

EVERY SCHOOLGIRL'S OWN PAPER

"THE RIDDLE OF THE
WRECK"
By HILDA RICHARDS

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"SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



CLIFF HOUSE TO THE RESCUE

A thrilling incident in this
week's exciting long com-
plete Cliff House mystery
and adventure story



The RIDDLE of the WRECK

Jemima Carstairs, of the Fourth Form at Cliff House School, Takes The Lead In This Powerful Story of Mystery and Adventure

Out of the Storm



"PHEW!" gasped Barbara Redfern. "My hat!" panted Mabel Lynn.

And, "What a glibly storm!" contributed Clara Trevlyn, the athletic Tomboy. "Ahooy there, Jimmy! Where are you?"

"Coming, coming, fair one!" the merry voice of Jemima Carstairs floated out of the darkness. "Just as fast as my rheumatically old legs will bring me. Wha, there! Anybody seen my goggles?"

But nobody had seen Jemima's goggles. It was questionable if anybody ever would see it again. For the goggles, together with Mabel Lynn's umbrella and Barbara Redfern's hat and the newspaper which Clara Trevlyn had been carefully carrying, had all gone, whisked away on the wings of the storm which was raging along the coast near Cliff House School.

And what a storm it was! Early in the afternoon, though it was, the sky was almost as dark as night. Except when the lightning flashed, illuminating the wild message with a momentary brightness more blinding than the most radiant light of a summer's day, the four chimes from the Fourth Form at Cliff House grasped their way through icy gloom.

It was difficult to make their voices heard, what with the ralling thunder, the constant hiss and lash of rain, the howling tearing wind, which, coming in from the sea, at times staggered them; at others brought them to a com-

plete standstill. And it had been such a frightful afternoon, when, in a spirit of adventure and curiosity they had set out to explore the old ruins of Monk's Folly further along the cliff path.

"Wagh! Hope we soon get out of this!" grunted Clara. "Fogg can't be far."

Fogg, the nearest fishing village, wasn't. But they could see no sign of it as they ploughed on their way. For ahead, as through a sheet of distorted glass, they saw the winking beam of the light-house on Kewstone Point, and far out at sea, now and again, a tiny dancing light which told that a vessel of some description was heading with

Baba passed.

"I say, it must be awful to—to—" And she blinked in the lightning which at that moment flashed into their faces. "It must be awful to be at sea in a storm like this, and—" Suddenly she broke off. "Oh—look at that!"

Hardly need for that injunction. As one, the four were looking. Out at sea, where they had seen that bobbing light, now came an unexpected sight. A streak of fire suddenly shot skyward, bursting into a shower of yellow sparks.

"A distress signal!" cried Baha.

"Oh, my hat!" They thrilled, struck for a moment into fascinated silence. As they stared, a flame of lightning flickered along the horizon, revealing the ship that plunged and reared not more than two hundred yards away from the shore.

"It's sinking!" Clara cried, a catch in her breath.

Winking it was. Another flash showed

them the vessel, its beam deep in the trough of the sea, the stern rising. For a moment they glimpsed a tiny black figure on deck.

"Come on!" gasped Baha. "They'll be launching the life-boat! We—we may be able to do something to help."

Forgotten in a moment were their discomforts. In a body they raced forward, splashing heedlessly through the puddles that lay in the depressions of the path. Another rocket shot up from the doomed vessel even as they ran. Ahead, in a lull of the storm, they heard cries, shouts—the sounds of a commotion.

"Whoa, whoa!" Jemima called. "Stop the rash, comrades! My superior's come astuck!"

But nobody stopped. Jemima was quite equal to dealing with her own refractory suspender! They peered on while Jemima stopped, desperately plugging at her stocking.

"Boffer!" the girls now muttered. "Take care, Mabel! Sigh-sigh! Oh, to be a bee, that I could burrow up my socks with shoe-lace! Tish-tish, what a life! Alas! Only no!" she said, as somebody in the darkness cautioned against her.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" a voice answered. "Don't mope!" Jemima said cheerfully. "Don't happen to have a bannister or saw-driver, or a tin of glue on you, what?" And then she looked up, as for a moment a flash of lightning revealed the white, starry-eyed face of the girl who had collided with her. "I say," she added, straightening.

For the girl, as if suddenly frightened, had taken to her heels and was running

like the wind down the sloping path that led to the beach!

"Now what," Jennina cried, "scared her off like that? Looked at me like a sheet, mister? Well, well, life is full of mystery, what?" And with another sigh, Jennina propped her spectacles that was no longer there. "Now where have my merry little playmates gone? Babs!" she called.

"Jimmie, this way! They're leaping the lifboat!"

Jennina's pulses quickened. She thought no more of the strange girl. She hurried on, descending the slope which led to the beach. There she joined her three chums who stood aside from an anxious crowd which had gathered there. The lifboat, pushed by its rowing crew, who stood up to their knees in the crashing breakers, was already making out to sea.

The four stood, watching, fascinated. There was nothing else they could do. They saw the crew climb in, saw the oars dip and flash as the men pulled towards the wreck.

"Will it get there before she sinks?" Clara whispered.

That was the question. The doomed ship, heaving and rolling, was going down rapidly now. With every flash that rent the clouds it seemed to have sunk deeper in the waves. Like a cork, the lifboat tossed towards it.

"It's going," Clara cried suddenly.

"No! No!"

"Look!"

Then, hearts thudding, they saw the ship rise, then drop, its decks awash. Nearer, nearer the lifboat drove.

"Could it get there in time? Could it—"

Then suddenly there was a cry. Babs felt her face turn pale. Instinctively Clara hurried to the very water's edge, standing there unheeded as the surf broke over her shoes and the rain beat into her face.

"Babs—Babs!" Clara's voice rose to a shriek. "Come here!"

"What?"

"There's somebody there—in the sea!"

Babs, Mals, and Jennina, rushing to the water's edge, joined her. Another revealing flash of lightning barred sea, and for one paralyzing instant they all stood goggling at the sight which met their gaze. Twenty yards away, battling feebly among the waves, was a figure—the figure of a girl!

"She may have come from the wreck," Mals cried. "Oh, Babs—"

But Babs, her face gray, was already wading into the sea. A wave came to meet her, making her stagger, as the struggle shifted beneath her feet. She struggled forward. Mals and Clara joined her, Jennina, bracing herself, plunged into the sea after them.

"Join hands!" gasped Babs.

They joined hands, wading out together. The water, though not deep, made the shivering struggle touchingly real. The surf lashed about their feet. The spray, rising in a fine mist, dabbled into their faces. But, set they waded in up to their knees; now up to their thighs.

"Look! There she is!" Clara cried.

In that moment they were grateful to the lightning. Flaming they saw the wretched being, as though struck, at her last gasp. A girl—a girl with sunken eyes, with dead white lips. She clutched a frock as if she were dying.

"Save me," she muttered hoarsely.

She struggled, came in months, they saw her struggling towards her. Babs, plunging away from the rest,

grabbed her just as she would have sunk. In a moment they had surrounded her, sitting cross and legs. At the same moment—

"Look out!" cried Mals.

A huge wave rushed at them with a roar like thunder, leaping over their back backs, drenching them from head to foot.

"Everybody sit tight!" gasped Clara.

Answering calls, a trifle choked and breathless.

"Come on, then! Get her ashore!"

They floundered back. The girl, who ever she was, being a dead weight between them. Jennina and Clara supported her shoulders. Babs and Mals her legs. Breathless, they laid her on the beach.

"She's unconscious," Clara said. "No, she isn't; she's opening her eyes." She bent down. "Can you speak?" she asked.

"Oh, thank—thank you!" the girl gasped. "It—it was terrible!" she said and shuddered. "I—I thought we—no, some sinking, you know. I—I jumped overboard."

"Poor kid!" Clara shook her head.

"Jennina, bend off and collect the first-aid man, will you? I expect you'll find one at the lifboat station. She—"

And she lowered, "Jimmie—"

Jennina, starting over her head at the face of the rescued girl, started.

"Oh, what? I lost your garden?"

"Will you lend the first-aid man?"

"Oh, certainly!" Jennina turned.

"But—"

And, backing out—for a crowd was beginning to collect—she bumped into someone and turned, with

a smile of apology. And again she stopped.

For the moment, although bumped into, did not appear to notice Jennina. She was a girl slightly older than Jennina herself; a good-looking girl, whose face seemed vaguely familiar. She was staring fixedly at the girl on the beach.

"Come!" she whispered.

"You know her?" Jennina asked.

"Yes!" The girl seemed to become aware of Jennina as if with a start.

Very strangely she eyed the flame-cropped girl from Cliff House's Fourth Form. Her lips quivered with her in the noise of the storm they were lost; then most astonishingly she turned away.

Jennina shook her head. Life seemed full of excitement and strange girls these afternoons. But, still— And, with another glance at the girl on the beach, she twisted off, pressing her way into the dense crowd which had gathered round the lifboat-station.

That crowd, heedless of the storm, stood facing the sea. Jennina saw that the lifboat was returning, and wondered vaguely if the crew at the wrecked vessel was safe. She heard snatches of conversation.

"It's Fallow's boat—"

"Fallows and several men were in it—"

Jennina paid no heed. The storm seemed to be increasing in violence, if that were possible. What with that, her own soaked condition, and the need for urgency, she had no time in which to wait and pick up further details. By



THE light of Babs' torch showed the others a great hole in the ship's side. "Come on!" the captain whispered. And she crept forward.

the greatest of good luck, she found the first-aid man.

"Girl drowning!" she gasped out. "Down there—along the beach! Can you come?"

The first-aid man gave her a look, then pointed up his bag.

"O.K.," he replied briefly. He strode out, pushing his way through the crowd. Jennina, with a gasp, tried to follow him, only to pause at a hand laid on her shoulder. She blinked as she eyed herself looking over the face of the girl to whom she had spoken two or three minutes ago.

"Jennina!" the girl said. And Jennina stared, wondering how she knew her name.

"Jennina!" she muttered almost incoherently. "It's urgent—important! Can—can I speak to you?"

The Stowaway at Cliff House



"WHAT'S her name?"

"Ruth Chil-

ton?"

"Where does she come from?"

Barbara Redfern shook her head. "She doesn't say. She'd only say that she was a stowaway on the wreck."

Babe & Co. had got back to Cliff House some two hours since, and, after changing, had gathered in the Commons.

Outside, the storm was at last blowing itself out, though a ceaseless pattering of rain still beat with ragged fingers at the windows, and the wind shrieked in the branches of the old elms.

Much had happened in those two hours—much which, though Barbara Redfern & Co. were unaware of it, was to affect them strangely in the near future.

For Ruth Chilton, the girl they had rescued from the sea, was at this moment an inmate of Cliff House School—she was, in fact, in the school's possession. Because the tiny Fogg Cottage Hospital was full up, kindly Miss Finmore, the headmistress of the school, had given permission for her to be brought here, and Barbara Redfern & Co. now rather looked upon her as their own special protégée.

The Sea Spray, the small cargo boat from which she had come, was a wreck. Fortunately, however, the captain, Ned Fallows, and the crew had been rescued by the lifeboatmen. They, apparently, had been unaware of the stowaway they had carried, which further lightened the interests of Cliff House in the wail it now found in its midst.

Dr. Longmore, the school doctor, had been called in. The girl, he declared, was suffering from shock and a bad chill, consequent upon her immersion. Her name and the fact that she had stowed away on the Sea Spray was all that anybody knew.

"But why did she stow away?" Lella Carroll demanded.

"Goodness knows!" Babe said. "I haven't even spoken to her myself since she came in. I got the news from the matron."

"Where's Jennina?" Clara Trevlin said suddenly. "You know, I haven't seen her since we packed her off for the first-aid man."

"Jennina?" Mabel looked around, rather as if she had left the immaculate one lying about somewhere. "Well, that's queer!" she said. "I never noticed in the excitement. She never came back."

"Then where is she?" Babe demanded.

"Elsewhere, for once," a sterner voice put in at the door, "in the affirmative—that is!"

And into the room—immediately dressed and newly groomed, her gleaming eyeglass catching the glimmers of her bright Eton crop—strode Jennina herself.

"Behold me, Spartans, in all my native majesty, clean, washed, and in my right mind once again. Ha—Woe! Benjie Hunter—quick!" she added in alarm.

"Oh! woe—woe—what—?" and out of the easy-chair which she was occupying, fat Benjie Hunter jumped like an agitated jack-in-the-box. "W-what's the matter?"

"Nothing, old fat one! Nothing!" Jennina flustered beamed. "Just wanted the old chair, what? Thanks!" And Jennina, to Benjie's glowing surprise, dropped gracefully into it, carefully folding over the pleats of her skirt.

"After all the housework work I've been doing, you know—dragging people out of the sea, and all that, Mother Nature calls the weary old bones to rest!"

"But where," Clara demanded, "have you been, you chump?"

"Out—out, my Clara. Braving the nifty old storm, paddling in the merry old ocean, and so forth," Jennina answered vaguely.

"But what happened to you when you went off to fetch the first-aid man?"

"Well, I fetched him, what?" Jennina answered. "H. e. e. e. e. didn't he?"

"Yes, but—"

"Well, there you are." And Jennina waved a hand as though that disposed of the whole question. "Nice drop of sea," she said, stretching her slim, shapely legs towards the blank.

"But where," Babe demanded categorically, "have you been for the last two hours?"

"Ah!" Jennina said profoundly.

And it was obvious from that moment that Jennina was in one of her most appreciatively mysterious moods.

"Oh, give her up," Clara growled, and then turned as the door opened and Mrs. Thwaites, the ship-deck matron, looked in. "Oh! Matron—"

"The doctor says that you can come in now," Mrs. Thwaites said, "and Ruth herself would like to see you first, to thank you for having rescued her."

The four rose. Together they went out, following the matron as she led the way down the corridor. The door of the sanatorium was reached. Mrs. Thwaites pushed it open and led the way into the apartment ward. Ruth Chilton, her face a fiery red, her eyes rolling, turned her head on the snowy pillow as they came in.

"Her lips parted."

"Barbie!" she cried.

"Ruth—" and Babe in a moment was by her side. She caught the girl's hands as with a dart, wifely mode she extended them to her. "How do you feel?"

"Better," Ruth said. "But—" she sighed. The doctor says I've still got a temperature. He says I'll have to stay in bed for at least three days. But I do want to thank you, for all that you have done for me!" And, as the others drew near, she smiled at them all in turn. But when her smile flashed to Jennina, it wavered and then faded uncertainly disappeared from her lips. She stared at the slim one penetratingly.

"Oh, dear, I—I don't remember you," she said.

"No!" Jennina smiled. "That's! How very disconcerting, what? My

name's Jennina—Jennina Carstairs, one of the old building breed."

"She helped to rescue you, Ruth," Barbara gently explained.

"Oh?" But Ruth stared at Jennina. Then suddenly her face broke into a tremendous smile. "Then thank you," she whispered timidly. "Thank you all—so very much. That—that's all I wanted to see you for," she explained. "Just to thank you for—for being so good to me. But, Barbara, do you know anything about the Sea Spray? It—its hasn't gone down, has it?"

"Not quite," Jennina replied. "Tough on the old craft, what? Just looking in the cradle of the jolly old ship. They tell me that it won't be deep and dry on the beach until about eleven to-night—and then only for a couple of hours. You, you know."

The girl smiled faintly. She glanced nervously towards the doorway, through which the matron had just disappeared. Then she sat up.

"But, be careful," Babe exclaimed. "Thank you, it—it's all right." The girl gave a nervous smile. "But—oh dear! Barbara, you know what the doctor says, that—that I shan't be able to get out of bed for another three days! You—you—?" And then she stopped, biting her lip and shaking her head. "But no," she cried. "No! I can't ask you—not that—not that!"

"What, dear?" Babe asked gently.

"There's something I've got to get from the Sea Spray."

"But, goodness—Ruth!"

"Barbara, I must get it! I must. I've got to go—now—"

And Ruth began to throw the bed-clothes aside.

"No, no—wait! Ruth, you—you suffer!" Babe panted. She was alarmed now. Her face which had been so pale now, became flushed and she came into the girl's chamber, the wild, gleamy look that was showing in her eyes. Obviously Ruth was not even fit to walk. "Ruth, no!" she cried as she pressed her back.

"Ruth, be quiet! What is this that you want from the Sea Spray?"

Ruth gulped.

"Barbara, I—I don't tell you."

Babe bit her lip.

"Ruth, listen," she said quietly. "We're your friends. If we can, we'll get it for you—whatever it is. She looked round at her cousins for approval, and there were none. "Now tell us."

"Oh, Barbara, you mean that?"

"Yes, do!"

"And you won't breathe a word to a soul? On your words of honor?"

"On our words of honor."

"Then—then—" she gulped. "Mabel, you—one that there's no one at the dock?" she muttered, nervously. "Oh dear! I—I don't know where to start. But you know that I stowed away on the Sea Spray. I—I stowed away because I knew the boat was coming to Fogg. I—I had something—something that was in a tin box—something, please don't ask me what it was. I—I can't even tell you everything, even now."

The four stared at her. Jennina fingered her monocle. Vigorously, she polished it.

"And is that all?" she asked.

"No. But—but it's all I can tell you now," she wailed said. "Please, Barbara, believe me. You see, I, I don't tell you any more—I-I can't. I gave my word of honor to—to someone, that I wouldn't let him down. There was a small cabin used for storing ropes and tackle in the stern of the vessel. I hid the box under that tackle. Oh, Babe, it—it only you could get it for me!"

Babe shook her head a little. She looked at her cousins. Babe was standing still, every line of her face expressing the pity she felt. Clara was leaning on the rail of her bed, sympathy in her eyes. Jonathan still continued thoughtfully to polish her sneakers. Her head, drooping, excluded the view of her face.

But Babe was thinking—could they do it? It was going to be no easy task. Only for a couple of hours that night would the wreck of the Sea Spray be high and dry enough to be boarded. That meant the risky expedient of leaving bounds. Apart from that, there would be no search to dodge, police perhaps—

And yet—what alternative was there? It was obvious that the loss of the tin box was prying on Ruth's mind. Strongly stirred, Babe had already conceived a great liking for the girl. The host of mystery, of uncertainties surrounding her perhaps helped that liking, added to which there was the feeling of responsibility she had invested in herself as the nurse of the girl. She hesitated.

"Well," she said, "what do you say, Clara?"

"I'm game!" the Tenboys said at once.

"And me!" Babe put in.

"Not forgetting," Jonathan softly interjected, "little me!"

"Then we go—to-night?"

"We don't!" Jonathan announced.

Ruth smiled tremulously.

"Oh, thank you! It—it's frightfully good of you! I promise you," she added fervently, "you shall never, never regret it!"

They left her then, just as Mrs. Tenboys came back.

Over tea in Study No. 7—to which they were invited by Clara—they discussed the details of the trip. Rather puzzled now that they had made up their minds. By the advantage it promised, rather intrigued by the mystery surrounding it.

The storm had gone when bedtime came. The wind had dropped and a still, brilliant moon rode high in the sky. In silence they climbed into bed.

Gennie Jackson, the perfect one, came round to turn out the lights, and the Fourth Form settled into slumber. Half-past nine—ten! Half-past ten chimed out!

Then Barbara rose.

"O.K.!" she breathed.

Four shadowy figures rose in the darkness and silently and rapidly dressed. Babe looked round.

"Ready?"

"What's! Lead me to the scene of action!" Jonathan chuckled.

"No noise, then."

Out of the dormitory and down the corridor they slipped. In the lobby Babe slowed back the window-catch, shivering a little in the cold air which flamed her face. Without notice, they dropped on to the flower-box outside.

Haunted Hulk



ONCE out on the moonlight road that led to Pegg, they walked talking, arriving at the tiny fishing village barely minutes after leaving school.

Pegg shivered in the moonlight like a deserted village. The sea, still showing signs of turbulence, spread out like a rippling fan dotted with glowing diamonds.



"I MUST have the box—I must!" Ruth parted. "You don't know what it means to me. Oh, can't you get it for me—please?"

Babe nodded grimly. "Yes," she said. "We'll try again—this afternoon!"

And high and dry on the beach, near the submerged rocks on which it had foundered, stood the black bulk of the wrecked Sea Spray.

At the bottom of the path which led down to the beach they paused, crouching in the shadows to prevent being seen. Long and earnestly they stared at the wreck.

"Nobody about!" muttered Clara.

"No, let's go on. Keep into the cliff, though. We don't want to be seen. I—"

"What's that?"

"Near the wreck—I thought I saw something move."

They stopped again, they stared. Motionless, grim, the old bulk stood.

"Mysterious!" Jonathan murmured.

"Over little old Babe's reading things! Shiver me timbers! 'In cold, let us advance, husheth.'"

They moved on, keeping to the shadows thrown by the cliff, their eyes upon the wreck. None, none they approached, until at last they stood quite close to it. Still no alarm, no movement or sound.

Forward they crept, hoping to goodness no vigilant constabulary was watching from the cliff above.

And there—halt! In the dark shadow thrown by the wreck they halted, gazing up towards the deck of the vessel above them.

It was easy to see, even in the darkness, what had happened. A great hole had been stove in the hull of the ship. The moonlight, glinting into it, showed there a confusion of smashed timbers, upturned beams, tangled ropes.

"All well, methinks!" Jonathan murmured. "Oh, comrades, up! Babe, you lead. Ninnywags waste this way!"

That was Barbara's way of referring to the hole, of course. But Babe had

already decided upon that. Slipping her torch into her hand, she entered first, climbing over the wreckage inside. A tiny door, hinging from one hinge, confronted her. She pushed it aside.

"All secure?" she called. "Come on!"

She found herself in a small compartment. Now at last it opened onto a switch on the berth. She pressed the button. A bright beam of light focused along the narrow passage.

And then, quite suddenly, Babe caught a sound—a faintly startled cry, followed by a swift scurry.

"What was that?" she gasped.

"Fast rats!" Jonathan said. "Lead on, MacLeod!"

"But don't wait! Desert sinking ships!" Babe warned to know.

"Only the cowardly rats," Jonathan assured her. "Not the real British rats, what? Besides, the poorer old man-of-war isn't sinking. It's safe!"

That hardly disposed of the argument, but Jonathan, at least, seemed to be content with the explanation. They pressed on.

Four inches above sea, and in that confined space they had the effect of floodlight. They revealed the appalling damage which had been done. Twisted metal plates, crushed timbers, doors hanging and split; walls with gaping fissures in their sides not there a moment ago as they crept on.

On tiptoe they went, though, to be sure, now that they were safely inside the vessel, there was no need for such caution. Beneath them the scurred timbers creaked.

"Ugh!" Mabel Lynn shuddered.

"Creepy!"

Certainly it was weird. Though there was nothing to be afraid of, they

hatted once or twice, nervously looking round. Then, at last, they came to the end of the passage. A small door, still locked, faced them.

"Would this be it?" Babs asked.
 "Well, let's look!" Clara suggested.
 "There's a key in the door. But look up! This place is getting on my nerves!"

Babs turned the key. Four torches flashed into the tiny compartment littered with boxes of oil, with ropes, with tins, with hales. A great fire-brick ran across the floor from one end of the room to the other, and into that faint other articles had fallen.

"Oh, my hat!" Clara muttered in dismay, and then jumped round with a gasp. "What was that?"

Nervously they jumped. With one accord they turned towards the door. At the same time Jimmie gave a sharp cry as her torch clattered from her hand. Instinctively Clara turned—too sharply, for, manning against Jimmie, her torch went spinning, to disappear, with a hollow thud, into the fissure that ran across the floor.

"Oh, my hat, my torch!" Clara gasped. "Babs, shine yours here!"

"But—"
 "I say—" Babs yelled.
 "Now what?"
 "My torch!"
 "What's the matter with your torch?"

"Somebody snatched it!" Babs panted.

"At that moment—"
 "Oh, great gibber!" Look out!" Jimmie cried.

She staggered back. Not usually was Jimmie clumsy, but this time she tripped on Babs' toe, at the same time knocking against the arm which held the torch. Up from Babs went a yell of anguish. Out of her hand the torch was swept, extinguishing as it fell.

Instantly the cabin was plunged into pitch darkness!

Darkness at all times breeds fear. In this battered bulk which only a few hours ago had been a stately ship heaving with the storm, it seemed to take on a peculiarly sinister quality. In trembling silence the startled girls stood, ears and eyes straining, hearts drumming.

"What was it?" Babs quavered.
 "What? Babs?" And Babs, by her side, felt her suddenly shiver.
 "Barbara, look!" she breathed hoarsely.

In the pitch darkness the pointed, but there was no need, for both Babs and Clara had seen, and both stood rooted.

A ghostly, glowing shape, moving against the background of the companion wall, was coming towards them.

Not as a rule were Babs & Co. afraid. In the ordinary course of events they would have stood their ground. But the silence, the unassuming appearance of this apparition, the atmosphere of this uncanny wreck, the mystery of that smothered hand, all contributed to the momentary panic which seized them now. There came a cry from Babs; a sudden movement.

"Come on!" she cried.
 She made a dash for the door. Panic breeds panic. Neither concern nor thought did Babs and Clara give them. Impelled only by Babs' example, fled with the sudden desire to escape from this ship of mystery, at all costs, they followed her. One terrified look they flung back towards that mysteriously glowing figure which blocked the passage-way. Up the stairs they flew. They reached the deck.

"Oh, my ruddy aunt, what was it?" Clara gasped.

"A ghost!" Babs cried.
 She was trembling. In the moonlight which shone down, her face shined white beneath her golden hair. Babs gulped, catching her breath. She stared down the hole, up which they had so frantically scrambled.

Clara stood, fuming, colorless with shame now at the thought of the escapade. She had run away! Run away from a shadow! The pride of all the Truylins rose in arms. Her eyes glittered.

"Oh, we've idiots!" she said. "Foolish! What the dickens did we most like that for?"

"Well—" Babs said.
 "Well—" Babs temporized.
 "Anyway, I've got a hank," Clara declared. "My hat, if it got round, we should be the laughing stocks of Cliff House! Anybody coming?"

"But—the torches!"
 "Blow the torches!"
 And Clara, fiercely disgusted with herself, made a step forward.

"But—I say, hold on!" Babs cried.
 "What! about Jimmie? Where's Jimmie?"

Starkly they stared. Until this instant they had forgotten Jimmie. But Jimmie was not here—that was obvious. Clara looked stern.

"A laugh we've given her! Come on!"

And Clara, decidedly annoyed with herself now, took a step towards the companion ladder.

Almost recklessly she climbed down. Babs, hencing herself, went down after her. At the bottom they gath'ered, blinking, for a moment in the inkly darkness.

The corridor was vacant now. Whatever it was that had seized them had disappeared. Clara led the way towards the door.

And then suddenly she stopped. In the darkness she turned a startled glance upon her companions.

For a light now glamed beneath that door—a light which wavered, dimpled and glimmered again, as though a torch inside was winking the floor. And suddenly, as they all stared in wonderment, a voice reached them.

"Like looking," that voice said, "to the proverbial old needle in the merry old haystack! Please! Would my hat have to call it a day! Or should we say a night, at this hour of the sleepy moon?"

"Jimmie!" breathed Babs. "She's in there—talking to someone!"

She moved forward. Her hand settled on the knob of the door, and she pushed. Instantly, the light went out!

Jimmie Has a Secret



"JIMMIE!" Babs cried, and pulled at the door. "Jimmie!"

No reply.
 "My aunt! What's the idea up to now!" Clara turned. "Babs, push the door open!"

"I—I can't! It's locked on the inside!"

"But Jimmie! Jimmie!" Clara cried. Again no reply.

"Well, of all the— Here, let me have at you as a!" Clara asserted, and, pushing Babs out of the way, bravely caught the handle. "If her idea thinks this a suitable time for a jump, we'll jolly well—ugh!" Violently she tossed the handle, violently wrenching.

"Jimmie, you daunt!" Open this door!"

Still no reply.

In the darkness, Babs frowned. What game was Jimmie playing? And who had she been talking to in the secrecy of the locked cabin? Babs, still a little nervous, blinked apprehensively along the corridor. Clara, her lips set, made a vigorous onslaught upon the door. But the door was stout. Unlike the rest of the vessel, it seemed to have escaped damage. Fiercely she tugged, fiercely she screeched and tinned at the handle.

And then—
 "Whoa, down there!" a voice came from the top of the companion ladder.
 "What! Comrades?"
 "Jimmie!" yelled the three.
 "What cheer!" Jimmie called.
 "What are you doing?"
 "Well, as the moment you know, I'm trying to warn you that a couple of hefty looking consguards are stargazing in this direction across the beach! Better be nifty as they'll be nothing as for sabotage or something!"

Clara frowned. But she had her eyes to realize, despite that, that unpleasant consequences might ensue if they were caught. No help for it, under the circumstances, but to abandon the search. Up the ladder she scrambled, Babs and Babs close on her heels. They reached the deck. Jimmie, her eyes gleaming in the moonlight, favored them with a bland smile.

"All serene—" she greeted. "But, quick's the action, Spartans!" And she pointed towards the beach, across which two men, in the unmistakable uniform of consguards, were approaching. "Just time," she whispered, "to get going while the merry old going's good, what? Better yourselves over the deck and in position in the shadows until they've got aboard!"

"But—"
 "Quickly!"

No time then in which to argue. Fortunately they were in deep shadow. They heard the footsteps of the two men bounding among the shingle—in another five seconds they would be aboard! Jimmie herself set the example by dropping over the gunwale, crouching in the concealing shadows. Clara followed.

"Now, quiet!" Jimmie muttered. They stood still. They heard the men clamber aboard. On the deck they stood talking for a few minutes. They saw the sound of clumping steps as they descended into the hold of the ship.

"Now's our cue!" Babs whispered.
 "While they're below they can't see us." They rose. Across the moonlit stretch of beach into the dark protective shadows of the cliff they bolted. There they passed.

Well, a nice end to the search, I must say!" Clara greeted. "A prize out of this! North Country picked us to help her! But you, Jimmie! What funny game have you been playing?"

"I?" Jimmie asked in surprise.
 "Oh, don't act innocent! Who the dickens were you with in that cabin, and why did you lock the door? And how?" Clara compassionately exploded.
 "You manage to get on!"

Jimmie smiled.
 "Simple, my children!" she answered lightly. "Miracles to order by your dear Jimmie!"

Clara breathed heavily and exasperatedly.

"Jimmie," she said finally, "I like you! It would give me very much indeed—to have in secret wealth and luxury as a girl I call a friend, but you're jolly well going within an ace of getting that deck head of yours banged against the cliff. Now listen, I've

want to know what you did when we barked!"

Jessima sighed.

"Well, I want to look for the old ghost, you know. Terrible responsibility! Dreadful perils, and all that! Taking my building courage in both hands, and balancing it on both feet, as to speak, I set out to make up the old ghost, and give him a piece of my mind—what? But, alas for the old building spirit!" And here Jessima solemnly sighed. "Not a solitary sign of a rattling skeleton, or the sound of a clanking chain. Too tough—what? Wasting all that breath—I mean—"

"And then?" Clara asked grimly.

"And then— Oh, well, then!"

And Jessima vaguely waved a hand. "Then, you know—well, I mean to say, having wound my way very to the dock, I spotted the old constraints. My duty, like a good Spartan comrade, was to warn you that the deaths of nine sea-women on your trail. And nobody," Jessima proudly declared, "I carried it out."

They gazed at her hopefully, speechlessly, Jessima, as though that fully cleared up the matter, looked at them. But it was obvious from that moment that Jessima had and all she meant to say—obvious, that no amount of questioning, threatening, pumping, or pleading would get anything further out of her. Very mysterious could Jessima be when she liked, and it obviously pleased her to be mysterious now.

And so it proved. Argus as Clara might—and she did that the best part of the way back to the school—Jessima's replies were always disarmingly vague and evasive. Clara gave it up at last.

"Well, I think it's jolly larks," she said bluntly. "I don't pretend to know what game you're playing, but I jolly well know you were in that rain after we left it. And if you're the charm you pretend to be—"

Jessima pretended to weep. "Poor, poor me!" she sighed. "How miserable I am! Alas! poor Yarrick. How tougher than the thickest oyster is to have a toothless child! He missed that—what? But you get the metaphor, Spartan mine!"

Clara sniffed. They had reached the school then. Silently they forced their way through the gap in the hedge, quietly flitted across the grounds towards the lobby window.

Fortunately, no incoming mistresses had passed that way in the interval, and it was still open. Swiftly they padded up to the Fourth Form doorway. A pair of round spectacles glistened in the moonish darkness as they came in. A fat and indignant face glared at them.

"I always, you know— Where have you girls been?" Berrie Baxter demanded.

"Go to sleep!" Babe hissed.

"Oh, certainly, Babe, I refuse to go to sleep. I think it's a lot thicker, you know, soaking off in the middle of the night without telling me. If you must have secret foods, then I think the best you can do is to take me with you. Where have you been?"

"Trushbrook, sweetheart," Jessima sweetly answered. "Or perhaps it was Trushbroes."

Berrie granted. Even she did not believe that. Any further argument, however, was suppressed by Clara, who quickly dropped a pillow over the fat one's face, and threatened to sit on it until Berrie shut up.

That threat had the required result. Berrie, wrathful as she was, knew better than to defy the Tootsie. She settled down to sleep with a last protesting sigh, and the others climbed into bed.

Babe was tired, but it was a long, long time before sleep touched her eyes. Unconsciously she was worried, not only because she and her chums had failed Beth, but because of Jessima. What had suddenly come over Jessima?

But it was about as profitable to worry about Jessima and her doings as to worry about the Sphinx. Both were equally mysterious, equally inscrutable. A law unto herself—that was Jessima!

Had Jessima had anything to do with that scare in the cabin?

Had she really heard Jessima talking to someone else on the wreck?

Had she—

"Oh, how!" Babe muttered exasperatedly.

"What's! Awake, Babe?" a voice asked. "Or you just talking in your sleep, beloved?"

"Jessie, aren't you asleep?"

"Not quite," Jessima answered.

"Just lying awake thinking, you know. Awful effort, thinking—especially when one can't wear one's caplan. Anything on your mind, old Spartan?"

"Yes; you are."

"Oh!" Jessima sounded disappointed. "Thought it might be the girl who calls herself Ruth Chilton, you know?"

Babe sat up with a jerk.

"What do you mean—calls herself?"

"Oh, nothing!" Jessima answered.

"Nothing, old bean! Just a notion that fluted through my cerebral vacuum—what? You like her, don't you?"

"Jimmy, of course, I do. Don't you?"

"Oh, so-so," answered Jessima ungraciously. "Rather an interesting study in human psychology—what? She'll be faithfully set up that you haven't found the old tin box—oh! Going to have another show, Babe?"

But Babe did not reply to that. It struck her suddenly that Jessima in that gaily artless way of hers was pumping her. A voice, lower down the room, growled at: "Go to sleep!"

Babe turned over. Presently she fell asleep. An uneasy sleep, haunted by dreams of the crepe wreck. In the morning she awoke, tired and heavy-eyed, and with Babe and Clara congregated in Study No. 4. She hesitated.

"Better get along to the survey and break the news to Ruth," she said.

"But what about Jimmy?"

"How Jimmy?" Clara said crossly.

"But mightn't she be offended?"

"Oh, how that! She didn't worry about offending us. If you ask me, the best Jimmy has to do with this after last night the better. Come on!"

They quitted the room. Off to the recreation they went.

Mrs. Thwaites met them; told them that Ruth had spent a far from good night, and warned them not to be more than a few minutes. They went in.

Babe was in luck. Her face was ghastly pale. Her eyes seemed larger yet deeper sunk than yesterday.

"Beth?" Babe cried.

Beth's eyes seemed to flame.

"Oh, Babe—Babe!" She caught her breath. "I've been worrying, thinking about you. Did you—did you—"

Nervously she looked round. "Did you get to the Box Spray?" she asked, in an eager whisper.

"Yes."



THERE was no need for Clara's damaged cry as she pointed to the notice; her chums had already seen the warning. The wreck was out of bounds—and their vital task was not yet accomplished!

"And—and—she seemed to hold her breath—'did you get it!'"

It hurt Babe to see the tragic disappointment in her eyes as she shook her head.

"Oh!"

The engineers died from the trouble's face. For a moment an expression of black despair came into it. Her body trembled suddenly. Nervously she glanced at the bookkeeper. Starkly, helplessly, she stared in front of her. Then suddenly she dropped back on the pillows with a moan.

"Hush!" Babe cried again, in impatient anxiety.

"The best!" Ruth murmured. "The best! I must have the best! I must! I must!" Babe—and, with a suddenness that was frightening, she clatched the Form captain's wrist—"Babe, I must get it! You don't know, you can't guess, what that box means to me!"

"Oh, my goodness!" muttered Mabel Lynn.

"Ruth, please!" Babe cried desperately. "You can't go! You mustn't go! And if you want," she added, "what good could you do? The tide's not out until half-past twelve. And constables are on the watch! Run, no! Lie down, please. Look here, will you again!"

"When?" the girl asked.

"As soon as ever we can. This afternoon—"

"And—and—but no, it isn't fair!" Ruth cried. "Babe, I can't let you. Why should you take this risk for me—you, who have had to nothing about me?"

Babe smiled.

"Never mind, Ruth. We trust you," she said. "Now—" And hastily she composed herself as the door opened and Miss Throckmole came in, with a smiling "Time's up, girls!"

They went off then, leaving Ruth a little happier. Breakfast bell was ringing, and together they tramped into the dining-hall. Jessica, looking neat, spruce and spry, and with no traces whatever to show that she had spent such an agonizing night, beamed brightly.

"What cheer?" she said. "Nice morning—what? Seen the papers?"

"No," Babe said.

"Well, you should. Hoops of news about us all," Jessica said. "I took the liberty of grabbing one, and I've brought it, so that you can take a look at it. Here we are!" And contently she unfolded the local paper at the table.

"Drama of doom," she read.

"Pegg master mariner loses his boat on the rocks of the Shoalies. Fear Cliff House girls save a stowaway. In the news—what?" Jessica beamed. "Just a bit of literature, to help the old eyes and bones on their way. Read it, Babe."

And Babe, taking it, read it. Some loose-news journalist had ferreted out the details and written it up.

There was a photograph, too—a photograph of a girl of her own age. Beneath it was a caption: "Elisea Fallows, daughter of the captain of the wrecked vessel, who so tragically waited for her father's homecoming. See the exclusive story in the next column."

Babe blinked a little. She recognized the story in the next column. Elisea Fallows, it appeared, had been expelled from Hillborough School. She had returned home, to find her father at sea, and her father had not heard the news of her expulsion until he had seen her last night in the Pegg Hospital. For what crime Elisea had been so drastically punished, the smart scribbler who

had penned out this "exclusive" news did not say.

"Babe, just that down!" the sharp voice of George Jackson cut in as George, who was talking the Form in the absence of Miss Charvost, came into the room. And Babe, whisking the paper aside, looked up to find Jessica, from the other side of the table, regarding her with a rather curious look.

"Read it, Babe?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Rather tough—what! On the Elisea girl, I mean?"

"Very tough," Babe agreed. "I wonder what she was expelled for!"

"Barbara, take twenty lines for talking," George snapped.

Babe pulled a face. In thoughtful silence she ate her breakfast, thinking not of Elisea Fallows and her disgrace, but of the poor wail in the restaurant, whom she had promised to help. Breakfast was over at last; then came assembly; then lessons. After lessons, Mabel, Clara, and Babe met in Study No. 4.

"Well, are we game?" Babe asked.

"Yes, rather! But what about Jessica?" Mabel asked. "Don't you think we ought to ask her to come?"

"No, I jolly well don't!" Clara cut in at once. "We've had enough of Jessica's little mystery. If she feels offended because we haven't asked her—well, she's only got herself to thank!"

That seemed reasonable on the face of it. But Babe did not feel entirely comfortable about it. She felt even less so when, descended down the steps into the bright sunshine of the quad, they came upon the very girl they least wanted to meet—Jessica Christian herself!

"We're Locked In!"



"WHAT's that?" Jessica said.

"Getting out!"

"Yes!" Clara said bluntly.

"Nice day for a walk," Jessica continued. "Merry old birds hurrying and twittering, and all that sort of thing. What! The wreck will be high and dry, too," Jessica added thoughtfully. "Don't happen to be going that way, I presume?"

Babe flushed very red. Mabel hit her lip a little. But Clara glowered.

"Are you interested?" she asked.

"Oh, frightfully! But don't," Jessica implored, "ask me to come with you if you don't want me to, you know. In any case, I hardly feel I could stagger all that way. Hit me in the old knees above my heroic rescue work, yesterday—what! Fizzle the whole thrilling story in my shell-like ears when you return. I wish," Jessica added, with a sigh, "poor Jessica in deeds of derring-do to producing 'em! Good-bye!"

She bestowed upon them a beaming smile, with a cheery wave of her hand, trailed back up the steps. For a few minutes, eyes fast, she stood on the topmost step watching them as they wended their way towards the gate. Then, with an inscrutable smile, she vanished into the school.

Babe it is, walked upward.

A shiver ran up her spine. God, glowering at her stretched before them as they reached the beach. High out of the water the old wreck stood, listing over to starboard, its position very little changed from the position it had occupied last night. Clara stared round.

"Nobody watching?" she asked.

"Can't see anybody," Babe said.

"Anyway, no harm in stealing over and having a look. If we're told to buzz off, we can! On the other hand, if we're not stopped, we can slip aboard!"

That certainly seemed to be the plan—and the only plan, at that. Hopeless to try to board the wreck by stealth in broad daylight, with an open hundred yards of beach between themselves and it. Quickly they strode over, instinctively alert for the barking voice of a constable as they went. They reached the wreck, and then Clara pointed.

"Look!"

Hardly need to look. In front of the old bulk was a notice, newly printed. It said:

"It is forbidden to board this wreck. Any person trespassing aboard is liable to prosecution."

Clara pulled a face.

"Nasty!" she said.

All the same, Babe stoutly argued, "that's not going to put us off."

"Rather not!" Mabel agreed.

They looked round. No one was in sight. Carefully Babe walked round the stern of the boat, her two friends following her.

"All wrong!" whispered Clara.

"What's that?"

"Come on, then!"

One cautious glance round the Tangleway gave, then, with a soft chuckle, she advanced. The vessel heaved over with a heavy list, and it was not difficult to scramble up the sloping side. She reached the sill of the lower deck, drew herself over, giving a hand to Babe and Mabel. Headfirst, they joined her.

"Good enough?" Clara, chuckled. "Get torches, eh? Lead on, Babe!"

Babe nodded. She felt she knew the way. Beneath them was the cabin, which was their objective, though, to be sure, it was no easy work to get to it, with the floor so much an angle. Carefully they lowered themselves down the companionway, and there, for a moment, stood in pitch darkness.

"Good enough?" breathed Clara. She shivered. "Gracious, though, there's something about this boat that gives you the creeps! There's—!" She stopped.

"Babe, quick, back on your track!" she said.

In a moment Babe's torch was on. A gleam of light cut into the darkness.

"What was it?"

Clara gulped.

"I—I don't know. But I could have sworn I heard somebody breathing. Up there?" And she pointed a little way above.

"There's a door there, Babe."

Babe passed. For some reason she herself shivered. She went forward.

She pushed open the door which Clara had indicated. She looked in.

"Nothing here!" she said.

Clara groaned.

"Must have been my imagination," she said. "Ugh! Well, never mind, here's the cabin."

"Here?" said Mabel Lynn. "But, I say—"

"Well, what do you say?"

"You remember last night the door was locked. It's open now."

That was so. They stared for a moment. Then Babe smiled.

"Well, bother it! I expect the salvage people have been having a look round," she said. "Anyway, don't let's stop chattering here. Get trunks!"

They went in, stopping with care into the silent room. Clara closed the door, and they tucked their trunks round. Tin trunks, suitcases, and coils and coils of rope met their gaze. It was piled higgledy-piggledy all over the place, and a fair quantity seemed to have gone down the broad steps of the

crack which had split the door. Clara grinned.

"Like looking for a needle in a haystack," she said. "Still, get to work. Let's shift that rope in the corner there first."

Babe and Mabe nodded. On an upturned drum they placed their toes so that the light would shine directly upon the scene. Then, with a will, they set to work. Heavy and hard the work was. Half the drums were full and the rope was heavy and stiff—no heavy, in fact, that it took the three of them five minutes to move one coil. Then suddenly—

"What was that?" cried Mabe. Clara blew out her cheeks.

"My hat, what ever does you give me! What was that? I heard nothing."

"That I did! At the door," Mabe said. "Something like—something—"

And she crossed over to it and turned the knob. She pulled, hesitated, pulled again, then gave a gasp.

"We're locked in!"

Babe started. Clara, with a moan, stepped forward. Viciously she pulled at the door. It would not yield. In consternation the three stared at each other.

"But why?" gasped Babe. "Who the dickens?" She shook the door again.

"It, these!" she called. "I say! Let us out!"

No sound.

"We're prisoners," Clara said. "Oh my aunt! I know jolly well that there was somebody dodging about in that passage, and a nice old faw there'll be when we're caught here—especially in view of that notice outside! But hold on!" she suddenly cried. "If Jimmy and her pal get out of this hot capital, then we can jolly well get out of it to-day. There must be another outlet somewhere!"

That obviously was true. It gave them fresh energy and inspiration. Who had shut them up, and for what reason, they did not know. But if they were caught here the same was up with a vengeance. Hastily they grabbed their torches, cautiously swung them round, and then Clara gave a sudden exclamation.

"Look! Up there!"

She pointed.

"Up there" was the ceiling. It was a ceiling at rather an unusual angle now, however, owing to the heavy tilt of the boat. A small mountain of the tackle the cabin contained had slid into the vertex of the angle, piling itself against the trapdoor which Clara indicated.

"Come on!" she said.

Up the wreckage she climbed. She pushed at the door; with a squeak, the hinges worked, the door itself falling away with a crash upon the deck again. In a moment Clara had disappeared through it, stooping to lend a helping hand to Babe and Mabe.

"My hat, that was how Jimmie and her pal got away last night!" Clara said. "And this—" She looked round. They had landed on to the lower deck again, and found themselves sandwiched between the walls of the galley and the high ceiling of the stern. "Wait a minute!" she said. "Quick! Bob down, both of you! Babe, close that trapdoor! And—look!"

They looked, awestruck. From this point they were facing a narrow view; two people were standing across the beach, two people at sight of whom their hearts gave a bound. One was a Musciformed constabulary, a rather grim look on his face, a telescope under his eye. Beside him trotted a girl.

"But the girl—" Babe started. She had seen her before! Where?

And then like a flash the answer came. She had not seen her before, but she had seen her photograph in the paper that morning. It was Ellen Fallowers, the daughter of the skipper of this doomed ship, the girl who had been expelled from Billborough School.

"Why—" she began.

"Watch!" Mabe warned. "Keep her!"

The two had halted now. They heard the constabulary speaking. "You're sure, Miss Ellen?"

"I'm positive. I shut them up in the cabin."

"Ho, ho," breathed Clara grimly. "So that's who we have to thank, is it?" Her lips came together.

Babe's eyes glistened a little. She looked quickly at Clara's set, angry face. What a mean trick that, shutting them up and then putting the constabulary on their track. For all she knew they were only a party of schoolgirls, exploring the wreck out of curiosity. A schoolgirl herself, even though an expelled one, should have had a better sense of fair play than that.

The constabulary nodded. They saw his climb up and disappear in the direction of the hole through which they had penetrated into the hull last night. Babe rose.

"Come on!" she said.

"But—"

"They're inside, they can't see from below. Scold!"

The advice was good. They rose, with as little noise as possible, they skinned to the other side of the wreck, dropped over into the sea, and ran.

ARE ALL YOUR FRIENDS READERS OF "THE SCHOOLGIRL"? IF NOT—ASK THEM WHY!

There was no alarm. In safety they reached the path, passing only when they found themselves in the cliff cutting which conventionally hid them from the view of the wreck. Clara's face was livid.

"Well, of all the rotten tricks! What are we going to do now?"

"Can't do anything," Babe decided. "Except go back to school. They're bound to be on the watch after this."

"But Ruth—"

"We'll have to make another attempt to-night. The tide will be out again about midnight."

Clara granted. Mabe bit her lip. They were all reluctant to abandon the search then, but, as Babe pointed out, there was no earthly purpose to be served in hanging about. Obviously Ellen Fallowers had betrayed them. Very definitely the wreck was out of bounds from that moment. Hastily they set their faces towards the school. Rather angrily traced back.

Jimmie, lounging at the gates, greeted them brightly as they came in.

"Well, well, here we are!" she said. "All merry and bright—what? Or, perhaps," she added, with a second and more thoughtful glance at their faces—"perhaps not so merry. Clara beloved, have you been eating bananas?"

"But? Of course I have!"

"Pardon my mistake?" Jimmie chattered. "It must have been alone, then? I mean to say, with such an accident supervision on that wreck face of yours, you must have been talking something disagreeable. Come to think of it, some of you seems your charge hot—what? I'm sure Babe is sickening for—"

"So?" by the look on her face, and Mabe looks as though she's lost a week's pocket-money. "I do hope," Jimmie said,

added anxiously, "nothing's happened to upset you?"

"Oh, sure!" Clara sneered grimly.

"If I can be of any help—" Jimmie murmured.

"You can't!"

And Clara, in no need for lippancing, savagely tramped on. Jimmie gave a rather wistful smile, sighed, and polished her monocle. Babe hastened, and then, with a shrug, followed with Mabe. Jimmie announced where she was, and, pointing, her head.

Inside Big Hall, Babe panted. "Better get it over," she said. "I'll slip along and see Ruth! I do hope she won't take the news too badly."

"Well, tell her we're making another try to-night," Clara said. "That might cheer her up!"

Babe nodded. She trailed off, not a bit in love with the task she had set herself now. Ruth, obviously, must be told. She would be anxiously waiting. What was in that tin box to which she attached such great importance? How would its recovery affect her and the mysterious man, whose name she had not mentioned? And how—

But Babe, musing heavily, thinking those thoughts, gave an involuntary shrug. It was not her business, she told herself. She liked Ruth. She wanted and had promised to help her.

It was ten minutes later when, having seen Ruth, she trailed back into Study No. 4, looking rather worried and a little dazed. Clara and Mabe, waiting for her, wheeled round.

"What did she say?" Clara demanded.

Babe shrugged.

"Well, you can guess. She was almost off her head." She sighed. "If we don't find that box to-night, goodness knows what will happen. She talked of getting up and going to look for it herself."

"Oh, grand!"

"And—and—Babe gazed at them queerly—"she was worried, too—about Jimmie."

"Jimmie?"

Clara and Mabe blinked.

"But what?"

"Jimmie, apparently, has been to see her while we've been out. Ruth didn't say what happened, but she says she's got a feeling that Jimmie doesn't trust her. She seemed frightfully upset, thinking that Jimmie might have been saying things about her to us—"

The three stared at each other. In each of their minds the same question was arising. What was the matter with Jimmie? What queer line of thought was inspiring her present actions? Jimmie had helped to secure this wall out of the sea who now lay so ill at their own school. Jimmie, with enthusiasm, had taken up this quest to help her. And so—

If both children was a mystery, they all had the strongest of feelings now that Jimmie was an even greater one! "But what—" Clara began, only to be interrupted by a sudden snatched cry from Mabe.

"Babe! Clara! Quickly!"

And they whizzed towards the window through which Mabe was staring. They started. And then Babe's eyes widened. From between Clara's lips came a little hiss. Down there in the quad was Jimmie—Jimmie talking in the most friendly and cheerful of fashions with a girl. Babe took one look at the girl and almost fell down.

"Oh, my hat! See who she is?" she breathed.

Clara looked grim.

"The girl who shut us in the cabin and brought the constabulary after us?"

"Eileen Fallowers!"



Admit!

TUMPH!

"What's! Do I hear the petals of wailing gently falling?" Jennina gasped, murmured as that terrific crash came at the door of Study No. 3.

"Or is it just my tender-hearted Clara? Come in, old Spartan! Come in! Don't knock a second time, forsooth! The old door is only two inches thick!"

The door opened, Jennina, in the study above, beamingly rose as Clara, accompanied by Bala and Mela, entered.

"Ah, nice day," she said. "If you can sit down without pushing the old chair through the floor, take a seat. In fact, take tea!" Jennina generously invited. "Clara, my Spartan, I detect a hint of contentment in your bearing. Unhealthy, cautious! And for the old blood-pressure and so on! Deterioration yourself, sweetest?"

Clara breathed furiously.

"Jimmy," she said firmly. "We want to speak to you."

"Permission granted," Jennina beamed heartily. "Say on, friend of my infancy!"

"Jimmy, will you be serious?"

"As a spider," Jennina declared vividly, and covered her face with an expression of penetrating solemnity.

"Jimmy, who was the girl you were talking to in the quad last week?"

"Oh, her? Or should it be she? Never can get the hang of those pseudo presenters or whatever they are, you know! Why, since you ask, fair Spartan, that was a friend of mine."

"Her name's Elvira Fallow, isn't it?"

"Teach will out," Jennina sighed. "It is, indeed."

"She was expelled from her last school."

"Clara! That is what the papers say!"

"Then," said Clara, her lower lip quivering, "I jolly well think you ought to know what sort of a girl you've taken up with. I don't care about her being expelled, but I jolly well do think you ought to know, Jimmy, she's a rotten little snook. This dinner-time—"

And Clara, her eyes glittering, went on to tell what had happened. "Is that the sort of girl you like for a friend?"

Jennina gazed at her thoughtfully.

"You say she gave you away and laced you up? Too tough! She here casually that you were Cliff House girls?"

"Of course she did!"

"And you wore, of course," Jennina remarked thoughtfully, "wearing school uniform? The old school tie, and all the rest of the merry old stuff?"

"Oh, what the diabolical see you getting at? You can't see when we came back. You know we were!"

Jennina sighed.

"Then doesn't it strike you?" she asked cautiously. "Mind, this is just an infantile suggestion! But doesn't it strike you, that if she'd really wanted to be spiritual, she could have carried the matter further and told old Pringle that you were on the tottering old wreck. Only a suggestion of course! For is it from me to give credit for a good impulse where such dark and criminal wickedness has been revealed?"

"You mean," Bala asked, starting a little—the hat not thought of that—"that she shut us up and fetched the constable just because she wanted to give us a scare?"

"Think it out!" Jennina replied

cheerfully. "She might have had another reason. Meaning—?" She paused. "Well, well, I'm a hard-headed old Briton, what? Bullfighting and snobbery, and all that, but I've really got to be convinced that—well, that she's such a naughty old fossil as you are trying to make out."

The chains tinkled at her.

"Well, in any case," Clara started, "what do you mean by trying to frighten Ruth?"

"Frighten Ruth? I, in my sweet childish innocence?" Jennina looked shocked, and hurt. "Beloved, do not break my tender heart," she implored.

"I, the gentle Jimmy—in-trit! I merely asked her a few harmless questions, you know. What her name was and the color she liked for footstools behind, and what her father was when his great-great-grandfather was alive and so forth. A very pleasant little chat if I remember rightly." Jennina added beamingly. "And so frightfully instructive! Yes, frightfully! No harm in that, is there?"

"No harm was the only, so disarming the look accompanying that question, that it was simply impossible to be angry with Jennina. But Clara wasn't satisfied. Neither was Bala.

"She's playing some funny game," Clara asserted, back in Study No. 4. "I don't trust Jimmy—not as far as this business is concerned, anyway! And I say, when we go to the wreck to-night, we leave her out of it."

"That was agreed. Nothing was said to Jennina. And nothing, either, to anyone else.

At half-past eleven that night, they were. Careful they stole out of the school, crossed across the quad towards the gap in the hedge. Evidently they appeared through it.

And then—

"What cheer, darlings?" a soft voice said.

"Jimmy?" gasped Bala.

There came a soft chuckle from the darkness.

"In the flesh," Jennina assured her, emerging from the shadows. "Nice night for a little trip to the wreck, what? Be on the dark side perhaps, but what can one expect when the jolly old sun don't shine?"

Clara stopped.

"What are you doing here?"

"Oh, just coming with you, you know!"

"Oh, you are, are you? And supposing," Clara sarcastically asked, "just supposing we don't want you to come?"

"Oh, but," Jennina said, "Be merciful! Remember the old Cartesian's sanctimonious and all that rot! Besides, you know, I'm interested in the wreck, having had a hand in the rescue of Ruth Chilton—I suppose that is her name, by the way. Let's suppose, shall we? Suppose about it's good for my old children?"

They glanced at her, catching the glint of her eyes in the darkness. It was obvious that Jennina had made up her mind to accompany them. Or, better, too, that she could not be turned back.

There was a pause. Bala shook her head, feeling more out of her depth than ever. Perhaps a little uneasy, too. Clara's lips set.

"Well, no funny business!" she said.

"No funny business at all," Jennina promised.

"All right then—but be careful," Clara warned threateningly. And Jennina, with a bland smile, fell into step beside them. "Come on!"

They went on. It was a dark night

with the hint of a new storm in the air, and a strong wind blowing in from the sea. It howled and whirled among the trees, growing fresher and more boisterous as they stopped along. Even from that distance they could hear the angry boom of the wind upon the shore.

"Not going to be a nice night," Bala stizzed.

"It wasn't. For hardly had she spoken than the first really gust of rain smote them in the face. Higher and stronger the wind rose. By the time they reached the shore, the squall had developed almost to a gale. Black and angry, the sea roared and crashed in front of them.

"Well, one good thing," Mela broke out, "we shan't be spotted tonight. Can you feel the wreck, Bala?"

"I think so."

And Bala led the way.

The tide was coming in strongly then. In the darkness they saw the line of white foam reach across the bank then they had bargained, and realized that their time aboard the vessel was limited. They took a hasty conference.

"Is it safe?" Mela muttered.

"What's that? As safe as a house on the edge of a landslide," Jennina murmured.

"It's got to be safe," Bala answered resolutely. "We can't let Ruth drown again. Not your turn?"

"Yes."

"Courage, comrades! Advance!" Jennina cheered. "Up guards and at 'em! In you go, Bala."

But Bala was already leading the way. She entered the hole which had been stove in the side of the wreck. Clara, rather grimly, keeping close to Jennina, followed. Mela went last. The wreck had shifted again with the last tide. Now it was nearly upright once again. They had little difficulty in finding their way, and at last fished their toes up the door of the cabin.

The hay was still on the outside. Bala turned it.

"In you get," she muttered, and stepped with a start. "What was that? Did I hear anything?"

"Only the wind," Clara muttered. But all the same she flung an uneasy glance down the tunnel of darkness through which they had passed.

They stood listening, hearts beating rather painfully. Outside the wind howled. The old wreck creaked and shivered, and the roar of the things assailed ceaselessly.

"Oh, get in!" Clara granted.

Bala went in, shining her torch. Clara, with one hand ready to catch Jennina's arm, went in after her. Then, finally, she took the key out of the door, locking it on the inside. Jennina frowned.

"Clara, I suspect you of having a suspicious old mind," she said.

"Then you suspect right?" Clara granted. "We're taking no risks this trip, Jimmy! Come on! Let's get to work and out of this!"

And to work they got, Jennina most willingly leading a hand. Hard work it was. Dangerous, too! From inside the cabin to the other they shifted the accumulated rubbish, clearing a space eight or nine feet square. There was no sign of the tin box, however.

"Too tough," Jennina sighed, wiping her hands delicately.

"It must be in the wreck," Bala said.

They blinched a little. Exploring that wreck was going to be a more difficult job than the one they had just tackled. Goodness knows how deep it was, and the future at its widest was no more than a yard. Clara settled the question.



WILD-EYED, Babs turned to her chums. "We're floating out to sea!" she yelled.

however, by getting down on her hands and knees.

"Well, show a light," she said. "Shooop! I say, did you notice that? The wreck moved."

"The wind!" Babs said.

Clara gasped. She was lying flat on the floor now.

The wreck shifted again. Then suddenly there came a crash, a screech and swirl on the deck above. From somewhere above them, a thin trickle of water came pattering.

"I say, I believe the tide's in!" Babs exclaimed.

"Besser get going!" Mabe cried urgently.

"But—here, wait a minute!" Clara cried. "Quick! A torch! I think I see—" And Clara, holding on to the edge of the floorboards, with her head beneath floor level, peered exactly downward. "Babs, what's that?" she cried.

"That's it!" Babs shouted.

It was. They saw the tin box glinting in the light of the torch. There it rested, three or four feet below them, wedged tightly between a coil of rope and the side of a battered cabin trunk—just out of reach. For the moment they forgot their danger in the joyful thrill of the find of their quest. While Babs and Mabe grabbed Clara's legs, so that she could lower herself farther into the hole, Jennina seized the torch. From Clara came a groan.

"Hold tight! I think I've got it—no I haven't! Yes I have! Here, the thing's stuck. Don't let go whatever you do!"

"We're holding," Babs said. "Get it!"

"Yes—no! Dusk it!" And Clara granted fretfully. "The blessed thing is stuck hard. I say, help!"

There came a muffled shriek from the Tumbler. From Babs and Mabe a cry. Jennina with a gasp went reeling. Down

into the hole, head first, shot Clara, as Babs and Mabe, hung across the cabin, released their grip upon her legs. For a moment they had a vision of Clara's feet wildly kicking above the level of the floorboards. Then, in a hoarse, they were violently flung together. The wreck gave a convulsive lurch, shivering from stem to stern. At the same moment:

"Look!" shrieked Mabe. "The water!"

They looked, eyes rounding with horror. The trap above them had flown open. Down in a crashing cascade the water was pouring, filling the tiny cabin with noise, splashing, seething, drenching them all in a moment.

Quick as thought Babs flew to Clara. As quick as she was Jennina.

Together they caught the Tumbler's foot.

"Now heave!" Jennina called.

They heaved. Desperate their strength in that moment. Out of the hole, red-headed and half-suffocated, Clara came, to splutter in the rushing cascade that descended upon her from above. In her hand was the tin box.

"Babs, we're floating!" Mabe cried.

"No!"

But they were. Too late, they realized what had happened. In the darkness of the lifting cabin, their faces turned white. Outside, the wind shrieked and howled. Beneath their heads boards heaved and cracked. Water now was pouring in from all sides. Already it was swirling round their ankles.

"Oh, my eyes!" Clara gasped. "The key! Here, Jimmy, take this box!" And she pushed it into the sick man's hands. Fervently she fumbled for the key; gaspingly produced it. Laid the key on the floor.

"Up the ladder to the deck!" she gasped.

Four had them in its grip now. Desperately they clung up. Clara went first; then Mabe and Babs, all reaching the deck on the backs of the others. There was a pause.

"Jimmy!" Babs called frantically.

"What's it?" Jennina's imperturbable voice came from below. "Aber, there! Coming!"

"Quick!"

There was a terror's further pause. Then up the ladder, the tin box still in her hand, Jennina came swaying. A great wave crashed over the deck, a howling gust of wind made the wreck heel over. Like a buoyant cork the bulk of the Sea Spray now bobbed and gambolled in the waves. It seemed to be rocking.

And then Babs, breathless, looked about her. As she did so every spot of colour drained from her face. Too late, she saw what was happening. Ahead—no far ahead that the distance frightened her, she made out the dimly white outline of the cabin cliffs.

Between them and the cliffs was a broad stretch of heaving water.

"We're floating out to sea!" she cried.

And Mabe, Clara, and Jennina, their faces drained and white, looked. It was true. Hopelessly adrift in the bulk of the Sea Spray, they were in the grip of a current that was taking them out into the English Channel.

And even as that moment the wreck was sinking beneath their feet!

"Trust 'Uncle Jimmy'!"



WHIDE-EYED, filled with horror, the four girls stared in drowsed, dumb dismay.

It was true. Rapidly the tide had come in. Some great wave must have lifted the battered bulk and drawn it back out to sea. Now, caught in the coils of a swift,

strong current, they were being whisked out into mid-Channel!

"Oh, goodness—what ever shall we do?" Babs cried.

"Dear up! Dear up!" Jimina cheered. "Never see die! Up to the top deck, meantime! Unfasten the flag of distress! Eileen's got a rocket or something about you, Clara!"

"No, but we've got our torpedoes!" Babs cried. "I'll write soon from the shore!"

That gave them momentary hope. Up to the top deck they climbed. The lower deck was awash even as they left it. The surface of the sea roared dreadfully near. Babs ran ahead. Once, twice, three times her torch flashed. They stared anxiously towards the mainland.

"No answer," Jimina announced.

"Try again," Clara counselled.

Babs tried again, flashing on the S. O. S.

Anxiously again they stared.

No light winked in reply.

"No use," Babs said.

"No use," Jimina declared hopelessly.

There was silence now. In a little, nervous group they gathered aft. A great wave came crashing up on the deck; for a moment the boat seemed to be under water.

"Aha!" Jimina suddenly roared.

"What?"

"Aha!" Jimina roared again.

"Steady! Listen!" she added.

They listened, straining to catch some other sound but the risk and surge of water. Then, faintly ahead, there came a cry:

"Where are you?"

"Hurrah! Somebody's coming!" Clara cried. "Quick, Babs! Flash your torch."

Babs flashed. From in front of them came an answering flash. Eagerly they turned, forward, leaning on such a dangerous angle over the battered rail that had another wave come at that moment they would surely have been swept seaward. They saw a boat. Dearly they made out the form of a solitary oar. A voice reached them again—a girl's voice:

"I'm afraid you'll have to jump for it! I'm coming alongside!"

"Who are you?" Clara shouted.

"Eileen Fallows!"

Eileen Fallows! Babs jumped. Eileen Fallows, the girl who had given them away to be coast-guarded, the girl they had called snook and traitor, the girl who had been expelled from her last school, Clara started.

"Your pal, Jimmy?"

"My pal," Jimina declared cheerfully.

"What price the sympathy did my British names you called her now?" Clara asked, frowning.

"That you trust me now, Clara, my sweetest, perhaps you'd better take this old tin box you've been so much great pains to rescue."

"But, Jimmy?"

"Please," Jimina said, and pressed it into her hands.

The boat was alongside then. Eileen, true daughter of the sea that she was, made it fast to the ship's side. It was a portless and incredibly difficult business, lowering themselves into the boat, but, helped by Eileen, they did it. Fortunately, the boat possessed two pairs of oars, and with four of these pulling away with a will, while Jimina took the tiller, they got back to the shore, rather damp, but otherwise no worse for their adventures. In a group they surrounded the girl.

"Eileen," Babs said.

Eileen passed a little

"Please," she said. "I—I can't stop

now. The wreck is awful! I shall have to go and warn the coast-guard! There's a strong current taking it out to sea right in the track of the ship-pling. While that's awful there's danger!"

"But, Eileen, we want to talk!"

"Please! Do you mind? I can't, I can't stop!"

"Oh, goodness! Then—then, look here! Will you come to Cliff House to-morrow morning?"

"Yes, Good-night!"

And Eileen, without waiting for more, sped headlongly away.

"True blue, what?" Jimina beamed.

"Real old daughter of Neptune! Duty before pleasure! Well, Clara, my sweetest, what about my pal now?"

Clara turned red.

"Oh, bother, I'm sorry!" she said.

"I—I didn't know she was a girl like that. If it hadn't been for her—"

And the Torbay gave a little shiver as the looked back towards the sea. "But, come on! Let's get back!" she added.

"Thank goodness, that wreck's finished with!"

"You've got the box?" Babs asked.

"Yes," Jimina said softly. "She's got the box."

They hurried back, wet, chilled, rather scared now in the mystery of the place which they had so narrowly eluded, and with far, the different feelings towards the girl who had rescued them. No doubt that Eileen had saved their lives. No doubt, had it not been for her, they would almost certainly have been drowned. But, thank goodness, as Clara said, the wreck was done with. Thank goodness, they had, after all, completed their task.

They reached the school. Through the lobby window they climbed. Babs was in the act of turning to close it down, when there came a quick hiss from Clara.

"Care! Somebody here!"

They stood still, straining eyes and ears in the darkness. Down the corridor a figure moved. The moon, which had just risen from behind a bank of clouds, shone out at that moment, shining full on her face. Babs gave a violent start.

"Oh, good goodness! It's Beth!"

Ruth Children stepped down.

"Beth?" she cried. "Oh, you—"

She stared round at them, then she hit her lip. "I—I couldn't stand the suspense," she muttered feverishly. "I—I broke out of the sea. I'm going to get the box."

"Beth, you idiot!" Babs whispered.

"For goodness' sake, get back to bed! You know what the doctor said!"

"But the box?"

"The box is here! We've got it!"

"What?"

In silence Clara handed it over. Beth jumped. They didn't see the sudden queer look in her face as almost feebly she snatched it from her.

"You—you got it?" she cried. "You—"

And then, anxious with relief, she wrayed on her feet. "Oh, Babs, how can I thank—"

"Now, Beth, get back, please!" she begged.

"You're willing to every about my snare. To-morrow morning I'll come to the money and tell you all about it."

And gently, but firmly, she gave the girl a push.

Ruth went off, clattering the precious box to her. Rather wearily the four tramped up to bed. Each one of them was late when rising-bell rang in the morning. After washing and dressing, Babs went down to Study No. 4. She started as a girl rose to meet her.

"Eileen?"

Eileen Fallows it was; her face was white and strange.

"Miss Redfern," she gulped, "I forgive me! You've told me last night that I might come to see you. But—"

Miss Jimina told you anything?" she asked quickly.

Babs stared.

"Why, no."

"Because"—Eileen hit her lip—"Jimina," she said, "promised to help me. You see, there was a box—a tin box—hidden aboard the wreck."

Babs jumped.

"But what was that to do with you?"

"Everything," Miss Redfern. "The girl's lip quivered. "It was because of that box that I ran away from school, and—"

and—no one can say," she added, with a shudder, "but threatened with the police, into the bargain. The box contained jewels. I—I was accused of stealing them."

Babs sank into the chair, staring at the other dumbly.

"Yes, tell me," she said.

And Eileen told her. The story was a long one. She and a girl named Kate Bryne had been friends at Billingham School. Her father's boat, the Sea Spray, had docked in the harbour for one night, and Eileen, with Kate, had broken boards to go to visit her father.

For a considerable time while she was aboard the boat had visited Kate. It had struck her before that Eileen seemed nervous and ill-at-ease. Also, she said, Kate had carried a parcel on their way to the Sea Spray. When they left the boat together the parcel had no longer been in her possession. She thought nothing of it then, however.

"But the next morning," she went on, "leaving for—"

the next morning the next was all over the school; there had been a robbery—the headmistress's jewels had been stolen. Somebody gave away the fact that I had been out of school. The headmistress had me before her. I was searched; one of the missing pieces of jewellery was found in my pocket."

"I had nothing to do with it, Miss Redfern; I swear that. The headmistress was kind enough to conclude I had been playing a practical joke. She gave me twenty-four hours in which to find and return the jewellery to her. If I didn't return it at the end of that time, not only would she expel me, she said, but she would inform the police."

Babs stared, strongly moved by the distress in the other's face.

"What could I do? I didn't know. I went to find Kate, only to discover that Kate had received a telegram that morning saying that her father was dangerously ill and had gone home. Then—then I found out that Kate was the one who had given me the money."

"She—the girl that?" Babs indignantly burst out.

"And—and— Oh dear! I suppose I lost my head." Eileen went on. "The time was drawing near, you see. I couldn't find the jewellery. I was afraid of the police. I—I suppose I was a coward, but—but I ran away."

"The paper said you were expelled," Babs said.

"I know, but that wasn't the truth. The reporter must have got hold of that story from someone else. I came here, intending to wait for father's boat, knowing he was due to die in 1902. I was on the beach during the night of the storm. I saw you and your friends rescue a girl. I saw that girl as she lay on the beach. It was Kate Bryne."

Babs jumped.

"You mean Kate Bryne," Eileen cried.

"No, please, Miss Redfern, don't stare

at me. It was true. I'd never connected Kame with the robbery before, but when I saw her I naturally began to wonder why she was in Pegg. Kame's home is in Northumberland, so, obviously, that telegram was a fake! I remembered that the parcel she had carried here, after visiting the bank, she had returned to school without it. It came to me then that she had hidden it on my father's ship, that she was waiting for my father's ship to turn up so that she could get hold of it again."

Babe sat stricken.

"And then—then I saw Miss Jemima. I knew Jemima; I met her and her father two or three years ago, just before Captain Carstairs went abroad. I told her—"

A light was beginning to dawn upon Babe's face. She realized she understood Jemima's remarkable behaviour at last.

"But why," she began, "didn't you tell us?"

"Would you have believed me?" The girl asked faintly. "You didn't know me. Don't you remember what happened?" You rescued Kame from the wreck, as you thought. I couldn't prove that she wasn't on the wreck—indeed, I did think for a moment that she might have been on the wreck all the time. You brought her here. She knew that I was about. She was probably afraid to go to the wreck and look for the tin box herself, so cleverly worked upon your sympathies to go and get it for her."

Babe drew a deep, deep breath.

"Yes," she said quietly.

"Sometimes, of course, I was looking for it myself, with Jemima's help. I was desperate. I've told you what the recovery of that tin meant to me. I—I hated to spare you that night by pretending to be a ghost, and I—I loathed shutting you up yesterday and—and fetching the constable, but I was desperately afraid you might find the box first. And how could I have claimed it then? Last night I was on the wreck when you came. That is why I got hold of a boat and rowed out to rescue you when the Sea Spray drifted in the night. But, Miss Redfern, I—I have come to ask you—did you find the box?"

"Yes," Babe confessed.

"And—and where is it?"

Babe bit her lip.

"Kilbon, Hater," she said. "Oh, my hat, wait a minute! It's all such a tangle. We believed in Ruth—or Kame—as you call her. We promised to get her this box. We gave it to her!"

The girl's face whitened.

"And—and she's got it now?"

"Yes!"

"Then—then—"

But Babe rose. Her face was hard now. She was not entirely convinced. How could she be, after the faith and trust she and her chums had placed in the girl they had saved? And yet—There had been that queer reluctance of Ruth's to say anything of the reason she wanted the box. Her own desperation had spurred them to take risks they would never have dreamt of.

Still, now, more and for all she would have an understanding. If Ruth Clifton had been tricking her and her chums, then—

"Wait here," she said, and went out. Straight to the newspaper she hurried, there to meet a Mrs. Thwaites most cordially and fearfully distressed. She stared when Babe asked for Ruth.

"Ruth," she said, "has gone! She ran away in the middle of the night."

Babe awayed.

"It ran away!" she stammered.

"She went—like that!" And the matron distractedly postured with one arm.

"But, oh, my goodness! I almost forgot! She left a message for you, Miss Redfern. Now, where—Oh, dear!" And the matron distractedly ran through her pockets. "Here it is," she said.

Dreadfully Babe took it. She unfolded it. She read:

"Thanks for all the assistance you have given me. It was nice of you to get the box. Sorry, I shall never see you again.—RUTH"

Babe's lips came together. She read it two or three times, before, sick at heart, furious with herself, she turned away.

There was no doubt now, no possible doubt. That girl, having got what she wanted, had run away! What a fool she had been! What fools they had all been! Swayed by their sympathies, they had helped this girl to cheat another!

Clearly she trailed back to the study. Kame and Clara were there, obviously having heard the story from Kibon's lips. Eagerly that girl looked up.

"Miss Redfern, was she—Have you—"

"She—she's gone," Babe said dully.

Kibon sank back, covering her face with her hands.

"Oh, what shall I do, what shall I do!" she moaned. "Those—those jewels, Miss Redfern! They might mean prison for me! I can't prove that I didn't take them. We must find her."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Babe.

"But how? Where are we to find her?" Babe cried, distractedly.

"I don't think," a voice just in at the door, "that I should worry. And into the moon's bright, dark and smiling, tripped a beaming Jemima. "Days of the morning to you all!" she said cheerfully. "Well, well, and what a happy little family we all are! Mother," she added, staring round, "I detect an air of repentance!"

Clara glared.

"Jemima, this is no time for nonsense."

"No!" Jemima sighed. She sat down, carefully holding her skin as she crossed her knees. "So the game is up!" she asked. "You wouldn't put your faith and trust in your Uncle Jimmy, and you see, dear children, what it has brought you to. That! It is a sad, sad life! And there are many wicked people in it, (wretched! Still, I'm glad Kame didn't get away with the jewels!)"

"But she did, you chump!"

"I know," Jemima continued, shaking her head, "that that girl was a bad little egg the first time I saw her. That was—well, as you know, Babe! When

I was standing my watchful suspension! Fact! She hurried into me on the top of the cliff and said 'Sorry!' Yes, I'll own she had manners of a poet. That's the next time I saw her was in the sea."

Babe blushed.

"You mean you knew the lady's been wrecked?"

"I know!" Jemima said, severely. "Can't hide those sort of things from a Christian, what! True enough, old Boyton Blakes, is, interestingly perceptive, and all that, but interesting little game she was playing, I thought. Why should a girl deliberately throw herself in the sea? Intriguing, what? Then I saw Kibon here, and Kibon saw me, and—well, you know, I did try to warn you in my own gentle way that Kame wasn't the angel you thought her."

Babe gasped.

"Oh, my hat! What's the good of telling us now!"

"Just warning her, the old lesson," Jemima bantered. "Better pretending to watch your face, what! Might have been serious, too," she added, "if she'd got away with those jewels. But as it happened"—and Jemima smiled incontinently—"trust old Uncle Jimmy to come to the rescue!" She pushed her hand into her pocket. While the others stared, mystified and fascinated, she dropped a handful of pearls, rings and other jewellery on to the table. "There, I think," she said easily, "is all the loot, what! Give me a medal, somebody!"

From Kibon came a cry. Babe & Clara stared breathless.

"Jimmy, when did you get those?"

"Last night," Jemima replied impatiently. "I went with you—remember!—just in case you did find the box. On the old wreck, when you were all shivering up that latherly old ladder to escape a nasty water grave, Kame handed me the box. I took the liberty then of examining those jewels and filling the box with a few substitutes I found around. After that, of course, I handed the box back to old Clara, in case she should be wiser than I."

The three girls stared speechlessly.

"There—there Ruth or Kame—"

"Kame," Jemima smiled, "has popped off with a box full of shells, and bangles, and bits of tarred rope!" She yawned. "Well, well, a nice rummy lot of work," she said, "with a great big serious moral! That moral—" She paused.

Babe laughed.

"What?"

"Always," Jemima replied seriously, "trust Uncle Jimmy!"

THE END OF THIS BOOK'S STORY.



WHAT was Miss Gilbey's secret? Why did she visit the crypt at dead of night? Why was she dismissed? What was she doing at Cliff House School?

You will know the answers to these questions when you have read the new long complete CLIFF HOUSE story, by Hilda Richards, in new Heinemann's SCANDALOUS! Hilda & Co. feature in this grand story of a perplexing and intriguing mystery. You'll enjoy it.

COMPLETE NEXT SATURDAY

"DETECTIVE DAVE" TAKES A HAND IN THE MYSTERY: Further Chapters of This Exciting Morcove Serial

WHEN MORCOVE EXPELLED HER

By
MARJORIE STANTON



FOR NEW READERS.

MAISIE FENDER and her brother, **RALPH FENDER**—who is a senior at Grange—are living at Cliffside Banglow, near Morcove. They are outwardly friendly to Morcove; secretly they are engaged to smuggle gold.

THEY TRAVELERS, the Fourth Form girls, owing to her dominating attitude on the formation, become an innocent threat to their plans. Because of this they succeed in getting her disowned at Morcove. Victim of their scheming, Tom, rather than write an explanatory apology, accepts discipline! She is being with her **AUNT PENLOPE** at the suburbs of Barncombe. Determined to discover the Fenders' secret, Tom explains a clue to the headmistress. She finds there, hidden in the sand—bags of gold!

(You read on.)

The Riddle Answered

GOLD! Daffion gold, in heavy ingots, each worth a small fortune! And every ounce of it—smuggled!

So, at last, Tom Trelawney, ex-Morcove Fourth Former, had found out everything in connection with the treachery of Cliffside Banglow.

"What's their game?" she had been asking herself over and over again. And here was the answer!

"Yes, I see it all!" she panted to herself, still on her knees in the seashore cavern, where she had dug such a deep hole in the sandy floor. "All this gold is being smuggled out of some foreign country. That small boat I saw the other evening, signalling from offshore—it was bringing more gold, that!"

She counted the massive ingots that her digging hands had uncovered. Ten of them, there were. No sooner had she brought to light the first, from under the deep sand, than she had worked away faster than ever, like a human tick.

But now she was satisfied that there were no more than these to be discovered. They formed a heap, neatly

placed together—so simple, and yet so safely hidden!

How many people might have wandered into this cavern in Morcove's bustling cliffs, taken a good look round, and then wandered out again, without suspecting anything!

Tom stood in thought for a moment, gazing on the exposed gold. Then, coming to a decision, she started to sweep back the sand, to cover it. She was going to leave everything exactly as she had found it, not forgetting to replace that layer of seaweed which had lain upon the sand, just here.

"Then I must get away—to Morcove!"

She gave a little laugh. What a large sensation it was going to be for the school! Now to get herself sighted in the eyes of all! She, Tom Trelawney, expelled a few days since, to be proved absolutely blameless, after all!

Expelled because she had refused to apologise to the Fenders at Cliffside, when the headmistress had considered that an apology was due.

And now—it would be for the headmistress to want to apologise to her—Tom!

Another handful of sand was going to get the last corner of a gold ingot out of sight. Tom rushed that handful over it, anxious to get out of the cave as quickly as possible.

She only wanted to be back at Morcove School, the expelled girl, more than anything; the friend of Betty and so many other good classmates—to them, all!

"And that," she was thinking, as she now rose up to hurry away, "is exactly what I can do for myself before an hour is out."

She glanced at her wrist-watch. At this very moment Morcove's rising-bell would be ringing. Wonderful to think, she would be at the school as soon as the girls were getting down from the dormitories. By the time breakfast was over she would be a Morcove girl again.

"And there hurried Aunt Penelope

will be, at her villa in Barncombe." Tom's mind ran on, "without me to leave her for all day! She's got to get her own breakfast this morning. How funny!"

But this was no time for giving oneself over to a checking state of triumph. Tom realised that she still needed to be extremely cautious.

So she went out backwards from the cave, stepping to smooth away such footprints as were liable to show that she had been here again.

And all the while she was constantly glancing round; her ears were on the alert for any sound of somebody's lurking around.

At no moment did she have cause for alarm. Seen she was out in the open air, enjoying proof of her still having this part of the always lonely seashore, under the great cliffs, quite to herself.

She saw some gulls rise from the wastelands in going winging away at sight of her. Until she came out of the cavern those birds had been undisturbed. The noise with the nesting jackdaws in the cliffs. One or two now rose from their nests to flap about, squawking uselessly.

Tom walked away, going in the direction of Morcove. She was in great haste to get to the school, and so she resorted to hurry along under the cliffs to the cliff-path, which was Morcove's handy means of going up or down. That path was only a few minutes' run from the school.

But first Tom would be passing another pathway up the cliff—the one which served Cliffside Banglow. Very carefully she went along the sands, when she was getting close to the foot of what was known as the Cliffside Zigzag.

Down that craggy path Maisie Fender might be coming, intending to go to the cave, where her father had all her smuggled gold. Even at such an early hour as this, that girl—the only member of the family at present sleeping in the banglow—might be out and about.

A few seconds more, and Tom was level with the foot of the path. She could see all the way up to the top. No Maisie there—nobody at all!

Then, as if Tom still lacked something to complete her new-found joy, she suddenly heard a burst of happy cries from a not very distant part of the shore.

She knew them instantly as the joyous cries of Morcove girls, who had come down for an early morning dip. The time of the year had come when girls, by arranging overnight, could do this—in care of a Form-mistress, of course!

And what specially delighted Tom

was the certainty that her own best chance were amongst the morning's bathers. She could not, for the moment, see any of the bathers. They had not yet gone to the water's edge, but had only just got down to the shore.

But there was the unmistakable drizzling of English Nansay Nakara, the tobacconist about madcap Polly Linton, and even a faint squawling, that might be Paula Reed, suffering some of the usual teasing.

Tess broke into a run, meaning to go top speed the full half-mile of the sands, to where they were dispersing themselves. But only fifty yards had she advanced when there came a shock to her own joyful state—a surprise that stopped her dead.

Minnie Fowler was suddenly out here on the sands, within only a few paces of Tess. The Cliffedge girl had come darting from that boat-cave which was reserved for the private use of any Cliffedge tenants. She was in a scarlet bathing dress, over which she wore a bath robe. Bandials were upon her feet.

Face to face stood both girls, in mutual surprise. Tess would much rather the encounter had not come about, but she felt not the least cause for alarm. It was not as if Minnie had caught her near that other cave. What was there to tell this girl that one had discovered the hidden gold? Anyway, Minnie Fowler was in bathing things, which surely put her at a disadvantage. So Tess was open ready to retile.

"Minnin'!"
"Oh, good-morning!" came with a nod and smile that must have meant great self-possession. "Down here already, are you? Stunning!"—with an inclination to laugh outright.

"Oh, so!" Tess declaimed airily. "Going along to see my chums now."

"Oh, are you?" was the last as airy retort. "Funny, I'm going along to them, too! I arranged to join them for a dip. But perhaps you'd rather not come with me?"
"I don't mind."

Tess said it, meaning to be on guard against any artfully put questions. Except that she must be very careful about what she said, there seemed not the slightest risk in walking with the girl.

"Well, you must have been up early." Minnie laughed as soon as they were settling off together. "As for me, I wished to goodness I had never got the maid to call me at half-past six—Barker!" she next moment exclaimed, going upon one knee to take off a sandal. "A beautiful pebble just under the insole!"

You waited, and, although this girl she was with was the one whose trickery and the motive for it had now been so sharply proved, she could not help thinking how pretty she looked just then.

The scarlet bathing costume, the half-dozing effect of the bath robe, and then the pose—it all combined to make artistic Tess think: "What a picture she'd make!"

But suddenly Minnie Fowler, in that half-dozing posture, made a hasty snatch to seize Tess by an ankle.

The hand gripped hard, pulled violently; and Tess, with that foot pulled from under her, fell helplessly, to have Minnie next instant using her other hand to stop her victim's cry for help.

Shoes were bath robes over their bathing dresses, others a mere man. First dip of the year it had been—and a sippy one at that! But all had brought themselves back into a nice glow by racing one another home to school like this.

"We could have stayed in longer!" was now the playful grumble of madcap Polly Linton, as she saw the time by the school's outside clock. "Why didn't we?"

"Yes, Miss Merrick didn't have to speak twice when she thought we'd been in long enough," chuckled Foss captain Betty. "Just chums here we can sleep her when we like!"

"Go down another morning this week, we will," Burrey Trevor proposed. "What do you say, Paula darling?"

"Er—yes. But Jane? Yes, wathah!" beamed pretty Paula Reed, forgetting how she had shrieked when first the chilly surf foamed about her. "No insisting—that! Yes, wathah—Grand!"

But Paula's chums were not forgetting a certain timidity that had been here during the bathing. Her expressing such vast delight, now that the sporting deed was done, drew shrieks of laughter. The Madcap indulged sweetly:

"Feeling better?"
"Stitch, Polly dear! Haven't you seen me, paws?"
"I thought you said you were like all over!"

"I," cried Burrey, "thought I heard Paula say 'Never again!'"

"Wathah!" said the obtounded one, tugging her head. "I went out as far as any of you, I'm sure!"

"You mean, you went under more often than any of us?" shrieked Nansay. "Decks we jolly well put you under over and over again. Gorjus!"

"Back to Grandmamma, any old here!" Polly now struck a new vein. "We've

done what none of those boys would do, even if they had the sea at their best back. We've bathed before breakfast in the Easter term!"

"Hurrah! Yes—our noble advice!" Burrey happily cheered.

"If only Tess could have been with us!" came Madge Minder's wistful rejoinder.

"Yes. Poor old Tess!" said half a dozen of them in chorus; and once again the talk was suddenly all of her, their expolled chum. It ended in Betty's voicing a thought from which she was drawing comfort:

"I'll be seeing her to-day, any rate. She's got my bike—the one I loaned her last night, when we met her walking back to her aunt's. At twelve o'clock, I'm off to Barncombe to get my bike back. And it won't be so if I don't go into things pretty thoroughly with Tess!"

"I hope you'll find her—well, but reserved than she has been over the whole business," Judy Cardew earnestly murmured. "There's something she hasn't told us."

"She's going to tell me to-day—got to!" Betty said determinedly. "Shall stay with her until she does!"

But long before midday there was a fresh sensation in regard to Tess, upsetting Betty's plans.

At the mid-morning "break," instead of being able to go out to the field with the rest of the Ferns, Betty was summoned to Miss Somersfield's private room.

"I want to ask you, Betty," was the headmistress' prompt beginning. "Have you received any communication from Tess this morning?"

"No, Miss Somersfield!" The Fern captain's eyes were asking: "Why?"

"None of you Study No. 12 girls has seen her?"

"No, Why?"
"Her aunt has been ringing up. Tess, it seems, has run away."



SUDDENLY Minnie's hand gripped Tess' ankle; she pulled hard and Tess crashed to the things—tricked after all by this girl who was her deadliest enemy!

Fair Face—False Heart!

A DOZEN Merry-go girls, finishing a health-giving run back from the seashore, after their bell, early morning dip, went helter-skelter towards the School House.

"What!"

"Her Aunt Penelope came down this morning, and Tom was not there. Upstairs, her bed had been slept in, but all the evidence suggests that Tom was up soon after daylight and that she went off—by bicycle. No machine was in the garden shed when Miss Trevelyan looked."

"Then Tom went off on my machine?" cried Betty. "I loaned her mine last evening, when—"

"Yes, I heard about that from your First-mistress, who was with you at the time."

"Can I—can I go along to Barncombe at once, Miss Somerset, to see into it all? I mean to say this about Tom running away from her aunt—"

"I would gladly let you go, Betty, but it would serve no purpose. You would find no one at the house. Her aunt is now motoring to Tom's own house, Betty smiled away, to see if the girl is there. It looks as if the girl—so rash and stupid as she has been of late—must have acted on some mad impulse to go home."

"But what could Tom do there?" Betty gasped. "Her parents are away and the house is shut up. It's why she had to go to stay with her aunt."

"I know. But where else could she have gone?"

"The reason for her running away, as you call it, Betty, never wanted to know. "Oh, Tom is not so crazy as you may imagine, Miss Somerset. We chums of hers know Tom!"

"She would never have been sent away from Morocco, Betty, if she had not adopted a most stupid, obstinate attitude. As for her reason for running away from her aunt's house—if it can be called a reason—it appears that she has been very nervous, rebellious, and so Miss Trevelyan had to exercise her. Tom has resented it—another instance of a very rash mood. But, as you know nothing about her running away until I told you—"

And Miss Somerset gave a dismissing gesture which sent Betty out of the room.

For a moment, in the passage, Betty stood getting her breath back, at the same time passing a hand again and again across her forehead.

Tom, gone from Aunt Penelope's! Tom, a runaway! And this, at a time when one had been so resolved to get the girl to explain her "obedience" of a few days ago.

It was with a rue Betty set off to find her chance out on the garden field. "Bless!" offered no time for anything like a definite bit of "prayer," and very often girls simply scattered round, with perhaps a tennis or cricket ball to provide amusement. Something like that Betty's chance would have been doing this morning, when she came running up to them, only—Minnie Fender had turned up.

"Hallo, Betty dear!" the Cliffodge girl turned to greet the Ferns captain very sweetly. "I came across, partly to say how sorry I am—ah—ah—ah! When I had promised to join you for the early morning dip, I forgot!"

"We've all done that, before now," Betty grinned. "There were you, or two of us, this morning, only wishing we had overlapped—when we found how cold the sea still is!"

"Bekas, Pads—she's awfully screamed—"

"On the contrary, Minnie—"

"Oh, but I guess it was cold!" laughed this girl who seemed to have taken such a liking to Betty & Co. "Anyhow, you all did what I didn't do! The other thing about which I

wanted to see you. My brother Ralph is coming over this afternoon from Gloucester College. And he tells me that he can bring my brothers and girls here, and their classes—if we could get some tennis on your hard courts?"

"O.K. to that!" Folly exploded. "Just the thing!"

"Bekas, everybody come to tea in Study No. 2!" yelled Maudie. "No, not Study No. 2, bekas, set your 'old nose! But we can have an unobtrusive—'a special spread! a porridge do!"

"That's right enough!" Betty heartily approved. "But, look here, girls! I've just had news of Tom that's a bit worrying. She's missing!"

"What?"

"Never!" said Minnie Fender, looking as puzzled as any of the girls. "Tom Trevelyan—missing!"

"She's run away from her aunt's place in Barncombe. Now the aunt is chasing about in a car, trying to find Tom. There's an idea that she's gone to her own home, even though her parents are away and it's all shut up."

"But—" Minnie Fender started blankly—"why—why has Tom left?"

"Oh," Betty grinned, "it's pretty obvious! We have something of Tom's Aunt Penelope—"

"Bekas, of all it's nasty, grumpy, nagging—"

"And Tom just wouldn't stand for it; that's about it," Betty shrugged on. "So, very early this morning she cleared out."

"Jolly good luck to Tom!" was Betty's unkind comment. "Oh, and I'm not surprised! Tom and her aunt—"

"Oil and vinegar, yep!" Folly said grimly. "But Tom, if she has gone to her own home, will only be latched back!"

"Sweetie! Bekas—"

"And if she hasn't gone to her own home?" Judy Carlew gravely asked. "What then? Where is she?"

"Oh, but surely," cried Minnie, getting over her distasteful admission, "the girl simply must be there at her own home! Anyhow, girls, I hope there'll be news of her when I see you this afternoon. I don't ring up Deaconwood, cancelling that idea about tennis!"

"No, please don't!" Betty said quickly. "And it's jolly nice of your brother Ralph to be working in all for us. We'll be so glad to see the boys! Only, you can't mind, any of you, if I—well, I may have to go off to Barncombe, after all, about Tom."

Minnie Fender gave a most understanding nod.

"Very well, then, all; we'll leave it at that. Bye for now!"

The bell was ringing for the return to classrooms. Away went Minnie, across the last-emptying field, to do her solitary walk back to the bungalow.

Arriving at the porch, she had to let herself in by the front door with a latchkey, for the one servant employed about the place, had, at Minnie's own ordering, gone by bicycle into Barncombe to do some shopping.

Minnie closed the front door, and would have hurried to the kitchen, but she was checked by a scribbled message which the maid had left for her.

"Your mother ring up from London to say she will be down to-morrow evening."

"Um!" muttered Minnie Fender, after scanning these pencilled words. "And I wonder what mother will say when I tell her how we stand now."

Oh, well, what I've done, I simply had to do!"

What she had done! There was a special in it now, in her hurrying to the kitchen, to make a secret raid upon the larder, with the change offered.

So that the servant should not notice a strange depletion of the shelves by accident, Minnie helped herself only to tinned stuff. There was a good deal of this in the larder, and the crafty girl could take here a tin, and there a tin, from behind front rows.

As for the top of a loaf which she crammed into a marketing-basket, along with the tinned goods, she could easily resort to the maid, later on, that she had used it to lovel the galls.

And now, with no one to see her, Minnie Fender went away from the lonely cliff-top dwelling, making her way down the near-by zigzag path to the shore.

An ever-smiling, affectionate Minnie Fender, the one that Betty and others knew—a real "cigger." But what a difference Minnie Fender was this, going warily along to the bungalow's own back-courtyard, with its padded lattice gates!

Nobody, strolling past at any time, could wonder at those looked gates. It was a private eye, and here any tenants of Cliffodge were entitled to keep, if they so chose, beach-tubs, bathing things, and fishing tackle. Besides, there was a rowing-boat moored in the cove. At a spot so lonely, such things might be stolen by night.

But Minnie Fender, after unlocking the gates to let herself in, unlocked the gates to let herself in, unlocked the gates. Then, taking up her ladder basket, she went about the high-and-dry boat, so far in that daylight bailed her. She had a touch with her, and she thanked it on.

Some of the forward-looking light came back to her face, revealing it as one charged with an uneasy, half-frenzied expression.

The dry sand flooring of the cove rendered her footsteps inaudible, and the eerie silence may have told upon her nerves. But, chiefly, a sense of guilt accounted for the dread with which she went to the car's very end.

There she first shone the torch upon two or three big lumps of rock, which were wedged together in a niche in the crevice wall.

Then she set the torch down, leaving it still burning, and, with some difficulty, she lifted away first one block of stone and then another.

The task took her great exertion, for each stone was as much as any one, even as well-grown as herself, could lift, and the wedging had been very securely done.

So, at last, the cleft in the wall of the cave was free from obstruction. Minnie, by this time, was very agitated, and she looked apprehensively into the narrow passageway whilst reaching down a hand to take up the torch.

When she had it again she shone it through the natural cleft into what was no longer cave.

As it happened, in that inner cave, looking on as Minnie looked in, was poor, wild-eyed Tom Trevelyan, suffering the cruel fate of one who knows too much!

No News of Her!

THANKFULLY, about five o'clock that afternoon, Betty saw a car coming, that she guessed was Favourite Trevelyan's, back after a hundred-mile run.

Betty was just then, turning away from the front door of Miss Trevelyan's

villa, after some vain clinging at the bell. Tess, obviously, was not about the place again, and so what a relief it was that her aunt was turning up at this moment—surely, with news that would dispel anxiety!

But Aunt Penelope writhed out of her body her looking very bad-tempered.

"Well, what do you want?" she began at Betty, recognizing the Marcové hat. "Look here, one thousand gals is enough for me to have to deal with—"

"Excuse me, Miss Trevelyan," Betty appealingly broke in, "but I had to come into town to hire a bike—"

"You mean, you made that the excuse?"

"I admit I greatly wanted to call here and find out whether Tess—"

"Well, Tess isn't home—and she's not at her parents' house, either! Nobody in their village has seen her. So now, the terrible spinner turned on, striding to her front door, "I must be the police now. You can be off, girl!"

"But—"

"Be off, I tell you!"

Then Betty went out to the pavement and took her newly-hired machine from where it had been leaning against

the fence. She knew that to linger would only mean having the front door banged upon her. It must be back to Marcové now, full port, in the hope of hearing news about this latest and strangest development in regard to Tess, from Miss Manserfield.

Very likely the missing girl's aunt would have rung up the school by this time one got back.

But Betty, a few minutes later, brought her fast riding to a sudden stop. She had got to a part of the road road from which it was only a short

(Continued on following page)

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MY DEAR READERS,—I do wish I didn't have to call you "my dear readers." So—don't take offense. You are "my dear readers," of course, but what I mean is this: I like to write this Chat of mine so though I was really talking to you—no, though we were all having a really cheery chat together. And if we were, I should hardly start by calling you "my dear readers," should I?

But, then, of course, if I didn't start this letter with "My dear readers," you wouldn't know if it was addressed to you or not, would you? So, I've afraid, there's no help for it. However, having complied with all the accepted rules we can forget all about it and start afresh.

(IN PARENTHESES)

What I really wanted to talk about was my post-bag. That is, not the bag itself (which doesn't exist, anyway), but the letters contained therein. [That is, the letters which would be contained in it if it did exist (and that the letters don't exist. They do (and very nice letters they are, too)!]

And now, if Mr. Driver hasn't run right out of brackets, I'll confess that I've always had a secret ambition to see three piles of books in one costume. But I shouldn't advise you to try it in the next English essay you have to write. I don't think the mistress would approve, somehow! There are some things in this world which can be done by culture and not by scholarship.

And now, where are we? Oh, yes. Post-bags. Don't be so forgetful, will you? If I start scribbling on about anything whatsoever—just whisper—"Post-bag"—like that. That'll stop me.

CONTRASTS IN CLIMATES

Well—be continued, taking a deep breath—I was going to remark how very interesting this post-bag of mine which doesn't exist is (N.I.L.—Never and a sentence with a proposition! What would that English mistress say if she knew your Editor did things like that, eh? Why, she might even— Oh, yes—post-bag! Sorry.)

Here are extracts from two letters which I received recently. Without further "so-do," I'll let you read them for yourselves.

From Dorothy Franklin, of Saskatchewan, Canada.

"The weather here is very cold now, the lowest temperature being about 56° below zero. The snow is very deep and when I go to school I have to trudge through deep snowdrifts . . ."

After reading which I hastily ordered Gusty to build up the fire higher, and show my chair nearer the blaze. But in the very next letter—the very next letter, mark you—I read this:

"We are having a terrible summer; it is hot . . ."

That was written by Margaret Ailes, of Bloemfontein, South Africa.

What a contrast! It only goes to show that half the world really hasn't the faintest idea how the other half is getting on. Now, however, I'm sure Dorothy will find it a tremendous help when she has to get out of bed on cold mornings to think of Margaret sleeping under mosquito netting—so won't she?

I will refrain from lyrical descriptions of the scenes conjured up by these letters. I will spare you my pretty outburst about African plains crashed and scorched by blazing sunlight; the roaring herds; the snakes writhing in the dust; the air shimmering with the rising heat—

I will spare you that. I will spare you, too, a wordy essay on the snows of Saskatchewan; the dancing whitecaps; the biting chill of the wind; the roar of the mountain avalanches; the howling of the timber wolves . . .

And now, readers who live in Saskatchewan and Bloemfontein, you can write and tell me, in whichever town, what a completely false idea I have of those places; that there are no wolves and avalanches in England; that there are no snakes and lions in Bloemfontein. If so, I'm sorry. I really am. I humbly apologize. I meant well.

THRILLING DESERT DRAMA

And now, of course, you're anxiously awaiting full details (as promised last week) of the brilliant new serial which is to take the place of "Miss Mystery" of Carnival Land.

Firstly, then, it's written by Elizabeth Chester, popular author of "The Fugitive of Paris," "The House of Bygone Days," and our present Riviera serial. In this new serial Miss Chester has absolutely excelled herself—in fact, I really think she could not write a better story.

The scene of this fine, new feature is the romantic desert city of Timar—yet like a jewel amid the shifting sands, a town of shining buildings, of gay centers and market places and narrow, cobble streets where picturesque Arabs mingle with gay-dressed Turanians.

And dominating all—the magnificent palace of the Sharoon of Timar. Young, beautiful, all-powerful, the Sharoon is absolute ruler of this romantic city of the desert. Yet there is one other—All the Great Adviser—cunning, ruthless, master of power, who is covertly plotting behind the Sharoon's back, while openly pretending to be her best friend.

It is in the Sahel City Chapter and her friend, Sarah, comes, as guests of the Sharoon. Fresh from England they arrive in this city of romance and beauty and mystery—and straightway are plunged into a drama that is as thrilling as it is unusual.

You will love reading about Sally and Sarah in this great new desert serial. Meet them next Saturday in the extraordinary first installment of—

"GUESTS OF THE SHARON"

by Elizabeth Chester. Be sure to tell all your chums about this grand new treat—and make sure of securing your own copy of THE SCENARIOS by ordering it at once.

"MYSTERY MISTRESS AT CLIFF HOUSE"

is the title of the fine long complete Cliff House School story in next week's issue. In between all your favorites of the Fourth is a mystery which centers about a mistress who is in charge of the Fourth during the temporary absence of Miss Sherman.

A grand story, this—one that will grip you from beginning to end. So don't miss it, will you?

"WHEN MOROVVE SPILLED HER,"

Marjorie Stanton's brilliant Moroccan mystery and adventure serial is becoming more and more exciting each week. Thrilling developments crowd next Saturday's chapters—so, of course, you'll want to read them.

And last—but certainly not least is our fine fiction programme—

"HAPPY GO LUCKY LULU,"

is another merry escapade told by Ida McIlverree. All these good things, as well as Pat's pages, await you in your favorite SCENARIOS next Saturday.

With best wishes,

YOUR EDITOR.

walk across grass-patched grass to the edge of the cliff.

"And—amazing!—one of 'the boys' who had turned up for tennis at Morocco a couple of hours ago was walking about on the cliff top, all by himself."

"It's Dave Gardner?" She could tell at once. "Scouting about—I wonder why?"

"If she had not known him, the brains of the Transpennine Force, as well as the did-it-taking-and-little-notice-of-her-when-she-came-across-to-him-might-have-credited-Betty."

But he always was condemnative, and she felt sure that at present he had found one of those occasions for the mind which he always regarded as "better than games." Give this quiet, clever brother of Judy Gardner's a problem to solve, and he was happy.

"What's the idea, Dave?" Betty asked her tentatively. "Isn't it bad enough that I'm a deserter from the tennis party?"

"Jimmy and I won our set, and so—"

But three Dave leaped into one of his silences, whilst he continued to pace this way, that way, as if looking for something lost in the gorge.

"So what?" Betty asked, not with the impatience Polly would have manifested.

"Oh! Oh, I thought I'd run out to this part of the cliffs to take a look at the gully path—the one, you know, where there was a sort of landslide the other day. I've had a look, and now I—"

"Freaking fellow! He had again broken off."

"Trying to find something, Dave?"

"Oh!" He had Betty following him as he went off in a fresh direction.

"You—terribly—as a matter of fact, Betty, I'm looking for a bike. Ah! here come with his coat beneath; and, for him, it was quite an excellent outburst."

"And here it is, too?"

She saw, in the instant that he reached in part some larger bushes, and so reveal a bicycle lying amongst them, that it was a girl's machine.

"Dave!" she gasped, thinking of Tess. "Oh, how terrible, Dave! I've just heard that Tess is still missing!"

"Was a jiffy, though," he said, with a hard-thinking frown. "This is a bit queer, anyhow. I was looking for a machine that had lost its lamp. Just now I picked up a bicycle-lamp halfway down the gully-path, all amongst the rocks and rubble. But this bike I've found—it still has a lamp."

Betty was in a sudden tremor.

"Dave, let me tell you something," she whispered. "This bike isn't mine—it's not the one I loaned to Tess last evening. This bike is her own machine!"

His dark eyes gave Betty a burning look. His face had become grim, and he spoke through clenched teeth.

"Missing, Betty—let's see; yes! This is the bike Tess rode to come out here last evening. It was washed from her—just where she couldn't find it again. So she had to start to walk back, I see! So— Here, come and look," he briskly invited; and, leaving the found bicycle unattended, he led Betty to where they could descend the gully-path together.

Midway down, where the fallen rocks were at their worst, he checked Betty,

also pausing, now him staring about in great astonishment.

"It's gone, Betty!"

"What is it?"

"Why, the bike-lamp, of course! I left it where I found it—just here. It's best not to touch things when the police have to be called in. But I wanted you to see it and say if it's the lamp belonging to your bike."

"My lamp had a cracked green glass, and a big dent—"

"Then it was your lamp I saw—"

"And now—gone!" Betty gasped.

"In the last few minutes. And the machine itself is missing!"

He nodded.

THE FINEST STORY

of mystery and adventure in the desert that you have over read—

"GUESTS

OF THE

SHAREEN"

begins next Saturday

in

THE SCHOOLGIRL

It is written by

ELIZABETH CHESTER

"Here's how I figure things out, Betty," he said at last. "You came this way early this morning, riding the bike you had lost her overnight. She may have come out here simply to look for her own machine. Anyway, she was here again this morning—"

"And from that moment she vanished! Oh, Dave, what can have become of her! And the bike I lost her—the one she rode this morning!"

"That, Betty, has since been ditched away by somebody. Don't you see! The lamp dropped off unnoticed—while the possessor was having great difficulty in carrying the machine down this half-choked path. Then, in the last few minutes, somebody has been back to look for the lamp, and has found it. And I—'Dave hastily frowned—'was only just up there, on top of the cliffs."

"Shall we go on down to the shore, Dave, and take a good look round?" Betty suggested. "The sands may show footprints—even the trail of a wheeled bicycle! The scabbars, too, would be such a good place for anything to be hidden. You can see easily being any there in the sand—even a bicycle." She added excitedly: "There's a case, don't forget!"

Not a word did Dave answer; he simply offered a helping hand to Betty, to get her with him past the fallen rocks and bushes, and so down to the shore.

For a minute or two Betty had to see her eyes to see where she was stepping.

Soon, however, they reached the bottom of the gully, and came down upon the sands by some rough rock steps beside a trickling stream. Dave was quick to notice that there was moisture on the steps.

"See that, Betty?" he remarked, and pointed.

Betty frowned.

"Why—there's wet," she scattered.

"But I don't see—"

Dave smiled understandingly.

"Pondered!" he inspired. "You don't see what I'm driving at?"

Betty shook her head. She had to admit herself lost.

"You see," Dave explained, "anyone who comes down the gully has to wade that patch of water. He pointed to where the stream, which started from a spring high up in the cliff, trickled out across the sands to join the sea. "That means their feet are wet when they come up the steps."

Betty nodded.

"Yes, I see that. But then, almost anyone might have come this way during the morning."

Dave shook his head and smiled again.

"Just think, Betty," he reasoned, "how bright the sun is and what a strong wind is blowing. Such a slight green patch would soon dry on a day like this. But the steps are still quite wet. That means that someone has been this way quite recently—only a few minutes ago, in fact."

"But we should have seen them at the top—"

Betty began excitedly, only for Dave to interpose calmly:

"They never got to the top. They only came up as far as the bicycle lamp."

"And came down again!" Betty realised. "I say—they can't be far away even now!"

She ran excitedly out on to the sands, gazing eagerly along the shore. No one was in sight, however.

"But we can't see far along even here," she pointed out, so Dave joined her.

"Which we get round the rock—"

And as they hurried downward she nodded towards the great rock mass which hid most of the beach from their view.

Silently they crested along the sands, with only the sound of wind and surf in their ears. The tide was coming in, and long white waves were curling over on to the shingle—a symphony of rushing water and sliding pebbles.

They rounded the rock, and immediately Betty's lips parted in amazement.

"Why, look, Dave—look who's along there! Ralph Fender! Yet he was with his uncle, at the Morocco tennis courts, when I left. I am surprised!"

"Surprised?" Dave quietly inquired. "I'm not. And now, let's go along and ask him—for that lamp!"

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