

"ROSA THE RUNAWAY": "HAPPY-GO-LUCKY LULU": "MORCOVE MAROONED!"  
"THE HOUSE OF BYGONE DAYS" FOUR PAGES OF ARTICLES—Inside

# THE SCHOOLGIRL

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

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EXIT

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**"I CAN PLAY THE  
PART!"**

Rosa Rodworth's Bid To Save  
The Show

A dramatic moment in this week's  
brilliant long complete Cliff House  
story: "Rosa the Runaway"

## A Powerful Complete Story Featuring Rosa Rodworth, The Stormy Petrel of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School



# Rosa the Runaway

IN mighty London—Rosa Rodworth, the fugitive, a penniless wanderer, friendless and alone; Renee Ballard, proud and arrogant, gloating over the Stormy Petrel's downfall; Babs, Mabs, and Dick Livingstone, seeking fame before the footlights. Dramatically their paths cross . . .

### Their Two-Fold Quest

"SLIP into it! One, two, three! Tip-tap, tappity-tip! No, Babs, you haven't quite got it!" And Mabel Lynn of the Fourth Form at Cliff House, looked anxious. "Try it again, old thing!"

Barbara Redfern, captain of the Form, brought the dance she was performing to an abrupt halt. She sighed as she shook her chestnut head.

"I don't think I'll ever master that step," she replied. "Goodness knows how Rosa managed it so perfectly. Still, let's have another shot. Dick, will you time me, please?"

"Pleasure!" Dick Livingstone said. "But he, too, looked anxious. Perhaps that reference to Rosa, meaning his own Stormy Petrel cousin, Rosa Rodworth, who had first been expelled from Cliff House, and then had run away, after stealing money from the bazaar collecting-box, was haunting his mind.

Dear, silly old Rosa! She who had been such a reckless spendthrift when she had money, who had learned too late of the ruin of her father—how marvellously she had performed this dance which Babs was now trying to struggle through!

But Rosa had gone—where, no one knew. The dance which she had rehearsed so perfectly must now be performed at short notice by Babs. Babs had already performed it once—or,

rather, a very makeshift version of it. That had been two days ago, when the school bazaar concert had been held.

And now—

Now there was a reason for that perturbation on Dick Livingstone's face, for Mabs' anxiety. For the dance was part of the playlet which the three of them were acting at the request of Dick Livingstone's father, a rather struggling theatrical manager, who had asked them to give it at the Burlington Theatre, at the charity matinee performance next Saturday afternoon.

"I'm afraid I'm hopeless!" Babs sighed.

"Oh, I think it's very good!" Dick gallantly replied. "Perhaps—you don't mind me speaking candidly, do you, Babs?—a few rough edges to knock off—but we'll attend to those at rehearsal at the theatre. But let's pack up now. Remember, we're off this afternoon. I suppose," he added wistfully, "nobody's heard anything of Rosa?"

Mabs shook her head, and Dick sighed.

"Silly old chump—running away like that," he said. "Oh, bother it, though! I'm worried about her. She couldn't have much money when she left. And,

of course," he added stoutly, "she'd never have taken that bazaar money if she'd known at the time that her father couldn't send her any more to replace it. She—"

And he paused as the door opened and another girl looked in. A pretty-looking girl, whose attractiveness was rather marred by the sneeringly supercilious smile which was on her face. His brow darkened, a rather queer thrust came to Dick's chin. "Well?" he asked shortly.

Renee Ballard laughed.

"Just looked in," she said off-handedly. "Got some news for you."

"News?"

"About Rosa."

Dick looked at her sharply.

"What about Rosa?"

"Nothing, but—" and Renee tantalisingly smiled. Slowly she withdrew a post card from her tunic and handed it to him. "I received that half an hour ago," she vouchsafed. "Rosa, of course, still thinking of me as the tried and trusty friend she had when she was at school here."

Babs and Mabs glanced quickly at each other. Then they looked at the girl. Contempt was in their faces—contempt for this false friend, this treacherous girl who had been Rosa's evil genius, who, in that subtle, crafty way of hers, had lured her on to her ruin.

What Renee Ballard's object was they had never found out. But only Rosa had been fool enough not to see through

By  
**HILDA RICHARDS**

the gate. Now, bowled out, ordered to leave Cliff House, Renee was flying her true colours with a vengeance.

Dick, reading the card, pursed his lips. His face was rather white all at once.

For undoubtedly the card was from Rosa. It bore a London postmark, but no address. It said:

"Sorry I left in such a hurry—without even saying good-bye. I am writing to say I haven't forgotten the five pounds I owe you, and as soon as I can get some sort of a situation I will pay you back. Please give my love to Mabs. Tell her again how sorry I am for everything that happened, and if you see my Cousin Dick, tell him I am writing to him later on.

"ROSA."

Dick looked at Renee oddly. "Why do you show me this?" he asked.

Renee shrugged. "Well, thought you might be interested," she said, "knowing how you dote on her. Also," she added, a malicious light in her eyes, "that's rather proof, isn't it, that she owes me five pounds. As her cousin," Renee mocked, "and as I'm leaving the school to-day, I thought you might like to pay me that five pounds on her account."

Mabs frowned. "Renee, you know that Dick hasn't got five pounds."

"Pity," Renee sighed. "Well, you needn't bother. If you can't rustle up the cash, I dare say my solicitors will find means when they find Rosa. Now good-bye, and a pleasant journey," she added mockingly. "I do so hope you will come and see Rosa when I've sent her to gaol!"

And, with a taunting wave of her hand, she went out. The three grimly stared at each other.

"Oh, what a cat!" Babs breathed. "And that," Dick burst out bitterly, "is the girl whom Rosa thought was her friend—who she still thinks is her friend." His face was hunted all at once. He stared grimly at his girl chums. "Babs, she means mischief," he breathed. "What will she do?"

Mabs frowned. "Well, I don't see that she can do anything—not really," she said. "She's just bluffing! She might see her solicitor, as she says. She might even find Rosa. But the beginning and the end of the matter, I should think, would be that Rosa will receive a solicitor's letter."

"But Rosa will pay back—when she can get money!" Dick cried. "She's not dishonest, even if she did take that money." His eyes smouldered as he gazed at the door through which the sneering Renee had disappeared. His big fists clenched. "My hat, if she were only a boy!" he muttered.

But Renee, unfortunately, was not a boy, and Renee, still resolved to bring about Rosa's final downfall, was plainly prepared to do her worst.

Still, she was leaving now. Unlikely indeed that they would meet her in London, even though she was going there, too. In any case, her visit had not been altogether without its bright side. She had left the postcard with Dick, and that postcard, sent last night, proved clearly and indisputably that Rosa was in the same town. The postmark gave E.C.4, which, Babs pointed out, was at least a clue. But was Rosa living in that locality, or had she just posted it in passing?

"Babs, Mabs, look here," Dick burst out. "We've got to do our best to find her. We must find her. Oh, I know it sounds an impossible job—in a place

like London. But we shall have time on our hands between rehearsals. Babs, you'll help, won't you?" he added pleadingly. "And you, too, Mabs!"

The two glanced at each other. "Of course!" they both assented at once.

And they smiled reassuringly, while Dick, heaving a sigh of relief, took his handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his face with a trembling hand.

To find Rosa—yes! That, as well as making a success of their show, was their purpose in London from that moment.



### In the Heart of London

"LONDON!" Babs announced. "Hope," Dick returned, "that pater is here to meet us!"

And Mabel Lynn, with head out of the compartment window as the train steamed into Charing Cross Station, nodded her golden head.

London it was. London at last. Barely five minutes it seemed since they had left Friardale, with a cheering, crying crowd of well-wishers from both Cliff House and Friardale to see them off.

What a thrill, what excitement that would have been normally. They, who had been selected to fill a gap in the big charity concert at a leading West End theatre, who had got a week's leave of absence in which to enjoy themselves.

But the parting had not been happy. Excited though each one of them might inwardly have been at the prospect

which lay ahead of them, their mood was tempered by seriousness and by sadness.

For in the forefront of each of their minds was the thought of that errant, lonely girl, whose impetuous follies had brought her to such utter disaster! Rosa!

Now the train was slowing down. Faces flashed by, voices shouted. With a shudder it stopped, throwing them together as eagerly the three of them groped for their luggage. Dick jumped out to give a hand to the two girls as they alighted, and simultaneously a sudden hand fell upon his shoulder. A big, bluff-looking man smiled into his face.

"Dick, old man!" "Why, pater!" Dick cried in delight, and eagerly grasped his father's outstretched hand.

Mr. Livingstone it was, punctual, as usual, to his promise. Babs and Mabs had already met him—at the bazaar concert, and they had both taken a tremendous liking to him. Smilingly they shook hands. He was unfeignedly pleased to see them both.

"Nice of you to come," he said. "I hope the show will turn out well. I've booked the theatre for rehearsals to-morrow and the next day."

"Oh, that's topping!" Mabs cried. "It's a big thing—for me," Mr. Livingstone said slowly. "I was given the job of organising this affair. The committee weren't too keen on wedging a trio of unknown schoolgirls and a schoolboy into the programme, but I talked them round. When they knew that it was your own play, written by Mabel—at which Mabs blushed prettily—they agreed to put it on for the novelty of it." And he paused, glancing quizzically at his son. "There



FOR an instant the figure on the pavement turned, showing a familiar face. "It's Rosa!" Babs panted. "Quick—we must stop her!" But the runaway had seen them; pursuit was hopeless!

was another—and a not very unselfish reason, I am afraid."

"Such as?" Dick queried.

"Shall we have a coffee in the buffet, and I'll tell you about it?"

"Well, that's a good idea," Dick agreed. "We could do with something to cheer us up. But, pater, tell me you see—or hear anything else. Have you been—travelling—the three of them hung on his reply."

Slowly, regretfully, the man shook his head.

"I'm afraid not!" He paused. "I had a letter from her father this morning, in which he tells me he is coming home. He hinted in his letter that he might have news for me, but he didn't say what sort. He'll be frightfully cut-up about his girl!"

They reached the buffet. Mr. Livingstone ordered the coffee and they sat down. For quite a while no one spoke. Rosa was in all their thoughts. Then, absently, Dick looked up. He smiled at his father.

"Well, pater, what's the selfish reason?"

"You can stand a shock, old man?"

"Oh, yes! Love 'em!" Dick smiled.

And then Mr. Livingstone told them, in a grave, shaking his head. Things had not been going too well for him lately. Indeed, so depleted had his finances become that it was certain now that Dick would have to leave Friardale School at the end of the term.

Dick winced a little at that. Babs and Mabs exchanged a dismayed glance.

"But things may not be so bad," Mr. Livingstone went on. "Dick, you've always wanted to go on the stage, haven't you?"

Dick flushed.

"Always been my idea ever since I could toddle," he muttered.

"I believe," Mr. Livingstone said seriously, "that if you got your chance, you would make good. I'm trying to flatter you, old man, when I tell you that I was very, very impressed by what I saw of you at the Cliff House bazaar concert. It was your performance—backed up by Mabs, which gave me the idea of introducing your play into the matinee programme."

"Yes!" Dick said, a trifle impatiently.

"Dick, it may be that matinee will solve your future for you. You'll have a chance to shine. Half the big names in London are on the bill, and apart from that, there are several big producer people coming along to watch rehearsals. I spoke to one of them the other day—a man named Predergast, who had just arrived in this country from America, on the look-out for a juvenile lead for a new show he's going to put on in New York. I mentioned you. I invited him to come along and see the rehearsals, and watch you at work."

"And—and—" Dick breathed.

"He's coming! If he likes you—you get a contract. That's all!"

Dick's eyes shone, Mabs flushed. They were sorry from the bottom of their hearts to hear that Dick must leave Friardale, but they were overjoyed to hear that such an opportunity awaited him.

As to Mabel Lynn, was the breath of life to Dick Livingstone, and though he loved his school, he would have given it up a thousand times for the chance of making an early start in the career he was determined to adopt.

And what a chance was this! To step straight off into a leading part—to have the chance at once of making his name!

And on Broadway, of all places!

"Oh, my hat!" he breathed.

"Good news?" his father asked.

"Oh, pater, it couldn't be better!

And I'll work—I'll work!" Dick said determinedly. "If I can only collar the contract, I shall be able to give you a leg-up, too, pater. The play's a good one. It ought to stand out even if we've got the whole world of professional talent in the bill. What do you think, Mabs?"

But Mabs shook her head. She couldn't say anything in that moment. Babs glowed, really, genuinely pleased. It would be hateful to lose Dick, of course—such a good chum he had been—but it would be just marvellous to feel that he had got the very thing he wanted.

They left then, Dick looking a little dazed. Outside the station they boarded a taxi, to drive off to the modest hotel in St. Stephen's Square, in which Mr. Livingstone had reserved accommodation.

It was a slow and tortuous business, however, getting through the London streets at this hour in the afternoon. After the quietness and rustic solitude of Friardale, it rather bewildered Babs and Mabs to find such a roar and hustle and bustle, and such unending streams of flowing traffic. Hold-ups were frequent.

The streets were crowded, for this was the London rush hour. Half the shops in Oxford Street were in the act of closing down, and the pavements were thronged. The taxi just crawled in second gear, never doing more than fifty yards without having to stop.

A halt rather longer than usual occurred outside a big drapery emporium in Regent Street, and Babs who was interestingly scanning the windows of the shops, with a vague idea of getting her new autumn frock, gave a sudden excited exclamation:

"Mabs—Dick! I say, look!"

Through the window of the cab she pointed. At once Mabs and Dick crowded to her side. And then they saw.

The slight, pretty, lonesome-looking figure which stood there gazing wistfully, but unseeing, into the shop window.

The figure of a girl, her back towards them, wearing the well-known Cliff House hat, from which the badge was missing. Tired and shabby she looked.

"Rosa!" whooped Dick.

Rosa, by all the miracles on earth, it was! Did she hear her name, or did some inner sense warn her of their proximity? Slowly, wondering, she seemed to react. For a moment they glimpsed her face, white, drawn, pinched the eyes glowing dully in cheeks that were the colour of parchment. A quick stab went to Mabs' heart. Babs gave a little cry.

And then Rosa saw them.

"Rosa!" Dick choked.

For one breathless instant she stood still. Into the pallid cheeks came a rush of incredulous colour. A flash of hope, of joy lit up her eyes. Then she seemed to react. As pale as death her cheeks suddenly turned. With a frightened little cry she pivoted on her heel.

"Rosa!" yelled Dick. "Rosa—"

"Oh, my hat, she's going!"

"No; stop her!" cried Babs.

"After her!"

But Rosa was already melting into the crowd. They caught a glimpse of her. One hurried word to his father and Dick had thrown open the door. Breathlessly Mabs and Babs leapt after him. There was a yell as the taxi began again to move. At the

imminent risk of being run over by a motor-bus, they reached the pavement. And then stared. Where was Rosa?

"She went that way—towards Piccadilly!" Babs cried. "Come on!"

But going on was another matter. The crowds were dense. Breathlessly they pushed their way along. At the corner of Piccadilly they spotted her again crossing the road. Despite the forbidding arm of a policeman, they ducked into the crowd.

But when they got to the other side of the road no Rosa was to be seen.

"Come on!" Dick cried. "Down Shaftesbury Avenue. She'll probably stick to the main streets."

But that was where Dick was wrong. Rosa, startled out of her wits at the sight of those three familiar figures, was in a state of feverish panic.

Having reached the opposite side of the road, she turned into a narrow side street, and hurried furtively through a maze of small turnings until she had reached Old Compton Street, in the heart of Soho. A little Italian coffee-bar was open there, and she darted in, seating herself away from the door, and screened by an alcove from the gaze of passers-by. She was still shaken, still in a flutter.

But now she was calming down. The waiter brought her coffee. Out of the corner of her eye she watched what she could see of the street as she sipped it, instinctively shrinking back at sight of every passer-by. Something like a sob rose in her throat.

Mabs, Babs, Dick—why were they here? She had seen them, and she had run away.

Why?

But she knew, even as she asked herself the question. She, Rosa Rodworth, was a down-and-out! She was shabby, down at heel. She was—oh, so utterly weary, so terribly tired!

But she still had her pride—that proud, fierce pride, which had seen her through so many crises, and which, at the same time, had so often contributed to her downfall.

Her downfall had been complete. Now she was almost destitute.

This coffee was Rosa's first drink today, except for some water at the fountain in Trafalgar Square. The pitiful little store of cash she had brought away with her from Cliff House—a matter of a few shillings only, had dwindled to almost nothing. Try as she might to find a situation, her sternest efforts had met with failure.

Rosa gulped. How she was going on she did not know. Just her pluck and her pride kept her going. The few things she could sell had already disposed of. For the last three nights she had lived in a girls' hotel, sleeping in a hard bed. But to-night there would not even be a bed. Her thoughts wistfully flew to Renee, that girl who had been her friend at Cliff House, to whom she owed five pounds. Towards Renee, at least, she did not feel as she felt towards these others. Supposing, she thought hesitantly, she wired her? Would Renee perhaps let her have a little money? And then, looking in her purse as the waiter came up, she hit her lip. There was only sevenpence here.

"How—how much?" she faltered.

"Threepence, please, miss?"

Rosa threw the threepence on the table. After the slightest pause she put another twopence beside it. An extravagant tip in her present penurious position, but one which at least saved her pride.

Well, thank goodness Babs and Mabs had not been this way. It would be

safe enough for her to clear off now. Heavily she rose, gazing wistfully and hungrily at the piles of cakes and sandwiches arranged behind the counter, and then, compressing her lips, started towards the door.

As she did so another customer came in.

And Rosa, stopping, stared at the newcomer bewilderedly. Then a joyful cry welled to her lips.

"Renee!"

For Renee Ballard it was! Renee, haughty, imperious, with a bag in her hand. But she did not look pleased to see Rosa. She looked hard, bitter, vindictive. And as she saw her standing there, that gladness light in her face, her arms instinctively half outstretched as if in appeal, a sneering smile crossed her lips. She laughed lightly.

"So!" she said. "I've found you, have I, Rosa Rodworth? Well, what about that five pounds you owe me?"



### Disillusion

ROSA RODWORTH blinked. Dazed and numb her expression as she stared at the haughty one.

Was this Renee Ballard—the girl who had been so sweet towards her at Cliff House; who had shared her most reckless adventures, had helped her to spend her money? This, Renee Ballard, the Renee who had always said that she would stand by her?

"Renee!" she faltered again. "Renee—oh, please don't joke!"

"Take a seat," Renee Ballard grimly suggested.

Rosa took a seat. She took it without shifting her eyes from the other's face. Then she shook her head.

"Renee," she said. "Renee, old thing! Don't look at me like that! I know you're only rotting. It's a funny thing, I was just thinking about you when you came in."

"Indeed?" Renee said uncompromisingly. "Thanks, waiter, I'll have cafe filtre and a couple of ham rolls. Are you going to have anything?" she added to Rosa.

"Oh, thanks!" Rosa heaved a sigh. "That's jolly nice of you, Renee. Yes, rather, please."

"Oh, don't thank me. I'm not going to pay for it!"

"Eh!"

"I said," Renee confirmed with a sneer, "that anything you want you can jolly well pay for yourself. I'm not here to stand treat to a pauper—and especially one who owes me five pounds."

Rosa's lips compressed. Something of the old fire came back into her eyes. Immediately vanished now, bitter contempt took its place. No longer was it possible to believe that Renee was joking.

"I see!" Rosa's temper rose. She was trembling, but she fought for self-control. "I should think," she added, "that you could see that I haven't got five pounds. But I haven't forgotten, as I told you in my postcard. As soon as I can get a job I'll repay you."

"A job? Scrubbing floors, perhaps?" Renee taunted.

Rosa's face turned white.

"Renee, that's cruel!"

"Is it?" Renee shrugged. "But it might be true," she went on. Thoughtfully she studied the crimson face in front of her, taking a cruel delight in the misery she saw reflected there. "I



ROSA'S glad cry of recognition was met by Renee with a hard smile. "So I've found you, have I?" she said. "Well, what about that five pounds you owe me?"

don't suppose they'll send a kid like you to prison, but there are such places as reformatories, aren't there? I suppose you know," she added, "that Miss Primrose has put the police on your track!"

That was a lie—a heartless, flagrant lie. But it amused Renee to see the alarm it brought into Rosa's face.

"Renee—no! She wouldn't!"

"Why not?" Renee taunted. She regarded the other disdainfully. "Why not?" she repeated. "You ran off with money that belonged to the school funds, didn't you? Why should Primmy have any compunction in putting the police on to your track? To her you were just a common little thief. You weren't even a Cliff House schoolgirl, having been expelled at the time, and Primmy was rather fed-up with you, wasn't she?"

Rosa eyed her in horror. Frightening the fear that took possession of her at once. The police! She had never thought of that.

Appalled, suddenly desperate, Rosa slunk back. Oh, what could she do? She, penniless, lonely. She leaned across the table.

"Renee, please listen," she begged. "Renee—no! Renee, I can't believe it that you have turned against me! We were friends at Cliff House. I lent you money, didn't I? I gave you a good time. Renee, you said then that you would always stand by me, that you would be my friend whatever happened. There's no one I can turn to now—except you! Renee, please," she begged feverishly. "I've no money, no home—nothing! After—after this I dare not show my face. Renee, for the sake of the friendship you always said you had for me, help me now—please!"

Such passion, such pleading in that appeal! It might have melted a heart of stone. But Renee, carefully sipping

cafe filtre, looked coldly over the rim of her cup.

"Oh, don't be a fool!" she snapped.

"Renee!"

"And don't shout my name about the place," Renee scowled. She put down her cup. "Now listen, idiot," she cried violently. "I never was your friend! I never meant to be your friend!" She laughed mockingly, as she saw the colour coming and going in the other's face. "Oh, yes, it was amusing to play up to you—to help you to spend your money and see you sliding on the downward path. It was fun when you were expelled. It was still greater fun when you pinched that cash and ran away. I knew all the time you were doing that that you'd never get any money from your father!"

Rosa's eyes were wide. Shaking, she rose to her feet.

"You—you knew?" she stuttered. "But—but it was you who advised me to do it!"

The other laughed.

"And like the fool you've always been, you took the advice. Yes, I knew! My father wrote and told me days before your father wrote and told you. You forget," she sneered, "that he was on the Continent doing the business deal that ruined your own father."

Rosa heaved a deep breath.

"But—but why did you do it?"

"Oh, reasons," Renee retorted carelessly. "Perhaps you'll find out when you meet your own father. He should know by now. Anyway, sit down. Don't make yourself conspicuous. The waiter is staring at you!"

But Rosa did not sit down. She stood gripping the edge of the table. Horror, dismay enveloped her like a wave. She felt suddenly sick with utter despair.

Then something seemed to snap in

Rosa's brain. For an instant all the old stormy furies were unleashed.

"You cat! You awful, treacherous cat!" she cried.

And she jumped forward, Renee, looking up, saw the blow coming—too late. Like lightning the hand of the quivering scapegrace came round. Renee jerked back as it connected with her cheek, her coffee spilling all over her. She gave a cry.

For a second Rosa, trembling, shaken, stood staring at her. Then with a choked sob she flew from the shop into the street.



### Homeless

SHE shouldn't have done that—she shouldn't!

So Rosa told herself as she made her way into the Tottenham Court Road.

Rosa was still trembling. Now that her burst of passion had exhausted itself she was regretting—as she always regretted the action done in the heat and haste of the moment. She should have kept calm.

But somehow she couldn't feel altogether sorry. If ever a girl had asked for what she had received, then surely that girl was Renee Ballard.

And yet—  
Sick, horrified was the dismay which swept Rosa. What a hopeless muddle everything was!

She thought of Mabs, Babs, Dick—those three who had always shown themselves so ready to help her—in London now. If she could only meet them again. If only—

But that was impossible. Knowing nothing of the objective which had brought them to the metropolis, Rosa miserably dismissed them.

Meantime, she had twopence. Just twopence, and a great, hungry pit in her stomach which was making her feel faint and her head reel.

She walked on.  
As if to add to her load of unhappiness, a drizzling rain began to fall. It was accompanied by a sharp wind which, in her present starved condition, caused her to wilt and shiver.

Without realising where her steps were taking her, she walked on. Dusk was falling, and lights were already going up. She blinked suddenly to find herself in the radiance of St. Giles' Circus.

For an instant longingly her eyes dwelt upon the Corner House. If she had money she could get food.

She had none. She walked on. The sight of a policeman standing at the corner of Bedford Street brought a sudden wave of guilty colour to her face. He stared at her searchingly as she went by, Rosa thought. And remembering what she had heard from Renee, she had to summon all her courage and her resources to pass him without breaking into a panic-stricken flight down the street.

Faster the drizzle fell, colder the wind blew through her garments. At sight of the police station farther up Tottenham Court Road she turned white and stopped, hurriedly bolting down a sideturning. Then, feeling more secure, she stuck to the less frequented side streets and, hopelessly lost, found herself presently in the dingier purlieus of Kentish Town. The destination board of a bus caught her eye. It said: "CHALK FARM."

Rosa hadn't the faintest notion where

Chalk Farm was. It sounded nice and rustic, however, and she thought she might get some sort of work which would earn her a bed for the night there. Hopefully she followed it.

But when she reached Chalk Farm she was dismayed to discover that no farm existed. Not, at any rate, that she could see. The place was an underground station and a rather busy terminus for one of London's bus services. Darkness had descended then. A neighbouring clock showed her that the hour was nine.

Nine o'clock! Soaked through! And not even the remotest notion of where she would sleep!

On, on she walked. The road seemed endless. Thinner grew the traffic, hurrying pedestrians scarcer. Trees were to be seen beside the roads, and a wide stretch of water in the middle of the road, nearly opposite an inn which bore the name of Jack Straw's Castle, told her that she had reached Hampstead Heath.

Well, what did it matter? One place was as good as another.

Hungry and faint, she went on. The silence and the darkness of the Heath invited her. She felt if she did not rest she would drop. Somewhere just off the road between Jack Straw's Castle and the Spaniards Inn, she found a tree stripped almost bare of leaves, but with a bundle of dusty bracken and dead leaves beneath it, and crawling thankfully beneath its branches, composed herself to a shivering rest. What a bed for her—the rich, imperious Rosa of other days!

But she was too tired to worry, too tired even to feel cold. She just dropped—and slept.

Then—  
"Oh!" gasped Rosa.  
She awoke in the pitch darkness, very cramped, stiff with cold and suddenly very frightened.

The world was full of a hissing, singing noise. Her hair, her clothes were soaked through. In dismay she rose, to find that the growing storm had burst and her comfortable bed beneath the trees was just a mass of running water and mud. It was trickling down her neck, soaking her to the skin, running into her shoes and stockings.

Rosa, out of sheer misery, sobbed.  
She got up. Hopeless to remain there. She was almost staggering with weakness and unhappiness as, guided by the lantern she made her way towards the high road.

A gust of wind howling across the Heath met her with full force as she breasted the rise which gave on to the road, hurling her backwards against a figure of a woman who, with downbent head and carrying a basket, came limping along from the direction of Jack Straw's Castle. Rosa turned with a gasp.

"Oh, I'm sorry! This wind—"  
"At right, duckie, don't worry," the woman said. "A real tyrant of a night, ain't it? But hey!" she cried, as she took full stock of Rosa under a lamp. "You're only a gal. And look at you! Covered in dead leaves and mud. What have you been doing?"

Rosa crimsoned.  
"I—I—"  
"Hey! Lost your way?"  
"Rosa," Rosa gasped.  
"Where d'you live?"  
"I—I— You see—"  
"I see, right enough!" The woman looked grim. Rosa, staggering with weakness, saw her face—pert, comely, pretty in a faded way, but still definitely young. "You've run away from somewhere," the woman decided with shrewd Cockney perception. "and you've

been trying to sleep under the trees. And, by the look of you, my gal, you ain't 'ad a bite to eat for days."

Rosa gasped. She felt too utterly done-up to deny that.

"Is that right?"  
"Y-yes!" Rosa confessed feebly.

"Oh, lawks-a-mussy, you gals! But come now, bear up," the woman said sharply, put down her basket, and clutched at Rosa's arm. "Half a mo'. Here, let me 'old you. Lean agin the lamp-post. The last bus'll be along in a minute. You're comin' 'ome with me."

Rosa complied, too dazed, too weak even to wonder what was going to become of her. The woman continued to chatter.

"It's the pore what 'elps the pore, they say, though, by the looks o' you, young lady, you ain't come from a bad 'ome. I'm only a flower, but I ain't got much 'cept my little Timmy—Martha Lattimer's me name, and though I say it, it's proud I am to bear it, even though me pore husband passed away a year ago—and 'im leaving me with little Tim, who was only four weeks old. But come now! 'Ere's the bus."

"Th-thank you!" Rosa stammered.  
And then—only in the vaguest way did she realise what happened. Good Samaritan, rough and ready, Martha pushed her on the bus.

Half awake and half asleep, Rosa felt herself being carried along, only jerking into full consciousness when Martha touched her arm as the conductor called out a name with some reference to Hornsey.

Like a shining sheet the rain lashed their faces as they tramped along. Martha, despite her basket, lent the Stormy Petrel a hand.  
"Well, 'ere we are," Martha said cheerfully at last.

She produced a key and let herself into the house. It was a poorly furnished little place, but everything, Rosa observed, was spotlessly clean. From a door on the right came the plaintive wail of a fretful child.

"That's my Timmy," Martha said. "Poor little fellow—he's dreadfully ill. Stir up the fire, miss, and put that kettle on. And then you'd better take off them wet things of yours."

And off she fluttered, while Rosa, feeling warm again, pulled herself together. She stirred the fire, found coal, put it on. Found the gas stove in the tiny adjoining kitchen and set the kettle to boil. Martha, rather anxious looking, came out of the other room with some clothes and put them to air, and while Rosa stripped off her own wet clothes, the make-shifts warmed cheerfully in front of the now glowing fire.

Then Martha appeared again.  
"Don't like the look of 'im," she said, with a jerk of the head in the direction of the room she had just vacated. "All 'ot and feverish, 'e is. Got a temperature. But her now, dearie. If you look in the cupboard you'll find some steak and potatoes. I'll just put my Tim's milk on, then we'll have a bite to eat."

Cheerful was Martha. Rosa was amazed to find the amount of work she fluttered through. Timmy's milk was heated; Timmy, for the time being at least, appeased; then supper—steak, onions and boiled potatoes, washed down with steaming coffee. Rough and ready indeed the meal, but to Rosa it tasted better and more gratifying than the finest and most expensive dinner she had ever eaten at the Courtfield Restaurant. It put her new heart, new life, new warmth into her.

"Oh, Martha, how can I thank you?" she gulped.

"Just don't," Martha said. "Perhaps some day, ducky, you can do me a good turn. Clear the table now, will you, and then perhaps you won't mind making yourself a bed on the sofa there. You could sleep with Timmy," she added seriously, "but Timmy looks so real queer that I'll have to turn in with 'im myself. Pore mite! He's only thirteen months old. It would—" and she checked herself as Timmy's wail came through the door again. "Coming, ducks!"

She flew. Rosa thoughtfully made up her bed. A rough and ready enough bed it was, but oh, what luxury after the mud and leaves of Hampstead Heath!

And yet for quite a while Rosa did not sleep, but lay still, blinking drowsily at the fire which still burned brightly in the hearth, comparing the actions of this stranger with that traitor who called herself friend.

She thought of Mabs, Babs and Dick, of the police—and shuddered. And then her mind in a tangled, bewildered whirl, she fell heavily asleep, to be awakened only at intervals by faintly distressful cries from the next room.

Broad daylight was streaming in when finally she came to complete consciousness, aware that it was still raining outside, and that voices—Martha's and a man's—were coming from the next room.

"I'm afraid, Mrs. Lattimer, he can't be left. No, not for a minute. You'll just have to stop away to-day." What, when I've been and bought me flowers!" Martha retorted. "Doctor, I can't do it."

"Can't you get somebody else to do it for you?"

"Now I ask you, who—" Rosa jumped out of bed. Her face was set now. There was a glint of determination in her eyes. What she wanted help. Well, she could help! She would be the meanest, the most ungrateful person if she did not come to her benefactor's help in this hour of her crisis.

Hastily she dressed herself, tiptoeing into the next room. Little Tim, white as death, lay on the bed, his eyes closed. Martha, facing the doctor, was wringing her hands in despair. They both flung round as Rosa appeared.

"Why, you, Miss Rodworth!" Martha cried. "If you want your breakfast, I've left it in the oven."

"Thanks, that can wait," Rosa answered. "Martha, I just want to tell you—I heard what the doctor was saying. You must stop here and nurse Tim."

"I know I've got to. But how—" "I—I—" Rosa said with that quiet determination so characteristic of her when she had made up her mind, "will take your flowers and sell them for you."

The doctor stared. Martha's mouth dropped open.

"But you—a young lady—" "Please, Martha, I'd like to."

"Well," the doctor smiled, "there you are, Mrs. Lattimer! That gets you out of your difficulty easily. And a very attractive substitute," he added, with an admiring glance at Rosa.

"Oh, Miss Rodworth, you don't mean it?"

"Tell me what to do," Rosa said. And that clinched the matter. Flurriedly Martha came out. The doctor took his departure. While Rosa ate her breakfast, Martha explained. These were the threepenny bunches. These were the sixpenny bunches. These were the shilling, and so on.

"But I'll never forget you for this," Martha said tearfully. "You don't

know what a load you've took off my mind, Miss Rodworth. Now here you are—here's your fare. There's half-a-crown for change in case you want it. And here's my street seller's licence," she added, "in case the police stop you. Here, what's the matter? You've gone white."

"Never mind, go on," Rosa said between her teeth.

"If the police say anything, just tell them what's happened," Martha added. "They won't say nothing. They all know me round that part. Here you are, ducks. Mind, the basket's heavy. Can you manage it?"

"Of course," Rosa laughed, and hoisted it on to her arm. Then she turned. "But here, wait a minute," she cried, "you haven't told me the name of the pitch, as you call it. Where do I go?"

"Oh lawks-a-mussy! I'm that flustered that it just went clean out of my empty head," Martha cried. "Get the bus to Piccadilly, ducks, and then get off at the Burlington Theatre. I generally take my stand outside the stage door there. Nothing much doing in the morning, but there might be this morning because I happen to know that the big pots are rehearsing for the charity matinee on Saturday. Now good-bye, Miss Rodworth—and—" she added fervently, "I'm so grateful. Good luck!"

"Good luck to Timmy!" Rosa laughed; and, all unconscious of the significance of the destination for which she was bound, sailed out, the laden basket on her arm.

She felt almost happy again now that she had something to do, something to take her mind off that other worry. But if Rosa had only known—



## Morning Rehearsal

AND if Rosa Rodworth hadn't missed the first bus from Hornsey to Piccadilly, nothing in the world could have prevented her from being at her post when Dick, Babs and Mabs arrived at the stage entrance to the magnificent Burlington Theatre, and, all strung-up and flutteringly excited, entered its portals for the first rehearsal of their novelty show.

As it was, Rosa did not arrive until five minutes after that, and so missed them.

But if Babs & Co. had only known! For yesterday they had spent the whole day scouring London in search of Rosa Rodworth. Not until they were exhausted, soaked and numb, had they returned to their hotel, having given up the search.

But even on the way to the theatre they had been on the look-out.

"Well, here we are!" Dick breathed, as they entered the theatre to be greeted by Mr. Livingstone. "For the time being, at any rate, we've got to concentrate on the play. Many people here, dad?" he asked.

"Quite a crowd."

"Mr. Predergast?" "Yes; he's among them. He's waiting for your turn. But come along now, and I'll show you where to put your things."

Keed-up, they went off. At that same moment Rosa was in the act of dumping her heavy basket on the wet



ONE hunted look Rosa flung at her pursuers; then, with a wild leap, she boarded a bus. Faintly came Dick's appealing cry: "Come back!" But Rosa knew there could be no going back now.

pavement outside. And at the self-same moment, at the main entrance in the main street, a taxi drew up, and deposited a girl and a woman outside the main doors.

The girl was Renee Ballard. The woman was middle-aged, sharp-eyed, ferret in appearance. She was, in fact, the sister of that same Mrs. Dickson, who had so brazenly swindled Rosa Redworth before her final downfall at Cliff House School.

"Well, here we are!" Renee breathed. "I know they're rehearsing here this morning. I've got permits; but I don't want them to see us. We'd better tuck ourselves away in the back seats."

The woman nodded. Renee produced the permits, and they were shown through into the auditorium.

Cold, unreal and unnatural it looked at that hour in the morning, with only the front seats occupied; the stagehands lounging in the wings, and a wild-haired producer on the stage, beating time to the famous artiste who was singing a song. Except for the stage itself, the whole place was in darkness.

"I say!" Renee whispered, to her companion. "See the big man—the one in the second row smoking the cigar. Know who he is?"

"No—who?"

"Predergast, the American. The star-maker, they call him. I read somewhere that he's in England looking for a cast for a new super show he's putting on on Broadway. Pots and pots of money, they say. Give anything for anybody he wants. But shush!" she added, and sat up. "The singer's going off."

The singer had finished. But as she went off three youthful figures, accompanied by Mr. Livingstone, stepped on to the stage. A flash came into Renee's eyes; her lips tightened. For the three figures were those of Dick, Mabs and Babs.

Predergast, a silhouetted giant against the footlights, rose. "Hey! These the kids?" he asked Livingstone.

"Yes."

"What's the name of the piece?"

"Dancing Mad," Mr. Livingstone answered.

The American grunted.

"O.K.! Then shoot!"

Renee sat up with a jerk. Almost fierce was her whisper.

"My hat! I believe Predergast has come to watch that crowd."

Predergast had. And "the crowd" composed of Dick, Mabs and Babs, were at that moment suffering from the liveliest pangs of apprehension. Now that the moment of their ordeal was here they found themselves shrinking a little—found themselves suddenly afraid.

For this rehearsal was no longer the jolly trundle to the bigger events which would take place on Saturday. It was a rehearsal which might decide Dick Livingstone's future.

Babs and Mabs exchanged a glance, each reading in the other's face what she was feeling. Nerves, or no nerves, they weren't going to let Dick down.

"Right; let's go!" Mr. Livingstone said, and signed to the pianist.

Dick braced himself. Mabs squared her shoulders. Babs, feeling that she dared not look at the audience, swallowed her stage fright as the music crashed out. The first time the words spoken, Dick opening, Mab facing him, Babs standing aside to wait her cue.

In the audience silence settled.

"Watch!" Renee breathed.

No need to hand out that advice. Mrs. Sinclair—for that was the name of her companion—was watching. Everybody was watching, and everybody was, from the first moment, impressed.

With the first spoken words, Dick lost every vestige of stage fright. Mabs, completely forgetting herself and the audience as well, became for the time being the dance-crazy sister, who was determined to become the world's greatest dancing star.

To be sure, Babs was still apprehensive, thinking not of herself, but of Dick, and hoping and praying for his sake that she could execute her dance without mistake.

Her cue came.

How Babs wished then that Rosa still had this part—the part in which she was doing well! There, she knew she bungled that step, but, rapidly recovering from her confusion, danced on. She saw Predergast looking, not at her, however, but at Dick. What impression had Dick made?

Then it was at an end. Dick, Babs and Mabs stood in a group, bowing. From the audience came a ripple of handclapping. Then Predergast stood up.

"Fine," he said—"fine! Good stuff! But hold it a minute!" And he came clambering up to the stage. "He caught Dick Livingstone's hand. 'Great!' he breathed. 'Nice little thing! Who's the owner of the copyright?'"

"I am!" Mabs cried.

"O.K.! I'll buy it off you! Name your own figure! But you, boy! Oh, gee, that was great!" he breathed. "I came to watch you, and, by all the stars in the Stars and Stripes, I'm glad!"

Dick drew a deep, deep breath, not daring to trust himself to words.

"It's in my mind," the American said, "to all at once—let all at once. I want to see you when you've got the crowd watching you. That's the test, laddie—that's the test! Shine at this performance on Saturday, when you've a real critical mob looking at you, and the contract's in your pocket."

Dick looked overwhelmed. Mabs, in sheer happiness, laughed. Babs smiled, still a little trembling and nervous. But Dick glowed. He had pleased Predergast. Predergast, as an actor, liked him, but just wanted to test his nerve in the real big show-down. Dick laughed. He had no fear of crowd. He had been far more nervous, far more anxious in front of this handful of critics than ever he would be in a theatre packed from floor to ceiling with ordinary spectators.

But at the back of the hall Renee Ballard heard all that. And Renee Ballard was scowling, her eyes were glittering. In her lap her hands were clenched. She turned to her companion.

"And," she hissed, "when Saturday comes, that play has got to be a flop! Not if I can help it is Dick Livingstone going to get away with this chance!"

Mrs. Sinclair nodded.

"Leave it to me!" she muttered.

Unseen by either Renee or her companion, a figure carrying a basket and dripping with rain, stole silently out of the passage on the right.

Rosa Rodworth, blinking in the darkness, slipped silently in the seat behind them, depositing her basket on the floor in the aisle. And then, settling herself, she sat bolt upright, staring in bewilderment at the figures on the stage.



Wanted by the Police

ROSA had had a stroke of luck. She had practically sold out of her flowers.

Not to be sure, by means of stray customers. Her customers had composed a whole coach-load of high-spirited young men and girls, who, bent on seeing the sights of the city, and in great holiday spirits, despite the inclemency of the weather, had suddenly stopped their coach and descended upon her in a crowd.

In ten minutes her loaded basket had dwindled to four or five bunches, and the little leather bag which Martha had given her to contain the takings was bulging.

Rather bewildered and breathless had Rosa been when, with a whoop, the happy party had clambered back into their coach and driven away.

The doorman on the stage door grinned at her. As a friend of the present Martha Latimer, he had already made Rosa's acquaintance.

"Stroke of luck—eh?" he said. "Not often that happens. Wonderful how people will spend money when they're in the right mood. Martha'll be pleased. But, my," he added, "ain't you soaked! Shivering, too! Why don't you come in and get warm?"

Rosa blinked.

"You mean—in there?"

"Well, why not? There's nothing much going. Only a rehearsal or so. Nobody'll see you. If anybody does say anything to you, just tell 'em that Joe Copps let you in. Say you're a friend of mine."

Rosa thanked him fervently. She was pleased with her success, but she certainly was cold, and she was dripping wet. Also, she was frightfully interested in what was going on in that theatre, for the theatre in any shape or form had an irresistible appeal for Rosa.

So Rosa, directed by the kind-hearted and expansive Joe Copps, accepted that invitation gratefully. Into the theatre she crept. Joe led her to the passage which gave on to the auditorium, and Rosa, stealing into the theatre in pitch blackness, took her seat—and then almost swooned at the sight of Dick, Mabs, and Babs in the group on the stage. She felt her pulses racing suddenly, felt her heart leaping. What were they doing here?

Not long was she left in perplexity on that point, however. Predergast, on the stage, was still waxing enthusiastic. Rosa thrilled as she learned what had happened. For the moment she forgot herself, forgot everything. For well she knew how Dick had longed to go on the stage. And Dick now was being offered his chance.

Rosa could have cried out. All at once she was possessed by the most tumultuous urge to rise to her feet. She wanted to clap and cheer. If, she thought, and caught her breath—if only she were doing in the dance in the play—that dance which she had practised, which she could perform with such perfection!

And then she saw the two people in front of her—saw the etched profile of Renee's face against the lights of the stage as she turned to her companion. And she heard Renee's voice:

"Get him out of it! Decoy him away! Keep him until after the show, so that he can't play the part!"

Rosa started. Quickly she looked. What was this? But she knew—she



knew—and suddenly she felt a wave of anger surge over her. They were talking of Dick, planning to keep him away from the matinee on Saturday; plotting to prevent him grasping this great chance which had come his way!

How like Renee, that—the Renee she knew now, the self-confessed traitor who had so hated Dick and Mabel Lynn at Cliff House!

Rosa's eyes flashed. Well, she determined, they shouldn't! Dick was her cousin. She was fond of Dick—always had been fond of Dick. She only wished now that she had listened to Dick back in those days of her headstrong extravagance!

She caught her breath. She would warn Dick.

But she was too late. For even as she sat deciding her course, Renee Ballard threw a sly glance over her shoulder. Sitting there, with the stage lights reflecting on her face, Rosa was quite easily recognisable, and Renee gave a violent start.

Rosa! How had she got here? And then the perfume of flowers came to her nostrils, and she saw dimly the basket which stood in the aisle. She understood.

Had Rosa heard what she had been saying to Mrs. Sinclair?

And at that moment Rosa stood up. Resolutely she picked up her basket. Now, this moment, while the plotters were still in the theatre, she would warn Dick and denounce Renee at the same time!

She did not look at Renee as she lifted her bag. She did not see the quick movement of Renee's arm. But she called:

"Dick, on the stage, flung round, staring into the darkness of the auditorium. Rosa hurried forward. At the same moment Renee's voice rang out:

"Stop! Stop that girl! She's stolen my handbag!"

And in a moment Renee was on her feet. Rosa, thunderstruck, swivelled round. Renee, red-faced, thin-lipped, was rushing at her. Mrs. Sinclair thudding on her heels. From the stage went up a yell:

"Rosa!"

"You thief!" Renee cried. She dashed up. Dick, with one leap, vaulted into the auditorium. Babs and Mabs jumped after him. The spectators in the front seats turned. Mr. Livingstone came running after his son. All together they reached the astonished Rosa, who had halted, her basket still on her arm.

"Don't let her get away!" Renee cried. "Send for the police!"

"My hat, hold on!" Dick expostulated. "Why, what is this, Rosa?"

"She's stolen my handbag!" Renee fumed.

"I haven't!"

"Yes, she has! I saw her take it! Mrs. Sinclair, fetch a policeman!"

"But—certainly, my dear!"

"But—Oh, my hat! No; wait a minute!" Dick cried distractedly.

But the woman had already disappeared, while Rosa, wild-eyed shrank back.

"I never saw her handbag! I never even knew—"

Renee laughed scoffingly.

"What a tale!" she cried. "Look at her! Doesn't her face give her away? It's obvious! As if," she added, "she wasn't already a thief, who ran away from school because she pinched money," she added tantalisingly. "—Oh, here we are!" she added, as Mrs. Sinclair returned, accompanied by a burly, uniformed policeman. "Officer, I give this girl in charge for stealing!"

"I tell you—" Rosa almost shrieked.

"Oh, shut up!" Dick threw an angry look at the arrogant Renee. Rosa, desperately panting, had put her basket down now. She shrank back at sight of the policeman, all her most lively fears of the law returning. It was the same constable who had been on duty outside the theatre, whose glances had already filled her with such inward trepidation.

"I don't believe it," Dick protested stoutly. "Anyway, where is the handbag? She hasn't got it on her."

That was obvious. The policeman frowned.

"You're sure this girl stole it?"

"Positive!" Renee replied.

"And you want to prosecute?"

"I intend to," Renee bit out venomously.

"Right, then—no, stand aside, please," the constable said to Dick and Mabs, as they came forward. "This is out of your hands now. Now, young lady, if you stole that handbag, what have you done with it?"

"I tell you—" Rosa panted.

And then there came an exclamation from Renee. She was pointing at the basket.

"Officer, look! There, underneath those flowers!"

The constable glanced at her. He looked at Rosa. Then quickly he stooped. The few remaining bunches of flowers that lay in the bottom of the basket, all that Rosa had failed to sell, he moved aside, and Rosa's eyes rounded with horror as she saw. There—it fastened gleaming in the light, a handbag!

"That's it!" Renee cried.

And then—what? For one moment Rosa remained petrified. Every ugly fear she had ever possessed rushed scorching to the surface. She, already being searched for by the police on Miss Primrose's instigation, had been caught in this further felony. Her reputation was against her. She had not an atom of proof that she was innocent. In that awful instant she saw the hand of the law closing around her, saw herself, with the mocking, triumphant Renee as her denouncer, arraigned behind the dock of a magistrate's court.

Her nerve failed her.

With the bag in his hand the policeman was straightening up. It was then that Rosa acted. In blind panic she turned.

"My hat, stop her!" yelled Renee.

"She's running away!"

"Rosa!" bawled Dick.

But Rosa did not heed, did not pause. She was flying. She wouldn't be caught. Unswervingly she ran. The green baize door which led to the passage closed behind her with a bang, and she flew on. Dick turned.

"The fool!" he cried. "Oh, my hat! Come on, after her!"

But Rosa had a start now. Mabs, Babs, and Dick rushed out. They reached the door, flung it open, and skimmed down the passage, to meet a dazed Joe Coppins, who had just emerged from his office. He stared.

"Here, what is this?"

"Which way did she go?" Dick asked quickly.

"Who do you mean—the flower girl?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Well, towards Piccadilly. But I say—"

But Dick wasn't listening. Neither was Babs nor Mabs. They flew out, to see a figure climbing on to a moving bus. Dick shouted.

"Rosa!"

Rosa flung one hunted look round.

Distractedly, feverishly she shook her head. The bus, getting up speed, shot on, turned the corner, and went skimming across Piccadilly Circus towards Shaftesbury Avenue.

MARATHA, WHEN white-faced and dishevelled Rosa feverishly knocked at the door, stared at her in bewilderment.

"Why, lawks-a-mussy! What's the matter?"

"Martha, let me in—please!" Rosa panted. "Oh, Martha, there's your money. I'm sorry, I—I had to leave the basket, but you'll find it at the theatre. I had to come back now to give you your money," she cried frantically. "Something happened."

"Wait a minute!" Martha said.

"Wait a minute. Now, what happened?"

And, gulping, Rosa told her.

"So!" Martha frowned. "She's that sort of tike, is she? Well, I know an honest girl when I see one, and you're one, if ever there was, Miss Rodworth. Why, if you ain't, should you come and give me my money?"

"But, Martha, they'll track me here."

"Don't worry."

"But I tell you—" And then Rosa jumped up as there came a knock on the door.

"Martha, the police!" she breathed.

Martha bit her lip.

"Quick, behind the sofa," she said. "Leave it to me. Hurry now." And while Rosa, palpitating and with the most deadly fear she had ever known in her life, flopped down out of sight, Martha, wiping her hands, went to the door. Rosa trembled as she heard the policeman's voice. Then Martha:

"No, she ain't come back here," she said, "and I reckon if she's done a thing like that, she won't. Eh? Yes. I'll let you know, o' course, if she does come. Like to come in?"

Rosa almost groaned.

"No, thank you! I'll have to slip along to the station. But if she comes, you keep her here."

"You bet I will!" Martha returned.

She closed the door, laughing a little.

"It was a cop all right. That Renee girl has put 'em on your track. But get out now, everything's all right!"

"But, Martha, what shall I do?" Rosa moaned.

"You'll have to get out," Martha said. "They'll probably watch this house if that minx makes them prosecute. Wait a minute," she added. "Here, take this!" And she pushed a ten-shilling note into Rosa's hand.

"That'll help you on your way. No, don't thank me. You can give it back some other time, and you know where I live now, don't you? 'Fi was you,' Martha added shrewdly, "I'd do a bit of disguising."

"Disguising? But how?"

"Well, here's a pair of specs. There's a shop near here what'll bleach your hair for three-and-six, and glad to do it at the price. But better get going now," she anxiously advised. "Come back whenever you want to."

Rosa gulped her thanks. In a state of trepidation she went out. Disguise, yes! That was her only resource now. Disguise—and then—She gulped.

Straightway she hurried to the shop.

A rather dingy shop it was, which advertised permanent waves at ten shillings each, and had a wonderful variety of bargains in hairdressing styles. For three-and-sixpence she had her hair bleached a bright blonde. For another shilling her eyebrows were

plucked and bleached to match. When she had put on the spectacles she could hardly believe, looking at her reflection, that she was regarding herself.

She went out. She felt easier now. But what was she to do? She daren't go back—not for a day or two, at all events, to the big-hearted Martha Lattimer. She was still shaken, still in a state of panic-stricken terror.

There was a little teashop in a side-street. She went in.

Five-and-eightpence was the money she had in her pocket. She thought of to-night. One of the hostels would give her a cubicle and breakfast for half-a-crown.

Meantime, there was the question of the future. She thought of home—of her ruined father, who still was away on the Continent. No good going home, even if she had the fare. That probably was in the hands of the receiving officer by this time.

She ordered cake and tea. And as she sipped she idly picked up the "Evening News," which an earlier visitor had left behind. A paragraph on the front page caught her eye and made her wince:

**"SEARCH FOR MISSING SCHOOL-GIRL!**

**WANTED ON WARRANT FOR ATTEMPTED THEFT!"**

Rosa winced. The paper shook in her hand. There, hideously in black and white, was her own name, with a brief account of what had happened in the Burlington Theatre that morning.

She, Rosa Rodworth, was wanted by the police! She, the rich schoolgirl of a week ago, was a fugitive from justice—no, not justice—from the law! Renee Ballard, apparently, was still viciously insisting upon the arrest.

She turned to another page. What was this? And, as if the name had been printed in capitals six inches high, it leapt out at her.

"The Burlington Theatre—Wanted," it read, "Programme-seller for Grand Charity Matinee on Saturday. Applicant must be of smart appearance, good-looking. Apply between ten and six to-day only."

Rosa breathed heavily and deeply. For a moment she sat with the paper in her hand. Dare she try? Dare she? But why not? Nobody would recognise her in this disguise. And, in any case, she thought, her place was at the theatre. There it might be possible to establish communication with Babs and Mabs, to warn them of the peril that was afoot. In any case, she thought, she could keep an eye on them.

The old flash came into Rosa's eyes. There and then she left the restaurant. The bus took her to the Burlington. Under the eyes of Joe Cops she walked in. There was a heart-stopping moment as Joe glanced at her, admiration in his eyes. And then a great wave of relief as he nodded to her to pass in. Ten minutes later she came out again, almost walking on air. The job was hers!

Now for a meal and a hostel! And, feeling somehow quieter in her mind, and more assured in person, Rosa went to look for her night's lodgings.

WHILE in a dingy lodging-house in the neighbourhood of Camden Town, Renee Ballard was facing her confederate and co-conspirator, Mrs. Sinclair.

"We needn't worry about Rosa," she said contemptuously. "She'll be too scared of the police to show her face. But Dick will be worrying about her. And Dick will probably be expecting to hear from her." She paused, picking up a note she had written. Amusedly she regarded it. "I'll make a ripping forger some day," she mused. "This is Rosa Rodworth's hand to a 'T.' If I send this off, it should reach him. He'll come like a shot. And when he does—"

She shut her lips. Savage the light in her eyes. Mrs. Sinclair, looking at her, smiled.



**The Clue of the Crossed 'i's'**

"NO news?" Mabs asked anxiously. Dick flung his cap across the room and groaned.

"Nothing!" "She's not been back to Mrs. Lattimer's?" Babs queried.

Dick shook his head. It was the next morning—a morning that should have seen the chums filled with the most tumultuous excitement. The morning of Friday, of the last rehearsal before the play which was to mean so much to Dick on the morrow. But there was no sign of joy or happiness on any of their faces. They looked anxious.

For each of them was thinking of Rosa.

For they all knew now that, thanks to the spitefulness of Renee Ballard, there was a warrant out for Rosa's arrest, and that Rosa, somewhere in this vast and bewildering city of London, was lying low, hungry, starving perils, a fugitive from the law!

Mabs sighed. "Poor old Rosa!" she said. "Well, she knows now what sort of friend Renee was to her. But Dick, you don't look well."

"I'm worried," Dick confessed. "And so are all of us. But that won't make for good rehearsals," Mabs said gently. "Dick, don't worry, please. We can't do any more, and after the rehearsals we'll have another scout round. We'll have to be off to the theatre in an hour, too. Have a rest, old boy. We'll give you a call when it's time to go."

Dick yawned tiredly. Mabs pushed him into an armchair, and, with a glance at Babs, stood out of the room. And there they left him, retiring to their own room, which was on the next floor of the hotel.

But Dick did not rest. His eyes, travelling moodily round the room, fastened at length on the table where his morning's correspondence, so far untouched, stood in a neat pile on one corner. Disinterestedly he picked it up.

Here—a letter from Jimmy Richmond. Good old Jimmy! The next was a postcard from a friend at home. Here was a note from Dr. Barrymore, at Friar-dale, wishing him luck. A little message from Clara Trevely, at Cliff House School.

Then—and he started at the next envelope. All the colour receded from his face, to return in a sudden boiling rush.

For that handwriting! He recognised it at once!

Rosa! In a moment he had torn it open. The letter was headed: 17, Harkaway Road, Camden Town.

It read:

"Dear Dick, can you please come and see me as soon as you get this? I need your help badly! But please do not tell Babs or Mabs, or anyone else. Just come alone. Burn this.

"Love, "Rosa."

Dick started. Then he crushed the letter in his hand. Without realising what he was doing in that moment's pre-occupation, he threw it into the empty firegrate.

Rosa—at last—at last! He had found her! She was asking for him! He looked at the clock. An hour. Wait a minute, though. Better leave a note for Mabs.

Hurriedly he wrote the note.

"Mabs—Called away. Will see you at the theatre."

That would give him more time, he thought; better than dashing back here. He found his cap. Downstairs with a rush he went. Outside he hailed a taxi, gave the man the address, and in fifteen minutes pulled up outside the dingy-looking house in the Harkaway Road.

Eagerly he tapped at the door. A vaguely familiar but shabby-looking woman peered out.

"Oh!" she said. "Are you Mr. Livingstone?"

"Yes, I'm your cousin."

"Come in," the woman invited.

And Dick, raising his hat, went in. The street door closed behind him. At the same moment a door leading off from the hall opened. A giant of a man in shirt-sleeves stepped into the hall. He stepped forward, one hand outstretched as though to take Dick's.

"Mr. Livingstone?" he asked.

"Yes," Dick said; "but my cousin—"

The man smiled. He held out his hand. Dick, starting impatiently, grasped it, and then jumped.

For suddenly the whole list of the other fastened upon his hand like a vice. While Dick stared, the man's arm went around his neck, changing his cry of alarm into a gurgling silence.

From the woman behind him came a soft, throaty chuckle. Overhead, where the stairs led up to the landing, a girl's face peered down as Dick, like a baby, was gathered in the giant's arms and carried off.

A sour smile crossed the girl's pretty face.

"Good work, Bill!" Renee Ballard muttered.

"WHAT, DICK not here?" And

Babs and Mabs together stared in amazement at the troubled face of Mr. Livingstone, in the green-room of the Burlington Theatre. "But he left a note in the hotel, saying that he would meet us here."

"Well, he's not come," Mr. Livingstone said. "And goodness knows what's going to happen. It will take him a quarter of an hour to dress, at least. And you're due on in half an hour's time. Surely," he added, "if he was detained, he would have rung and let me know. We'll give him another five minutes."

Babs and Mabs looked uneasily at each other. Dick—where was he? Not like him, as his father said, to deliberately let them down like this! But then, not like him to go off without a word, as he had done at the hotel. Dick was troubled about Rosa, but Dick was so intensely keen on the play.

Babs bit her lip.

"Babs, you don't think anything could have happened to him?" Babs scoffed. "If anything had happened, the police would have let us know right away. I wonder if he's gone back to the hotel?"

Five minutes went by. Mr. Livingstone poked his head in at the door again.

"I've arranged with one of the other turns to swap rehearsals," he said. "That means we go on at the end of the programme. It gives me the best part of another hour. But I'm worried about Dick. Babs, I wonder if you'd mind popping across to the hotel to find out if they've heard or seen anything of him there? And if you find him, grab him by the scruff of the neck."

Babs nodded. She left Mabs still making up. The hotel, as it happened, wasn't far away—not more than five minutes' walk, and taking terrific risks in traffic dodging, she reached it well within that time. The commissaire in the vestibule, however, had not seen Dick since he had gone out, looking hot and flurried, over an hour ago. Babs went to his room.

She opened the door. The room was as she had last seen it, in Mabs' company, when they had called for Dick, to find his scribbled message on the table. Strange!

What could have detained him?

And then, for no reason on earth that Babs could fathom, her eyes went to the grate, where the crumpled letter he had received that morning still lay.

Almost without realising what she was doing, she moved towards it, and then, looking down, saw the signature and gave a jump. Rosa!

Dick had received that letter this morning!

And that, Babs thought, explained his disappearance!

No compunction had she in taking up the letter then. She read it, frowning thoughtfully. Rosa! It was Rosa's handwriting all right! But, wait a minute, was it? And suddenly Babs felt her heart leaping, found a most terrific rushing in her pulses.

Renee, in forging that letter, had said that she had got Rosa's handwriting to a "T". But on that particular consonant, as it ironically happened, Renee had made a mistake. Babs, familiar with the writing of every girl in the Fourth Form, had a habit of spotting their little peculiarities and characteristics, and one of Rosa's most careless habits was that of crossing her 't's' high above the letter intended, instead of running a neat stroke through it. These 't's' were all perfectly crossed.

"Somebody," Babs breathed, "wrote this to get Dick away!"

Why—and who? But that didn't matter. Not for a moment did Babs suspect the real treachery that lay behind that note. Dick, obviously, had gone to that address. Dick would be there now.

Hastily she rushed out, summoning a taxi. At the corner of Harkaway Road, however, there was a hold-up. Babs, fuming and impatient, got out, paid off the driver, and decided to do the rest of the journey on foot.

No. 17 was half-way down the road, she discovered, and, presently, reaching it, she raised her hand to knock. As she did so, a sound came from beyond the door, which made every particle of blood in her body turn to ice.

"Help, help!"

Dick's voice.

Slowly Babs dropped her hand. Her face whitened then. As far as she could judge, the voice came from the back of the house. Dick was there—Dick, obviously a prisoner! Desperately she looked up and down the street. There was no policeman, only a few tattered children playing in the road.

She did not knock. Rather hurriedly she retreated. Then she saw, at the side of the house, a narrow alleyway, which obviously gave access to the back yard. For a moment she paused. Then, succumbing to a sudden impulse, vanished down the entry, finding herself presently in a back yard littered with dustbins and with refuse. From upstairs came a shout.

"Let me out! Let me out!"

Babs gasped a little. That was Dick! Dick, obviously locked in an upstairs room. She reached the door. To her joyful surprise, it gave beneath her pressure. Cautiously she tiptoed in, to find herself in a little kitchen. A flight of stairs led up from the passage outside.

From a room along the narrow hall she heard voices. The coast was clear.

Up the stairs she crept. Another furious punnelling came from Dick's prison. With her heart thumping furiously, Babs reached the door, saw that the key was on the outside, and was in the act of turning it, when suddenly heavy footsteps sounded below.

She glanced quickly down, to behold a brutal-looking giant of a man in his shirtsleeves. He looked up at the same moment.

And Babs knew then that she was lost.

But Dick was her first thought. Too late she acted. She heard the man, breathing heavily, clambering up.

Along the passage she flew. The passage was not a long one. There was a door at the other end. Just as the man reached the top of the stairs she bolted through it.

"Hey, you!" he roared.

But she had got him past Dick's door. She had lured him away. Did Dick know that the door was unlocked? Blindly the man came after her. Babs, her heart thudding in her throat, waited beyond the door. It came open with a crash, almost flattening her against the wall. Glaring-eyed, her pursuer looked round.

"Hey, where are you?"

"Here!" Babs stated.

And she jumped forward. In a moment she had banged the door to. Then quickly she turned the key, throwing it out of the window. The man roared.

"Hey, what was that for?"

"But Babs laughed. She felt she could afford to laugh. For while he stood glaring at her she heard the door of Dick Livingstone's room open.

She was a prisoner—but Dick was free! And Mr. Livingstone knew where she was. It could only be a matter of an hour at the outside before she was released!

—



Rosa Risks All

"BUT I can't understand it," Dick said bewilderedly. "I just can't! I tell you I was a prisoner in that room. Somebody got me away with a faked message. Then somebody turned the

key, and when I looked out there was nobody there. Naturally I made my way downstairs."

Mabs frowned. Mr. Livingstone shook his head. It was half an hour later and the three of them were in the green room of the theatre.

"But, Babs—where is Babs?" Mabs cried.

Dick shook his head.

"I don't know. I never saw her."

"But she rang up. She said she had located you—that she was going to that address. Dick, and Mabs suddenly jerked up. "Oh, my hat, don't you see? It was Babs—Babs who released you? Babs must be in the power of the gang herself."

Dick jumped to his feet.

"Then come on!" he cried. "Let's get back there. And this time," he added grimly, "we'll take the police."

As one they hurried out. At the police station they breathlessly poured out the story to the sergeant in charge. Five minutes later, accompanied by four stalwart policemen, they were on their way to the house in Harkaway Road.

A crowd gathered as the police closed in upon the house. There was no answer to their knock, and the door was forced in. But when they had searched it, it was innocent of life.

"They've taken her away," Dick gasped.

And that was exactly what they had done. Realising that the hue and cry would be up now, Renee and her fellow-plotters had made a quick getaway. They were now on their way to Renee's own home.

Bewildered and anxious, Mabs and Dick returned. Babs had not arrived at the hotel. Lunch came. Still she had not arrived. Tea. Night. The police were searching. They had no news. Mr. Livingstone was gloomy in the extreme.

"It means," he said, "that if she doesn't turn up in time for the matinee to-morrow, there will be no show. And if there's no show—" with a saddening look at Dick, "there'll be no contract, Dick boy. Predegar is leaving for the States the day after to-morrow, but he won't take you until he's seen you in public."

Dick looked quite haggard. Oh, where was Babs—where was Babs?

The next morning—still no news of Babs. In communication with the police though they were, they could get no satisfaction.

Anxiety changed to gloom. Gloom to despair, when finally the time arrived to go to the theatre. Still no Babs.

Babs, when they arrived, was not there. And still no news. The theatre was already filling. In a corner of the wings the programme girls were being issued with their programmes. Something oddly familiar about one of them took Mabs' eye as she restlessly roamed about—a girl with spectacles, thinly-trimmed eyebrows, and hair which most obviously had been recently bleached. To Mabs' surprise, the girl approached her.

"Miss Lynn?" she asked.

"Yes," Mabel said, and stared. "But who are you?"

"My name is Elsie Simms," the disguised Rosa said, but her heart was throbbing. "I've heard of you, Miss Lynn, and I just want to say that I do hope your show will be a success. I—"

she stopped at the sudden wave of bitterness that crossed Mabs' face. "Miss—Miss Lynn, nothing has—has happened?" she asked anxiously. "You look worried."

"There's likely to be no play," Mabs

answered, and bit her lip. "Miss Redfern is missing."

Rosa jumped.

"Listening? Oh, Miss Lynn—"

"And we can't go on without her,"

Mabs replied.

Rosa bit her lip. Most tumultuously her pulses were racing now. Mabs missing! Babs, who had taken over her own dancing part. If Babs did not appear, then obviously the play could not be put on.

But could it? Rosa set her teeth. It could! She could do Babs' part. She knew it—from A to Z. Hadn't she rehearsed it times without number at Cliff House? Hadn't she won the highest plaudits for her dancing? Supposing she went forward now. Supposing she told them who she was, asked to take the part? She could save the show! And if she did—

Rosa winced. For she had spotted Renee Ballard in the audience. Renee was there, Renee would recognise her. With a warrant out for her arrest she would be caught, taken off to prison on a charge which she could not disprove.

Three minutes.

And then—  
The curtains parted. Mr. Livingstone, his face grey in the light, appeared. "Ladies and gentlemen," The old man spoke with some emotion. "Before the programme commences I have an announcement to make. I regret to say that owing to the absence of Miss Barbara Redfern, the playlet, 'Dancing Mad,' which was to have been included in the programme, will not—"

"No, stop! It will! It will!"

And everybody stared at that voice—the voice of the programme seller. Everybody jumped as Rosa, white-faced, went running suddenly down the aisle towards the stage. Her mind was made up. It was for Dick's sake. For Dick's sake, and the sake of Mabs, she would face this ordeal, would risk the consequences which would follow! She would save the play!

"I will play the part!" she cried as she ran.

Mr. Livingstone glanced at her.

"Ladies and gentlemen, excuse me," he said.

He darted behind the curtain, just as Rosa climbed into the wings.

Her glasses were off now, she was trembling. Dick and Mabs jumped.

"Why, who—?"

"Don't you see?" Rosa's voice was shrilly enthusiastic. "It's me—Rosa! I know the part. I can play it in Babs' place, and I will! Quick, now, don't ask questions. Lead me to the dressing-room."

"Rosa, you—you brack!" Dick gulped.



Arrested!



**D**ESP AIR vanished. Vibrant hope took its place. Feverishly Rosa made-up. Feverishly dressed.

Feverishly shook her head when questioned, and when the call came went on to the stage. Breathless silence marked the raising of the curtain, glowing admiration of the audience as the play started and progressed. Ecstatic and enthusiastic their handclapping when it came to an end.

"Oh, bravo, bravo!"

"Encore! Encore!"

"Bravo! Bravo!"

The three stood quivering, excited, in front of the lights. Three, four, five

times they took the call. Then, breathless with excitement, made their way towards the wings. And there Rosa fell back. Under her greasypaint her cheeks turned ashen. For, confronting her, with two uniformed constables behind her, was Renee Ballard.

"Officer, this is the girl!" she rapped.

"Arrest her!"

"No, wait a minute," Dick said, and interposed. "Officer—"

"I am sorry, but we must obey orders," the taller of the constables said.

"Rosa Rodworth, it is my duty to arrest you!"

Then—

"No, wait!" a vibrant voice cried out.

"You can't—you shan't arrest her, officer. If you must arrest someone, arrest her!"

And to everybody's bewildered stupefaction, another girl rushed on the scene—a girl whose face was crimson with exertion, who was quivering with excitement, and who flung a denouncing hand in Renee's direction.

"Babs!" Mabs shouted.

Babs it was, breathless and excited, Babs who now, as Renee trembled with guilt, headed her off, clutching at her arm. She faced the policemen.

"Arrest her!" she cried ringingly. "I give her in charge! No, wait a minute,"

## SCHOOL: CIRCUS: SWIMMING

Next Saturday's fine complete Cliff House School story, by Hilda Richards features Janet Jordan, Fourth-Form swimming champion and is a stirring tale of school and circus life. Order your SCHOOLGIRL now and make sure of reading:

### Janet Jordan's ORDEAL



she added angrily, as Renee made a movement. "Rosa didn't steal her handbag. Rosa didn't steal anything. This girl has been against her from the start. It was she who conspired at her expulsion from Cliff House. She who persuaded her to steal money that didn't belong to her. She who plotted the handbag theft. And she," she added with passionate indignation, "who kidnapped Dick Livingstone yesterday."

Renee's face was white and hunted. Mabs and Dick stared. Rosa's eyes were like saucers.

"But—but how do you know all this?" Mr. Livingstone burst out.

"In the same way that I know Renee went to Cliff House with the one purpose of ruining Rosa Rodworth!" Babs retorted, with a flashing glance of scorn at the now trembling schemer.

"Renee's object in that was first to lead Rosa on and get her expelled, and then get her sent to prison at the same time her father had entered into a business deal with Mr. Rodworth on the Continent, and was planning to ruin him there!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"It was a campaign of revenge," Babs went on. "Mr. Ballard at one time was a servant in Rosa's father's service. He

swindled Mr. Rodworth. Mr. Rodworth sent him to prison. He swore revenge. His daughter swore revenge upon Rosa at the same time, because Rosa was the one who bowled him out. But he wasn't known as Ballard then. He was known as Buncer!"

Rosa started.

"Oh, my hat! That man?"

"And I," Babs went on, "found all this out by this—"

And she suddenly produced a book. "Yesterday, when Dick escaped, Renee got the wind-up."

She and her fellow-crooks took me to her own home at Sunbury. There I was shut in her room. Apparently," Babs added, "Renee kept a secret diary. I found it. This morning I escaped by smashing my way out through a window.

And here," she added, putting the diary into the policeman's hand, "is the proof. Renee—"

And then gave a jump.

"Oh, good gracious, hold her!" she cried. "She's faint!"

And Renee had. Deathly white, she had slumped against the wall.

**W**ILD with joy was the Cliff House party after that. Rosa saved! Dick, his contract assured. But that day, obviously, was destined to be a day of surprises. For when, after a tumultuously happy reunion at the theatre, they went back to their hotel, they were astonished to discover a visitor awaiting them. He rose from the lounge as they entered, and Rosa let out a glad cry.

"Daddy!"

"Rosa!"

Mr. Rodworth it was—smiling, debonair, well groomed, and looking anything but a ruined financier.

He smiled.

"But, daddy, I—I thought you were ruined!" Rosa blurted.

"So," he replied dryly, "did I. But I was deceived, Rosa. I discovered Ballard to be a trickster. It was not ruined—just swindled. Fortunately, I caught him out in time."

Rosa shouted:

"And now?"

"Now," he laughed, "if you mean Ballard, I have sent him to gaol. If you mean have I still money—yes, as much of it as you want."

Rosa laughed. Her face shone.

"Oh, then, you can let me have ten pounds, daddy? Just to celebrate!"

And daddy, with a laugh, lowered his hand into his pocket. Mabs gazed at Babs and then at Dick. They shook their heads. Perhaps they wondered in that moment if Rosa had really learned her lesson, after all.

**O**N MONDAY they returned to Cliff House. Rosa once more a Cliff House girl, her innocence of the charge for which she was expelled conclusively proved when Renee's diary was read.

But before they went they said goodbye to Dick, happily, radiantly embarking for the States. He smiled as he shook hands with his cousin.

"Promise me you'll never be a fool in future!"

"Not," Rosa laughed, "while I've got Babs and Mabs to keep me on the right path. Good-bye, Dick, and the most scrumptious good luck! Now by-bye, old time, we're going first to look up Martha—I've a little present of ten pounds for her, and then we're off to Cliff House School. Think kindly sometimes of your old scapegrace."

And she kissed him, while Babs, Mabs, Mr. Livingstone and Mr. Rodworth, standing aside, smiled tenderly and affectionately.

## "SOS-SOS"—The Morcove Castaways' Message For Aid Flashes Across Space . . . Dramatic Chapters of This Fine Serial



# Morcove Marooned!

By MARJORIE STANTON

**FOR NEW READERS.**  
BETTY BARTON & Co., of Morcove School, together with members of Grangemoor, are on their way home from Africa by air-liner, when they have to make a forced landing on a tiny island. With them is a mysterious girl named MURIEL, who has jumped by parachute from another plane. She tells Betty & Co. that she was escaping from people who had kidnapped her. The leader of the kidnapers is a man named

DULIP KHAN, an Indian ruler and tyrant. Later, his yacht anchors near the island, and the clumps realize that he is going to attempt to recapture Muriel. Muriel awakes in the night to find a woman—one of Khan's helpers—bending over her.

(Now read on.)

### The Closing of a Trap

**A** FIERCE gesture from the woman who was bending over her in the deep darkness of the palm-leaf shelter, warned Muriel not to move or cry out. If she did, it would be the worse for her!

In any case, Muriel must have taken a moment or so to make up her mind what to do. She had awakened out of a heavy sleep, to find herself in great peril.

No girl at such a moment could have had her wits about her instantly. Had there been a sudden awakening to all the turmoil of a midnight attack upon the camp, Muriel would have felt far less bewildered.

But it was as if those keeping watch outside must have shown great negligence. How else could it be accounted for, that this woman, who was in Dulip Khan's service, had crept to the very shelter which slept all the Morcove girls as well as Muriel herself?

So there was this brief space, during which the menaced girl kept mute and still.

Suddenly the woman, fearful of delaying a moment longer, clapped a folded scarf over Muriel's mouth, at the same time actually kneeling upon the girl's body to keep her down.

Silently and swiftly was all this done; but as soon as Muriel realised that the woman's hands held only the intended gag she began to struggle. It might, perhaps, have been a short-lived, ineffectual struggle, since anyone set upon whilst lying down is always at a great disadvantage.

Before, however, there had been a full moment for the woman to act with the strength and skill which were hers, the situation underwent a most dramatic change.

Up rose every one of Muriel's fellow-castaways of the shelter—not asleep, after all!

She heard one of them voice a calm, "Got you!"—whilst they all, whether they spoke or not, swooped to seize the woman.

Nor did the surprise end there. Even as Muriel found the equally startled woman being dragged off her, she was aware of Pam's mother and Mrs. Cardew standing just inside the shelter's entrance.

Next moment an electric torch was switched on. It had been quickly taken from some pocket in the woman's dress by Betty, who had expected to find it there. The woman herself received the full glare of the torch as she stood dishevelled and helpless in the grasp of at least four other Morcovians.

Her wild eyes looked only at the two "Morcove" mothers, whose attitude just then was one of calm readiness to lend a hand, so to speak, if necessary.

"Yes, all right, Muriel!"

"Yes, Mrs. Willoughby! But—"

"Hurray, zen!" yelled that dusky imp, Nelever Nakara, whose own share in the clever capture had been a minor one. Bekas—what zey call a fair cop, I zink!"

"Yes, rather, bai Jove!" came Paula Creel's slightly nervous chortle. "Gwaet welief—what?"

"Whoa!" cried Polly. She was one of those who held the woman so that she had not the slightest chance of breaking away. "None of that!"

But, in her maddened state, the woman gave another frantic struggle, afterwards stamping with the rage of helplessness, and panting fiercely at the two ladies:

"You have caught me, then! Very well! What good do you think it will do you? I warn you, unless you let me go at once—"

"That is quite out of the question!" Mrs. Willoughby interrupted. "If you are wise—"

"Keep me prisoner, you think? Fools, all of you!" the half-breed panted on. "If I am not back in the Khan camp by daylight, then he will come with all his men! Yes, all of them, and this time he will not mind what he does!"

"Oh, you waste your breath to talk like that!" Pam's mother smiled. "We happen to know, you see, that Khan will not be at all surprised if you are not back at his camp by daylight. On the contrary, he will imagine that everything has gone off—according to plan, shall we say?"

Those who looked at the held woman then saw her go suddenly deathly pale. She recovered herself a little, but had nothing more to say; could only stand quite submissive, glaring wildly, now that she knew that Khan's plan for tonight had been—found out!

"Bring her outside, girls," Mrs. Willoughby was resuming, when they all heard masculine voices and a low laugh or two, from close at hand on the open beach.

Then, as Betty shone the torch so that it served to light the way for those who were marching their captive out of the shelter, there came Mr. Willoughby's hearty:

"Well done, Morcove!"  
He was just outside the shelter, with

Madge's father and a couple of the Grangemoor lads. Airman Somerfield was off the scene, and Muriel guessed that he, with the reliable help of the other Grangemoor boys, had something keeping him busy that was all of a part with this capture of the woman.

Muriel was among those Morcove girls who went last of all from the shelter. She was going to implore them to enlighten her as to how it was that they had been only shamming sleep when the crafty creature came stealing in; but now a fresh surprise fairly took her breath away.

A couple of Khan's turbaned seamen—prisoners who were being closely guarded by Dave, Tom, and Tubby.

That was the fresh surprise for Muriel—to see two Hindus standing disarmed, and with their wrists tied behind them, over by the camp fire.

Airman Somerfield was there as well, calmly smoking one of the few cigarettes that had been salvaged from Morcove's wrecked air-lander the morning after the fateful crash.

There came a gasped "Ah!" from the woman, betraying increased dismay at seeing those two Indians as helpless as herself; and then Mr. Willoughby nodded and smiled at her.

"All right, laugh if you like!" she hissed at him. "Fool! I tell you now—I warn you for the last time! I am related to Khan!"

"Perfectly well aware of that, Seranje Khan."

"What—you know my name, then?"

"Certainly," Pam's father smiled on. "During my time in India I did not get to know quite a lot about Khan himself without getting to know a good deal about—"

"His half-sister!" she said, through her clenched teeth. "And any insult done to me—and this is an insult, remember, to make me a prisoner, even to let these girls touch me—"

"Oh, that will do!" Mr. Willoughby airily checked her ravings. "May I suggest that you owe it to your dignity to get quietly with my wife and this other lady?"

"Go!" Seranje Khan again stamped. "Go where?"

"They will show you."

Then a loud despairing sigh proclaimed the woman's complete submission. In a few moments she had been walked away between Mrs. Willoughby and Mrs. Cardew.

As a precaution, the two men who had been here followed them across the firelit patch of beach, and so Muriel was left with only the Morcove girls.

Jack, with his game leg, and Jimmy Cherril were moving off together to talk with their three Grangemoor chums and the airman.

"Lovely!" Bunny Trevor was chuckling her delighted comment, and other Morcovians were starting to laugh when Muriel at last had her chance to cry:

"I say! It's all very well—oh, it's simply wonderful, of course! But—"

"Our being awake, after all, do you mean?" chuckled Betty, switching off the torch. "Nothing wonderful at all, really, considering Mrs. Willoughby had slept in five minutes before to wake us all!"

"Without waking me!" stared Muriel. "Yes!" several of them laughed together.

"Only—Muriel dear," Betty continued, with a change to great earnestness, "really we were supposed to jump up and swoop upon that woman the moment she got well inside the shelter. I'm afraid we waited a moment or two

longer than we should have done, and—you were awake at the time!"

"Awful scare it must have been," Judy Cardew shuddered. "But there was nothing to tell us that you had woken up. And so—"

"Oh, don't bother about that; as if I can't understand," Muriel exclaimed. "You had to be so awfully careful not to act—too soon! What I still don't see is why the woman was allowed to walk, as it were, into a trap set for her. Or is there something to be gained by keeping her a prisoner?"

"We don't know what the idea is, any more than you do," Betty answered. "We only know that Mrs. Willoughby, when she roused us all just now, warned us that the woman was going to be allowed to creep in, and so we must be ready."

"Yes, well," Pam put in with her usual serenity, "mother must have had word about something, of course, from dad and the others."

"Here, let's go across to the fire," Polly suddenly proposed, "and see what the boys have to say."

To have been more exact, Polly should have said Jack and Tubby, instead of "the boys," for only those two were still about in the firelit darkness.

Dave, Jimmy, and Tom—they had been required to go with Airman Somerfield when he took the captured Indians each by an arm and marched them away.

Jack was pretended to be, in a bad temper at having been debarred by his lameness from playing any part to-night. Whereas Tubby, for once, had helped to do big things!

It was Tubby's delight to be able to tell the girls how he, Jimmy, and Tom, along with Mr. Somerfield, had captured those two Hindus on the beach.

Mr. Willoughby was with us as well at first; but as soon as we saw what the game was, he crept away to let it be known here at the camp. A boat had come round from Khan's side of the island. It was a motor-boat, but the Indians were rowing her very quietly. They landed the woman, and we who were in hiding let her go by to walk into the trap at our camp. Then we swooped and collared those Indian johnnies.

"And the boat as well, of course!" Betty inferred. "How perfectly splendid!"

"But, Tubby," clamoured Polly, "is there an idea of keeping the men, too, as prisoners?"

"Bekas, ef so, I'd like to know how zey are all going to be fed!" piped in Naomer. "Ze sensiblest thing, ef you ask me, offer to send zem back in egg-change for a jolly good sack of biscuits, and tinned meat; and some vegetables would come in useful, too!"

There was an all-round laugh—not at what Naomer had said, but at Polly's clobbering the dusky one aside as being simply "goofy." Then a voice called out for one of the girls.

"Pam dear, we want you!"

Her mother it was, calling across the shelter from just outside the shelter to which Khan's half-sister had been taken.

"Right-ho, mumsie."

Pam, as she hastened in that direction, glanced at a wrist-watch. Four in the morning! In a couple of hours from now it would be getting light again.

"Pam dear," said her mother, "our taking those three prisoners has given us a wonderful chance to do a very big thing. Between now and daybreak some of us are going out to the yacht."

Pam, although thrilled by a sudden belief that she was, for some reason or other, to play a part in the daring exploit, said only:

"Yes, mumsie?"

"We are going to use the yacht's wireless to send out an SOS—call all ships."

Mrs. Willoughby added quietly:

"And you, Pam dear—you must go with us."

### Daring Does It!

WHAT pride in her only daughter it must have given Mrs. Willoughby to receive such a prompt, calm:

"Yes, well, mumsie, I'm ready."

"There is no time to waste, dear, but I must explain. You are to go in the boat, because there must be a girl who can be passed off as Muriel—captured at last! I'm going to disguise myself as that Seranje woman. Your father and Mr. Somerfield will be disguised as Hindus. By our taking those two men and the woman prisoners, all three disguises can be effected. Dad, as you know, speaks Hindustani like a native, and so does Mr. Somerfield. We shall only be on board a few minutes—that is, if all goes as we hope it will."

Pam was giving eager nods.

"You see, dear," her mother wound up, "if only Mr. Somerfield can send out a message, it will certainly get us all rescued at once. And you know, Pam, unless we are rescued within the next twelve hours or so, it may be very, very serious."

"Just you and I and dad—and Mr. Somerfield?"

"To go in the boat? Why, no, Pam," she was quietly answered. "One of the boys will be with us. Dave has been through a great deal; Jack is crooked; so we have decided—Jimmy. Now I must get into my disguise." Mrs. Willoughby smiled, turning to go into the shelter where, as Pam had been able to tell, Mrs. Cardew was with the woman prisoner.

"You have a few minutes, Pam darling, so you can slip back to your chums and tell them."

"Right-ho!"

The few minutes became, after all, a full quarter of an hour; but then suddenly there had to be an end to Pam's standing in talk with all the other girls.

Her mother appeared—and it might have been the half-breed woman herself, so clever was Mrs. Willoughby's disguise. She was wearing some of the woman's raiment, which included a rich-coloured silk scarf, covering the head and shoulders, and usefully obscuring much of the face.

As for Pam's father and the airman, they were those two Hindu prisoners all over again. Borrowed turbans helped greatly, of course, to make it such a safe masquerading.

Pam had not needed to disguise herself. There would be no encounter—at least, so it was hoped—with anyone on the yacht who would question her identity. The few men in charge knew that a kidnapped white girl was expected at any time to be brought on board. Good enough.

And Jimmy—he also was undisguised, for the simple reason that the plan involved his keeping altogether out of sight.

Jimmy, in fact, was to be "in reserve," lying low in the boat when it had come alongside the yacht, a bit of tarpaulin covering him.

At this last moment there was some jollying of Jimmy by Jack and others about his only going as a "stowaway." But below such surface merriment there was a grave understanding of the desperate part he might have to play—single-handed, it might be—if things went wrong.

The boat captured earlier in the night was used to embark the five. At the water's edge, just before the start, all who were there to give the adventurers a subdued but hearty send-off were in great excitement. Hopes of success ran high, for so much depended upon the disguises—and they were perfect. But, still, one never knew.

"Best of luck, all!" the fervent wish was whispered to those in the boat, as she became afloat in the shallows, with her engine not yet started up. "See you at brekker, Pam dear!"

"That's it, girls!"

"And an eggstra special brekker, too, don't forget—to celebrate!"

"Eggstra special, without the eggs, I'm afraid!" Bunny's voice followed Naomer's. But I call it being given a special treat, Pam, to be chosen for the job!"

"Yes, sweendle!" Naomer now said aggrievedly.

"Pam dear, good-bye for the present!" Paula called out. "Oh, geals—geals, if—if—"

"Now, shut up!" Polly checked her tender-hearted chum. "But, Pam dear, I say— Oh, dash! Just a mo'!"

And out into the shallows ran Polly, with her usual impulsiveness, intending to bestow a last kiss upon Pam, if possible.

The boat, however, was all but gone from reach. Even as wading Polly clapped hold of a part of its gunwale, sudden propulsion was imparted by the started engine. So there was no kiss for Pam, after all; only a violent jerk for Polly herself before she had to let go.

Very nearly she toppled forwards into

of its passengers, when she was startled by a feeling at one of her ankles, as if a floating rope had taken hold of it by a chance entanglement.

She thought she had only to draw up that foot to be able to shake it free. But, as soon as she made the effort, she felt a resisting pull that made her blood run cold.

It was as if she were going to be pulled right off her balance, and next moment she actually was overthrown by another mysterious tagging.

"Oh, I can't get back!" she cried.

"Something has got hold of me—is dragging me away! It's under the water! Help!" Her voice rose to a scream.

"It's one of those vile things—an octopus!"

#### AN OCTOPUS!

They could see nothing of the dreadful creature as, without a thought of the risk to themselves, they all rushed out into the shallows, to do their best for Polly.

But in every horrified mind there was a vivid, animated picture of a cuttle of a hugeness, perhaps, only known in tropic seas.

Even Polly was, for the moment, almost lost to sight in the darkness. They saw only her flailing arms above a patch of disturbed water.

"It's all right! Here we are!" one and another of them shouted, whilst they flourished and plashed out to her.

"Coming!"

Jack as well. He was hardly fit to walk without a crutch, yet in this dire moment for his sister he was by no means last of all in the rush to save her.

upon that writhing tentacle, to try to tear it away.

At the same time, there were two of the other boys and at least three of the girls all uniting to drag Polly back to the beach.

They had all they could do to drag her the first yard or so, feeling terribly certain that they were even dragging the octopus with her.

Sure enough, a few seconds later a part of the creature's body showed above the swirling water, with one or two more of its writhing tentacles.

But this was a good thing to have happened. No sooner did the creature find itself being drawn above the surface than it suddenly let go its hold on Polly, to sink back, and so make off.

Then, in silence, those who had chanced to be the ones to bear up Polly rushed her to the dry shingle. As they laid her down, they expected her to lie there, half-swimming; but she was upon her feet instantly, giving them grateful looks.

"Dweadful!" Paula shuddered. "I tried to lend a hand, but there was no room for me, bai Jove!"

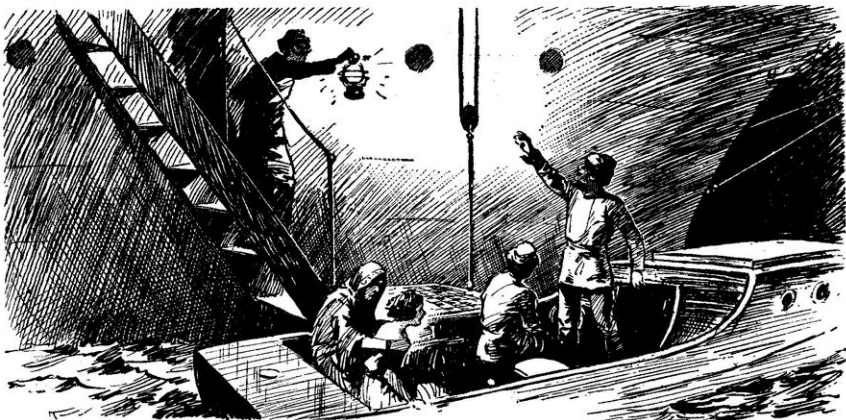
"Zere would have been for me," shrilled Naomer, "only I fell over, and thought ze octopus was on top of me, but eot was only Tubby."

"A whacker, he was," Dave commented, meaning the octopus. "I suppose they come close inshore by night to scavenge for food. We'll have to be more careful after that."

"Polly-wolly!" Jack panted. "None the worse for it, are you?"

"Not a bit."

"Hurrah zen!" Naomer cheered.



MR. WILLOUGHBY stood up in the launch to give a shouted command in Hindustani, while the others waited tensely. Would their daring ruse to get aboard Dulip Khan's yacht succeed?

the water, and Naomer and others, aware of this, sent up a faint, facetious cheer.

"This would certainly have brought Polly splashing back in haste; but there was the boat to watch as it sped away upon the calm sea, so soon to be lost in the darkness.

For a few moments, Polly, more than knee-deep in the warm wavelets, stood peering her hardest.

She was thinking again with great hopefulness how it looked in the night just like a boat manned by two Hindu seamen, with a Hindu woman as one

He and others lifted Polly by her shoulders clear of the water. Then, as they started to drag her towards the beach, she came altogether out of the sea, and they saw a dark, shiny tentacle of the cuttle clinging about her left ankle.

Jack, rendered frantic by the sight of his sister's white, upturned face and the terror that was in her eyes, shouted wildly at the creature.

That may have been a useless thing to do; but Jack did more than shout.

He left the others, to go on holding Polly clear of the water, and laid hands

"And so what a pity, whilst we were about eot, that we didn't catch him! Bekas zey said they are good to eat."

"Thanks!" said Bunny, with extreme disdain. "But I'd rather not."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

#### "SOS"!

A QUARTER to five in the morning, by Pam's wrist-watch!

Only another hour before daylight came creeping back, and so much that must be done whilst darkness still remained.

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## BETWEEN OURSELVES

**M**Y DEAR READERS,—I have just got back from a most fascinating short holiday. And where do you think I've been? Round Britain's coast on a cargo steamer.

I dare say that seems to you a rather strange holiday, but I can assure you that it was tremendous fun. And although the vessel was only very small, with limited passenger accommodation, there was never a dull moment on the voyage.

Most of the time we were in sight of land, and so there was plenty to see.

The shipping, too, was fascinating to watch—trawlers and drifters going to the North Sea fishing grounds, cargo boats, stately passenger vessels, all manner of shipping, to say nothing of the numerous lightships off the East Coast, whose mournful, moaning whistles always reminded me somehow of the bellow of a gargantuan cow!

I made a great friend on the voyage—the ship's cat! I don't know what Chum would say if he knew, but Mike—that was pussy's name—became greatly attached to me, and would follow me round and round the deck.

One day a small bird flew aboard and remained perched in the rigging for

But now they were almost alongside that grand ocean-going steam yacht which had lain idle, a few miles out from the island, this last day or two.

Their coming, as had been intended, was known to the few men who looked after the vessel whilst Dulip Khan, and most of his following, were encamped upon the island. Now a man was at the foot of the slung landing-steps, shining a lantern to light the motor-launch alongside.

Moment, this, for Pam's shout to prove whether or not a fluttered command of his, in Hindustani, would "do the trick." They did not want that man to remain there with his lantern.

As a sharp-sounding order the cry was sent across to him, and Pam wondered if others in the boat with her were feeling as heart-in-mouth as she was.

That man with the lantern—had he been deceived into thinking that he was under orders from someone acting for the yacht?

Yes. He even extinguished the light before running up the steps, to be lost to sight on the vessel, which again to-night was being kept in total darkness.

Pam exchanged a smile of relief with her mother, then turned to Jimmy. It was more than a delighted look which had to pass between girl and lad. They had been sitting close together during the run out from the island; but now it was time for him to get down out of sight.

So as she saw him move from the seat, to lie low in the boat, there was something of a fond farewell nature in Pam's last smile to him.

hours. Mike, ever on the prowl, saw it, and with typical catlike stealth, began to climb up the mast, evidently in the hope of reaching it.

But the officer on the bridge commanded to see what was going on. With a grim smile, he tugged the chain which operates the steamer's whistle; there was a terrific ZOOOOM! from the siren—and Mike almost fell out of the rigging! The bird, of course, took wing—and the last I saw of Mike's intended dinner was a tiny speck winging its way back to the distant shore.

Hundreds of other fascinating sights there were—the Bass Rock, literally swarming with a myriad seabirds; the great cliffs of Flamborough Head; the Forth Bridge, and, on the southward voyage, the hills of Arran, the Irish coast, and the famous Longships light-house of Lanes End. Alas! I have no space in which to describe them all to you. But perhaps in a future Chat I will tell you more about this very interesting voyage.

Now for some very, very brief details of the stories in next Saturday's **SCHOOLGIRL**.

The Cliff House story, written by Hilda Richards, features Janet Jordan, and is a grand school and circus tale. It is complete in next week's issue, and the title is:

### "JANET JORDAN'S ORDEAL!"

Make sure of reading this fine feature by ordering your copy of **THE SCHOOLGIRL** right away.

Long instalments of our two popular serials, a merry complete tale starring "Happy-Go-Lucky Lulu," and "Pat's" four pages of articles complete next week's splendid number.

With best wishes,

YOUR EDITOR.

"I think it's going to be all right," Mr. Willoughby whispered. "Those on board have taken it as an order. They're to keep out of the way. Jimmy's covered over—is he?"

"Yes, dad," Pam whispered back. The boat bumped alongside, and was instantly tied up by Airman Somerfield in such a way that she could be cast off in a moment. Then he went first up the railed steps, to take his stand at the gangway on to the deck.

He was there as a turbaned "Hindu," in a stiff, respectful attitude when Mrs. Willoughby came up, in the role of Seranje Khan, followed by Pam.

She, Pam, checked by her mother directly they had set foot upon the deck, glanced this way and that in the darkness.

There was time for her to become almost certain—but not quite certain—that none of those seamen were skulking around, to pry. Then her mother gripped her by the arm in the right "Seranje" manner, and hustled her to the cabin passage.

They came, in the deep darkness, to one cabin door that had a panel smashed out of it. That, of course, was the damage Seranje Khan had committed, by having to break out of the cabin at dawn yesterday, after Betty and Dave had locked her in.

As roughly as ever—just in case any of the skeleton crew should be spying—Mrs. Willoughby pushed Pam before her into a cabin next door to the damaged one.

She went the door, and Pam's mother made a point of noisily bolting it; but the bolt was afterwards quietly slipped back.

Then, as mother and daughter stood close together in the cabin, they heard "dad's" footfall in the passage-way. It ceased, and they knew that he, as arranged, had taken up a sentinel-like position outside the cabin door.

Mrs. Willoughby clicked on a cabin light, and there in the sudden glare mother and daughter looked at each other, and smiled. "So far—good!"

A few minutes crept by. There had been faint sounds on board the yacht, as if one person only were going about some duty or other. Then a door had closed, and since then—silence!

The door of the wireless-room, was it? If so, then Airman Somerfield was in there now, sending Morse into the ether.

Pam seemed to see him, in her mind's eye, sitting at the instruments, dot-dashing rapidly, urgently.

Suddenly there was the faint slap, slap! of running feet, and then in the cabin passage an excited jabber of Hindustani began.

Rap, rap, rap! The cabin door was knuckled in an urgent way. The man who knocked also called out in Hindustani.

Pam's mother was smiling as she switched off the light before opening the cabin door. It was all right. And so Pam could breathe again.

After making a noise with the bolt, Mrs. Willoughby opened the door. She and Pam had dad and the airman before them in the dark doorway. First Pam's father spoke—still in Hindustani. Then Mr. Somerfield joined in, most excitedly.

Some of the crew, sneaking round to listen, perhaps? Well, if they were, they could only hear Seranje Khan being warned not to stay on board, after all.

"Come then—you!" Mrs. Willoughby suddenly addressed Pam; and that, perhaps, was the very cleverest, as it was the most daring act in the whole performance, so far. Seranje Khan's voice imitated perfectly.

"Back to the island then, but that does not mean back to your friends—no!" was added, with realistic harshness.

Pam, as if she were really being taken along by a gripping hand that shook her savagely, purposely stumbled in her steps. She had her hands up to her eyes as if she were crying; but she was feeling much more like laughter.

So, with one sham "Hindu" walking in front, and the other close behind, she and her mother emerged upon the open deck, and were next moment at the top of the landing-steps.

Then as she went second down the car-van-sided flight of steps, she peered eagerly for the launch.

Just as she did this her father, only a step or two below her, made a pause that meant uncertainty. And she knew why.

There were two of the Hindu seamen at the bottom of the steps.

But this was not that accounted for Pam's own sudden feeling of wild alarm.

The boat, with Jimmy in it, was gone!

**IN** the moment of success—sudden disaster? What has happened to Jimmy? And what will become of the party who have so daringly boarded Khan's yacht? Thrilling developments crowd next Saturday's chapters of this powerful adventure serial, so make sure of reading them by ordering your copy of **THE SCHOOLGIRL** right away.