assail her. What if that shot in the dark were true? What if Doris really were in peril?

She shrugged irritably. Oh, what rot she was thinking! Doris had merely run away, no doubt over some childish escapade as yet undiscovered. Plenty of people must have seen her since she had left the school, and she would soon be traced and brought back.

"Well, what's the programme, Babs?" asked Clara Trevlyn as they wheeled their bicycles out of the shed. "What's the first port of call?"

But Babs had already thought of that. "Pegg!" she said briefly. "The silly kid might have gone to look for that ring she lost on Belwin Island yesterday. We'll ask the boatman if he's seen her."

"O.K., chief!" grinned Clara. "Full speed ahead for Pegg, then!"

**OLD SAM**, the mahogany-checked boatman, shook his grizzled head.

"Sorry, young leedies," he said gruffly, "but I ain't seen nothing of the little girl—not since yesterday. Cheeky little thing, too!" He chuckled reminiscently. "Remember her skylarking about here with those other imps when they went across to the island. But she'll turn up again, never you fear!"

Babs and her friends stood on the golden sands of Pegg. The tiny fishing village was bathed in the morning sunshine. Little foam-tipped wavelets trickled lazily up to the beach and slowly receded. The sea was an azure blue, shimmering in the rays of the sun. Half a mile out the black rocks of Belwin Island showed starkly against the surrounding blueness.

But Babs had no eyes for the beauty of the morning. She looked at old Sam worriedly.

Old Sam was shaking his grizzled head.

"Seems your sister's not the only one missing," he muttered. "There's my Sally Ann disappeared and me not knowing where she's gone!"

"Your Sally Ann?" asked Clara. "Your daughter—"

The old man chuckled.

"Nay, one of my boats. Not a sign of it this morning, and it was here on the beach yesterday, that I be sure of."

Babs pricked up her ears.



NOT a word came from the grim guardian of the ruins; but his fierce gestures plainly meant: "Go back!"

"A boat missing?" she asked quickly. "Then—then mightn't my sister have taken that? She might have taken it this morning before you got down here."

Old Sam started. "Why, I never thought of that," he admitted.

Babs was looking excited now. She gazed at her chums eagerly.

"There's something in it," Mabs breathed. "What about it, Babs? Going across to look?"

The Form captain nodded. "Right away," she said. "Sam, a boat for us, please. We're going across to the island."

But before Sam could move, a shadow suddenly fell across the sand, and a strangely foreign, sinister voice fell upon their ears.

"Do not go to the island."

The chums wheeled. And then their eyes goggled in astonishment. For standing before them was a strange figure—a dark-skinned woman, with penetrating black eyes, and clad in a queer flowing dress of some black material, with a silk scarf tied loosely over her raven black hair.

Strangely sinister that black-clad figure looked in the brilliant sunshine. But before the chums could speak, the woman was in their midst, her dark eyes fastening upon them one by one, for some reason sending queer shivers through the girls.

"The island—it is dangerous!" the woman repeated. "Loya the Mystic warns you!" And before Babs and Co. could regain their breath, the figure glided away as mysteriously as it had come.

The spell she had cast over the girls seemed to lift as she retreated along the

beach, to stop some fifty yards away and stand gazing out towards Belwin Island.

"Well I'm jiggered!" It was a gasp from Clara. "Pinch me, somebody! I'm dreaming. Did I see her or didn't I?"

Marjorie, looking a little white, forced a smile.

"Oh dear! She made me feel quite creepy," the gentle one said with a little shiver. "But, Babs, what ever did she mean?"

Babs shook her head.

"Goodness knows!" she murmured. "But we're not taking any notice of her. Loya the Mystic! I don't know who she is and I don't care. Evidently got some bee in her bonnet about Belwin."

But even Babs, as she uttered those words, could not forget the magnetism of those strange eyes as they had bored into hers. There had been something so compelling about the woman. Those words had seemed so sinister.

Babs shook herself irritably. She was being idiotic, she told herself.

"Well, come on, Sam," she said, to the still startled boatman. "A nice light boat, please—not one of those heavy old tubs."

"Then—then you be going across to the island?" he questioned.

"Absolutely."

Old Sam nodded, then glared darkly at that mysterious figure at the water's edge. But he made no further comment. He dragged a boat down the beach, waited for the girls to jump in, and gave them a vigorous shove-off.

Clara and Babs took the oars. Soon they were riding over the dancing waves, heading in the direction of Belwin Island.

They were half-way across when the

of an engine sounded from behind them.

"Hallo," said Clara, looking up, "we're not the only visitors to the island, after all."

A large motor-boat, throwing up twin sprays of water from its bows, came roaring alongside. In a few seconds it had passed them, but not before the chums had seen and recognised one of its occupants.

"Well, of all the giddy cheek!" exclaimed Mabs, "Did you see who that was?"

"The mysterious Loya herself!" chuckled Clara. "Cool, what? Warns us not to go, then shoots off herself!"

"Jolly queer, though," muttered Babs, and her gaze followed that motor-boat as, leaving a creamy foam in its wake, it sped towards the island.

For a moment she had a glimpse of that strange woman—the woman who had called herself Loya the Mystic; seemed to feel once again those black eyes boring into hers.

With a queer tremor which she could not understand, Babs bent to the oars again. The rowing-boat ploughed on and at last Belwin Island was reached.

Tomboy Clara was the first out as it grounded into the soft sand of a little cove. Quickly the others scrambled after her, securing the boat to a large lump of rock high above the lapping water.

"Now what?" asked Clara. "Do we separate or search together?"

"I think—" began Babs, and then tensed, warning her chums to be silent. "Look!" she breathed.

Her keen eyes had spotted a movement among the rocks some distance to the left of them.

Wonderingly, her chums stared in the direction in which she pointed. And there, they, too, saw. Clara gave a low whistle.

For scrambling over those rocks, making for the centre of the island, was the dark-clad figure of Loya the Mystic. But it was not she who riveted the chums' attention. It was another figure which followed furtively in her wake—a figure that ducked behind a rock every time the woman turned, as if afraid of being seen.

The figure of a man, dressed in the blue jersey, dark trousers, and thigh boots of a fisherman.

Like a shadow he flitted in silent pursuit of the woman, while Babs & Co. watched her in fascinated wonder and amazement.

As those fitting figures finally vanished from view among the rocks, the chums eyed each other blankly.

"Mysterious!" muttered Clara Trevlyn.

"Jolly mysterious!" affirmed Mabel Lynn.

"Oh, bother them!" exclaimed Babs fretfully. "We've come here to look for Doris, and as there can't possibly be any connection between the two, let's forget about that woman and start searching."

Mabs, Clara, and Marjorie, understanding their captain's anxiety, were only too willing to do that.

The search began. Soon the chums were themselves scrambling over the rocks, but in the direction opposite to that which Loya and her shadow had been taking.

Babs & Co. had not got far, however, before they made another discovery. Reaching a sandy cove among the rocks, they found beached there a small rowing-boat.

"Belongs to that fisherman, I suppose," Babs was saying, giving it a cursory glance, and noticing the lobster pots, or round wooden baskets, it contained.

She would have passed on, but suddenly her gaze fell on something lying in the bottom of one of these baskets. In a couple of strides Babs had leapt to the boat.

"Look!" she cried, her voice now trembling with excitement. "Quickly, girls! Look!"

She dived her hand into the lobster pot, and drew out the object which had caught her attention.

"Babs, what's the matter?" gasped Mabs. "It's only an old shoe!"

She stared at her chum and leader in amazement, watching that first flush of excitement fade, leaving the cheeks curiously drawn and very pale.

But still Babs stared down at the thing in her hands. A shoe it was—of black leather, not very dainty with its rather broad toe-cap, and now limp and saturated after immersion in the sea.

"Babs, dear—" began Marjorie Hazeldene, startled by the Form captain's silence.

And then Babs groaned. "Oh, don't you see?" she cried poignantly. "This—is this Doris' shoe! She would have been wearing it when she ran away from Cliff House!"



The Guardian of the Ruins

A TRAGIC silence fell over the little group of chums. Mabs' face was white.

"Babs!" she exclaimed, in horror. "That shoe has been in the sea! You—you don't think—"

"I'm almost frightened to think at all, Mabs," replied the Form captain dully. "But, at least, this proves that Doris came across to Belwin Island. But—but did she ever reach here, or—" Babs shuddered, looking again at the saturated shoe.

Clara shrugged impatiently. "I see what you mean, Babs. But, oh, my giddy aunt, that's all rot!"

"The Tomboy, blunt as she was clumsy, could never be tactful in the most delicate of circumstances. "Of course, Doris reached here! Why shouldn't she? She can handle a boat, and the sea's been as smooth as a pond. Buck up, Babs, old thing, and don't be a pessimist. It's not like you. I know you must be dreadfully worried about Doris; but she'll turn up safe and sound, and we're going to find her."

Which, for Clara, was a long speech; but it certainly acted as a tonic on Babs.

"Oh, Clara, I hope you're right!" she said. "Perhaps Doris' shoe fell off as she was climbing out of the boat, and dropped into the sea before she could save it."

Babs tried to convince herself that that was the explanation. Then the shoe must have drifted into the lobster pot, and the fisherman, collecting his pots that morning, had dumped them in his boat—no doubt very disgusted to discover that his only catch was a girl's shoe.

Now Babs felt her confidence returning. The shoe was a definite clue that Doris had crossed to Belwin Island. But was she still here—and, if so, on what part of the island?

"Come on, girls!" Babs cried. "Let's get going again. Doris must have come across here to search for her ring, after all. Oh, the silly goose! Why did she have to scare everybody by saying she'd run away? According to Madge, Doris lost her ring somewhere near the ruins, so I vote we make it that direction. Keep your eyes open, old things!"

"Rather!" Once more the chums began the search. The ruins of which Babs had spoken stood in the centre of the rocky island—crumbling relics of a once proud castle which, in medieval days had dominated Belwin Island, and been the impregnable fortress of a powerful baron.

The ruins came into view now as Babs & Co. clambered over a rocky ridge. Leaning archways blocked by piles of fallen masonry, crumbling walls, three feet thick, and the cracking remains of round towers, with their tiny embrasures.

Of the castle itself little still stood, but underground a perfect labyrinth of dungeons remained intact—the lair of many a smuggling gang and fugitive from justice.

It was towards the once imposing front entrance that Babs & Co. made their way. But, approaching the shattered archway they suddenly pulled up short.

A figure had appeared from the shadows—a figure that made them blink their eyes incredulously, and immediately sent their minds back to that strange foreign woman they had encountered on Pegg beach but a short while ago.

But this time the figure before them was that of a man—a huge giant of a fellow, dark skinned, black bearded, with fierce, curling moustachios. His feet and legs were encased in black leather top-boots. A long blue tunic hung down to his knees, drawn in round the waist by a vividly coloured silken cummerbund in which was thrust a cruel-looking, short curved knife. His hair, black and thick, hung to his shoulders. He looked what he was—a fierce warrior, whose bizarre costume proclaimed him a native of some Balkan country.

With eyes glaring, he strode down upon the girls, flung out his arms as if to bar their passage, and then, speaking not a word, pointed back to the mainland.

So fierce his demeanour that Babs & Co. gave back. As plainly as if he had spoken, they knew that he was telling them to return whence they had come. Then Clara, recovering herself, made a bold step forward.

"Here, you can't stop us—" she began angrily.

This time the man's eyes seemed to flash fire. Quick as lightning his hand flashed to the hilt of that wicked-looking knife at his waist. Still not a word or sound came from his lips, but his actions were only too ominously apparent.

There was no entry to the ruins while this warrior was there—a grim, silent sentinel!

"WELL, IF that isn't the giddy limit! Now what are we going to do?"

Clara Trevlyn was indignant. "We can't hope to force our way past that brute of a man!" said golden-haired Mabel Lynn.

But Barbara Redfern was very thoughtful, a look of uneasiness growing in her pretty blue eyes.

For some moments she stood silent, her shrewd brain crowded with thoughts—thoughts which alarmed her the more she considered them. Then:

"Oh, my hat!" There was a world of alarm in that exclamation. The others looked at her quickly. "What is it, Babs?" asked Mabs quietly.

"I—I don't know quite," Babs confessed; "but somehow I've got a feeling that Doris is a prisoner on this island."

"A prisoner!" It was a unanimous chorus from Clara, Mabs, and Marjorie.

"Yes," Babs paused. "Listen, girls! I've been thinking things over. That brute standing there by the ruins—where do you think he comes from?" Clara looked puzzled.

"Well, from somewhere in the Balkans, by the look of him."

"Yes; that's it," said Babs. "And that somewhere is—Turonion!"

"Turonion?" echoed Marjorie. "Isn't that where Doris went for her holiday this summer?"

Babs nodded grimly. "Exactly! And it was in Turonia that she bought the ring which she lost here yesterday."

The other three began to look interested now.

"And," went on Babs keenly, "we know that Doris came to this island to do—finding that shoe proves it. First that woman on the beach at Pegg warned us not to come here. She was foreign, too—very likely a Turonian, also. Why should she try to frighten us away from the island? Because," Babs continued, answering her own question, "she had some reason for not wanting us to come here."

Clara gave a whistle.

"My hat, Babs! I believe you're right!"

"I'm sure of it!" said Babs confidently. "And now we're barred from searching the ruins. Why should he stop us, unless there's something, or someone, down in the dungeons he doesn't wish us to see?"

"Hear, hear!" supported Clara, her eyes gleaming excitedly. "My hat! But how are we going to get into the ruins?"

"Well, that's easy," put in gentle Marjorie Hazeldene. "What about that other entrance we know of—the one in that cove between the rocks?"

"Good old Marjorie!" cried Babs, her cheeks beginning to flush with excitement now. "Come on, girls; let's go! But careful!" she warned.

"Try not to make any noise, in case anybody spots us."

She looked around cautiously. The sentry by the ruins was still eyeing them steadily. With an air of nonchalance the chums moved off; but no sooner had they disappeared behind an intervening ledge of rock, than they broke into a swift run.

In a few moments they had reached the beach again, were hurrying towards the cove, when a movement among the rocks ahead of them made the girls drop quickly to cover.

Then from those rocks emerged the figure of the fisherman whom they had seen furtively trailing the woman who had called herself Loya the Mystic.

He was still acting strangely, creeping stealthily from rock to rock as if afraid of being seen.

"Well, this beats me," whispered Mabs. "Where the dickens does he fit into the mystery?"

"And what's he doing now?" breathed Marjorie, her pale cheeks unusually flushed.

Babs gave a start. "My hat! He's making for that other entrance to the dungeons!" she hissed. "Now what's his little game?"

She was gazing across the stretch of sand that divided them from the fisherman, watching his every movement.

Then all at once her eye became attracted by something that glistened and glistened in the sun. She looked at it idly for a moment, then, impelled by curiosity, wriggled her way forward over the sand, still keeping to cover, however.

The glittering object now lay in the sand only ten yards away from her. She was just able to distinguish it, and then her heart gave a bound. She forgot caution, forgot the figure ahead of her in the excitement of that moment.

"Mabs! Clara!" she yelled. "It's Doris' ring!"

With loud whoops, Mabs, Marjorie, and Clara ran forward. Babs was on her feet, running towards that gleaming trinket.

But even as she reached it, stooped to pick it up, she was thrust violently aside with a jerk that almost robbed her of breath. She saw a blue-clad figure bending down; saw a garbled hand stretch out to grasp the ring. Even as she fell, she recognised the face of the fisherman, grizzled and weatherbeaten.

A stab of alarm shot through her. This man had the ring—Doris' ring. She struggled to her feet.

"Clara! Mabs!" she yelled. "He's taking the ring—"

"Coming!" shouted Clara. And as the fisherman straightened himself the three girls hurled themselves upon him.

Against their combined weight he staggered.

"You fools!" he panted. "Out of the way!"

"Give me that ring!" Babs shouted, now hurling herself at him. "It belongs to my sister!"

"You can't have it! Out of the way, I say!"

The fisherman lunged forward, flailing his arms. But Babs & Co. still hung on to him tenaciously, striving to pin his waving arms. He turned his head, glaring at the girls. But that proved his undoing. He did not notice the piece of rock protruding through the sand at his feet.

With a crash the toe of his stout boot caught against it; he hurtled forward, thudding to the sand, dragging the girls with him. Instinctively his hands flew out to save himself. The ring jumped from between his fingers and rolled forward to the feet of Marjorie Hazeldene.

"I've got it!" she cried jubilantly. "Come on, girls—quick!"

Breathlessly the other three scrambled to their feet.

"Beat it!" yelled Clara.

Beat it they did, leaving the fisherman still spread-eagled on the sand.

**B**UT UNBEKNOWN to Babs & Co., two pairs of glittering eyes had watched that struggle on the beach.

Now those same eyes watched the four Cliff House girls as they triumphantly ran along the soft sand, disappearing among the rocks.

From his place of concealment in a rocky cliff which rose up from the shore, a short but stockily built man straightened to his feet.

"The ring they have!" he hissed, in broken English. "Our ring that to us means so much! They must not escape! Hasten, Loya!"

The second figure that had been crouched behind that boulder also rose. It revealed itself as Loya the Mystic, her black eyes flashing hate, her dark face a mask of rage.

"It is those girls, Raoul! They did not heed my warning, and now they interfere!"



WITH a rush, the chums sprang upon the fisherman. "Give me that ring!" Babs panted. "It belongs to my sister!"

"They not interfere long!" snapped Raoul harshly. "But that ring we will have—at all costs, Loya!"

"At all costs, Raoul!" the woman echoed between gritted teeth.

Raoul darted forward, with Loya beside him. He drew from the pocket of his dark lounge suit a small silver whistle. He placed it between his lips and blew three short blasts upon it.

A few moments later there was the sound of running footsteps. The giant sentinel of the ruins joined the pair. Raoul barked a command in some foreign language. The warrior nodded. An ugly gleam came into his eyes. Like a panther he leaped forward, followed by Raoul and Loya.

And so it was that Babs & Co., pausing on the seashore to examine the ring and to discuss their next movements, whirled round in alarm as three figures rushed down upon them, the terrifying figure of that fierce-looking warrior in the lead.

"Run for it!" gasped Babs, in alarm.

But too late. There was a sharp, fierce struggle, with the girls hopelessly outmatched. In the grip of the three foreigners they were helpless prisoners.

"The ring!" hissed Loya. "Give us the ring, and you shall go free!"

Babs gave a violent start. A wave of excitement surged through her. First the fisherman wanted the ring. And now these people. What could it mean? What was the secret of that curiously shaped ring which Doris, her sister, had brought from far Turonia?

Defiantly Babs faced her captors.

"The ring," she flashed out, "is safely hidden. Until you tell me why you want it, the ring remains hidden!"

Raoul gave a savage exclamation.

"Enough!" he grated. "Do not argue with them, Loya. Be a dungeon with them. If they do not speak of their own free wills within an hour, then the ring from them we will force!"

He turned to the grim-looking warrior. Again he barked out something in his own tongue.

Babs & Co. were jerked forward, hauled off towards the ruined castle—prisoners in the hands of these mysterious foreigners.



In the Dungeon

"PUT them in here, Stefan!"

There was the sound of a door grating open. The flame from a smelly oil-lamp lit up a small stone chamber, cold and bare and musty.

The giant figure of the black-bearded Turonian appeared in the doorway of the dungeon. Each of his huge hands was clasped round the slender arms of two girls.

Barbara Redfern, Mabel Lynn, Clara Trevlyn, and Marjorie Hazeldene, struggle as they might, found them selves helpless in the muscular grip of the giant. Their arms seemed to be paralysed, so tremendous was Stefan's strength.

With a fierce grin he forced them into the dungeon; with a thrust of his arms sent them spinning forward against one of the stone walls.

Then Raoul, holding the smoky lamp, strutted into the cell, with Loya behind him.

"How you like this—eh?" he demanded harshly.

"You brute," cried Clara. "There'll be terrible trouble when this is discovered! You'll go to prison—"

The man laughed contemptuously.

"Hand me the ring," he replied, "and you shall be allowed to go. One hour later and I come down to hear your choice!"

He swung round and, following on Loya's heels, marched from the dungeon. Stefan, with a final hideous leer at the prisoners, backed quickly out.

The massive door, of thick oak and iron-barred, with a small grille set in its upper half, crashed shut. The Cliff House girls heard a heavy iron bar being dropped into its socket on the other side; a glimmer from the oil-lamp shone through the grille. Then it faded; was gone as footsteps retreated along the stone-flagged passage.

Darkness!

The chums huddled together by the door. They could not see each other in the inky darkness, but to be close was comforting and gave them courage.

Babs spoke.

"That ring," she said slowly. "I've got it hidden in my shoe. They've promised to release us if we hand over the ring. But why do they want it so badly? And there's the fisherman—he's after it, too. Obviously, the whole mystery hinges round this ring. But we still haven't found Doris—and that's what frightens me. The more I think about it, the more I'm convinced that she's disappeared because of the ring!"

"You're right there," murmured Mabs.

"And that she's a prisoner, the same as us, on the island," continued Babs. "But is she held prisoner by those foreigners, or by the fisherman? In other words, for Doris's sake, we've got to be careful what we do with the ring."

Silence again, during which Babs was thinking furiously, and then—

Something happened.

Without any warning a man's voice suddenly spoke—a gruff whisper, startlingly clear in that silent underground prison.

Marjorie Hazeldene gave a little shriek; Mabel Lynn jumped so violently that she knocked against Clara, standing stiffly rigid, and sent the Tomboy off her balance; Babs felt her heart give such a leap that it seemed to come up into her throat, stifling the cry that would have burst from between her lips.

"Anyone there?" came the whisper.

Babs tried to still the mad beating of her heart, tried to find voice.

"Y-yes. But who is it? Where are you—"

"S-sh! Not so loudly! Listen! Are all you four girls together?"

Still Babs could hardly credit the evidence of her own ears, but she had recognised the whispering voice now, and her amazement increased. It was the voice of the fisherman, and it was coming from just beside the startled girls. But where was the man? He couldn't be in the dungeon—Then she laughed shakily. Of course, he was standing in the passage on the other side of the door; he was speaking through that tiny grille. He must have crept along to their prison so silently that they had not even heard the slightest sound of his footsteps.

"Yes, we're all here," Babs whispered back. "But—but where are those foreigners? Who are you?" Her hopes suddenly rose; and excitedly she went on: "Have you come to release us?"

"S-sh! I have—but you must give me that ring first. You still have it. I saw you captured, and you refused to give it up. Give me the ring, and I'll get you away from here."

Babs did not reply immediately; she

heard an indignant exclamation from Clara.

"My giddy aunt! So that's his game! Don't give him the ring, Babs! We'll find some way out of this hole—"

"Don't be a fool!" hissed the fisherman from out of the darkness. "You are in deadly peril. You must have this ring at once while you are still safe. Give me that ring, and you can have my boat and get back to the mainland."

Babs felt a tug at her arm.

"Don't do it, Babs!" exclaimed Clara. "We're not frightened—"

The Form captain, however, had made up her mind now.

"Very well," she said softly, speaking to the unseen fisherman. "You shall have this ring on condition that you release us. I'll hand it to you when you keep your part of the bargain and see us safely to the boat."

There was a hissing breath from the other side of the door.

"Good!" grunted the man. "I accept your word. Just one other point. When you get back to the mainland, say nothing of what is happening on this island. That is most important. If you do—well, the consequences may be jeopardised. Now, get ready—and come as quietly as you can."

Babs felt a momentary qualm. She was securing the release of her chums. Thank goodness for that! But her sister—She would be leaving Doris on the island—although, to be sure, this man had been emphatic that she was in no immediate danger.

But Babs had decided. Already an idea had formed in that shrewd head of hers. For the sake of her chums she must make this move; and when they were free, she would be able to put her idea into operation for the rescue of Doris.

A light shined at the grille of the dungeon door now—the pale, suffused glow of an electric torch, the glass of which was covered with a piece of red material. The chums had a glimpse of the fisherman's face, grizzled and wrinkled. They heard a muffled sound as he removed the bar from the door; then it swung slowly back—and the way to freedom lay open.

With the fisherman leading, Babs & Co. tiptoed along the stone-flagged passage. The floor began to rise; fifty yards along this, and then a patch of light showed ahead.

Babs & Co. knew where they were. Scores of times had they explored the ruins of the castle on Belwin Island, and were familiar with every underground passage and vault. This would lead them out into that tiny cove for which they had been heading when Babs had found her sister's ring.

Now they were treading soft sand; the blue sky was above them, and the sea was gurgling round jagged rocks; the afternoon sunshine streamed down on the peaceful scene. Babs & Co., blinking in the bright glare, could hardly believe that less than ten minutes before they had been captives in a dark dungeon.

The fisherman pulled his peaked cap well down over his forehead. Babs studied him intently, but he averted his face.

A cautious glance round, and then, without a word, he strode along the yielding sand to the spot where Babs & Co. had found his boat, containing the lobster pots. Doris's shoe was still in one of the baskets, where she had replaced it.

He held the boat steady while the girls clambered in.

"I have kept my part of the bargain,"



he said gruffly then, looking at Babs. "Now, please hand me the ring."

Babs had been clutching a handkerchief in the palm of her right hand; she held it out to the fisherman.

"I wrapped it up in this," she said quietly. "Better take the handkerchief as well."

The fisherman hastily pressed the handkerchief, felt the ring contained, and placed it in a pocket; then he gave the boat a strong push.

"Thanks! And don't forget—straight back to the mainland, and say nothing. I'll see that you're not pursued."

The boat was riding the waves, drawing quickly away from the island, as Clara and Mabs pulled lustily. The mysterious fisherman ran back up the beach and dived into cover.

"Oh, you chump, Babs!" panted Clara. "You shouldn't have given him the ring! He's up to some fishy game of his own. I know he got us out of that beastly dungeon, but that wouldn't have mattered."

Babs actually smiled. "Chump yourself, Clara!" she retorted. "I didn't give him the ring; I gave him my own. Doris' ring is still hidden in my shoe."

"Eh?" Clara, gaping her astonishment, stopped rowing. Mabs and Marjorie were staring at their leader in amazement. "But—but—Oh, my hat! What's the giddy idea, Babs?"

The smile died from Babs' face, leaving it thoughtfully grim.

"A spot of trickery, I'm afraid," she confessed; "but justifiable, in the circumstances. As you say, Clara, that fisherman is up to some peculiar game of his own. I don't altogether trust him; that's why I gave him the 'wrong ring.' It's Doris I'm thinking of now; she's still a prisoner in the hands of those foreigners. That's why I kept her ring. To-night I'm going to do some bargaining myself. I'm going across to Belwin Island again, and I'm going to tell Loyla the Mystic that she can have the ring when she releases Doris."



The Face at the Window

**T**HOUGHTFULLY Barbara Redfern came out of Miss Primrose's study. It had been difficult telling the headmistress of Cliff House the situation saying just enough to satisfy her without going into details.

For Babs had had to remember the fisherman's warning.

"Say nothing," he had said, "or the consequences may be grave, and your sister's safety jeopardised."

Babs was now in a fever of impatience for the time to pass; was waiting desperately for night to come, when she had determined to return to Belwin Island and make that bargain with the two foreigners.

She reached her own study and went in. No one else was there. Afternoon lessons were about to commence, and Babs should have gone straight along to the classroom. But first she wanted to lock that precious ring, now in her blazer pocket, in the bureau. She mustn't lose that ring when the whole success of her daring enterprise that night depended on its security.

She had just placed the ring in its hiding-place, and was closing the bureau, when a sound at the door made her swing sharply round. And then her eyes narrowed.

Lydia Crossendale stood there.

"You're back, then?" asked the snob of the Fourth. "And without little sister. Perhaps you'll listen to my offer now?" she went on sneeringly.

Babs started. "Your offer?" she repeated wonderingly.

"Yes. That I'll tell you what's happened to your sister if you promise to get me a place in the hockey team on Saturday," Lydia explained.

Now Babs' hands clenched. Fury blazed into her eyes.

"Lydia! Then—then you weren't joking!" she cried. "You did know something about Doris, and you lied to Miss Charmant?"

Lydia Crossendale nodded.

"Yes. Wasn't I a naughty girl?" she mocked. But then her face hardened. "Now look here, Barbara Redfern, I want your answer. I'm not joking now. I can tell you where your sister's been taken. Let me tell you something. I happened to be coming back from a little bounds-breaking expedition last night when I saw— Well, get me a place in the team and I'll tell you."

She broke off, seeing the grim smile on Babs' face. In spite of her anger and contempt, the Form captain could see the humour in that situation. Now the position was very different. So Lydia did not know where she and her chums had been that morning. The snob still thought she could force Babs' hand.

"Lydia," said Babs, with contempt in her voice, "you're the most beastly little schemer I've met. You know Doris is in danger and yet you think only of your own selfish ends. Well, for your information, my answer is the same as before—the same as it will always be. No! Now get out!"

Lydia started back. Her eyes narrowed.

"You'll be sorry for this, Barbara Redfern!" she said thickly. "You can't think much of your sister if you're willing to act like this."

Babs did not reply to that taunt. With firm strides she crossed the room, flung open the door.

"Get out, Lydia Crossendale!" she said curtly. "This is the last time I'm telling you!"

And quailing before the steely glint in Babs' eyes Lydia, with a black scowl, went.

But her thoughts were venomous as she quitted the room. Never had she expected Barbara Redfern to turn down that offer. Not realising that Babs now knew more than she did about Doris' fate, she was amazed at Babs' seeming indifference.

A feeling of panic welled up within Lydia Crossendale as she made her way to the classroom. She had got to play in that hockey match against Whitechester on Saturday. Not because she wanted to play hockey. She loathed the game. But because she was being driven to it—driven by one of the girls in the bad set at Whitechester. That girl wanted Cliff House to lose the match, and by threatening to reveal one of Lydia's worst escapades, was forcing the snob of the Fourth to find some way of bringing that about.

Rather than face certain expulsion, Lydia had set her brains to work, had decided that her best move would be to get into the team, and so hinder them on that great day that they would be unable to win.

But now— Bitter were Lydia Crossendale's thoughts, desperate her mood. Somehow she had got to get into the team. Perhaps even yet an opportunity of forcing Babs' hand would come.

That opportunity came sooner than Lydia expected!

**"BABS!** It's no good arguing. We're coming with you!"

Clara Trevelyn said that very emphatically.

She said it in Study No. 4 to Barbara Redfern. There were two other girls in that cosy little apartment—Mabel Lynn and Marjorie Hazeldene.

It was nearly bed-time at Cliff House School; very soon the dormitory bell would clang. Which was why Tomboy Clara was so emphatic. She wanted to get the argument settled before they all had to troop upstairs and retire for the night.

Babs smiled faintly, and there was a fond look in her deep blue eyes.

"But, Clara," she protested, "I don't want to drag you all into danger. And there's every possibility that it will be dangerous. Oh, you're all bricks for offering to come across to Belwin Island with me to-night, but—but—"

Clara looked fierce.

"It's no good, Babs! You won't be able to stop us. We're going to help you look for Doris, and as to the danger—fiddlesticks!"

"Likewise rabbits!" exclaimed golden-haired Mabs indignantly.

"We're all coming with you, Babs, dear!" quietly supported Marjorie.

Babs knew now that all her arguments would be in vain. And really she was glad. Her heart warmed towards these three chums of hers who were so willing to help her.

"Very well," she agreed. "We all go. Now let's discuss the programme. I vote we start out at about half-past ten—everybody will be asleep then. We creep down here, collect the ring—"

Eagerly Babs & Co. continued to discuss their plans for the expedition that night. They were still talking when dormitory bell rang at last.

Upstairs to the dormitory they went with the rest of the Form, climbed into bed. But not to sleep. At half-past ten would begin the desperate adventure. With fast-beating hearts, thrilling at the prospect, they settled down, wide awake, and waited.

**BOOM!** One stroke chimed out from the old school clock.

Half-past ten. Four figures rose up in the darkness and quickly, quietly dressed. Leaving the sleeping dormitory, they crept out, tiptoed downstairs and entered Study No. 4 in the Fourth Form passage.

Babs & Co. were ready for their daring enterprise on Belwin Island.

"The ring—and then we slip out through the window across to the cycloshed," whispered Babs.

She crossed to the bureau. Mabs and Marjorie waited, while Clara moved to the window, intending to open it. But even as Clara reached it—

"Tap, tap, tap!"

"What's that?"

Clara drew back with a start. Babs, fumbling in the bureau, rushed across to her side.

Tap, tap, tap!

The sound was coming from the window. A dark shape moved outside. Babs & Co., watching in fascinated alarm, were first aware of a pair of glittering eyes that glared at them balefully. Then a face was pressed close to the pane.

Babs gulped.

"Loyla the Mystic!"

Again the woman rapped on the

window. Babs, recovering with an effort, flung open the window.

Like some black-hooded creature of the night, Loya the Mystic leaped over the sill.

"Listen, foolish ones!" she hissed. "You escaped from the island this afternoon, but you have not escaped from the power of Loya the Mystic. Your sister, Barbara Redfern, is my prisoner on Belwin Island. If you value her life, listen well. You have the ring. Give it to me or I swear that never again will you see your sister!"

Babs tried to still the beating of her heart, forced herself to speak calmly.

"I knew that my sister was your prisoner," she replied. "I was coming across to see you to-night—to offer you the ring in exchange for Doris' freedom. Will you give me that promise?"

"Yes. But the ring?"

Without another word, Babs went back to the bureau. Now she switched on a torch. With fingers that trembled she drew open the little drawer in which she had secreted the ring.

She flashed the beam of that torch into that drawer. There a strangled cry burst from between lips that had gone dry and pallid.

For the drawer was empty. The ring that could secure her sister's freedom was gone!

Clara took an angry step forward.

"Babs, what's she mean—"

"I mean," said Lydia, "that Barbara Redfern can have the ring when I'm promised a place in the hockey team for Saturday's match against Whitechester!"

Clara gasped. Not at first was she able to grasp the significance of that ultimatum. But Babs, in a white-hot fury, now flung herself at the snob of the Fourth.

"You scheming cat!" she cried, loathing in her voice. "You must know what the ring means to me—to Doris!"

Lydia winced. Unscrupulous as she was, even Lydia knew that she was overstepping the mark. But the snob was desperate. The threat of exposure, and certain expulsion from Cliff House, drove her to do this thing.

"Call me what you like, Barbara, but I mean what I say." She turned to Clara. "You're sports captain. You want to save Doris. Then give me a place in the hockey team—promise you won't go back on your word—and Barbara shall have the ring."

Clara's eyes were blazing. Words of fury trembled on her lips.

Clara took her duties as junior sports captain very seriously indeed. She thought only of the team, of the junior eleven's reputation. As for Lydia—she couldn't even play.

She stood irresolute—a fierce battle going on in her mind. To play Lydia was preposterous! What would the school think? And yet—there was Doris! What was hockey compared with Doris' safety?

Clara choked. Her reply came impulsively. She didn't even know herself what she was going to say until the words poured from her lips.

"You win, Lydia Crossendale! You play, you eat!"

"Babs—burst out Babs. "Babs! I've got to do it! You made a sacrifice for us this afternoon when you got us away from the island, and now— Lydia plays!" Clara exclaimed. "Three of us here arc on the sports committee, and we'll be in the majority. But—oh, heavens, Lydia in the team!"

The Tomboy shuddered. What it had cost her to come to that decision only she knew. She felt Babs squeeze her arm in gratitude.

"Now, Lydia," blazed out Clara, "You've got our promise! Give us the ring! Where is it?"

Triumphantly Lydia Crossendale dived a hand into the pocket of her dressing-gown. She tossed the ring to Babs—and then ran from the room as if in terror of her life.

Babs caught the ring.

A minute later Babs & Co. were racing from the school, en route for Belwin Island.

PEGG was dark and deserted.

Cold and windy the beach—with breakers roaring sullenly as they crashed down upon the shingly beach in a smother of spume and foam.

And somewhere out there, in that blanket of blackness—not visible from the shore—Belwin Island.

Babs & Co., propping their bicycles against the promenade railings, raced down the beach.

"Here's a boat!" exclaimed Babs. "Old Sam won't mind us taking one, and we'll pay him to-morrow!"

It was Marjorie, helping her chums to run the craft down to the water's edge, who, happening to look over her shoulder, saw a dark, shadowy figure emerge swiftly from behind the cover of old Sam's boat-hut.

"Somebody coming, Babs!" she breathed, with a nervous little catch in her throat.

"Who is it?" The Form captain swung round in alarm. She, too, saw the figure now. A man was running towards them. No time to launch the boat before the newcomer had leapt among the girls.

Babs groaned as she recognised his grizzled features in the gloom.

"Oh, my hat! The fisherman!"

The fisherman it was—he whom she had tricked that afternoon on Belwin Island, and whose queer behaviour had so mystified the Cliff House girls.

He caught hold of Babs' arm fiercely. His face was grim, and his eyes steely.

"Here, not so fast, young lady!" he growled. "Tricked me nicely, didn't you, with the wrong ring!"

"It can't be of more importance to you than it is to me!" Babs retorted desperately. "I tricked you because that ring will save the life of my sister. We're taking it across to Belwin Island now. I'm going to give it to those foreigners—"

There was a hoarse gasp from the fisherman. His grip tightened on Babs' arm until she winced.

"You mustn't do that! You mustn't give them the ring! You don't know what you're doing—what it will mean! Those foreigners— His voice hardened, took on a rasping note as he became more and more agitated. "I won't let you go! You're not crossing to the island—"

Angrily Babs shook her arm free of his detaining grip. Her own eyes flashed with a reckless determination. Precious minutes were being wasted, and she was in no mood to argue with anyone who threatened to interfere with her plans.

"Grab him, girls!" she cried.

And she leapt at the fisherman. Mabs, Clara, and Marjorie backed her up on the instant. With excited shouts they sprang upon the man, and for the second time that day he found himself struggling in the grip of these four girls.

"There'll be some rope in the boat!" panted Babs. "Grab it, Marjorie, and we'll tie him up!"

The fisherman suddenly stopped struggling. A grim laugh burst from his lips.

"All right, kids, I give in!"

His voice—it had changed! No longer was it the gruff, growling voice of a middle-aged fisherman, but young and boyish.

Clara, both her hands holding his arms in chancery, released it as suddenly as if it had become red-hot.

Babs and Mabs were staring at him with goggling eyes.

"My giddy aunt!" gasped Clara, in stupefied wonder. "It's—"

Again that grim, boyish laugh.

Yes, Clara, you young chump, it's me!"

Babs & Co. became speechless for the moment. Wide-eyed they stared at the fisherman.

For now they knew him to be none other than Jack Trevlyn, Clara's older brother!



Isle of Grim Adventure

JACK TREVLYN, disguised as a fisherman! Bewildered and incredulous, stunned by the shock of this amazing discovery, Babs & Co. continued to stare at him.



On the Beach by Night

**F**RANTICALLY Babs searched through the bureau.

Her mind in a tumult, a ghastly fear clutching her, she flung papers wildly aside, tore open the other drawers. But in vain. The ring had indeed vanished.

"It's gone—it's gone!" she cried tragically. "The ring is not here! Somebody must have taken it—stolen it!"

From Loya the Mystic, still peering in through the open window, came a hissing snarl.

"Then you must find the ring!" she breathed sibilantly. "I give you until dawn to find it and bring it to me on Belwin Island. If you fail—if the ring is not in my hands by then—your sister will suffer, Barbara Redfern. Mark my words well. Till dawn—or your sister will vanish, even as you say the ring has vanished, never to be seen again!"

Next moment Loya the Mystic had gone. Her hooded shape had disappeared into the blackness of the night.

Babs, numb with horror, stood gazing, wild-eyed, at her chums. No one spoke. They were all thinking of that woman's last words, of her terrible threat.

Then, abruptly that poignant silence was broken by a sound from the direction of the door. It had opened softly, and, framed on the threshold was—

Lydia Crossendale!

"I happened to overhear your conversation with someone just now," she said coolly. "I believe you have lost a certain ring. Perhaps I can help you."

Understanding came to Babs in a flash. With a passionate cry she rushed across to the girl who was taunting her.

"You've got it! You've stolen the ring from my bureau!"

"Oh, I wouldn't say that, Barbara Redfern!" retorted Lydia, eyeing the Form captain warily. "But I admit I know where that ring is—and you shall have it on the same condition that I mentioned before. Remember it!"

So it was Jack Trevlyn, so perfectly disguised that even his own sister had not recognised him, whom they had seen trailing the mysterious Loya when first they had gone to Belwin Island.

It was Jack who had rescued them from that dungeon. But why was he so desperately anxious to secure possession of Doris' ring? What was he doing here, obviously on the track of those foreigners who had kidnapped Doris? "My giddy aunt!" gasped Clara

"But Doris!" broke in Babs frantically. "We've got to think of her, too. She's still a prisoner on the island. That foreign woman has agreed to release her once I hand over the ring."

"I know!" Jack Trevlyn's voice was worried. "You must think I've been behaving like a brute, but what was I to do? In your efforts to rescue Doris—poor little kid—you've been seriously interfering with my own plans for rounding up Raoul and Loya and

like spoiling everything again, I simply had to. So here we are—and in the very dickens of a fix.

"I think they've got wise to who I am," he added, "at least, they know I'm after them. Looks as if they're relying on that threat to get the ring from you, and even if they don't get it, they intend clearing out before the game is up."

"And take Doris with them?" gasped Babs.

"I wouldn't say that. They may be bluffing," Jack replied uneasily. "But we daren't take the risk. Look here, girls, we've got to work quickly. I've got a plan to rescue Doris. I'll phone through to the police at Courtfield and tell the Flying Squad to rush down here at full speed. Then the five of us go across to Belwin Island. You girls see the Loya woman and give her the



feebly at last. "I must be dreaming! Pinch me, somebody! My own brother and—and—Jack, say something or I shall think I'm going crackers!"

Jack Trevlyn was regarding the dumbfounded girls with a little smile twitching round his lips, but there could be no mistaking his serious demeanour.

"You want to know what I'm doing here, eh?" he asked. "Well, it's a queer story, and I must admit I don't know the full details myself yet. But it's all the outcome of a vendetta—a feud between two branches of a very powerful family in Turonia. Raoul Lubesk and that woman Loya are the bad eggs of the family, and they're members of some Turonian secret society which has been causing trouble. I was given the job of tracking them down."

"I followed them here from Turonia," Jack Trevlyn continued, "and knew that they were searching for a certain thing. But I never dreamed then that that ring was in the possession of"—he glanced at Babs—"your sister."

"Doris bought it in Turonia during the hols. from a little antique shop," Babs explained. "But she only gave about ten shillings for it. What's the mystery about it—?"

"That's what I've got to find out—and why I was so anxious to get the ring, Babs," Clara's brother said. "Apparently it's a very treasured family heirloom, and for some reason Raoul and Loya want to get possession of the ring and take it back to Turonia with them. At all costs, we've got to prevent that. They must never get the ring."

**THERE was a frantic scramble to get aboard the boat; Babs and Doris were bundled in, helpless captives; and then a hoarse command was followed by the throb of an engine.**

getting the ring. Incidentally, you were running your own heads into danger at the same time, for they're desperate people. That's why I wanted to get you back to the mainland this afternoon, why I was so insistent about your not coming back. Thinking I'd got the ring I was going to rescue Doris, then call in the assistance of the police and round up that little gang. But—"

He smiled ruefully.

"You'd tricked me with another ring and, as I say, that upset my plans completely."

"Oh, Jack, I'm dreadfully sorry!" said Babs unhappily. "But—but I was thinking of Doris—"

"Of course you were," Trevlyn nodded understandingly. "Well, anyway, I knew you had the ring, but I didn't know what you were going to do with it—and in any case I couldn't come to Cliff House after you, because that bloke Stefan spotted me and I had to hide."

"I managed to get away about an hour ago, and arrived here in time to see Raoul waiting for Loya with a motor-boat. I overheard her say that she'd been to see you and that she'd given you until dawn to hand over the ring. So I waited for you."

"I didn't want to reveal myself even then, but—well, you kids were proving a little too much for me, and you looked

ring when Doris is released—don't get it to her, Babs, until your sister is safe and sound with you."

"And you—what do you do, Jack?" asked Babs, her voice thrilled.

There was a reckless grin on Jack's face.

"Once they get the ring they'll scoot off in a fast patrol boat which I know is lying in one of the coves. But they'll be unlucky. I'm going to cut that boat away from its moorings. Then, as soon as I see that Doris and you others are safely away, I'll flash a prearranged torch signal to the police, who'll be cruising just off the island in a motor-boat. Down they'll swoop—and that'll be the finish of the gang's activities!"

And that was the plan of action they decided upon.

**THREE** quarters of an hour later the keel of a rowing-boat scrunched into the soft sand of a tiny cove on Belwin Island.

Five figures leapt out of the boat, one after the other. First Jack Trevlyn, then Babs, followed by Clara, and Mabs, and Marjorie.

"This is where we separate, kids," said Jack. "Got the ring, Babs? Right, you know what to do. Once you've got Doris get away as quickly as you can."

Five seconds later they separated—Babs & Co. to go to the ruins where they knew they would find Loya the Mystic; Jack making his way along the beach.

Hearts beating with almost painful rapidity, Babs & Co. scrambled up the rocks, Babs leading the way and shining her torch. Ahead of them they saw the ruins. A shadow moved, then a yellow glow appeared among those

topping walls. Loya the Mystic, holding a lantern in one hand, stepped into view, with Raoul Lubesk beside her.

"Ah, you have come!" hissed Loya. "And you have brought the ring, yes?" "Yes we have brought the ring," replied Barbara steadily. "But you promised that my sister would be released. Not until then will I hand you the ring."

Loya's green eyes were alight with triumph. She laughed shrilly.

"It is well. Loya will keep her promise, never fear. But should you try any trickery—" The voice became harsh and ugly. "Then will you regret it?" Raoul, bring up our young prisoner!"

The man Raoul disappeared down the crumbling stone steps which led to the dungeons and vaults of the ruined castle. Soon he emerged again, a short, slim figure with him. The figure of a girl in a Cliff House blazer.

"Och!" shouted Babs huskily. "Or, Babs—Babs!" And Doris Redfern, tearing herself free of the man's grasp, rushed across to her sister, burying her face against Babs' coat. "See! I have kept my word!" hissed Loya the Mystic. "Now—the ring!" "Yes, yes! The ring we will have!" snarled Raoul.

Without a word, Babs disengaged one hand and passed the ring to Loya. Gloatingly she was gazing at it, while Babs & Co. gently drew Doris away, leading her back to the cove in which they had left their boat.

But only two yards had they gone when—

Babs & Co. knew that Jack's carefully laid plans had gone wrong!

In a lull of the whistling wind they heard a thud and a groan. They saw two white flashes come from the beach a little distance below them. Two flashes of a torch—the prearranged signal to the lurking police!

Another agonised groan came to their ears—and then on to the scene burst the giant Stefan. Straight up to Raoul he ran, making signs with his fingers in the dumb language.

Raoul's eyes blazed hate; his swarthy face went sallow with fear.

"Tricked we have been!" he grated in his broken English. "The British police—they come. But we have the ring. To the boat, Loya!" Then abruptly he began speaking in his native tongue.

Babs & Co., startled and horrified by this unexpected crisis, began to run, supporting Doris as best they could. But in a few frantic strides Stefan was upon them. His huge hands reached out—and Babs and Doris were almost whirled off their feet.

The two prisoners kicked and struggled, but in vain. Babs had a horrid glimpse of Jack Trevlyn lying unconscious on the sand, where he had been struck down by Stefan.

The boat was still there. Before he could cast it loose, Jack had been felled by his foe. From out to sea there came a loud roar of a powerful motor-boat engine. The white beam of a searchlight began raking the rocks, and Babs had a brief glimpse of uniformed figures standing up in a boat which was surging towards the island.

But not at first did that searchlight fall on the fleeing foreigners. Loya and Raoul sprang into their long, lean craft. The engine started and spluttered.

Stefan scrambled aboard, dragging Babs and Doris with him. He flung them to the floor of the motor-boat, then at a command from Raoul sprang to take the wheel.

Away shot the boat, seeming to leap over the tumbling sea.

Babs, half dazed by the impact of her head striking the floorboards as she was thrown in by Stefan, struggled to her knees. She groaned as she saw what was happening—saw the pursuing boat dropping farther and farther behind.

The smell of petrol was in Babs' nostrils. Frantically, she was thinking of a way to outwit these rascals before it was too late. Her gaze fell on a round metal thing which bulged near the open engine hatch—the petrol tank.

Babs started—and then her blue eyes gleamed with the light of recklessness. A daring idea flashed into her brain. With trembling fingers she fumbled

## ● NEXT WEEK:

The first of a grand new Cliff House School series by Hilda Richards

featuring  
**ROSA RODWORTH**  
and entitled:—



in the pocket of her coat—found what she sought. A tiny penknife.

Out it came and she opened the blade. Again and again she jabbed it into the petrol tank, low down.

On roared the motor-boat, with the police craft still ploughing in pursuit, although dropping hopelessly behind.

But now there was a snarl of rage from Raoul. The engine had begun to splutter, and the Turonian boat was losing speed. He sprang to the engine hatch, glaring down at it savagely. Not at first did he see the gashed petrol tank, empty of spirit now.

The engine stopped altogether; the boat, moving on by its own impetus now, was slowing down perceptibly. Behind, the roar of the pursuing craft sounded louder and nearer.

A torrent of words in the Turonian tongue poured from Raoul's lips. He had seen the punctured tank.

Eyes blazing with a terrible fury, he was springing towards Babs when—

A deafening, shattering roar. Crazy the boat rocked; there was a harsh grating sound as the police craft shot alongside. Babs opened her eyes and saw uniformed figures springing recklessly aboard. A shout of baffled rage from Raoul; a scream from Loya; Stefan fighting madly. But finally he went down, and then—

Babs fainted, overpowered by the fumes of the petrol which she had emptied from the tank and which swirled in the bottom of the boat!

IN the early hours of that morning, just when the light of dawn was glowing in the eastern sky, Barbara

Redfern and her sister Doris returned to Cliff House School.

With them were Clara Trevlyn, Mabel Lynn and Marjorie Hazeldene who, nearly frantic with anxiety, had been picked up from Belwin Island.

They had found Jack Trevlyn, now in Friaradale Cottage Hospital, where he would make a speedy recovery. They had watched Babs and Doris being whirled away in the motor-boat by the Turonians. Then over an hour later the return to the island of the police boat, with Babs and Doris safe, and Inspector Winter loud with praise for Babs, by whose efforts alone the Turonians had been captured.

Cliff House was thrilled when the full story became known. Doris, fully recovered after a long sleep, recounted her adventures to her awed Form-fellows.

She had received a note on the evening she had disappeared, purporting to come from a friend of hers, asking her to be outside the school gates that night at eleven o'clock.

Wonderingly, Doris had obeyed, and so fallen into the clutches of Loya the Mystic and Raoul Lubesk who, knowing Doris had the ring they so much desired, had attempted to get it from her. But, on Doris' telling them that she had lost it on Belwin Island, they had first forced her to write that note to Babs, saying that she had run away, and then taken her, a prisoner, to the island.

Then they had made her search for the ring, thinking she would know whereabouts she had lost it. But even Doris had been unable to find it, and so they had intended keeping her a prisoner in a cave until such time as they did find it and could flee from the island.

What the import of the snake-ring was Doris even now had no idea. But that the school learned later from the newspapers, when the case of Loya and Raoul was given prominence and they were extradited to their own country. For the head of the snake uncrowded, and in it was found a tiny tube of paper.

That paper was charted the whereabouts of a hoard of money which had been hidden centuries ago by the then ruling head of that powerful family on whose behalf Jack had been working. Raoul and Loya had hoped to discover that money, intending to keep some of it themselves and give the remainder to the secret society of which they were members. Then would that family feud have blazed out once again, causing blood and suffering.

But happily, first through the efforts of Jack Trevlyn, and then those of Babs & Co., that never came about.

And as for the scheming Lydia, who, knowing Doris had been kidnapped but had kept her knowledge quiet, hoping to serve her own selfish ends—her scheme was nipped in the bud, too!

For Babs & Co. were relieved of their promise to play Lydia in the Junior Hockey Eleven against Whitechester.

And that was the fact that Lydia was rated for a month by an irate Miss Primrose who found her breaking bounds!

Gated, Lydia could not play. Cliff House won the match handsomely.

Lydia Crossendale waited on tenterhooks after that, fearing denunciation. But fortunately for the schemer it never came about. No doubt the Whitechester girl hesitated to carry her threat so far, perhaps fearing retaliation from Lydia. But Lydia, by that time, had been so well frightened that it tamed her for quite a while.

THE END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

## Read About the Morcove Castaways in This Powerful Serial of Desert Island Adventure



# Morcove Marooned!

By MARJORIE  
STANTON

### FOR NEW READERS.

**BETTY BARTON & Co.**, of Morcove School, together with members of Grangemoor, are on their way home from Africa by air-liner, when they have to make a forced landing on a tiny island. With them is a mysterious girl named

**MURIEL**, who has jumped by parachute from another plane. She tells Betty & Co. that she was escaping from people who had kidnapped her. The leader of the kidnapers is a man named

**DULIF KHAN**, an Indian ruler and tyrant. Later, his yacht is seen approaching the island. The chums realise he is coming to recapture Muriel!

(Now read on.)

### "Fort Morcove"

"**S**AY, Betty—just look! Dave was right. There are two boats coming away from the yacht now!"

"And a lot of men in each of them!" That was Betty Barton's quick rejoinder to Polly Linton's excited cry. Both girls looked out to sea, from the island's beach, for only a moment longer. Then they resumed their share of the general activity.

Once again it was a case of no time to waste.

That Khan's yacht was going to land those two boatloads of men upon the island, for the purpose of taking a fresh step in connection with the girl Muriel, there was not the slightest doubt.

But, critical though the outlook was, Betty and her present companions had not lost their heads.

One heartening thought was in the minds of all. By a most fateful chance, for which they could never be too thankful, they and their fellow-castaways were no longer defenceless. Their menfolk and the boys could now be supplied with some of Khan's own weapons!

Already the motor-boat, captured so cleverly by Betty, Polly, and Jack Linton within the last hour or so, had been hauled up the shingle, quite clear of the surf.

The oblong wooden case containing rifles, had been lifted out by Jack and Dave Cardew, whilst a couple of the

girls offloaded the smaller boxes that were labelled "ammunition."

A locker in the motor-boat now supplied useful implements for getting the cases open. Hammer, a cold chisel, a hatchet, and strong pliers—with these were several of the juniors able to set to work.

Betty and Polly, between them, grappled with one of the strong ammunition boxes; Pam Willoughby and Judy Cardew were tackling another, whilst the two boys dealt with the stout case of rifles.

But although suitable tools were available, there were not enough to go round. Moments came when one pair of girls or another would be kept waiting, and then there would be an anxious looking out over the rough waters again, and an exchange of comment.

"I don't see how they can land just here, Polly!" Betty exclaimed, as she and her best chum were kept waiting for the chisel. "We know how we were very nearly capsized just now, and the sea is running worse than ever every moment. The wind is rising all the time."

"No; they'll surely make for the other side of the island," Polly muttered, "and so much the better for us! Hi! Done with that chisel yet?"

"Just one sec!" Pam called back, above the hurly-burly of wind and tide, to which was added the rapid hammering to get nailed slats of wood prised away.

Cree-ack! came a sudden loud rending noise, and Dave could be seen tugging furiously at a split bit of dovetailed wood comprising part of the rifle-case.

He wrenched it right away, and then, knowing, Jack claved at some layers of packing between the rifles. Another moment, and he gave one of his jovial shouts, standing up with a brand-new rifle.

Then the much-needed chisel came to Betty and Polly. They had the hammer as well, and some brisk work resulted in their box being splintered open only a half-minute after Pam and Judy's.

And now, if those two boats from the hove-to yacht had been making for this part of the shore, it would have been imperative for Mrs. Willoughby and the girls to be prepared to aid the menfolk in the resistance. The situation was desperate enough to compel a firing to scare off those landing-parties from this part of the coast.

But the boats, by this time only half a mile out, were already turned to work round the island in search of less dangerous surf. The girls were standing to watch, when Mrs. Willoughby calmly called a warning:

"Jack is going to fire just one shot into the air—to recall all our friends who are still away from camp."

Bang! Jack let-off the rifle with great enjoyment, and, of course, skittish spirits like Polly and Naomer Nakara had to give a big cheer.

"Bekas, stuff to give zem!" shrilled the dusky imp, doing a little caper. "Nothing like letting those men in the boats know—we are not so helpless, after all, good job!"

"But I doubt if they heard," chuckled Betty. "They're getting a dusting out there."

"Yes, wather," Paula Creel beamed. "Bai Jove, great relief that they are heving to keep away from heah!"

"And if they all become seasick," Polly grinned, "better still!"

"We're all right, anyway, chaps!" cried Jack as if he had only Grangemoor chums round him. "We'll be all together again before there's been time for those guys to land and show themselves here."

Then, with his usual fondness for teasing "Morcove" as being "only girls," he added:

"Eight men—MEN!—we must er. Why, it's a battalion! Mr. Willoughby, Mr. Minden, Mr. Somerfeld—and five

Grangemoor toughs! Of course"—proudly nursing his rifle—"you girls would never have been any use with a gun!"

"Oh, wouldn't we!" his sister sauced back.

"Anyway, Jack, you might except Muriel!" Betty laughed, turning to draw that victim of the great plot into the talk. "I darsay you've shot with a rifle many a time, Muriel?"

"Pretty often," was the smiled response. "At home in Kenya one had to keep one's hand in with a gun."

"Kenya?" several of the Morcove girls echoed. "So that is where you were—kidnapped?"

She nodded.

"Yes; my parents have a bungalow and a lot of land in Kenya. Dad and mother settled there when they left India a couple of years ago. They have a big estate, which they are farming."

"Lonely?"

"Oh, very!" Betty was answered. "But we all three loved the life. Dad has been doing well, too. Only the other day he was speaking hopefully of the prospects; and then—this happened to me!"

"You'll get back safe and sound—don't worry," Betty said very tenderly. "But our saving you from this Khan brute, as we mean to do—it won't make him any the less deserving of being stuck in prison."

Muriel nodded, and this might have become a moment for her friends-in-need to be told at least a little more of her strange story; but now two of the small search-parties were suddenly upon the scene.

It was to transpire that they had been working back to the makeshift camp, when the sound of a rifle-shot had caused them to come on in great haste.

As "Morcove & Co." had not possessed a single firearm when the organised search for Muriel was started, it had been an alarming thing to hear a gun being fired.

But Muriel, for whom these others had been vainly searching, was here to greet them. Relief on this account alone was tremendous.

As for all that had happened to enable the recalling shot to be fired just now—Mr. Willoughby's was not the only gratified smile over the great "cup" it meant, for Betty, Polly, and Jack to have done what they had.

Then the remainder of those who had been away upon the search came drifting back, in their twos and threes, to be told "the latest."

A very happy telling it had to be, for by now it was reckoned that those boat-loads of Khan's men were almost to land, on the other side of the island, and so there was need for fresh activity.

The camp, such as it was, had to be put in a state of defence.

All three men were expecting Khan's crew to turn up to demand the handing-over of Muriel.

Any such demand, was, of course, going to be refused. So it seemed just as well for this expected parley to take place with Morcove & Co. on the inner side of a thrown-up barrier, and Khan's men on the outside.

Jack and his pals were all to be armed, like the men, when the thrilling moment should come. And there was a quite cheerful belief that the unwelcome visitors would be easily halted at a safe distance, from the camp, by an unexpected display of levelled rifles.

But, "camp" was no longer the word Betty & Co. were using in regard to this patch of beach where they had spent their first night on the island. It had become a "Morcove position."

Like an entrenched position, at any

rate, the place soon began to look. The girls—Muriel included—worked hard and fast along with the Grangemoor boys and the men, casting up protective banks of shingle. The task was as simple as it was urgent; but it was no light one.

Lacking spades, there had to be resort to makeshift means of shovelling the sand and shingle. Slat of wood from the gun and ammunition cases came in useful, creating great fun on account of their faint resemblance to "seaside spades."

Meantime, the stormy day was growing darker than ever. At any moment rain might sheet down from clouds that were driving very low before the raging wind.

The surf roared, and behind the beach gale-tortured palms sent out a rattling sound, with a metallic note in it—"as if their leaves were made of tin!" as Bunny Trevor put it.

Murkier still was the view off shore. Khan's grand yacht could only just be seen—like some phantom vessel, ghostly white against the slate-coloured background which sea and sky combined to make, and as if it were the climax to this growing mood of ominous tension—a moment later came the warning cry.

Khan's men had been sighted.

### "The Tiger's Eye!"

**L**INED behind the protective bank of shingle which they themselves had so hastily thrown up, Betty & Co. and the boys looked over the top of it, and saw!

Nearly a score of men there were, floundering this way along the beach.

They had come into view when they rounded a bend that was only a few hundred yards from "Fort Morcove."

A dark-skinned lot they looked, and although most seafaring men acquire well-tanned faces, several of the juniors said at once, with conviction:

"From India!"

"And who is the guy walking a bit in front of the rest?" Polly excitedly wondered aloud. "He is wearing a turban, but the others—"

"There are lots of Indians who don't have to wear turbans," Muriel broke out, standing between Betty and Polly. "That man in front, though—he may be Khan himself."

"What! I say!" several of the Morcove girls were exclaiming, when there came a counselling word from Mr. Willoughby.

He, with Mr. Minden and Airman Somerfield, had come across to take their stand together, close behind the ban.

Each had a rifle.

"Down you girls, although I don't suppose there's going to be any ugly business at this stage. Just a first parley, and that's why Khan himself has come ashore."

"It is Khan then, dad?" Pam spoke up to him, now that she and the other girls had gone upon their knees in the shallow trench on this side of the wall.

"Yes! I remember him so well—and there's that huge jewel he always wears in his turban; the Tiger's Eye, as it's called."

No sooner had Mr. Willoughby said this, very calmly, than she sent a halting cry over the top of the parapet.

"No farther with your men, Khan! If you care to come on alone, we don't mind."

Muriel, noticing that the girls with whom she sheltered were looking surprised at Pam's father having spoken in English, whispered quickly:

"The man went to an English university."

Betty and others nodded, but not one of them spoke. Ears were being strained to catch any answer Khan might be making. Instead of his voice, however, the huddled-down juniors picked up, at last, only his clashing steps as he came close to the parapet—alone.

They saw Mr. Willoughby's stern-set face, as he stood on this side of the bank, with the two other men and the boys "in support," as it were.

"Ah, Khan, and now you recognise me?" Pam's father next moment smiled. "But this is not the time for recalling dealings we had with each other out in India. You wish to say—?"

"Only one thing, Willoughby Sahib," Khan's smooth voice was heard, quite clearly by the girls. "I will avoid much unpleasantness if there can be a simple understanding between us. There appear to be great numbers of you—in a fix, yes? No food, and this island off all shipping routes! The weather, too—bad!"

"Don't worry about us, Khan—"

"But my dear Willoughby Sahib!"

"Never mind that. There's a bargain you want to make with us, isn't that it? In return for our handing over the poor girl whom you caused to be snatched from her parents, you will do something to relieve our distress? Well, Khan—"

"More than that, my dear Willoughby Sahib." So the mock-polite manner was persisted in. "I can promise to end all the distress as quickly as the weather will permit. I wireless from my yacht—an SOS, giving your position. Then, at once there will be a boat sent to rescue you all."

"No, thanks, Khan." And "No!" shouted Morcove and Grangemoor together. They felt they must do that.

Instantly, Khan must have taken a climbing step or two, on his side of the parapet, for the girls saw his head and shoulders as he leaned over to look down upon them.

A more wicked face they had never seen. He must have been very handsome as a young man. In middle age, his every feature had become marred and coarsened by the raging tempest into which he so often flew. In his own remote province, in India, he lived the life of a tyrant.

At first his crafty smile was bestowed upon all the girls; then he smiled only upon Muriel.

Fixedly he looked at her, as a snake might regard its intended prey, before striking.

And the great jewel in Khan's turban, gleaming brilliantly even in this poor light, seemed to Betty and others like a third eye, fixed upon Muriel. The "Tiger's Eye"—and Khan himself a human tiger!

"Ah!" he said, in a whinnying voice, "so there you are! Yes, I recognise you also!"

Mr. Willoughby sharply interposed.

"Khan, you will please address any further remarks to me! Not that there can be any use in your hanging about, to try to bargain. The girl will not be given up."

"You think not?"

Pam's father laughed then.

"You see, Khan, I am not the only one to think so! You heard those youngsters just now. They'll never want to obtain safety for themselves on such terms as you have offered."

"Never—never!"

Once again the juniors were letting the rascal have their answer. They

were all upon their feet suddenly, treating him to looks as scornful as that united cry of theirs had been.

For a few moments it was uproar, the juniors demonstrating louder than ever each time he tried to speak to them. Not until he gave up the attempt and turned his small, close-set eyes upon Mr. Willoughby again, did the spirited derision cease.

"Insults, Willoughby Sahib," he said, in a low fierce tone. "And would I be here at this moment, if I were a man ever to forgive—an insult? Now I shall tell you," he hissed. "The father of that girl," suddenly pointing at Muriel, "he did me a great insult. For him to die at my hands—that would not be enough to wash out the insult that it was. So, I make up my mind to do a certain thing, and—I shall do it yet! I could have made him my prisoner for life; but I say to myself: No! Let it be—his daughter!"

Betty and two or three other Morcovians turned to Muriel as these last words of undying hatred were voiced. But she was quite calm outwardly, except for an emotional look which had only to do with her thankfulness at having found such friends and protectors. When those who had paid attention to her, like this, looked again to where Khan had been standing, he was no longer there.

Mr. Willoughby and his men friends, with all-over-for-the-present smiles, were at once falling into talk amongst themselves. Some of the boys took clashing steps up the bank of loose shingle, and the next moment most of the girls were doing the same.

They saw Khan returning to his halted party with the best possible attempt at dignity, the beach being a difficult place on which to give showing-off strides.

"But," Betty chuckled, "just in case he tries not to let his followers know what a bash he has come in for—all together, Morcovians!"

"Booh!" they sent after him, at full strength. And again, Grangemoor joining in: "Booh!"

And there might have been a few British cheers to follow, only Naomer was found to be ruining part of the parapet by capering about in king-of-the-castle fashion.

### Watchers in the Night

**D**ARK night had fallen upon the island.

Once again there was only the fitful light of a driftwood fire to illumine that part of the beach on which the Morcove castaways were encamped.

Such light as the fire did throw out, going into quite a blaze at moments when the gusty wind fanned it, was very welcome.

Many of the chums were finding as much to do as ever. From that moment, a little after midday, when Khan had received such an emphatic "No!" to his crafty offer, "Morcove & Co." had been left quite at peace.

And so it had been possible, during the latter half of the day, for venturesome spirits to try to "stock the larder," whilst others did their desperate best to improve conditions in the makeshift camp.

But it was known that Khan had left all those men of his upon the island. As likely as not, too, the woman who had been landed by aeroplane last night was still a mischief-worker to be reckoned with.

For this reason, as soon as night had

closed over land and sea, a scouting party had set off to work round the shore in one direction, whilst another party went the opposite way.

The fathers of Pam and Madge, together with Airman Somerfield, had felt compelled to go off as an armed trio, taking that route which seemed most likely to produce valuable results, the whereabouts of the enemy band having been shrewdly conjectured.

As for the other scouting party, comprising Jack, Dave, and Jimmy, it had orders not to proceed more than a certain distance from the camp. Then it was to go upon a kind of outpost duty, being ready to fall back and give timely warning of any detected danger.

Betty, seized with a sudden idea, left those chums with whom she was working hard, to come running across to the chery fire. Polly and Naomer were there, feeling a vast pride in having been appointed to see after the cooking.

Some quite ambitious cooking it was going on at present, for salt-water pools had provided a catch of fish, and the men's rifles had fetched down a few wildfowl.

"We need a bit more light where we're working away inside the shelter," Betty accounted for her coming to the fire.

"So I'm going to see if a burning stick can be kept going as a torch. I say"—with a relishing sniff—"something smells good!"

"Don't you touch the fire!" Polly playfully warned, with a "Keep-away!" gesture. "Those two pots—our only ones—have nearly fallen over twice already. And I do wish you would take Naomer away, Betty! I don't need her!"

"Nor do we over there, really!"

"Eet all ze same eef you do!" Naomer flatly declared. "Bakas I've just as

much right as Polly to see to ze cooking. What ze diggings, supposing both pots fall over at once! How could Polly save both of them all in ze same moment? And he is my pot that smells so nice!" she boasted. "Who wants fish"—in disdainful allusion to the other pot.

"I don't mind fish as my first course," Betty grinned. "Oh, thanks!" as Polly handed her a well-alight stick, very carefully withdrawn from the general blaze. "I wonder how this night is going to pass off?" she added, and stood still to stare away in the darkness.

It was in the direction Jack and Dave and Jimmy Cherrol had gone that Betty peered.

"Polly dear, d'you know what Muriel said about those three boys just after they'd set off? 'It must be fine to have one of them for a brother!'"

"So it is," Polly smiled simply. "I know for one of them happens to have me for—a sister!"

Lightly said. But what a world of love and admiration Polly's eyes expressed, as they now looked the same way as Betty's in this surrounding darkness!

"Do we go much farther, chaps?"

"Not much, I reckon. We must stick to instructions."

Jack, it was who had raised the question, speaking under his breath, and Dave the one who had answered. Now Jimmy Cherrol, almost elbow-to-elbow with those two chums, gave his opinion:

"I came this way during the search for Muriel. If we just creep to the top of the sandy mound that's in front of us now, we'll have a fine watch-point. Can't do better, I'm sure."



**S**UDDENLY Khan's crafty face appeared above the barricade.

He smiled mockingly, as if he knew that he had triumphed. "Ah!" he said. "So there you are! Now—perhaps you will

listen to my terms."

"Bit exposed up there?" Jack was inclined to demur.

"There's thick grass."  
"Good enough! Come on, then, and we'll make it there. Half a mile from the camp," Jack breathed on, "and, of course, we've come round on a bend all the way. Allowing for that—it is far enough."

His listeners to the bit of deep whispering nodded, and then they all three left the level of the foreshore, to take the gentle rise formed by a grassy hummock similar to one of the familiar sand-dunes in our own Homeland.

The tide brawled in the night, for, although the wind had slightly abated, a heavy sea was still running. The chums, however, were as cautious as if any footfall made by one of them, or any word spoken in an unguarded manner, were liable to be heard by somebody lurking around.

For the last half of the way they crawled upon hands and knees through the long grass. So they reached the tussocky summit of this low hill. One of the lads snaked to where he could keep watch upon the beach, whilst his chums peered about in other directions.

Those other two watchers—Dave and Jimmy—were alert for any signs of danger emanating from wooded land lying behind the dune, as well as for a timely warning of anyone's skulking along the shore, intending to spy upon the camp.

For five, ten minutes, the three remained on watch like this; Morcove's trusty "outpost," hearing nothing apart from the incessant growl of the tide, seeing nothing in the darkness to cause a thrill of excitement. And yet their vigilance never slackened.

Right on through the night they meant to keep just such a careful watch, except that turn by turn each would take a little nap.

But now a thing happened as strange as it was terrible, and without the slightest warning.

At one moment the boys were lying quiet still, and in the next—

As if an earthquake had occurred, they felt the ground giving way beneath them!

Trying to rise to their feet, they could not do so. They staggered only half-erect, and were then thrown off their balance. Flung asprawl, they felt the ground to be in motion, and there was the horrible sense of being helplessly carried away with it.

Then they knew—a landslide! To-day's storm had played some fatal trick with this wave-washed dune. As a mass of thousands of tons of infirm sand and shingle, it was suddenly slipping away, to spread itself over the beach. And they were going with it.

Jack indeed was already gone—lost to sight by Dave and Jimmy, who were wildly looking about for him, even as they themselves battled for life.

Then Dave, whilst feeling as if he were trying to swim in a roaring tide of sand, had it sweeping right over him. From head to foot he was covered, weighted down—was suffocating!

How long it was before he could breathe again, he never knew. But suddenly he got his head heaved clear, and then as he struggled to draw up his arms to be able to use them, he managed to call out:

"Jimmy! Jack! Where are you?"  
"Here, Dave! And I'm all right, I think!" Jimmy's choked voice answered from a few yards away. "But I've pulled Jack out, and— I don't know—he doesn't move."

"What!"  
"He looks rotten!"  
"Coming!" Dave panted, still struggling to extricate himself.

There was sand in Dave's eyes, so that he finally scrambled across to his fellow victims in a half-blinded manner.

In any case, this would have been no moment for him to look about and notice the altered surroundings. Half the dune had slipped away, and the three of them were in loose sand at the foot of a steep bank left by the fall—a bank that might come away in further tons of sand at any instant, burying them again.

"We must get him clear, Jimmy. You take him by the ankles, and I'll lift him by his shoulders!" Jimmy muttered.

"Oh, careful then—both of us! You give the word, Dave. He must be badly hurt, anyhow."

Dave nodded in tragic agreement. Jack had never yet been one to make a fuss about a trifling hurt.

"Now, Jimmy—both together, out to the open shore! Can you see all right?"

"Yes; can't you?"  
Dave's eyes were giving him agony. He kept them tightly lidded over for a second or so, hoping for a flow of tears that would wash away some of

the maddening grit. Then, starting to use his eyes again, to his utter amazement he found that he and Jimmy and the chum they carried were in the glare of a strong light.

Jimmy was already exclaiming: "Look out, Dave! Someone with an electric torch—just over there!"

Dave turned his head, and his tingling eyes met this dazzling ray which was stabbing through the darkness. Had it kept steady, it would have helped to blind him still more. But now the person who wielded the torch must have seen enough by its revealing light.

The ray wavered, and for a half-second it shone straight up to the sky—perhaps because of a clumsy, agitated handling of the torch. Next instant it was switched off.

"Dave," Jimmy panted—"that woman!"

"Yes; but she's gone!"  
"Only to let some of the gang know," Jimmy rasped the alarming conjecture. "And here are we, with Jack like this!"

At that moment a perplexed silence which had fallen upon some of the girls at the camp, was ended by one who had caused them to feel suddenly alarmed.

"It was like an electric torch being shone into the air," Polly said; for she it was who had rushed to these others to tell them. "Someone along the beach."

"That was," Judy said. "But that's the way those three boys went; and they had no torch. So what does it mean? Who else is there?"

"Oh, I don't know!" Polly cried out. "But I feel—I feel they're needing help."

Her sudden anxiety for the boys was acting as a spur to her always impulsive nature.

She sped away, and Betty and others, even though they knew what risk it meant, ran with her.

For they, too, felt as if an SOS had come that must, at all costs, be answered!

**ANOTHER** vivid instalment of this entrancing adventure serial will appear in next Saturday's SCHOOL-GIRL. You must not miss it—so order your copy at once. And tell all your friends to do the same.

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Admirers of Ida Melbourne's stories—and that means all of you, I'm quite sure!—will be thrilled to know that she is now writing a new series of complete humorous stories, the first of which will appear in THE SCHOOLGIRL in the very near future.

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With best wishes,

YOUR EDITOR.