

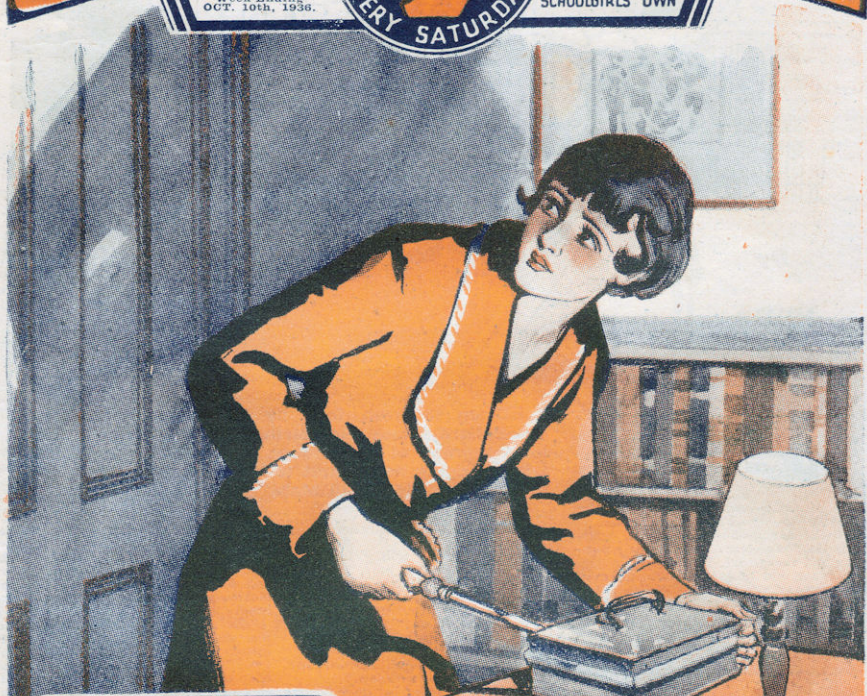
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# THE SCHOOLGIRL

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ONCE SHE WAS  
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# A Brilliant Long Complete Cliff House School Story, Featuring Rosa Rodworth



By

HILDA

RICHARDS

## The Girl They Suspected

"COO-EE! Dick! Dick, I say—" And Mabel Lynn of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School, emerging from the boy in the Friarale School cap, who had just sauntered through the gates.

Dick Livingstone paused. His boyishly handsome face, rather frowning and thoughtful, lighted up.

"Mabs, old thing! I just came over to see you."

"And I," Mabs got out breathlessly, "wanted to see you, Dick. About the play—"

He looked at her quickly.

"Oh, what about the play? You don't mean there's been any hitch?"

"Rather not!" Mabs laughed. "No, Dick. The reverse, in fact. Now, wait a minute! Let me speak! You know we're holding the bazaar on Saturday in aid of the hospitals?"

"Yes. Well?" Dick asked.

"Well," Mabs, cried triumphantly, "guess what else! We're going to have a concert the night before the bazaar, and Miss Primrose, our headmistress, has heard about the play, and wants us to make it an item in the concert." She laughed as she saw that she had aroused his interest. "But, more than that," Mabs added gaily.

"Great pip! What next?"

"I've written a third part into it—a dancing part."

"Who for?"

"Well, guess," Mabs teased. "Who do you know who's frightfully fond of dancing?"

Dick Livingstone paused. Very queer the glance he gave at Mabs then. Rather showing the admiration which

LED on to fresh folly by her false friend, Renee Ballard, Rosa Rodworth gets deeper and deeper into disgrace at Cliff House. And all the time Mabel Lynn is doing her utmost to save Rosa from herself—a task which calls for all Mabs' patience and forbearance.

shone in his face—an admiration mixed with gratitude.

For he needed no telling for whom Mabs had written that part.

His cousin, the stormy scapegrace, Rosa Rodworth, at the present moment under sentence of expulsion.

"You mean Rosa?" he breathed.

"Mabs, what a brick you are!" Mabs flushed.

"I thought it might interest her. She's rather down, you know."

Again Dick regarded her queerly. He shook his head. There was a tinge of bitterness, of sadness, in his face as for a moment his mind dwelt upon that stormy cousin of his.

Rosa Rodworth, well-styled the Stormy Petrel of the Form, was a girl for whom Dick had a sincere and imperishable affection. And yet a girl who, at the moment, seemed to be going from bad to worse.

But Dick believed in her. Dick thought Rosa several sorts of hot-headed fool, but he did not believe that Rosa had aimed a stone at Miss Calver, the film star.

For that she had been expelled, but since her father was away on business on the Continent, Miss Primrose had graciously allowed her to remain on at the school until he could be found.

If her father had never gone away, he reflected now, the disaster which had overtaken Rosa would never have hap-

pened. Rosa had been a victim of her own impetuous recklessness, her own love of showing-off, of trying always to be in the limelight. The money her father had left behind, and which she had recklessly squandered, had turned her head.

"She's rather down," Mabs repeated. She shook her golden head. "You heard, Dick, what happened, didn't you? Rosa bought things—a whole heap of things. She paid for them with cheques which the bank wouldn't honour. Then—then—" Mabs paused.

"To get out of the mess she was in she sold practically everything she had of value. And now—"

Dick looked worried.

"She's broke?" he asked.

Mabs nodded.

"How's she taking it?"

"Well, you can guess. Very much to heart. She's rather bitter. She says she's been expelled unfairly, and that everybody's down on her. I saw her this morning. She's not very friendly with me, because she thinks I let her down over that Dickson woman, who posed as a countess and swindled her out of twenty pounds. But she said that on Friday she'd be as rich as ever."

Dick's lips compressed.

"Meaning," he guessed, "that she's expecting money from her father?"

"Something like that." Mabs sighed.

"And so," she went on, "just to cheer her up and get more chummy with her, I wrote this dancing part into the play. I thought maybe that Primmy might give her permission to act in the concert if I only asked her. I haven't told Rosa yet, of course. I thought I'd better wait for you, and then we'd tackle her together. But you look worried," she added, breaking off.

Dick groaned.

"Mabs, I am worried," he confessed. "A lot! I don't want you to tell Rosa—not yet, at all events. But"—he looked away—"Mabs, I doubt if she'll get any more money from her father. He's broke!"

Mabs looked startled.

"Broke? You mean he—he's ruined?"

Dick bit his lip.

"Just that," he said sombrely. "Old Man Rodworth wrote and told my father. You know he went out on some business deal on the Continent with that Ballard man—the father of the girl Renee, who Rosa's taken such a fancy to at this school. Well, the concern they were interested in seems to have gone utterly rotten. I don't know the details, but it's bad enough! He pleaded with my pater, though, not to say anything to Rosa. In his own good time, he says, he'll write and break the news. But, I say," he whispered, straightening up, "talk of angels. That is Renee Ballard, isn't it?"

A girl had just come out of the school, was sauntering rather thoughtfully down the drive. An attractive-looking girl she was, though her face was marred at the moment by a rather thoughtful frown.

"Mabs, come here!" Dick whispered, and drew her aside. "Wait a minute! Don't let her see us! Mabs, there's something I wanted to ask you—about Renee Ballard. Tell me frankly, do you trust that girl?"

Wonderingly Mabs regarded him. She felt her pulses quicken. Strange that Dick should ask that question. For she, too, just recently, had found herself entertaining doubts of Renee Ballard's honesty of purpose.

Renee was liked. Renee was popular. To the Form, at least, she had presented herself as an altogether charming girl.

But Mabs was remembering an incident which had taken place two days ago, when she, desperately anxious to prevent Rosa making a fool of herself, had begged Renee to intervene. Renee had intervened, but not in the way Mabs had intended.

So far from persuading Rosa to do the right thing, Mabs had definitely overheard her advising Rosa to do the thing which would be directly against her own interests.

"Why?" she asked.

"Well—" Dick hesitated, his eyes fixed upon the approaching figure. "I never told you, Mabs, but you remember that I overheard Mrs. Dickson plotting with some girl in the woods. They were discussing the swindle they were going to practise on Rosa. I never saw the girl—only her back view, and I've often wondered since if that girl were Renee Ballard."

Mabs looked startled.

"Oh, Dick, it couldn't be!"

"Oh, I know it's a rotten thing to say—but whenever I see her I always think of that girl in the woods. Hallo!" he added, "she's gone into the tuckshop. Mabs, wait a minute, I've got an idea. I told you I never saw the girl, didn't I? But I did hear her voice. If I heard it again I should know. Let's go into the tuckshop."

Mabs started. Dick was looking excited now. Some of his excitement communicated itself to her.

"Come on!" she said.

Together they strolled across the lawn. Mabs, with a laugh, entered the tuckshop. It was fairly full. Barbara Redfern, the blue-eyed captain of the Form was there. So was Clara Trevlyn, Juno Merrett, Janet Jordan, and gentle Marjorie Hazeldene.

Renee Ballard, talking to Diana Royston-Clarke in the corner, looked up.

"Why, Dick!" Clara cried.

"Dick!"

"Come in and have a lemonade!"

Dick laughed.

"Not on you, Clara! On me this time. Whoa there! I got my pocket money this morning—the whole half-crown of it. So I'm in a mood to spend recklessly," he added. "And—" he smiled at the girl in the corner as though noticing her for the first time. "You're Renee Ballard, aren't you? My cousin, Rosa, has told me a lot about you."

Renee smiled.

"I hope," she said, "they've all been nice things."

"Oh, very nice," Dick said, but Mabs saw the start he gave. "Will you have a lemonade?"

"No thanks! I've just ordered ginger-beer."

Dick laughed. He turned. But Mabs caught his eye, saw the suddenly grim out-thrust of the chin. So it was true! Renee Ballard was the girl who had conspired with the treacherous Mrs. Dickson for Rosa Rodworth's downfall!

Ginger-beer, lemonade was produced. Heartily it was drunk. There and then Babs & Co. insisted that Dick should come to tea in Study No. 4.

But Mabs could see he was really anxious to get out of it; that he was just surrendering, eager all the time to talk to her. At the same moment Renee, swallowing her ginger-beer, rose.

"Well, I'll be getting back," she yawned. "I only popped in to get something for tea. Coming, Diana?"

She inclined her head towards the door. Diana, with a bored smile, rose. Together they went out.

"Babs," Mabs said quickly, "will you get the stuff for tea? I'll go on with Dick and see Rosa." She paused. "Babs, as Dick is here, do you think we might invite Rosa to tea?"

"Well, if she'd like to come," Babs said, but she said it without enthusiasm, for Rosa, apart from her expulsion, was not exactly popular with Babs & Co. then. But Babs liked Dick. She knew his fondness for his cousin. "I'll ask her," Mabs cried. "Come on, Dick."

Dick nodded. With a friendly grin he quitted the shop. Once in the drive outside, however, he plucked Mabs' arm.

"Mabs, it was she!"

"So I guessed. But Dick—"

"She's working against Rosa, while pretending to be her friend," Dick said. "I was right, Mabs—we both were. But it's no good telling Rosa that. Rosa is so full up with the girl that she'd just fly into a temper, and never speak to either of us again."

Mabs looked anxious.

"But Dick, what can you do?"

"I can't do anything," he said. "I don't live here, unfortunately. But Mabs—" he turned to her. "Oh, bother it, you've done so much already that I hate to ask you to do more. But I've only got you to help me, Mabs. If Rosa is to be saved from



"THERE'S Renee Ballard," Mabs whispered, as a figure came slowly out of the school. Dick nodded. "Tell me," he said quietly, "do you trust that girl?"

doing something more silly than getting herself expelled, she's got to get away from that girl. The part in the play might help. And, of course, I'll do my bit, too. But Mabs, will you?" he added pleadingly. "Rosa's such a jolly decent girl at heart. Get her away from Renee."

"He hung tensely on Mabs' reply. "Mabs bit her lip. "Mabs, please!" he cried. "All right," Mabs said, "I'll do my best." But she shook her head, foreseeing at once the difficulties in her way.

Not Mabs to refuse Dick any request, but apart from that she had a secret admiration for Rosa—Rosa who, when she liked, could be such an utterly charming chum.

"You'd better go and see her first," she advised. "Quietly break the ice and invite her to tea."

"Oh, Mabs, what a sport you are!" But Mabs smiled. They had reached the school then, were ascending the staircase that led to the Fourth Form corridor. Dulcia Fairbrother, the senior games captain, was coming down it, as they went up. She paused.

"Oh, Mabel, didn't Frances Barrett give you lines this morning?"

"Yes, she did," Mabs ruefully admitted. "Well, don't you think you'd better get them done? I've just had a word with Frances—"

"But I've done them," Mabs cried, and then stopped. "Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot to deliver them!"

"Well, take them along right away," Dulcia advised.

She passed on with a gracious nod of her head and a smile for Dick. Mabs laughed.

"What a forgetful goose I am," she cried. "But never mind! Good old Dulcia apparently smoothed Frances down for me. Dick, you go and look after Rosa," she added, as they reached the Fourth Form corridor. "I'll come along later."

Dick nodded. Mabs flew to Study No. 4. There were the lines—chump that she was to have overlooked them—on the table. She snatched them up and hurried off to Frances' study at once.

Frances was there. She had a few caustic remarks to make, and Mabs left the study.

Her way back took her past the prefects' room. The door of that room, suffering from a strained hinge, was slightly ajar. Through the aperture she glimpsed a girl at the telephone, and frowned a little, wondering if Renee Ballard had sought permission. And then her voice came to her.

"Come, I tell you it's a cinch. I've got her between my finger and thumb."

Mabs started. Without realising it, she halted.

"Eh? What's that? No, of course the fool doesn't realise it. She thinks that I'm just the best friend that ever stepped. Yes, yes, of course, I know about that. But she doesn't. Watch developments. I'll let you know as soon as I've got her where I want her."

Mabs stiffened; her eyes grew wide. If she had needed proof of Renee Ballard's duplicity as far as Rosa Rodworth was concerned, she certainly had it now.

"What's that?" And Renee leaned closer to the receiver. Then suddenly she looked round. Mabs, in her full line of vision, dropped back—too late! "All right," she called hurriedly into the mouthpiece, "speak to you later."

And down went the receiver with a violence that must considerably have surprised the caller at the other end.

She flung round, her face scarlet of a sudden.

"Mabs, you awful spy! You were listening," she cried.

Mabs eyed her contemptuously. "I'm sorry, I just couldn't help listening."

"And you heard—"

"I heard, Mabs retorted. "And what I heard doesn't reflect much credit upon you, Renee Ballard! I begin to see now," she added quietly, "why Rosa has gone from bad to worse. She trusted you, Renee Ballard. You've pretended all along to be her friend, instead of which—"

her chest heaved with the indignation that suddenly was let loose within her—"you were just leading her on!"

"No, no, wait a minute!" and desperately Renee bounded forward. "Don't be an idiot!" she cried. "Don't jump to conclusions. You've got it all wrong—all wrong," she cried. "I wasn't speaking about Rosa."

Mabs paused.

"No?"

"No! Did you hear me mention Rosa's name?" Renee cried. "You didn't. The girl I was talking about was Claire Smith—somebody you've never met, Mabel Lynn. I—we—that is—my friend and I are just playing a joke on her. I wasn't even thinking of Rosa. Rosa is my friend, always has been my friend. I've stuck up for her, haven't I? I've helped her when none of you other ninnies would help her. Why should you think that I'm just pretending friendship?"

Very deliberately Mabs eyed her. She didn't believe this girl's story. Her duty, she told herself, was to go to Rosa, to tell her what she had overheard.

But she couldn't. By accident she had overheard that conversation. She believed that it concerned Rosa, in spite of the other's denials.

But Mabs was fair with herself. She knew she had no earthly proof where Rosa was concerned. It was true that Renee had not mentioned a name. Apart from her own suspicion, there was no reason for disbelieving her.

She paused. Very searching was her gaze as she fastened it upon the other. "Well, I hope for your own sake you're telling the truth," she said shortly, and with that, turned on her heel.

"Mabs!" Renee cried. But Mabs did not look back. Renee Ballard clenched her hands.

"She suspects! She suspects!" she muttered. "I've got to go carefully. If I'm to keep my grip on Rosa! Rodworth until I've got her where I want her, I must settle Mabel Lynn at the same time!"



### The Outcast

**R**OSA RODWORTH was standing by the window of Study No 1 when Dick Livingstone's knock came at the door.

Rather wistful was the expression on Rosa's usually stormy face. Rather regretful the look in her eyes. And, to be sure, at that moment, Rosa was feeling rather lonely, rather fed-up, and perhaps a little repentant.

It had all been very well when she had money to spend, and she had spent it with reckless disregard for consequences. Now—temporarily, at least, she had nothing.

Nothing until Friday. On Friday,

though, a remittance from her father would arrive!

But Friday, to spendthrift Rosa, was a very, very long way off. In the meantime, though she had disposed of most of her realisable assets, she was still being worried. Odd bills, legacies of the days of her extravagancies, were still coming in, together with rather curtly worded letters from creditors who were getting impatient for payment.

Rosa turned as the knock came. She glared at the door as though it had offered her some personal affront. Dick came in, a cheery smile upon his face.

"Why, Dick!" Rosa cried. "What-ho, old timer," Dick greeted cheerily. "Alone?"

"Yes!" "That's good, 'cause I rather want to talk to you," Dick said. "No—" as he saw the expression on her face, "I've not come to lecture or anything like that. As a matter of fact, I've just been talking to Mabel Lynn. He jerked, in a manner which he hoped was casual.

A little flash lit up the Stormy Petrel's eyes. Her lips compressed.

"She's invited you to tea in Study No. 4," Dick went on, in the same matter-of-fact tone.

"Invited me? But why?" "And," Dick added carefully, staring through the window, "I don't know why she's done it, I'm sure, but she's got some idea you can dance or something, so she's written a dancing part into the play we're performing."

Rosa stared at him. She stared incredulously, unbelievably. The colour came and went in her face. Funny that she had only been thinking of Mabel Lynn a few moments before Dick had come in, realising in one of those softer and more generous moods which always followed the unleashing of one of her many storms—what a really good friend Mabs had tried to be to her.

"Dick, you don't mean it?" she cried.

"But I do!" Dick, with a smile, answered. "Rosa, old kid—" and impulsively he caught her hand. "Mabs is true-blue—like you in your saner moods. She's tried to be a friend to you, and you haven't let her—so far."

"But—but why does she want to be friends with me?"

"Well—well, because she likes you, I suppose. Anyway—" as a knock came, "here she is. Ask her for yourself."

Mabs, fresh from her interview with Renee Ballard, entered the room. She looked swiftly from one to the other. Rosa's face, for some reason, turned scarlet.

"Oh, halo!" Mabs smiled. "I say, Rosa, are you coming to tea?"

Rosa bit her lip.

"I—I— Well, Renee was expecting me to tea with her," she stammered.

"Oh, but that's the usual thing, isn't it?" Mabs asked. "I mean to say, Renee wouldn't mind. Do come, Rosa. Please," she added. "I want to talk to you about the play. I suppose Dick's told you—about the dancing part?"

For a moment it seemed that Rosa was struggling between acceptance and refusal. Then suddenly she shook her head.

"Yes, Dick told me," she said, her voice almost a whisper. "But I don't understand. I can't understand. Mabs, why are you so decent to me?"

Mabs flushed.

"Oh, Rosa—"

"When," Rosa said with some emotion, "I've been such a beast to you. Oh, yes I have! I—I seem to see it

now. Apart from Renee, you're the only one who's had a kind word or was willing to forget what I'm supposed to have done—although," she added with a flash in her eyes, "I never did do it!"

Mabs gulped a little. "You know, Rosa, old thing, I believe that. I've always tried to be friendly, haven't I—but you've not always let me. But don't think about that, old thing. Let's forget it all. Will you come?"

"Well, if—if you really want me to." "I do—we both do," Mabs laughed. "Then that's settled," she cried gaily. "I'll go along and hurry things up. Dick, expect you with Rosa in five minutes."

She went, her eyes alight, surprised herself by the happiness she felt. She felt that she had already accomplished something.

Babs and fat Bessie Bunter were already in Study No. 4, laying the cloth. Babs smiled as she came in.

"Why, Mabs, you look happy." "I am," Mabs smiled. "But Babs, just a word. I've just been to see Rosa. She really does seem sorry about things. You know that Dick's bringing her along to tea?"

Babs stared at her queerly. "Babs, be nice to her! Mabs went on. "I know there's no need to ask, but—well, I rather fancy she's feeling her position at the moment. You will, won't you, Babs?"

"Why, of course!" "And you, Bessie?" "Oh, rur-really, I always am nun-nice to Rosa," Bessie protested. "You know very well that I like Rosa, even though she is such a cat at times."

Mabs laughed happily. With a will she set to work to prepare the tea. Certainly the table looked inviting enough when the three of them had finished, and Rosa's eyes lighted up when presently she came in with her cousin Dick.

"Come in," Babs cheerily invited. "Bessie, chair for Rosa, please. Dick, you sit here—next to Rosa. I know you're a guest, but you won't mind making yourself useful, and handing me the flowers on the table by your elbow? That's ripping. Now we can all start." Babs beamed.

"Now, Rosa," Mabs said, "what is it? Cross sandwiches? Lobster—although the lobster's only paste," she added with a laugh. "Let me see, you do have two sugars in your tea, don't you? I say, this is jolly," she enthused. "Now about this play—"

"What play?" Bessie asked.

"The play we're going to perform at the concert the night before the bazaar. The parts," Mabs explained, and went on to give details. "You take the part of a big dancing star," she went on to Rosa. "You're Madame Kriseani, luxurious, languid and frightfully well-off. I'm just the simple little heroine, of course. I go to you for lessons."

She beamed. Rosa's eyes shone. She was interested now. Excitement, enthusiasm appeared in her own cheeks. For, as Mabs said, Rosa loved dancing. Dancing, with her, was almost a passion, in fact. And Mabs very cleverly had combined that dancing with the sort of glamorous part which Rosa would love best to act.

"You like the sound of it?" Mabs asked.

"I think it sounds marvellous!" Rosa enthused.

"Then," Mabs said, "we'll have rehearsal after tea, shall we? In the music room?"



THE sound of the music, the sight of Mabs dancing so happily, filled Rosa with a great longing. She might have been dancing, too—but her pride had made her spurn Mabs' eager invitation.

"Rather, Mabs!" Rosa enthused. "I'd love it. Do tell me more about the dance—"

No doubt that she was interested. No doubt that she was eager. Good it was to see that excitement in her face, that light in her eyes as she intently leaned across the table in Mabs' direction.

For the moment she had forgotten that she was expelled, had forgotten everything. She was supremely, uncontrollably happy.

Tea was finished—to Rosa's secret relief. She was anxious to be up and doing things now—eager to get to the music-room. Mabs smiled at her eagerness. Dick gave a knowing wink. Hardly had they risen from the table than Rosa said:

"Well, Mabs, shall we get along now? We haven't much time to rehearse."

"Do you mind clearing up, Babs?" Mabs asked.

"Good gracious, of course not! Bessie will help. Come along later."

So off they went—Mabs, Rosa, and Dick, Rosa eagerly leading the way. The music-room was reached. There Mabs seated herself at the piano while Rosa, beaming, climbed upon the platform.

The dance was gone through—once, twice, three times. Mabs clapped.

"Jolly good!" she said. "I'll do!" Rosa asked.

"It's marvellous," Mabs said enthusiastically. "Shall we go through it again?"

They went through it again, and again. Babs and Bessie came in. Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn joined them. Then Leila Carroll strolled along with Marcelle Biquet,

followed by Janet Jordan and Frances Frost.

Rosa glowed. The bigger the audience the better she liked it. Frances Frost cocked an eye at her.

"But I say, what's it in aid of?" she wanted to know.

"It's for the play," Rosa cried.

"What, the bazaar concert?"

"Yes, of course!"

"Oh, well now, isn't that interesting?" Frances drawled. "Of course, Primmy knows all about it?"

Rosa stopped dead.

"Primmy!"

"Well, I don't know. It just struck me, though, that you were rather taking things for granted. If Primmy lets you do that at the concert, it'll be the first time a girl who's been expelled—"

"Frances!" cried Mabs.

But the mischief was done then. Rosa's cheeks had whitened. Of sudden the eagerness had died from her face. She paused.

"Mabs, have you asked Primmy?"

Mabs bit her lip.

"Oh, don't take any notice of Frances, Rosa. Look here—"

"Have you asked Primmy?" Rosa demanded.

"Well no, not yet."

"I see!" Rosa stepped down. Her face was bitter all at once.

"Well, then, what's the use of wasting time?" she asked. "I took it for granted that you had permission, but Primmy will never let me act. Frances is right. I'm the wash-out, the outcast! I'm expelled!"

"Oh, crumbs! I say—"

"Rosa—"

It was at that moment that Renee

Ballard appeared again. She looked quickly at the stormy one.

"Rosa! I say, old thing, have you finished?"

"Yes, I've finished all right!" Rosa announced bitterly.

"Then could you spare me a minute?"

"Rosa!" cried Mabs.

"Rosa, you chump!" Dick interposed.

But Rosa shook her head. "I'm sorry, but there it is," she said. "It didn't occur to me to ask. You and Mabs were so jolly enthusiastic that I thought everything was all right. I was just carried away by your enthusiasm, I suppose. Come on, Renee." Dick and Mabs gazed at each other in dismay. The door closed.



### Rosa is a Problem

"MY hat, that's done it!" Dick groaned. "The touchy idiot! Mabs—"

But Mabs had risen purposefully. She hesitated a moment.

"It's all right," she said. "I'll go to ask Primmy now. No, don't you come, Dick. But Mabs, if I can persuade Primmy that Rosa is necessary to the play, she might consent."

She went out, Mabs following her. Meantime, Rosa, with Renee at her side, was strolling along to Study No. 1. Bitterness had taken place of the exhilaration of the last hour. Moodiness had come once more to reign where happiness had held sway.

"Well, I do think Mabs ought to have made sure first," Renee said as they entered Study No. 1.

Rosa, dropping into a chair, glared into the fire.

"Rosa, old thing!" Renee came over to her. She sat herself on the arm of the chair and wreathed an arm round unresponsive shoulders. "Don't take it to heart, old girl. Don't look so cut up."

"Bah!" Rosa said, and shifted restlessly.

Renee waited.

"Rosa!" she said presently.

"Well?" Rosa snapped.

"Rosa, old thing, I don't want to interfere—you know that, don't you?" Renee asked anxiously. "After all, I'm your friend. I'm the only one who's stuck by you."

Rosa looked up, she caught her hand, overcome by a sudden flood of conviction.

"Oh, I'm sorry, old girl. I suppose I am behaving like a bear. But that dance—" She heaved a deep breath. "Renee, that was made for me. It just suited me. And the frock I could have worn for it—" She waved her hand vaguely. "Something cut low at the back; something, all fluffy and frilly—"

Renee bit her lip.

"It would have been—lovely," she considered thoughtfully. "But Rosa, why worry about it? After all, you haven't got the money?"

"But I should have had it," Rosa said moodily. "My father is sending me some on Friday."

"But Friday is the day of the concert, isn't it?"

"Well, I could have borrowed it. You would have lent me the money."

"Of course I would," Renee simpered, but only her lips smiled. Rosa did not guess what Renee knew—that had been in the letter which Renee had received from her father that morning.

For Renee, by this time, was in full possession of the facts of Mr. Rodworth's downfall, though to be sure, still having her own designs upon Rosa, she intended to say nothing about it.

"And you can borrow it now, old thing, without worrying about the frock," she said generously. "But Rosa—"

Rosa turned.

"Why—why did you desert me at tea-time?" Renee asked hesitantly. "Rosa, you're not getting fed-up with me, are you?" she asked wistfully.

Rosa turned crimson.

"Renee, you know I'm not."

"But you seem awfully keen on Mabel Lynn."

"Well, that was—was because—"

And Rosa floundered.

"I think I know," Renee said. "Mind you, I'm not blaming you. But Mabs doesn't like me, Rosa. She never has, really. She's trying to get you away from me. I—I haven't told you this before," Renee went on, and looked to Rosa's consternation, ready to burst into tears. "But this afternoon I—I heard her telling your cousin, Dick, that ever since I'd come to this school you'd just been a fool."

"What?"

Rosa's eyes glittered.

"And—and that's why they invited you to tea. That's why Mabs put that dance into the play. Of course," Renee went on, "she knew jolly well that you'd never be allowed to act in it—she just made out that everything was all right. She— And she stopped as a tap came at the door. The door opened, and Mabs, with a merry smile, glanced in. But the smile vanished as she saw the look on Rosa's face."

"Why, Rosa—"

Rosa set her lips.

"What do you want?"

Mabs looked a little hurt.

"What's the matter?"

"Well, what do you want?" Rosa asked testily.

"I'm sorry; but don't take it to heart," Mabs advised. "Rosa, Miss Primrose wants to see you."

"What for?"

"Well, go and see."

Rosa scowled. She rose and glanced at Renee, standing there, shaking her head confusedly. She looked at Mabs, who, with hurt expression on her face and the colour in her cheeks heightening a little, was in the act of going out.

Resentful, angry her mood then, Rosa, never for a moment suspecting Renee for the traitor she was, had been disturbed strangely by what she had said. It did strike her now that Mabs had been going out of her way to become friendly with her.

But at that moment she could not make up her mind as to whose side she was on. She went out.

Now, what did Primmy want to see her about? she wondered. And felt just a twinge of apprehension as she made her way to the headmistress' study.

Miss Primrose's voice cried "Come in!" Rosa, bracing herself, entered.

The headmistress was sitting at her desk. Her eyes, blue and kindly through her pince-nez, fastened upon the scapegrace of the Fourth. Not for a moment did she speak. Then she said: "Sit down, Rosa!"

Rosa, again surprised by the mildness and kindly tolerance of the tone, complied.

"Rosa, I have sent for you as the

direct result of an interview with Mabel Lynn and Barbara Redfern." Miss Primrose said, and Rosa stiffened a little. "I am informed by Mabel Lynn that she requires you to act in the play which is to be performed next Friday—"

Rosa stared.

"Mabel," Miss Primrose went on, "has pleaded very eloquently, Rosa. She says that you are absolutely necessary to the success of the play. Well, I want it to be a success. At the same time, I cannot forget that you have been expelled—that you are at Cliff House only on sufferance until your father is located. Since, however, you have shown a marked improvement in behaviour since the affair of the Dickson woman, I have agreed—on condition that you continue to behave yourself—to waive my objections and let you take part in this play. You may go!"

Rosa rose, almost tongue-tied with gratitude, with wonderment.

"Oh, thank you, Miss Primrose!"

"Do not thank me," Miss Primrose replied, with a dismissing wave of the hand. "Thank Mabel Lynn!"

Rosa went out, her head in a whirl. Mabs—Mabs had done this, when she had been ready to blame her!

In the corridor she came face to face with Mabs and Dick. Both were grinning.

"Well, Rosa, is it O.K.?"

Rosa gulped.

"Yes, I can hardly believe it."

Mabs—

Mabs laughed. Chummily she tucked her arm in that of the other.

"Then that's all right," she said comfortingly. "We can go ahead. Now, no more tantrums, old Rosa," she warned. "We've got to work, and work hard, if this is going to be a success. To-morrow morning," she added, "as it's a full day's holiday, we'll have another rehearsal. What do you say?"

What did she say? Happiness had flooded back into Rosa's being once again. It was time for Dick to be going, then. Gaily she went with Mabs to see him off at the gate and then, since Mabs had some details to attend to, she went into her own study.

Renee was there. She frowned a little at the look of happy animation on the other's face.

"Hallo, cheerful, what happened?"

Rosa laughed. She told her.

"And it was Mabs who did it—Mabs!"

she cried. "Renee, you were wrong about her—you must have been wrong about her. Mabs is a brick!"

Rosa tried not to scowl.

"And you're going through with the dance?"

"What do you think?" Rosa laughed. Renee pursed her lips. She saw that it was useless at the moment to pursue her campaign against Mabs. She saw, too, that Rosa had made up her mind.

"Well, I'm glad," she said, with a heartiness she was far from feeling.

"It's about time, Rosa, that you were given a chance to show what you can do. But, I say, what about the frock?"

Rosa paused.

"I'll have to get one," she said thoughtfully.

"But when?" Renee asked. "There's not much time. Supposing it wants altering or anything, Rosa?" she added animatedly. "I saw the very thing in Madame Judith's when I was out this afternoon—and a real bargain, too. It was a lace and organza frock."

"Cut low at the back?" Rosa asked quickly.

"Yes, rather. And lovely little puff sleeves."

"How much?"

"Well, it was a model," Renee said

thoughtfully, "though it had been reduced. It was five guineas."

"Five guineas!" Rosa's face fell. "There was quite a crowd of people looking at it, too," Renee went on wistfully. "I shouldn't think it will be in the window long. But oh, Rosa, if you could have seen it!" she sighed. "Such a perfect dream of a frock. Immediately I set eyes on it I thought how marvellous you would look in it. But, Rosa," she cried eagerly, "you must have it—you must! Look here, you say you're expecting a remittance on Friday?"

"Yes, but—"

"Well," Renee offered, "let me lend you the five guineas, old thing. I can just about squeeze it," she added, with a laugh. "But we'd better go first thing to-morrow morning. Somebody's sure to snatch it up otherwise."

Rosa's face flushed, her eyes glistened. Very tender, very grateful was the glance she turned upon her friend, never realising the trap into which she was falling.

"Oh, Renee, that's marvellous of you," she breathed. "To-morrow morning then. But—oh, wait a minute," she added. "I've promised Mabs."

"Mabs?"

"We're having a rehearsal."

A jealous flash came and went in Renee Ballard's eyes. She pouted.

"Well, I don't see that matters," she said resentfully. "If we go to Courtfield immediately after breakfast, you can be back in time for the rehearsal."

"Well, all right," Rosa complied. "I'll come. But I'd better let Mabs know, in case we're late."

And she rushed off to Study No. 4. Mabs was there with Babs. She frowned when Rosa asked her if she'd mind making the rehearsal to-morrow morning a little later. She glanced at her quickly.

"But why?"

"Well," Rosa hesitated. "I want to go into Courtfield."

"With Renee?" Mabs asked.

Rosa stared at her.

"Well, yes. Why shouldn't I go with Renee?"

But she saw the change that came over Mabs' face. Quick in all her reactions, Rosa began at once to feel nettled and resentful. Obvious it was from Mabs' very expression that she didn't want her to go with Renee.

"I suppose," Rosa asked, "you don't want me to go?"

Mabs hesitated.

"Well, I'd rather you didn't."

Rosa's eyes glistened. A tell-tale flush stained her cheeks.

"Well, I'm going," she stated.

"But Rosa—"

"I'm going!" Rosa cried. "Oh, I know you've got it in for Renee, Mabs, though why, I don't know. Anyway, Renee is my friend, and I've promised her and I'm going with her."

"But Rosa—"

But Rosa had turned. She slammed the door. Mabs bit her lip. Babs, with a shrug, plunged into her work again. Perhaps she wondered in that moment why Mabs wasted her time on Rosa Rodworth.

that she was going seemed to suggest that Renee had got over that difficulty for her somehow!

Though she had no proof against Renee, Mabs was deeply mistrustful. If Rosa and Renee were going into Courtfield to-morrow in each other's company, that boded no good for Rosa.

Rosa should not go!

Upon that point Mabs made up her mind. She had promised Dick that she would look after Rosa. She had told Dick that she would keep her out of further harm.

Mabs suddenly rose, her eyes gleaming. Without a word she left the study. To Dulcia Fairbrother's room she went, there to ask Dulcia if she might use the phone. Very graciously Dulcia gave the permission. Two minutes later Mabs was talking to Dick Livingstone at Friardale School.

And in the morning, just after breakfast, Renee Ballard received a telegram. The telegram came from Courtfield. It said:

"Must see you. Meet me under the Town Hall clock at eleven. Dickson."

Renee turned almost green as she read that. For a moment she stood stock-still. The fool, the fool, she thought angrily. What did Mrs. Dickson want turning up here? For after very cleverly swindling Rosa Rodworth out of that twenty pounds, Mrs. Dickson had hurriedly removed to London.

And Rosa had vowed if she ever met her again she would hand her over to the first policeman she saw!

Something like panic filled Renee Ballard. Why must the woman turn up here—on this day of all days?

Savagely Renee crumpled the telegram and buried it in her pocket. Then slowly she went to Study No. 1, Rosa, excited thrilling with anticipation, already had her hat on, and was

preening herself before the mirror. She turned with a laugh as Renee came in.

"Hallo, Renee! I'm ready," she said. "How do I look?"

Renee paused. Again bitterness welled within her. That fool woman, she thought. She would mess up her plans like this. For having failed to coax Rosa from her dancing practice, Renee had planned this morning into making her buy that very expensive frock, knowing full well that Rosa would never be able to repay the money she borrowed for it.

"You look lovely," she said. "But Rosa—"

"Well?" Rosa asked. "Oh, come on, Renee, don't let's hang about. I'm dying to see that frock."

Renee bit her lip.

"I'm sorry, old thing—"

"Eh?"

"Well, I—I can't come," Renee mumbled. "You see, I—I've had a telegram—from a friend of mine. We'll have to wash it out, I'm afraid—for the time being, at least."

Rosa turned away, her face sulky and disappointed. Renee gazed at her, bit her lip, and then, seeing that she could hardly hope to improve matters by remaining, she turned and left her. Rosa heard her go, but did not turn round. When the door had closed upon her, she took off her hat and savagely tossed it across the room.

"Father it!" she cried.

She pouted. Rather like a spoiled child was Rosa. She felt that she had been let down. That frock—a dream of a frock, if she were to believe Renee's description—and Renee herself the one who had let her down over it. Rosa choked. She had looked forward so much to handling that frock—to trying it on. She had pictured herself, in her



"YOU and Dick can mind your own business," Rosa stormed. "What I do with my money is my affair and nobody else's. And now—get out!" Mabs stood irresolute; she did so want to help Rosa—but the Stormy Petrel would never understand!



When Music Called—



MABS was worried, and suspicious, too. She knew that Rosa had no money. Rosa, without money, would never have gone into Courtfield in the first place. The fact

vain mind's eye, wearing it at the concert on Friday. Now—

Now she was just left stranded. Then the door opened, Mabs looked in.

"Hallo, Rosa. I thought you were going to Courtfield?"

"Well, I'm not," Rosa said gruffly. "Oh, I say, that's topping. Like to come along to the music-room and have a run through the dance before Dick arrives?" Mabs asked pleasantly. "He won't be here for another hour, you know."

But Rosa shrugged. Yes—no—oh, bother it! No, she couldn't accept favours at Mabs' hand. Not—not after what she had said to her last night. She did not look up. She said, rather shortly:

"I'm going to be busy." Mabs nodded and withdrew. Rather thoughtfully she retraced her steps to Study No. 4. It was deserted, Babs having gone off with Bessie Bunter and Clara into Friardale. Most of the other girls had already departed. A sudden idea came to Mabs. Out of the corner, she produced the portable gramophone, and finding a record, put it on. Then she flung the study door wide open.

Rosa, in Study No. 1, frowning over a letter she had not even started to write, heard the strains of music from the study, and listened.

The tune was "Sing Before Breakfast," the self-same tune, in fact, to which she was practising the dance she was going to perform in the concert. She tensed, listening eagerly.

Should she pop along?

But no! She frowned at herself. Hang it, you couldn't quarrel with a girl one minute, and then be as nice as pie with her the next. Irritably she tried to dismiss the tune, feverishly set herself the task of going on with her letter.

Now from Study No. 4 came the tapping of dancing feet. That was Mabs.

Restlessly Rosa rose. She went towards the door. There, her feet tapping time with the music, she stood listening, torn between the dictates of her own conscience and her own desires.

As if drawn by a magnet, Rosa found herself strolling off down the corridor. Almost without realising it she found herself wistfully peering in at the door of Study No. 4.

And there was Mabs—Mabs laughing at her face, and airinetting in front of the little gramophone standing on its table in the corner.

Rosa felt her heart leap, felt sudden enthusiasm taking hold of her. The last barriers of her reserve broke down at that sight. She strode forward.

"Mabs!"

"Rosa!" Mabs cried, spinning round. "Oh, come in, old thing, I'm trying," she added, stopping. "To do your dance, but I'm just hopeless. Do let me see how you do that toe-tapping bit," she added eagerly.

And from that moment Rosa was kept dancing eagerly. Enthusiasm gleamed in her face. Artful was Mabs. She knew just when to flatter Rosa. Perhaps she knew that praise went to Rosa's head. There and then Rosa performed, throwing herself into the thing with a vim and energy which was surprising. Mabs clapped.

"Oh, ripping!"

"Ripping indeed!" a voice at the door applauded, and Dick Livingstone, his face one huge grin, came into the room. "Simply stunning, old kid," he said to Rosa. "Topping!" Like an Elsie Randolph and Jessie Matthews all rolled into one.

Rosa made a face. "Oh, flatterer! Mabs, what about the rehearsal?" she asked eagerly.

Mabs laughed. She felt that she had completely lured Rosa from her shell-like reserve. She looked at Dick, who grinned delightedly, and off they went to the music-room. Rosa on tenterhooks of excitement, and all impatient to begin.

Scripts were produced. Mabs seated herself at the piano.

"Now," she cried, "go, Rosa!"

No need to tell Rosa that. Animate, earnestly she danced, so conscientiously trying to do her best that she did not see the door open, or see the two people who for a moment peeped into the room.

One was Miss Primrose, the headmistress. The other was a younger, fragrant beautiful woman, whose name was world-famous, and whose photograph stared at one from every picture paper in the British Isles. She was Minette Calver, the famous film star.

Minette drew a deep breath of relief.

"She dances beautifully," Miss Primrose.

Miss Primrose looked at her curiously.

"You know who she is?"

"Yes, I know!" Minette shook her head. "Rosa is worthily the girl who so insulted me. But," she said, "one can forgive one who is such an artiste. Miss Primrose, do not let us disturb them. Let us go."

They retired, while Rosa danced on. Breathless she was when at last she finished. Laughingly she stepped off the stage. Mabs shook her head.

"Ripping!" she breathed.

"I'll do!" Rosa asked pleasantly.

"Do?" Mabs shook her head.

"Rosa, if you were at our stage you would know your fortune in no time," she said. "I—" and then she stopped as the door opened and Sally, the maid, came in. "Yes, Sally?"

"Please, Miss Lynn, Miss Primrose would like to see you."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mabs, and pulled a little face, wondering for a moment which of her recent delinquencies had come to the headmistress's ears. "Excuse me," she said to Dick and Rosa.

She left the room. Very pleasant Miss Primrose's voice sounded as she bade her "come in." Mabs went in, and started.

"Why, Miss Calver—"

The star smiled languidly.

"Good-morning, Mabel! I am pleased to see you," she said. "Please sit down. I saw your rehearsal just now," she said. "That girl Rosa—she dances very prettily."

Mabs stared at her.

"You like her?" she asked.

"I think she was good—very good indeed," Miss Calver said. "Hardly," she added, "the same girl that I remember. I have been talking to your headmistress about her."

Quickly Mabs' gaze flew to Miss Primrose's face.

"I have heard," Miss Calver went on with a thoughtful frown, "that she has been expelled."

Mabs gulped.

"Yes, Miss Calver."

"It was, of course, no wish of mine that she was expelled," she said. "The girl made herself something of a nuisance, apart from which she behaved abominably at our last interview."

"You mean—about throwing that stone through your window?" Mabs asked.

"Well—yes!"

"But Miss Calver," Mabs said urgently, "I'm sure she didn't do that.

Yes, I know it sounds wild—impossible. But you didn't see her face, did you? You just saw the back view of a girl flying away from the house, and because you had just quarrelled with Rosa, you thought it was Rosa. Rosa didn't do that," Mabs went on. "I know she's several sorts of reckless fool, but she would never have dreamt of a thing like that."

"Mabel!" Miss Primrose cried.

"Well—oh, I'm sorry, but—but—" Mabs shook her head. "Oh, Miss Primrose," she pleaded, "I—I just can't help but feel that you are making a mistake! Won't you—can't you give her another chance?"

The headmistress pursed her lips.

"Mabel, please, she said, "listen to me! It was about this question that I called you here—about it, in fact, that Miss Calver called to see me. Miss Calver, having thought the matter completely over, has a doubt."

"Then—then you mean—" Mabs breathed.

"I mean"—Miss Primrose said—"precisely nothing. Naturally, I am reluctant to expel a girl who does not merit it, but Rosa, even if she were exonerated from the offence for which she was expelled, has merited expulsion a dozen times over on other counts. I may tell you, Mabel, in confidence, that I was already considering expelling her before the incident which so unpleasantly involved Miss Calver."

Mabs bit her lip.

"However," Miss Primrose went on, "since Rosa from that time has shown a very marked improvement in conduct—an improvement, I may add, which I attribute solely to your kindly influence over her, I am giving the matter further consideration. She seems happy now. She seems to have repented of her errors, and to be getting on very well. I have by no means changed my mind yet—but in view of your appeal and Miss Calver's doubts, I am at the moment in the act of reconsidering the matter."

Mabs flushed eagerly.

"Oh, Miss Primrose!"

"But," Miss Primrose warned, "I do not wish you to communicate this to Rosa. At the moment she still stands expelled. If, however, you can continue successfully to influence her for her own good—you understand?"

Mabs did understand. She left the study walking on air. At last! There was hope for Rosa. Rosa, after all, might not leave. In the passage she met Dick. He paused, struck by the radiance in her face.

"Why, Mabs—"

"Oh, Dick, news!"

"Good news?"

"Yes, about Rosa."

"Oh!" His interest quickened.

And then Mabs told him. Dick's face turned scarlet with delight.

"Oh, Mabs, that's too jolly good!" he said.

"But not a word to Rosa, mind."

"No of course not. But—" He shook his head. Very frank and very admiring was the gaze he turned upon her. "If she gets out of this, Mabs, she'll only have you to thank. And she will get out of it. She's happy now. She likes you. She's keen on the play. The only thing," he added warningly, "is—keep her away from Renee Ballard! If anybody is going to cause mischief, it's that girl!"

And both their faces became a little grim as they walked down the corridor. Renee Ballard appeared that moment as a menace—an evil influence to be feared and fought against.





## Waiting in Vain

ELEVEN-FIFTEEN!

Outside the town hall in the Courtfield High Street, Renee Ballard clenched her teeth.

That woman—keeping her waiting like this! Just to make sure she had the rendezvous right, she examined again the crumpled telegram. But there could be no mistake. Here it was—eleven o'clock outside Courtfield Town Hall.

She gritted her teeth. In exasperation she stamped up and down in front of the town hall terrace. The gong sonorously chimed the half-hour.

"Of all the aggravating idiots—" Renee fumed.

And yet—it was queer. If Mrs. Dickson were in Courtfield, it was not like her to hang about. More, it was not like Mrs. Dickson to keep her waiting—Mrs. Dickson, her hired accomplice, who really lived in mortal terror of Renee Ballard and her unscrupulous father.

Sudden suspicion came to Renee. For the first time it struck her that the telegram might be a fake. Well, she told herself, she would soon find that out.

Not many yards up the street was the post office. Telegram in hand, Renee stamped in. Fortunately for her the office was empty at that moment, and the girl behind the telegram grille, looking rather bored, gave her a friendly grin.

Renee paused. Then she produced her telegram and pushed it through the grille.

"Can you tell me," she asked, "who sent that?"

The girl blinked.

"Why, yes! I received this myself as soon as the post office opened this morning."

Renee's heart beat faster.

"Who gave it to you?"

"Why, a boy," the girl said. "A rather good-looking boy, I remember. From Friardale School. A boy with brown hair."

"Thanks," grated Renee.

She snatched the telegram back. But her eyes flashed suddenly. For she knew then who had sent that telegram. Dick Livingstone.

Foot—foot not to have thought of that before. Dick Livingstone was, of course, hand-in-glove with Mabel Lynn.

Mabs had put him up to this—simply to get her away from Rosa, so that she could revive Rosa's enthusiasm for the dance.

Savage indeed was Renee's temper as she hurled herself on the bus. She had been beaten—beaten by Mabel Lynn! Mabel had deceived her out of school on a wild-goose chase.

At twelve o'clock she reached Cliff House, tempestuously stamped up to Study No. 1.

Rosa, happy but tired after her morning's exertions, was lying on the settee. Dick having gone back to Friardale School for dinner. She smiled as Renee came in.

"Hallo, Renee!" she said. "Had a good time?"

"Have you?" Renee shot back.

"Yes, rather. Rippling, in fact. That dance—" And Rosa sat up. Then she frowned. "But what's the matter with you?"

"I've been fooled!" Renee choked.

"Fooled?"

"By Mabel Lynn!"

"But how?"

"Mabel," Renee said between her teeth, "sent me that telegram this morning. Or rather, she got your cousin to send it. The telegram made an appointment. Like a fool I went to keep it. It didn't dawn upon me until it was too late that it might be false, and when I went to the post office and made inquiries—"

Rosa stared.

"But why should Mabs want to fool you?"

"Why?" Renee laughed sharply.

"Can't you guess?" she asked.

"Because she wanted to get me away from you. Oh, Rosa, you haven't forgotten, have you—that we planned to go out this morning and buy that lovely frock for your dance? Well, Mabs knew about that. Mabs was determined that you shouldn't spend your money, and so she booked this thing up with your cousin Dick. I've told you she hates me. I've told you that she's just trying to part us. Yes—part us!" Renee stormed. "She's got her knife into me. She just wants to rule you as though you were a kid."

Rosa's face clouded. Immediately her most sensitive point was touched. That bit about ruling her—

But she shook her head, even though a flush of anger stained her cheeks. She had had such a happy morning with Mabs!

"Oh, nonsense!" she said. "I can't believe it. Mabs—"

Tap! A knock at the door. Mabel herself came in.

"Oh, Rosa, I was just going to ask you—"

"Wait a minute," Rosa said. "Come in, Mabs." And Mabs came in, staring from the furious Renee to the puzzled Rosa. "There's something I want to know," she said quietly. "This morning Renee received a fake telegram which called her away from Cliff House. Renee says that you conspired with Dick to send that telegram."

Mabs winced.

"Is it true?"

"Mabs bit her lip. She was sorry then that she had entered at that moment.

"Well—" she stammered.

"Is it true?" Rosa rapped.

"Well, yes! But—"

"Why did you send it? Why did you want Renee out of the way?"

Mabs turned crimson, unable to answer.

"You knew," Rosa said, "that I had planned to go off with Renee to buy a frock for the dance. You jolly well thought, in your own schoolmistressy way, that I was going to spend money, didn't you? You and Dick between you are so concerned about what I spend, aren't you? As though—with gathering bitterness—" it was any of your beastly business. No, don't answer me back," Rosa went on, the storm gathering within her. "If you want to know what I think of that, Mabel Lynn, I think it was a downright rotten trick to play."

Mabs stared at her hopelessly.

"But Rosa, listen! I knew nothing about your dress."

"Yes, you did!" Rosa snapped.

"I tell you—"

"Oh, chuck it!" Rosa cut in. "Well, it doesn't matter. I can please myself, and I jolly well am going to please myself. I refuse to be treated like a child, Mabel Lynn. Now you can go."

"Oh, go!" Rosa cried impatiently.

Mabs clenched her hands. Hot words of anger trembled on her lips. But she smothered them. No, no! Rosa, in her

present sensitively touched mood was ripe for a row. A row at this juncture might undo all the good she had so far achieved. But she was disturbed. Knowing what she knew of Rosa's state of finance, she was apprehensive. Where was Rosa going to get the money to buy a frock?"

Mabel turned droopingly towards the door.

Rosa watched her, a pang of contrition at her heart; then, deliberately steeling herself, the door closed. Mabel disappeared.

Renee grinned.

"Well, I must say you handled that pretty slickly," she admiringly commented. "Jolly well serves her right! She knows where she gets off now!"

Rosa turned irritably.

"Oh, be quiet!" she said.

"But what—"

"Shut up!"

Renee pursed her lips. There was silence for a moment, then she said:

"Rosa, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to upset you. But—" She paused. "I had looked in Madame Judith's this morning while I was in Friardale," she added slyly. "The frock's still there. I was thinking—you know, old thing, if you still want that money, it's yours. And, Rosa," she added softly, "I asked Madame Judith if she would save it until you had looked at it."

Rosa started.

"And she said?"

"She said that she'd keep it until four o'clock this afternoon," Renee answered.

"Which means, if you want it, you'll have to buck up. Of course," she added offhandedly, "if you don't want it—"

And then left it, seeing by the expression on Rosa's face that she was tempted.

Rosa did want that frock, meant to have that frock. Rosa hesitated, then she said slowly:

"You—you mean that, Renee?"

"Of course, old girl! Do we go?"

Rosa gulped.

"I—I'm sorry for—for being rude to you just now," she said. "Oh, Renee, I'm a cat, I know. But I didn't want to row with Mabs—somehow. It upset me. Just for the moment. All the same, she added, "she had no right to interfere."

"Of course she hadn't," Renee purred. "But why worry, Rosa? After all, she was only doing it, as she thought, for your own good. She's not a bad sort really, though she does hate me. Rosa, do we go?"

"We do!" Rosa decided.



## Brought to Book

IN two hours they returned, Rosa, crimson with excitement, carrying a bulky parcel under her arm.

From the window of Study No. 4 Mabs, rather anxiously staring into the quad, saw them come in, heard their steps as they hurried past the door, and heard them climbing up to the dormitory.

Rosa had that frock. Five guineas it had cost—the five guineas borrowed from Renee. Renee had her IOU for the amount in her pocket now.

In a perfect fever of impatience Rosa unwrapped it, gasping at the sight of the lacy, fluffy, frilly thing which met her gaze.

"Oh, Renee, isn't it gorgeous?" she breathed.

Gorgeous it was! Little that frock that Rosa loved. A little too grown-up, perhaps, for a schoolgirl, but Rosa liked to look and feel older than she was, and the frock fulfilled her ideal in every direction.

There and then she must try it on, Renee watching in fascinated admiration as she preened herself in front of the long mirror.

She turned beamingly.  
"Renee, how do I look?"  
"Marvellous!" Renee breathed.  
Rosa laughed gaily.  
"You think it will stun them?"  
"I think," Renee replied, "it will just knock them sideways. It really is a bargain, old thing." She frowned thoughtfully. "But what about the other things to go with it? Shoes, stockings, and so on. And, of course," she added, "you'll have to have some sort of jewellery, even if it's only imitation."

Rosa paused. Anxiously she scanned herself in the mirror again.

Yes, she looked marvellous, all right. The frock was just perfect. Renee, sitting on the bed, watched her calculatingly, narrowly.

But it was true what Renee said. She must have a hair ornament, for instance. Must have a bracelet, and, considering the part she was playing, she must wear some sort of jewellery on the bodice.

A lovely red star would make a topping finishing touch. And stockings—she hadn't a single decent pair of silk stockings now. That would require money.

Rosa pouted.  
"But how's it to be done?" she muttered. "I couldn't borrow. I should want two or three pounds."

Renee, looking out of the window, frowned as she saw Miss Primrose emerging from the school in company with Miss Charmant, the Fourth Form's new and charming mistress. A sudden light leapt in her eyes. She turned.

"Rosa!"  
"Yes!"

"Wait a minute, I've got an idea. Supposing," Renee breathed, "I could find something—something valuable enough, I mean. I don't know what. I'll have to rummage among my things, but I think I've got one piece of jewellery we could raise money on. Mind you," she added, "it will mean that you'll have to pawn it."

Rosa stared at her. She gulped. Her face was flushed again, her eyes ashine. Vanity had its hold upon Rosa now. Having got the frock of her dreams, she felt it absolutely necessary to get the other things to go with it.

But Renee had already done so much towards helping her. Renee had already lent her her last five pounds. She shook her head.

"No, Renee, old thing, I couldn't let you."

"Oh, rats! If I can find something, will you pawn it?"

"Then wait there!" And quickly Renee leapt to her feet. "No, don't move!" she cried. "Just stop there! Oh, Rosa, I'm so proud of you in that frock. I do so want you to look your best. Just wait!"

She waved a hand. Rosa, gulping, shook her head. What a grand girl to have for a friend, she thought—what a topping, unselfish trick she was.

Not like Mabs—Mabs who had made it plain that she did not agree with her spending money, who wouldn't have lent her money even if she'd asked for it. Dear Renee—why, she'd give her her last.

Rosa smiled. Very melting and tender

her regard for Renee in that moment. Again she turned to the mirror, laughing in delight at her reflection.

She did not see the door open, did not see, until Mabs spoke, that the girl in her thoughts was standing there. But she turned as she heard her name.

"Rosa!"  
"Oh!" Rosa paused. "Hallo, Mabs!" she said, with difficulty. "Like my frock?"

"A new one?" Mabs asked.  
"Yes."

"Must have cost a lot!"  
"It did!"

"But where—"  
Rosa's eyes glistened.

"I didn't," she said, with a flash of temper, "ask you to discuss the price of it. I asked you if you liked it. You're not thinking of the frock."

"I'm sorry," Mabs said. "I was only talking for your own good—"

But irritably Rosa shrugged. Mabs paused, crimsoning a little. Obviously Rosa was still touchy. Obviously, in her present sensitive mood, it would not take a great deal to provoke Rosa into a quarrel.

Mabs turned and went, hurt a little, wondering and worried.

Renee had been out with Rosa to buy that frock. Renee had persuaded her into buying it. Rosa did not know that her father was broke. Rosa obviously had borrowed the money for the frock, which she would never be able to pay back. Did Renee know that?

And then, suddenly rounding the end of the corridor which led to the mistress's quarters, Mabs paused.

For out of the door of Miss Charmant's study a figure had suddenly appeared. It was the figure of Renee Ballard. Instinctively Mabs drew back, warned perhaps by the very furtiveness of the girl's attitude that she had been up to mischief.

For a second she saw something glint in her hand—something which flashed in the light. With a guilty glance to right and left, Renee closed the door and slunk away.

Now what, Mabs wondered, had she been up to? The girl's manner left no doubt that it was something fairly shady.

She paused for a moment. Then she started again as up the corridor came Miss Charmant. Mabs remembered then that, as treasurer of the bazaar fund, Miss Charmant had asked her to look in and collect from her this afternoon, and, rather curious as to what Renee had been doing, tapped at the door. Miss Charmant's voice, rather worried, bade her come in.

The mistress was staring perplexedly at the floor. Mabs looked surprised.

"Have you lost something, Miss Charmant?"

"My watch!" Miss Charmant bit her lip. "I left it on my desk. A little diamond-framed watch it was, which my father gave me on my last birthday."

Mabs stared. She remembered the glint and the flash of the thing which she had seen in Renee's hand.

"I'm sure I left it on my desk," Miss Charmant went on. "I always take it off when I use my typewriter, and—well—Miss Primrose called me out, and I forgot to take it with me. It can't be far away."

"No," Mabs said.  
"But very queer was the tone in which she uttered those words."

She left the study. Quickly she hurried back to the dormitory. There at the door she halted, tensing as she saw the scene being enacted within.

Renee was standing facing Rosa, who

had changed into her school clothes again. Oh, Renee's open palm gleamed something which sent the queerest of thrills through Mabs. For it was the little diamond watch.

"Well, there it is, old girl," Renee said eagerly. "You can have it. But take it now—at once! The pawnbroker should let you have at least a couple of pounds on it."

"But, Renee, I never knew you had such a lovely watch!"

Renee laughed.  
"Well, naturally I don't parade such treasures," she said. "But take it, Rosa, old thing! Hurry off with it now before the shop closes!"

"Oh, Renee!"  
And Rosa's eyes gleamed. She stretched forward her hand. Almost as if afraid, she took the dainty trinket which was extended to her, gazing at it almost in awe. Mabs' eyes flashed.

She saw the plot then! Renee, to involve Rosa in further disgrace, was persuading her to pawn this watch—stolen property! After which, of course, she would deny all knowledge of the transaction!

Crash!  
The door flew inwards. Both Rosa and Renee wheeled.

"Rosa, don't you dare pawn that!" she cried.

Rosa jumped, almost dropping the watch. She glared.

"You—what the dickens—"  
"Rosa, that's stolen!" Mabs cried quivering.

"Stolen!" she said scornfully, fingering round at the suddenly shrinking Renee. "I saw her! She took it from Miss Charmant's desk not five minutes ago. You fool! If you pawn that watch—"

"Mabel, stop! What are you saying?" And Mabs herself started round as that voice reached her ears. Mabs herself shrunk back as Miss Charmant, accompanied by Miss Primrose, came into the room.

Renee turned white, Rosa looked amazed.

"Mabel, what is that you said?" Miss Primrose rapped. "Miss Charmant, if that's the watch?"

"Yes!"  
"And you, Renee?"

Renee panted.  
"I—I didn't—"

"Thank you!" Miss Charmant took the watch from the dazed Rosa's hand. Mabs, dismayed, fell back. "Renee, you took this," she said. "Mabel, you know all about it. I do not understand, but—Renee, why did you do it?"

Renee gulped.  
"Well, I—"

"And, Mabel, if you knew that the watch had been stolen, why did you not tell me when you found me looking for it?"

Mabs shook her head.  
"I—I wasn't sure—"

"I see!" Miss Primrose pursed her lips. "Thank you, Mabel!" Her stern eyes fastened upon Renee. "That was a wicked thing to do," she said, "unworthy of any girl belonging to this school. Apparently your idea in stealing this watch was to get Rosa to pawn it, making it appear at the same time that it was your property. I cannot overlook that. Whatever your motive, your action was one which ranks with one of the worst offences a girl in this school can commit. I shall write to your father asking him to take you away at the end of the week. Meantime, come with me."

Renee threw her one sulky, glowering look. But the look she turned upon Mabs was savage in the extreme. Rosa stood still, amazed, looking now as if

she hardly understood it at all. Miss Primrose turned.  
"Mabel, you will come, too," she said curtly.

And Mabs went. She had not meant to give Renee away, but she could not feel sorry. For she was thinking of Rosa, of the disgrace from which she had saved her. Now, with Renee Ballard's term at Cliff House so suddenly restricted, Rosa would be free from her influence at last.

Renee shook her head.  
"Oh, Rosa—I've got to leave!"  
Rosa pouted.  
"Well, what did you expect?" she asked roughly. "And what a dashed silly thing to do. Why on earth did you take that watch?"  
Renee eyed her for one long moment, then burst into tears. Rosa jumped.  
"Oh, my hat! I say—"  
"You—you despise me!" Renee quiveringly cried. "Rosa, you, of all

was a girl who had given her all, who had risked expulsion to save her! And it was all, she thought, with a flash of that unreasonable temper so characteristic of her when she found herself torn by these moods, the fault of that sneak, Mabel Lynn. Mabs, who had betrayed her. Mabs—  
Rosa drew a deep breath. Ashamed of herself as she was in that moment, she felt that she had to find vent for her wrath somewhere. Well, she'd jolly well



"ROSA, that watch was stolen—stolen by Renee!" Mabs panted. "I saw her. She took it from Miss Charmant's desk." There was an instant's silence, then a voice spoke from the doorway:  
"Mabel, what are you saying?" It was Miss Primrose.



Panic!

"AND if I do not receive settlement by Saturday, I am putting the matter in the hands of my solicitors—"

"And if you fail to settle the bill in full by Saturday, I shall have no alternative but to take legal action—"

These were extracts from two letters which awaited Rosa Rodworth on her arrival in Study No. 1.

Something of a hunted look came into her eyes as she read them again, shuddering at the threat each implied.

Money—money—always money! Why couldn't they wait?

Rosa moved restlessly. They were in earnest, they were serious. Impatiently she put the letters aside, picked them up and put them down again. If only, she thought, she could pay these and be done with them! If only she could get rid of them!

Friday—on Friday she would have money!

But Friday was still some way off. In the meantime, those letters hung over her head.

The door opened. Renee herself came in. She looked as if she were going to cry. Rather unsure of the attitude she should adopt, Rosa stared at her.  
"Well?" she asked.

people! No, no, I could bear the other—but not this. Rosa," she moaned, "you know why I did it. I did it to help you—to just to help you. I wanted you to look nice. I'd lent you every penny I possessed, and then, to get more money, I stole. Now I'm practically expelled, and you—you ask that. Why did I do it! O-o-oh!" And Renee sobbed as if her heart would break.

"Renee, old thing—" Rosa went all hot.  
"Renee, I—I'm sorry," she cried. "I didn't realise it—not like that. Renee, please, please forgive me," she begged, and knelt down. "Renee, old thing, look at me."  
"And—and now," Renee choked, "you won't have the shoes and the other things. You'll have a beautiful frock and nothing else."

"Renee, it doesn't matter," Rosa said desperately.

"But it does," Renee choked. "I—I wanted to see you look nice. And it would have been all right if it hadn't been for that cat, Mabel Lynn. She spied on me. She knew that Primmy and Miss Charmant were in the corridor, and she spoke out so that they should hear. I was only doing my best for your sake, Rosa."

"Yes, yes!" Rosa cried. "Oh crumbs, please don't cry," she begged earnestly. "I'm just an ungrateful cat. I—I didn't quite see it like that before. Renee, do forgive me!"

Renee sobbed again. Rosa gazed at her despairingly. Dear old Renee! And she—she— She gulped. Here

tell Mabs what she thought of her, at all events. Mabs had no right to interfere. To try to put her against Renee. With a glance at the still weeping girl, she flung out.

But when she reached Study No. 4 she paused.

Mabs was there—so was half the Form. It was the final day of the bazaar collection, and Mabs sat at the table in front of a pile of money and notes. Girls in receipt of pocket-money were making their last and final contributions, and Mabs at that moment was extremely busy.

But she saw Rosa; she paused.  
"Hallo, Rosa!"

Rosa's eyes fixed upon the pile of money, travelled slowly to her.

"Come in, old thing!" Mabs invited affably.

But Rosa, finding most magically and most mysteriously her anger had evaporated, pushed her way out again. That money—

She did not go back to Renee. She stepped into the quadrangle. In her mind's eye she saw the money again, piles and piles of it. That would pay her debts ten times over, she thought. That would buy her all those accessories that she wanted to wear with her marcelled frock.

If—and then angrily she checked herself as she realised where her thoughts were taking her. No, no, not that!

Moodyly she strolled about, thinking of those accessories, her threatening creditors, her debt to Renee. If only

she had money! If only the weights could be lifted from her mind!

She did not see the telegraph-boy who stalked past and disappeared into the school. She did not see the face of Renee Ballard looking out at her. She did not know until later that the boy went to Renee. The telegram was from Renee's own father, and it read:

"SENDING YOU MONEY DAY AFTER TO-MORROW.—FATHER."

But when Rosa went in, Renee handed her the wire.

"Rosa, this came for you," she said. "I'm sorry, I opened it by mistake."

But Rosa cared nothing about that. Her heart was leaping. The day after to-morrow! In twenty-four hours she would be in possession of the money she so desperately needed. Her father would not let her down.

"Oh, my hat, if it were only to-day," she muttered. "Renee, if I could only get the money to-day—"

Renee eyed her queerly. "There seems plenty of money about," she said. "I went along to Study No. 4 not a minute ago. Mabel Lynn was tucking piles and piles of it away in a cashbox which she placed in the bureau." She looked at her quickly. "Rosa, why don't you borrow some of that?"

But Rosa shook her head. No, no! That would be stealing!

"Why not?" Renee asked again. "Nobody would be any the wiser, Rosa. I heard Mabs say that the money wouldn't be required until next week. The final collection has been made, and that means the box won't be opened. You could take what you wanted, couldn't you? And the day after to-morrow you could put it back. It's simply silly just to wait, when the money's there for the asking."

Rosa was tempted. She felt herself weakening. Well, why not? She wanted to settle her debts, get those things. But would it be stealing?

Rosa was tempted. Rosa was haunted. Silly for that money to be idle while she was so earnestly in need. She found it preying upon her mind. The more she thought about her debts, the more tempted she became.

Night came. She was still thinking. Well, why not? Nobody would be any the wiser.

And what a relief it would be to solve her problems to-morrow!

Temptation won, as Renee Ballard knew it well. In the early hours of the morning, Rosa Rodworth tremblingly crept down the stairs. Feeling a thief, she stole into Study No. 4, found the box, and opened it.

When she came back, stricken and white-faced, she immediately thrust a bundle of notes under her pillow, and in the morning looked so white and wan that Renee, coming into the study, regarded her sharply.

Rosa gulped. She felt she had to tell someone.

"Oh, Renee, I—I did it!"

Renee's eyes lighted up.

"Sensible old thing," she said.

"How much did you take?"

"Five pounds."

"Poo! I should have taken more!"

Renee said. "When are you going to get the things?"

"Well, I've got rehearsal this afternoon—"

"That means you're going this morning," Renee nodded. "Good luck, old thing!"

She laughed. Rosa really felt a bit easier about it then. But she missed the sly, crafty smile on Renee's face when, half an hour later, that girl saw

her off, accompanying her down to the gates.

Directly Rosa had gone, Renee returned to her study. There she paused a few moments to write a card, and then, having written it, took it along to Miss Primrose's study and slipped it under the door. Not for a long time, however, did Miss Primrose see it.

When she did pick it up, she jumped. For the card, printed in unidentifiable black capitals, read as follows:

"THE BAZAAR FUNDS IN MABEL LYNN'S CHARGE HAVE BEEN TAMPERED WITH.—ADVISE IMMEDIATE INVESTIGATION.—WELL-WISHER."

Miss Primrose frowned. Who had written that? Some form of practical joke, obviously, and yet—

Well, it was her duty, she reflected, to investigate even practical jokes when the imputation was as serious as this. Mabs was out. She sent for Barbara.

Babs jumped when she saw the card. "Oh, Miss Primrose, I'm sure it hasn't been tampered with."

"But we must look into it, Barbara," Miss Primrose said. "I do not favour these anonymous messages, as you know, but this is a matter which affects the whole Form—the school, indeed."

They went, just as Rosa Rodworth, laden with parcels, and with a smile upon her face, came in at the gates. Rosa felt happier then. She had cleared off her debts. She had bought the accessories she required for the frock. To-morrow the money from her father would arrive. Indeed, the only snag in the whole thing was the fact that the little gold monogrammed ring, which she had been wearing last night, had unaccountably disappeared.

She reached Big Hall. Just from habit, she glanced at the letter rack as she passed, and then her heart leapt. There was a letter for her—a letter bearing a Continental postmark.

## A FUGITIVE— 'MIDST LONDON'S MILLIONS

ONCE the wealthiest girl at Cliff House—now a penniless fugitive in mighty London! Read what happens to Rosa Rodworth now that she has fled in disgrace from the school—and of how Babs and Mabs, and Dick Livingstone strive to save her.

Next Saturday's brilliant, long complete story by Hilda Richards is laid in mighty London, and is a tale you must not miss. Remember the title!



The money from her father!

Rosa could almost have sung. In great haste she made her way up the stairs to Study No. 1. What a chance to repay her debt before classes were dismissed! Then, with her hand on the knob of the door, she paused. What was that?

Her name— "But do you know if Rosa Rodworth has been here, Barbara?"

Rosa paused. Quickly her face went along the passage. The door of Study No. 4 stood open. Barbara's reply came.

"No, Miss Primrose. But I'm sure it can't have been her."

"Then how are we to account for the presence of her ring in this box?"

Rosa's heart seemed to turn over. For one dreadful moment an awful paralysis seized her. They had found out! And she, in her trembling panic when she had borrowed that money, had left her ring in the box!

"When Rosa comes in," Miss Primrose said ominously, "send her to me."

There was a movement. Panic seized Rosa. Tremblingly she pushed the door of her study open softly she entered it. She was found out—found out! What should she do?

Shivering, she sat down. Wait! Here was her solution. She would go to Primmy, say that she had taken the money for a joke, and hand her the missing notes. If she could say that she had done it just to scare Mabel Lynn, then—

Feverishly she opened the letter, then blinked. There were no notes—no money of any description. But the letter was from her father—

What did it mean? Where was— And she read the letter—and, reading it, felt her senses reeling. What was this? Her father ruined; her father penniless; unable to send her another shilling!

Then the full horror of her crime came back to Rosa. She had borrowed money she could not pay back! She was a thief—a thief!

Only one thing—she must get out. She must fly!

Hardly realising what she was doing, she snatched a piece of paper towards her. Feverishly she wrote upon it; then, her heart feeling as though it was breaking, she stole along to Study No. 4. There she put the note on the table.

Ten minutes later, almost sick with shame and apprehension, she was on the bus; half an hour later, with her last remaining shillings she was buying herself a ticket to London.

The train came in; heart-broken she climbed into it. Good-bye, Cliff House! Good-bye, Mabel Lynn! Good-bye, Renee!

She sat in the corner; and then suddenly, uncontrollably, the Stormy Petrel buried her face in her hands and wept.

AND at the same moment Mabs, in Dick Livingstone's company, was reading the note Rosa had left in Study No. 4.

"Dear Mabs,—Please forgive me for running away, and ask Miss Primrose if she can find it in her heart to forgive me, too. I thought I had plenty of pluck; but, now the test has come, I find I am a coward. I took the money from the bazaar-box, intending to pay it when my father's remittance arrived. My father did not send me a remittance. He is penniless himself. I can't face you and the school again. Think kindly sometimes if you can of—"

"ROSA RODWORTH."

## Schoolgirls in the South Seas: A Thrilling Desert Island Serial, Featuring the Famous Chums of Morcove



# Morcove Marooned!

FOR NEW READERS.

**BETTY BARTON & Co.**, of Morcove School, together with members of *Grassquaver*, 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 kidnappers is a man named **DULIP KHAN**, an Indian ruler and tyrant. Later, his yacht anchors near the island, and the chums realize that he is going to attempt to recapture Muriel.

Dave and Betty are taken prisoners by Khan's party; he intends to hold them as hostages. They are taken to his yacht from which they attempt a desperate escape.

(Now read on.)

### On a Wide, Wide Sea

"THIS raft, Dave—it was not the only one on the ship?"

"No," Betty. "I saw two others."

Calm as ever the voice of this one chum of hers who had shared Betty's adventures of the last few hours! Perfectly calm, the answer he had made just then, although it told of peril for them both, as great as ever.

But Betty Barton herself had never been one to go to bits in a time of crisis. She was silent now, when this might well have been a moment for her to cry out, dismayedly:

"Those men on the ship, then, if they like can get a raft out and come after us!"

Her eye measured the distance between that stately steam-yacht which was Dulip Khan's princely possession, lying idle upon the quiet ocean, and this emergency raft, by means of which she and Dave Cardew had made such a desperate escape only a few minutes since.

Not more than three hundred yards had they been able to work away from the vessel; and that—if the five Indian seamen acted with anything like promptitude—was no distance at all.

## By MARJORIE STANTON

But she and Dave were never ceasing to paddle the raft with their hands, and there certainly was a quickening of its movement that encouraged them to go on doing that with all their might, since it was the only thing they could do!

Suddenly the very thing Betty and Dave were dreading was done by the seamen.

A life-raft, similar to the one upon which the girl and lad had escaped together, was rushed to the steam-yacht's rail and cast overboard.

Heavily it splashed into the sea, and was instantly ready to take as many of the Hindus as might be minded to ride it.

Nor had there been time for it to start drifting away when two, at least, of the seamen climbed over the deck-rail, and simply let themselves flop down into the waves, meaning to clamber aboard the raft, as they could very easily do.

Faster—faster still Betty and Dave tried to get their own raft to float away. Imprisonment on the yacht had been serious enough, in the first instance. To be overtaken now, and brought back into renewed captivity—that would mean a greater disaster than ever.

They saw those two men, bobbing up after the hasty plunge, make each a wild swimming stroke or two, so as to reach the rope-loops with which the raft was provided. In a moment both men had taken hold, and had only to draw themselves up.

And then, causing Betty and Dave to wonder what was happening, the rest of the seamen, looking over from the deck, yelled excitedly.

A warning of danger to the pair who were still in the sea? The frantic shouting and yellings were all in the native tongue; but they made a panicky

chorus that seemed due to sudden fright. "Ah!" Betty heard Dave say "Shark!"

A shark! Instantly she realised one of those deadly creatures of the deep might have been induced to hang about as soon as the first raft was flung overboard. Prior to that, buckets of kitchen waste had been thrown into the sea, so, in any case, the presence of sharks was not surprising.

And now, as if every second saved meant the difference between life and death, those two men scrambled on board the raft.

There, they quite lost their heads. They yelled and gesticulated to their shipmates on the yacht to be thrown a rope.

Betty and Dave saw the hideous head of a shark heave, shiny-wet, above the turmoiled water, close by that second raft.

The half-breed woman yelled down and waved to the men who were upon the raft to "go on!" But were they intending to start paddling with their hands, at the risk of having a hand snapped off at the wrist? Not they!

Dave suddenly spoke across to Betty: "You'd better mind out now, Betty. Have a rest."

"No!" she refused. "Just as if I can't take care of myself!"

"You must, Betty, do as I say! Besides," he added, as if to soften his almost stern word to her just then, "so far as those fellows are concerned, we've nothing to fear now. They're not coming after us."

"No," she cried, and then she laughed. "We've done them—done them, Dave! We're off!"

And, in her wild delight, she even sat round on the raft, so as to have her back to the great steam-yacht and face the way they were slowly drifting.

"Back to the island!" "No reason why not, either," Dave answered her confident cry. "A few miles at most—"

"If only the morning were clearer

we could see the island now!" Betty exclaimed. "Oh, Dave, and just think what a surprise we shall give the others when we do get near enough to be seen by them!"

He nodded.

"I say, keep a look-out for those bottle messages that we sent adrift at daybreak."

"Goodness, don't you think they're halfway to the island by now!" she grimaced. "They bobbed away so splendidly! If only we could be going as fast now!"

"We're not doing so badly!" he cheerily commented, still looking back to the now-distant yacht. "It's fine that they hadn't a boat to launch, but we know the ship's boats are all in use—or, rather, lying ready for use by Khan and his lot on the island."

"Dave," came from Betty uneasily, "supposing one of those boats happens to be coming out to the yacht? Khan might be wanting to go aboard again. Or they might want to fetch supplies ashore."

"Yes, I know; I've been thinking of that."

"Of course he had—he, the lad who always thought of everything! But shoo!"

"Oh, well," she shrugged, "we won't trouble trouble until trouble troubles us!"

"That's the idea! You know, Betty, it's helping us—"

"What is, Dave?"

"The little wind there is—"

"When we haven't a sail!"

"You and I can't be sitting here, Betty, without catching what wind there is—and I'm not going to wish for more, for it might be too much."

"Oh!" she laughed, in fresh delight. "Then shall I stand up and make a mast of myself for the blanket to serve as a sail? Why not?"

"Because," he said, "I'm going to do that. Betty, care for something to eat? Biscuits in the big tin; and a tinned tongue which I can open with my jack-knife."

"Not yet, Dave," she dissuaded him, as he took out his knife. "I'm hoping the tinned stuff will come in useful on the island. When we're with all the others again, it will enable us to have what Naomer calls a 'celebration!'"

"Help yourself to the biscuits then—and water in one of those bottles, Betty."

"Yes, all thanks to you! I hated your going back to get provisions before we started. I was in terrible dread. I don't mind telling you, when I was waiting for you on the raft. What's the joke?"

"I'm thinking of the other reason I went back, Betty—down into the engine-room, to squeeze the main steam-pipe in a vice. That's put a spoke in Khan's wheel, anyhow."

He took a biscuit from the offered tin, said "Thanks!" as politely as if he were being offered hospitality in Study No. 12 at Morcove, then stood up to take a look round.

Betty constantly glanced at him, knowing that she might have read in his looks something that was passing in his mind.

It would be so like him to want to keep any new anxiety to himself. But the difficulty was, with Dave, to read his looks. He could keep them so inscrutable.

There he stood, as steady as could be when the raft was always rocking in the waves, munching his biscuit whilst he scanned the wide waters or looked up to the murky sky. The yacht was already becoming a vague shape in the bad, misty light.

Was he, she wondered, secretly worried about the very poor visibility? The sooner raft and yacht were out of sight of each other, the better. But there was the island to be looked for, and until it was sighted, how could they be at all sure of making some sort of a course for it?

"Well?" she asked gently, at last. "What about the blanket as a sail? Here, let's both stand up and hold it out!"

"No, keep down, Betty!" he bade her, at the same time dropping into a kneeling position. "We won't try that dodge with the blanket yet awhile."

"Why ever not?" She stared. "The wind is falling, you know. Supposing we get a dead calm—before rain?"

He nodded, as if she had bothered him with the obvious when he had plenty else to think about.

"Lie quite flat, Betty, same as I'm going to do," he said, a few moments later, suiting the action to the word.

Then she guessed. Danger! By not using the blanket as a sail, and by lying flat upon the raft, they stood a better chance of not being seen adrift upon the quiet water.

As she was refraining from talk, wanting not to distress him, she heard the purring of a motor-engine. Very faint it was, but unmistakable as the steady pulsing of a motor-boat.

Her looks must have betrayed renewed suspense, for Dave said to her in a tone of tender regret:

"You've heard it, too, then? Sorry, Betty, but—"

"But, Dave," she was glad to be able to suggest eagerly, "our people have one of Khan's boats! Would it be that one—coming out from the island, to visit the yacht?"

"I'm afraid not, Betty. They'd hardly be doing that, for the simple reason that Khan won't have told them we were sent aboard the yacht."

"Then it's a boat we've some of Khan's own men in it; Khan himself, perhaps. Where—where?"

"Keep down! You'll think me a brute," he instantly added, "for being so sharp with you, Betty. But lying down gives us a better chance of not being spotted. The raft isn't like a boat. She shows so little above water. And the bad light is in our favour, don't forget."

As a slightly louder stuttering Betty heard the sound of the motor-boat now.

"Coming this way then," she said to herself.

Would she and Dave be retaken? If so—cruel luck!

How unkind of Fate, if, after all, the yacht was to have its escaped prisoners brought on board once more.

Yet how easily such a misfortune, in all its magnitude, might be coming upon them now, when they were on this island, and sitting in a raft—and the boat, so close at hand, was one of Khan's speedy launches.

Heavily indeed were the odds against Betty and Dave.

The motor-boat had only to come within a mile of them, as it raced over the gloomy sea, and then—they must certainly be seen.

saw one another's faces greatly brightened by the sunset light.

But only that sunset ray there was to account for such brighter looks. Nothing to give cause for any great transfiguration as comes when a great weight has been lifted from heart and mind alike.

Here on the island, at the very spot where "Morcove & Co." had been, as it were, marooned by Fate, the day was ending as it had begun—under conditions of tragic suspense.

Polly Linton—hers was a bonny face simply made for smiles. But at this moment, although it glowed in the light of the setting sun, it was the face of a girl beset with anxiety.

Frowning at her thoughts, she frowned heavier still as she looked into a certain palm-leaf shelter to which she had come running eagerly, and found it deserted.

"Now where is he?"

"Gone again, Polly dear—I saw him just now," one of her Morcove chums called out to her, from a little distance away. "Down to the water's edge—look, there he is, standing all by himself."

"Then bother him!" Polly raged.

But Pam Willoughby, who was the chum to have pointed out the sought-for lad, knew that Polly's cry meant far less anger than sisterly anxiety about a "crooked-up" brother who, indeed, was certainly a trying patient!

Away went Polly. Flying past one and another of her fellow castaways as she ran to where her brother Jack was all alone—with every indication of wanting to be left alone.

He had gone with a limping step to a part of the beach which represented the extreme limit of the camp in that direction.

As Pam had said, there he was, at the very water's edge, shading his eyes from the sunset glare so that he might scan the wide waters over which darkness would so soon be settling.

"When you ought to be resting, Jack!"

"Eh?"

"I say, that knee of yours, and the ankle—"

"Oh, shut up, Polly! Always on about my blessed—"

"It's all very well! If you don't get right again—placed as we all are—"

"I'm getting right again, aren't I?" Jack protested. "All right, Polly," he softened. "I'll go in again—just to please you. 'Course, I don't want to do anything to make it worse. I want to be rid of this limp by the morning, and if I'm not, then don't you come near me! Shan't be fit to be spoken to."

"Oh, I'm used to that—by now," she twitted him.

"Yes"—and he winced—"yes, I know. Oh, you never should have had a brother like me, Polly-wolly. You're worlds too good; sitting up all last night on my account, and—and—all to-day again; fussing over me—"

"But," she suddenly grinned, "it's Naomer, isn't it, who has done you real good?"

"Eh?"

"That wonderful 'invalid dish' she made you!"

"That awful slosh—my hat!" he groaned. "But never let her know that I tipped it all away the moment her back was turned. She meant well, Polly!"

"But what do you mean, Jack, by standing here to look and look—as if there were anything to be seen?"

"It's all I can do—worse luck—just stare about, wondering, always hoping; a plane, Polly, or a ship, sent to search for all of us—"

## The Island Again

AT the long day's end, redly the sun was shining out through a gash in the pall of slate-coloured cloud.

There fell upon the calm sea a lurid glow which meant, for the island also, a sudden lifting of the gloom. And now those who were busy about their useful tasks in the seashore camp

"Yes, of course," she nodded. "Wouldn't that be marvellous! But it has been beastly dull and misty all day. It's bright now for just a few minutes, and then the darkness will come with a rush. Nothing in sight, is there?"

"Nothing! Except Khan's yacht, away over there—hasn't shifted all day. Gosh, Polly, as you say, a few minutes and night again—and at dawn to-morrow Betty and Dave are to be—"

"Sh!" Polly softly checked him. "Here—Murie!"

He made a lame movement, and, facing the girl who had come away from the heart of the camp as if wanting a special word with him and his sister, gave her a kind, comforting smile.

"Hallo, Murie; come to see me have my pulse taken, nurse?"

"He's very cross, I warn you!" Polly jested.

"Then I must try not to upset him still more," Muriel smiled back. "And you, Polly—I've got to be careful, I know, or you'll be most annoyed," she added seriously.

"With you? Impossible! Jack is the only one who ever annoys me—apart from Naomer, and sometimes Paula, and Tubby when he gives that snoring laugh of his."

"But," Muriel earnestly continued, after another smile, "I'm going to ask questions that must be plainly answered—they must be! I have, I know, been kept in ignorance all day—"

"Oh, Murie—"

"But, Polly, I might just as well be told—really, I might! I'm only jumping to conclusions, as it is. Last night Betty and Dave were carried off. This morning Khan sent a message from that camp on his side of the island."

"And, as you know perfectly well, Murie—it was to say that Betty and Dave were in his hands."

"Yes, but there was something else—something I do with me!" Muriel voiced her tragic inference. "Yes or no; did Khan offer to release Betty and Dave if—I were handed over?"

"He did sort of—"

"He said just that!" Polly was distressfully caught up by the ill-fated girl.

She, the storm-centre of this strange drama which was being enacted on the tiny island, looked very hard-driven now.

And Polly, fully aware of what a selfless, spirited nature Muriel's was, suddenly warned her:

"Now, Murie, I know what you're thinking, and it won't do! It's no use. If you're not careful, some of us will be keeping awake all night—to keep an eye upon you. To see that you don't go off—to give yourself up!"

"Honestly, Muriel," Jack interposed, "you must leave things in the hands of the grown-ups. It's what we fellows and girls have all got to do. All day there's not been one of us who hasn't been longing to—"

"Oh, as if I haven't been perfectly well aware of that, too!" Muriel exclaimed in great emotion. "Tell me this, though, Khan's offer—he fixed a time limit? And it expires—when? To-night? Now that the sun is setting, and—"

"No, Murie!"

"When, then? At dawn to-morrow, perhaps? Another twelve hours—but that'll be hours of darkness!"

The last of the sunset-light gave a pearl-like sheen to tears that were suddenly ready to fall from Muriel's eyes.

"Can anything happen in the night to save the situation—to save Betty and Dave?" she whispered. "Unless I'm handed over at once, in exchange for them, what else can save them, except

the arrival of a rescue party? And, by night, the chance of a plane or a ship turning up—"

"I wouldn't say that," Jack cheerily dissented. "After all, Murie, we keep a good fire going in the open. Other nights the weather has been thick, but to-night—after a sunset like this—"

A shout interrupted him; a wild cry calling attention: "Jack—Murie!" from Polly, as she further startled those two by suddenly rushing into the sea.

Only a few splashing steps did she take, and then, knee-deep in the lazy shallows, she stooped to snatch up something floating there.

"My goodness!" she yelled. "Look—look! A message in a bottle!"

"What! By heck—"

"You can see the paper, folded up inside," Polly spoke on in great excitement. She was plashing back with her sensational find, trying to unstopper the jar as she rejoined Jack and Muriel at the water's edge.

"A glass jar, like they use for bath salts," there was time for her to comment. Getting the stopper away, she inserted two fingers and thus tweezered out the folded paper.

"A liner's notepaper—"

"Liner be blowed!" Jack exclaimed. "S. Y.—that means steam yacht—"

"Khan's yacht!" gasped Muriel. "Oh—"

"And that's where they are—Betty and Dave!" was Polly's wild cry, now that she was starting to read the message. "Betty wrote this! It says—it says—"

Yet, after all, she did not read the message aloud. A lump had come into her throat, stifling her voice.

Polly, known at Morcove School as the madcap of her Form, was not an emotional girl. But at this moment no

sound but a sob could have passed her lips.

When she had read to the last word she could not tell to whom she was passing the paper, except that it was neither Muriel nor Jack, but one of her Morcove chums. Several of them, hearing her outcry when she first sighted the floating jar, had come running this way.

Dimly she was aware of her own brother, already looking away over the sea again—out to the distant yacht.

She put herself close to him, ignoring his "Leave me alone!" gesture—for she could understand his feelings so well.

The sun's rim touched the level horizon of the sea. For a few seconds more, crimson light flamed upon the waters and imparted such a glow to the island scene as was theatrical in its effect.

Then, leaden clouds out there that had parted awhile since, closed together again.

The light was all gone instantly. Polly saw her brother's face looking grey in the sudden deep dusk, and his eyes—staring out to the yacht, gazing at it yearningly before it should be lost to him in the darkness.

"Something will be done, but I shan't be in it," he muttered, more to himself than to the sister at his side. "I'm a crock, dash the foul luck that gave me this leg! But our men—taking Jimmy and Tom, most likely—they'll go out in that boat we pinched from Khan! They're there—Betty and Dave," he spoke on, under his breath—"on the yacht, and only a few of the crew and that woman to guard them. It could be done, I could take on the job myself, if only—"

Whatever else he said, in that undertone, Polly paid no heed to it. At this,



FLOUNDERING eagerly into the shallows, Polly made a wild grab at the floating jar. To her watching chums she yelled excitedly: "Look—look! A message in a bottle!"

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## BETWEEN OURSELVES

**M**Y DEAR READERS.—What a lovely time of year this is! I went for a walk with Cham the other day—or perhaps I should say that he took me for a walk—and it really was delightful.

I may add that I lost Cham almost at once, as he dashed off in pursuit of a rabbit, and so I was left alone to enjoy the peace and the charm of the autumn landscape.

There is something particularly enjoyable about the country in the autumn, a sort of lazy calm, like the hush before a storm. Even the sunshine is sweetly mellow, so different from the scorching blaze of high summer.

While I sat on a gate beside a tiny copse, and smoked, a lovely red squirrel came down from a cluster of hazel-bushes near by, and proceeded to get very busy at the bole of an old oak-tree.

I could see that he was preparing his winter store of nuts and beechmast, and even while I watched he made several journeys to the hazel-trees, returning each time with a nut in his jaws, which he added to the little store in the cavity beneath the oak.

The smoke from my pipe must have come to his sensitive nose, for suddenly he stopped, sat up, and gazed around. For several seconds he watched me, while I remained absolutely still, and then suddenly he bolted up the oak-tree in a flash, where, from a safe height, he looked down at me and chattered his anger at being disturbed.

What a good thing Cham wasn't about! He would have sat at the foot of that tree for hours, patiently waiting for Mr. Squirrel to come down!

### CLIFF HOUSE IN LONDON

The last of the present series of complete Cliff House School stories, featuring Rosa Rodworth, appears in next Saturday's **SCHOOLGIRL**.

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YOUR EDITOR.

one of the last moments before darkness rushed upon the waters, she saw—or thought she saw—a strange object drifting in.

She stared harder, fixedly. "Jack!" she jerked. "What's that out there—see it? Can't be a boat by the look of it, and yet—oh, but don't speak!" she entreated, with the same breath. "Listen!"

For now it seemed to her that a faint, wailing cry was coming off the sea to them, and the cry—the one word: "Morcove! Morcove!"

**"THAT'S BETTY!"**

"That's a raft, that is!" Jack's voice matched his sister's joyful yell. "It's Betty right enough, standing up to shout and wave! But—I don't see Dave!"

"Neither do I!"

In the deepening darkness, they strained their eyes to make out more of a spectacle so vague and strange that it seemed to be illusory.

Jack, when he shouted about a raft, had been thinking of the most likely explanation. The girlish figure was almost all that could be discerned.

"Morcove!" Polly and Jack yelled together. "Aho—Morcove!"

Others took up the eager, heartening cry, for it had become instantly known to everyone else in camp what had thrown brother and sister into such a state of excitement.

"Morcove! Betty! Morcove!" the shouting was kept up, whilst someone roused the camp-fire into a brighter blaze.

"Bet-tee" was the particularly shrill yell of little Naomer, as she rushed with other Morcovians down to the water's edge. "Ooo, hurrah! Ooo, gurgus! Bekas—et is Betty—Bet-tee!"

"But Dave—where was he?" Only a moment longer did anxiety on his account mar the general relief and joy; and then a second figure seemed to rise from the darkening sea, to stand close beside Betty.

"There he is! There's Dave as well! Hurrah!"

"Both of them!" Jack bellowed, and in his delirious joy he suddenly took hold of his sister and started to waltz her round.

"Your leg!" she yelled the reminder. "Be blown to my leg!" he chortled. "Say another word, Polly-wolly, and I'll swim out to them—I will!"

### Round the Camp Fire!

**A**N hour later, Betty and Dave were comfortably settled amongst all their fellow castaways, close to the camp-fire.

Never mind that Khan and his crew, so far as Morcove & Co. were aware, still remained on their side of the island. There had to be this happy "gather-round," to hear again, in greater detail, all that Betty and Dave had to relate.

Many a burst of laughter greeted their account of what had taken place when they were captives on the yacht.

But the second stage of their thrilling story, dealing with their time upon the raft, was one to keep every listener silent, grave-faced.

No moment of comedy had there been for Betty and Dave, whilst adrift upon the raft.

There had been the thick weather to thank that, after all, Khan's motor-boat, early in the morning, had not "spotted" them.

But that same murkiness, lasting all day, had kept them utterly at a loss as to their whereabouts on the wide ocean.

After midday, they had wisely decided to get some sleep, turn and turn about.

"Dave would have me take first spell, and then he let me sleep on and on—oh, right through the afternoon!" Betty carried on the narrative.

"You needed it," he quietly interposed. "It was not much sleep you got last night—none, any way, after three in the morning."

"Anyway, I felt I'd been a pig when I woke up on the raft—as late as five o'clock it must have been. It seemed as if we were in for a night on the sea; and then, after Dave had been asleep for the best part of an hour, the setting sun shone out. And I saw—I suddenly saw the island!"

"Quite close, after all!" Polly exclaimed.

"Yes! So close, in fact, that I wouldn't wake Dave at once, feeling sure we would be all right. We were steadily drifting in. Then the sun went down, and I—well, I felt a bit windy! I had been waving to attract attention. I started to shout, and then, of course, Dave woke up."

"You others on shore did some shouting just then," Dave said, with that sober smile of his.

"We did!" was the agreeing chorus. "Bekas, so I should zink!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "And I zink, too," Naomer shrilled on, "we ought to have a special grand do, for supper before we go to bed!"

"And a sing-song," Jack chimed in jovially. "A jolly old camp-fire concert, chaps!"

More cheers! And what a time of mirth and melody Morcove & Co. did enjoy that night, the mood being: "Never mind to-morrow! Here we are—still together after all!"

To a late hour they kept it up, many a school song as well as all "the latest" helping to fill out the programme.

Muriel was having her first experience of Morcove and Grangemoor in a really "whoopie" state of spirits.

And long after she and the Morcove girls had gone to their palm-leaf shelter for the night, Muriel had moments when she was ashake with inward laughter over the cream of the evening's fun.

And when she was not in that state of repressed merriment, she was at least supremely happy in the knowledge that all these good friends of hers had come to no harm yet, on her account.

To her, sinking to sleep at last, it was as if those on guard over the camp, at present, were crying reassuringly in the night:

"All's well!"

How long she had been soundly off she had no idea, when she suddenly awoke—not because of any disturbance, for there was complete silence.

She had been dreaming, and she would have believed that the dream had startled her out of sleep; but instantly she was aware of someone bending over her in the groping darkness of the shelter.

For a moment she peered up to see whose face it was above her own; then the face came a little lower, and panic seized her.

For her face was the face of that half-bred woman—craftiest and most daring of all those who were in Khan's service.

**NEW peril for Muriel!** Is she to be kidnapped again—despite all the efforts of the Morcove party? You must not miss next Saturday's thrilling instalment of this grand adventure serial. Make doubly certain of securing your **SCHOOLGIRL** by ordering it now