

"THE FIREBRAND'S BID FOR FILM FAME!"

Magnificent LONG COMPLETE story of Cliff House School inside.

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Incorporating "SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN"



**THE FIREBRAND  
MAKES HER GETAWAY!**

—caring not a jot for the  
disturbance she has left  
behind her.

See the grand Babs & Co. story inside.

Film-making at Cliff House School! Great fun for Barbara Redfern & Co. in this long complete story, which stars the incomparable Diana Royston-Clarke.



# The FIREBRAND'S Bid for Film Fame!

## Pride Goes Before a Fall!



"THEY'RE here!" Barbara Redfern gurgled deliciously. "Oh, goodie!" golden-haired Mabel Lynn cried, her eyes shining.

"I say, when do we start acting?" Bessie Bunter put in eagerly. "Because, of course," Bessie added loftily. "They'll want me as the leading lady!" Barbara Redfern laughed. Mabel Lynn dimpled. Bessie, her plump face flushed with excitement, blinked at them indignantly through her thick spectacles.

The famous chums of the Fourth Form at Cliff House were standing together on the school steps. Beside them was Leila Carroll, the American junior.

"I guess," said the latter, "the leading lady's all fixed up. That's her—Miss Miranda Jollibell—standing next to the producer fellow."

"Well, I don't mean the leading lady, of course," Bessie said, "though I could jolly well do that, as well, you know! What I mean is the ju-juvenile lead! They must be having a juvenile lead if they're shooting a school film. Oh, I say, they're fixing the cameras!"

Fixing the cameras, they were, the "they" being the army of technicians, script girls, producers, and clapper boys from the near-by Enterprise Film Studios.

They stood in the quad of the old school, talking among themselves, giving orders. A formidable litter of film paraphernalia surrounded them.

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From the steps of the school, from study and class-room windows, all Cliff House was watching the preparation, and all Cliff House was ablaze with excitement, for practically every girl in the school, at some time or another, would be required to act in the film, special permission for which the Board of Governors had given to make in and out of the school itself.

Cliff House, in fact, was enjoying itself! Immensely!

For it was not often that such a gorgeous experience came their way, and though not one of them yet had the faintest idea what the film was to be about, they were all agog at the idea of taking part. All they knew, indeed, was that its title was the "Playground of Youth"; that the very charming and deservedly famous Miss Miranda Jollibell was to be its star; and that some other girl, unknown as yet, was to be its juvenile lead. Perhaps, secretly, there were not many of the watchers who were not hoping that they would be called upon to take that juvenile lead.

With interest Barbara Redfern & Co. watched. Now the cameras were ready. They saw the producer, Mr. Langley Runniman, putting his megaphone to his lips. They heard him shout instructions. Then Miss Charmant, the Fourth Form mistress, her pretty face almost as eager as their own, came up.

"Fourth Form, near the shrubbery," she instructed. "Please, girls, don't make such a noise! You'll be wanted, apparently, in the first shot. Barbara, will you get the girls in position?"

"Of course," Babs laughed. Babs, as captain of the Fourth Form, was re-

quired to take on these duties. "Fall in, please! Oh, hallo, Diana!" she added as Diana Royston-Clarke, the Firebrand of the Form, languidly drifted on the scene. "I say, what have you been doing to yourself?" she added.

For Diana, startling at all times, was even more startling at this moment. On her slim and shapely figure was a brand-new school uniform, of immaculate cut. Her glorious platinum blonde hair brushed well back from her forehead, and longer, according to fashion's decree, than she usually wore it, shone in the morning sunlight.

Those delicately arched eyebrows of hers had most certainly been "touched up"; there was a suspicion of powder on her lovely cream-and-rose-complexioned cheeks, and her curved lips, brighter than usual, irresistibly suggested the use of lipstick. From head to foot, indeed, Diana glittered.

The arched eyebrows lifted in supercilious hauteur at Babs' question.

"Is that your business?" she asked. "Well, if you must know, I have been making-up—a little. One has to make-up for the films—"

"Yes; but no one else has made up," Babs objected.

"But then," Diana answered casually, "you're only the chorus parts, aren't you? You"—with relish—"aren't taking an important part. I am! I don't want to boast, or anything," she added swaggingly, "but I'm the juvenile lead!"

And Diana smiled—that lofty, superior smile of hers—at the amazed, envious faces which turned to regard her.

"But—but who says so?" asked Mabel Lynn.

## By HILDA RICHARDS

Illustrated by T. LAIDLER

"My father," Diana retorted. "You know that my father is the financial manager of the Enterprise Studios—no end of a big noise there, too. He wrote yesterday, telling me all about the film. Quite enthusiastic he was about it, too; and he said he hoped I'd do my best for it. Naturally," Diana added, her lips pouting, "old Curmudge"—her pet name for her father—"would never have dreamt of letting his studios make a film at Cliff House without giving me the fattest part. Just do your best to back me up, that's all!" she added warningly, and strode towards the cameras.

"Oh, my hat! The—the lucky thing!" Babs stammered. "No wonder she's giving herself airs! Well, she certainly looks the part, whatever her acting may be like! But fall in there, please, girls. Now, quick march!"

Eagerly the Fourth fell in, though envious eyes were still following the languid and supremely conscious-of-her-own-charm Diana as she strolled towards the producing staff.

"Morning!" drawled the Firebrand to a cameraman. "Morning!" she nodded at Miranda Jollibell, who, talking to a girl of about sixteen, stared at her in surprise. "Mr. Runniman about?"

"Eh? Who's that?" And Langley Runniman came forward. "Oh, Miss Royston-Clarke!" he said. "Good-morning! Of course, you're taking part in the film?"

"Well, of course!" Diana said, with a stare, and turned up her nose at the young girl who was talking to the great film star. "Just tell me what to do."

"See those girls near the shrubbery?" Mr. Runniman asked.

"Well, I'm not blind!" Diana said, a little testily.

"Go on, then! Just tack yourself on the end of the line, there. Then, when I give the order, lead the cheer!" Diana blinked.

"I don't understand!" she said. "That's only doing what the others do. Surely that isn't the juvenile lead's job?"

"Eh? Who said anything about the juvenile lead?" the producer asked.

"Well, I do!" Diana stared at him. "I'm the juvenile lead, aren't I?"

"You?" He stared again. "Really, Miss Royston-Clarke—come, come!" he said good-humouredly. "You know very well you're not the juvenile lead. That is the part being taken by Miss Dawn Brandon—here"—and he pointed to the rather good-looking girl at the side of Miranda Jollibell. "Now, please, will you line up?"

Babs & Co. heard the conversation, and looked at each other. Some mistake here?

Lydia Crossendale and Frances Frost and two or three of the meaner spirits among the Fourth Form, giggled—they did so like the haughty, overbearing Firebrand shown up.

But Diana, for a moment, did not move; Diana, as if she could hardly believe her eyes, stood staring, thunder-struck, first at the producer, and then, with bitter hate in her fine eyes, at the girl who had been named as Dawn Brandon. It was a mistake! Must be! Her father, the man who practically ran the Enterprise combine, not to have

given her the one part which she could play!

She clenched her hands. "Wait a minute!" she said. "Oh, wait a minute! There's some mistake here—or else you're just trying to pull my leg! I understood from my father that I was taking part in this film—"

"And so," Mr. Runniman said patiently, "you are, but only as one of the schoolgirls, Miss Royston-Clarke. Those were your father's orders to me."

Diana's eyes gleamed. "And who," she flashed out, "gave orders that this girl here was to take the part?"

"Your own father, Miss Royston-Clarke."

"What?"

"I am sorry, but that is so," the producer said, a little troubled. "I have made no mistake," he added. "There is no possibility of a mistake. Now, Miss Royston-Clarke, would you mind, please? The light will not last long, and I have a lot of work to get through. Please join the other girls!"

"Yes, please, Diana," Miss Charmant said severely, coming on to the scene. "Really, you are holding everything up. Line up!"

But Diana did not line up. She was standing quivering. Red was suffusing her pretty cheeks; her eyes were flashing now. She, preening herself as a

**Haughty Diana Royston-Clarke becomes the old stormy Firebrand of the Fourth Form when she learns that she is not to have the important part in the film being made at Cliff House. She will not take "No" for an answer. By whatever means, she vows to get the part, and plots to that end. But even in the midst of her unworthy scheming, strange Diana reveals that finer side of her nature.**

star, when all she was required to do was to act as one of a crowd—she, Diana the incomparable, the daughter of the man who was the financial genius of the film company. It wasn't right! It wasn't fair! Her father's letter had led her to believe that the best part was for her.

Anger suddenly took possession of her. In a flash that firebrand nature of hers was on the surface. She flamed out.

"Line up!" she cried. "Line up? I'll see you all go to pot first! You want me to be one of a mob—yes, one of a mob!" she vibrated. "You want—"

"Diana!" Miss Charmant cried.

"Well?"

"Diana!" Miss Charmant's face was stern now. "You will go to your study!" she ordered. "At once, miss—at once! If this is how you intend to behave there is going to be no place whatever in the film for you! You hear?"

"Yes, I hear—"

"Then go!" Miss Charmant ordered. "And just to help you to remember your duty towards the school, write out a hundred lines! I will see you when I come in."

"Phew!" whistled Babs.

Diana's hands clenched again. For a moment, so enraged was she that it looked as if she were on the point of hurling herself at the mistress. Then violently she shrugged. With a scowl at Miss Charmant, a bitter look at the producer, and a sneer for the now distressed-looking Dawn Brandon, she swung on her heel.

## Good Samaritan Firebrand!



CHOKING, furious, and trembling was Diana Royston-Clarke. Yet even now she could hardly believe it.

She, to be supplemented by that doll-faced Dawn Brandon! She, whose father practically ran the Enterprise show, to have no bigger a part in his film than Babs, Mabs, or Bessie Bunter! What had her father meant when he had written to her about the film? That she was to be a mere cypher among the multitude? No!

Diana ground her teeth. Her pride had suffered—she, who had so vain-gloriously proclaimed herself juvenile lead in advance. Hang them—hang them all! But the film wasn't going on without her! There was some mistake—she was sure there was some mistake!

The only person, obviously, who could settle the matter was her father, and she was going to see him without delay. It mattered nothing to Diana that in going to Lantham for that purpose without permission she was breaking bounds. It mattered nothing to her that she was going in what was the school's time—the girls having been excused morning lessons for the purpose of the film. Equally it mattered nothing that Miss Charmant had ordered her to her study.

She simply rushed into the school. Quivering, Diana snatched her hat from its peg in the cloak-room, donned her mackintosh, and strode off.

She reached the gates unobserved by anyone. Imperiously she hailed the bus which came along; in trembling indignation sat in it while it rolled along to Friardale. There, ignoring the good-humoured good-morning of the cheery conductor, she stepped out, instantly waving to a taxi.

"Redlands, Lantham!" she snapped.

"And step on it!"

"Yes, miss."

The driver did "step on it," while Diana glared out of the window. Now she'd see. Now she'd show them. Now let that doll-faced Brandon thing dare to presume to keep the part that should have been hers!

Her home came into view. She stepped out, tossing two half-crowns at the driver.

She didn't wait for change. Diana was well supplied with money. Violently she marched up the drive and rang the bell. There was a second's silence, and Diana, fuming with impatience, rang again. Reeves, the new butler, opened the door.

"Oh, Miss Clarke!"

"Why the dickens can't you open the door more quickly?" Diana cried.

"I—I'm sorry, miss! I was in the kitchen—"

"And don't," Diana stormed, "make excuses! Here, take this!" And she almost hurled her hat at him. "Is my father in the study?"

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"Your father—" The gulping butler started

"All right; don't make a speech!" Diana scowled. "Well, don't stare, man! Get about your work! I'll see him! Oh, yes, I'll jolly well see him!" she muttered beneath her breath, and strode off towards her father's room.

Agitatedly the butler strode after her. "Miss Clarke, your father—" Diana flung round on him.

"Miss Royston-Clarke!" she flamed. "Must I always tell you that? You may be new here, Reeves, but please remember I don't like being called Clarke! Royston-Clarke—that's my name; spelt with a hyphen and a final 'e.' Now, get out of my sight!" she added, and knocked at the door, and without the formality of waiting for a reply, entered. "Curmudge!" she cried, and then paused. Irritation added to anger as she saw the room was unoccupied.

"Hi, Reeves!" she shouted to the butler, retiring across the hall.

"Y-yes, Miss Cl—Miss Royston-Clarke?"

"Why didn't you tell me my father wasn't there?"

"Well, miss, I tried, but you—" "Oh, bother it, man, don't for ever be making excuses!" Diana flared. "Where is he?"

"I—I'm afraid I don't know, miss. He went off this morning. All he said was that he was going to the Continent."

"The Continent?" Diana glared at him. The Continent! Her journey, then, had been in vain. While she was rushing around on a purposeless errand they were getting on with the film at Cliff House, and that doll-faced Brandon thing was acting her part!

She breathed hard. "If—if there's anything I can do, Miss Royston-Clarke?" Reeves ventured.

"You? What can you do? Didn't he leave any other message?"

"No, miss." "Oh! Diana bit her lip. Her eyes smouldered. Well, hang it! Bother it! But all the same, Dawn Brandon wasn't going to get away with it. "I see," she said quietly. "Order Jenkins and the car, will you? I want him to take me back to school. And, Reeves," she added.

"Yes, miss?" "I—I'm sorry for going off at the deep end like that," Diana said softly.

"I—I was a bit upset. Don't take any notice."

"No, miss," Reeves said, and smiled a little doubtfully. As yet he wasn't used to the Firebrand's annoying changes of mood.

"But buck up and tell Jenkins to hurry with the car," she added. "Thanks, I'll take the hat."

She put it on. Willingly Reeves hurried away. In two minutes Jenkins and the Royston-Clarke's Rolls-Royce were ready. Reeves, smiling, came back to tell her so. Diana nodded thoughtfully.

She strolled out. Jenkins, the driver, with an apprehensive "I-wonder-what-sort-of-mood-she's-in-now" sort of look in his eyes, regarded her.

"Morning, Miss Royston-Clarke. Will you ride inside or out?"

"Oh, out!" Diana said, and climbed up into the seat beside the driver. "I feel as if I can do with a breath of fresh air," she added.

Anger had disappeared now—at least, for the time being. But in its place was an unusually clear, icy-headed, thoughtful calm which might have alarmed anyone who knew the famous Firebrand of Cliff House. Obviously there was to be no appeal to her father—but, still more obviously, there was going to be

no climbing down in favour of Dawn Brandon. That part was hers. She was going to have it, come what might.

Diana was thinking of ways and means to achieve that end as the car bowled on. Courtfield was reached, and then there was a sudden shriek of brakes as violently the car pulled up. A woman who had been in the act of cautiously stepping off the kerb retired with such haste that she overbalanced and fell, hitting her elbow against the kerbstone as she did so. Diana glared at her chauffeur.

"You clumsy fool! Why didn't you look where you were going?"

"I'm sorry, miss, but—" "Sorry, bah!" Diana snapped, and, her heart suddenly throbbing in anxiety, leapt out of her seat. She reached the fallen woman.

"Are you hurt?" she anxiously asked. "My—my arm!" The woman stared up at her. Pretty she was—not frightfully old, either, but with such a troubled look in her big brown eyes that Diana, Firebrand as she was, felt stirred and touched. "Please—please don't blame your driver. It—it was my fault," she said. "Thank you, miss."

she added, as Diana gently helped to raise her. "It's very good of you, I'm sure," she added, rubbing her arm. Diana looked at her. Strange, changeable Diana! At once she had forgotten Dawn Brandon, her new determinations. Vain, conceited, overriding and overbearing as she was, Diana yet had within her that contrary streak which contact with a person poorer than herself so readily aroused. Now anger had vanished and compassion was taking its place as she regarded the rather shabbily but neatly dressed woman, with such plain traces of worry and hardship written on her face.

"Let me see the arm!" she ordered. The woman glanced at her. Silently she bared her arm, and Diana winced as she saw the cut on the elbow, the great bruise which was gathering round it. She shook her head.

"That's bad!" she said worriedly. "Have to get that attended to—quickly. Do you live far from here?"

"I've rooms at No. 5, Fore Street—"

"I know the street. Jump in the car and I'll give you a lift! What's your name, by the way?"

"Griffiths, miss. Mrs. Amy Griffiths."

Diana nodded. Gently she took the other arm. Mrs. Griffiths, as if under some hypnotic influence, moved towards the car, and the Firebrand gently helped her in. Diana gave instructions to Jenkins. The car bowled off. Fore Street—a thoroughfare comprised of rather down-at-heel-looking houses, each exactly the same as its neighbour, was reached.

Diana helped the woman out of the car. Her face was white then; she was holding her injured elbow, evidently in great distress.

Giving instructions to Jenkins to wait, Diana tenderly helped her over the threshold, gazing at the apartment which she entered with undisguised interest. Shabby, like the woman herself, that apartment was, but spotlessly clean, with a sewing-machine in one corner, beneath the needle of which was a still unfinished piece of work.

"Dressmaker, eh?" she asked.

"Yes." Now Mrs. Griffiths smiled faintly and wanly. "I've had to do something for a living since I left the films, you see."

"Films?" Diana stared at her. "You—you've been on the films?"

"Yes, miss."

"Oh!" If Diana had been interested before, she became utterly intrigued now! And yet, somehow, she had a vague feeling that the woman's face was familiar; somehow she felt she had seen her before. "An actress?" she asked.

"Yes, miss. My name," she added with a sigh, "wasn't Griffiths then. It was Sheridan."

"What? Not Julia Sheridan?" Diana cried.

"Yes, miss. But please don't let us talk about it."

But Diana was flushing then. Julia Sheridan! She had read about her, of course. In some old volumes of a picture paper she had at home she had seen her photograph many times. Hadn't there been some big scandal in which Julia Sheridan had been involved—some scandal which, in the long run, had caused her to leave films?

And now she had come to this!

"But you were a star—" she cried.

"Please, miss!" Mrs. Griffiths entreated her. "Please! If—if you don't mind," she added, with a sort of tremor in her voice. "That—that's something I've been trying to forget. Oh, this arm! How—how shall I work with it—and she cast a despairing gaze at the machine in the corner.

"You see, miss, I haven't much money, and—and that dress is urgent."

"Well, let's do the arm up first," Diana said briskly.

And she did it up, making a really perfect job of it. She was thrilled and interested in her new friend now. She wanted to know more about her. After all, she was in some sense to blame for this disaster. Though Mrs. Griffiths held Jenkins blameless, the fact remained that it was the Royston-Clarke's car which had caused her to sustain an injury. If Diana was ruthlessly towards her enemies, she was immensely kind to her friends.

"There!" she said. "Bit stiff, isn't it? I'm afraid you won't be able to use it for a little while, but don't worry about the machining! Look here, let me have a stab at that!" she said.

"What is it? Hemming?"

"Yes, miss. It just wants finishing off."

"Then," Diana gurgled, "watch me!"

She sat down at the machine, eyeing the work critically. There was no doubt that Diana could use a machine, though in needlework class at Cliff House she rarely bothered to exert herself. In ten minutes she finished the hems, and Mrs. Griffiths' face was flushed with gratitude as she held up the finished garment. Diana laughed.

"There!" she said. "All serene now, eh? And that just reminds me," she added. "I've a new design for a dress I want making up. Like to take it on, Mrs. Griffiths?"

"Oh, miss, it's too kind of you! I—I should love to!" Mrs. Griffiths faltered. "But I can't take payment for it—not from you!"

"No?" Diana laughed. "In that case, you're not going to have it!" she said. "You do it for me and then just see the jobs I'll get you! I'll bring it along this evening," she added. "Expect me about seven."

And with a friendly nod to the woman she went out, feeling really and most amazingly pleased with herself. In great good humour she went back to Cliff House, and only did that good humour vanish when, tripping up the steps, she came face to face with Miss Charmant.

"Diana—" the mistress said.

"Oh, yes, Miss Charmant?"

"Diana, you did not obey my orders!"

Miss Charmant said severely. "I thought I ordered you to go to your study?"

Diana pouted. "You didn't go to your study!" Miss Charmant went on. "You deliberately disobeyed. Apart from that, Diana, you have broken bounds by going out—you were not in for the second session of lessons! What have you to say?"

Roses of mutiny flamed in Diana's cheeks.

"I went to see my father!" she said. "I wanted to know about this awful Brandon girl!"

"Diana, you dare talk like that—about a guest of the school!"

Diana started. "What?"

"A guest!" Miss Charmant told her. "Until the film is finished Miss Brandon is remaining in the school in order to study in her leisure those things which she will have to do in the film. For the uses of the film she is attached to the Fourth Form at present, and is sharing your own study with you and Margot Lantham!"

"That cat—in my study!" Diana blazed.

"Diana, how dare you!" snapped Miss Charmant, her pretty face very angry. "You will take a hundred lines for disobeying orders! A further hundred lines for failing to turn up at lessons, and a black mark for ungallant behaviour! You may go!"

Diana hardly heard the last of those words. Quivering, she went. Almost raging, she went up to her study. Violently she pushed the door open. And then she halted and glared at the two girls who were in the room, laughing and chatting together. One was her chum and study-mate, Margot Lantham. The other—

She strode into the room. She caught Dawn Brandon's shoulder. Then, her face livid, she twisted her so that she faced the door.

"And you," she choked, "can get out!"

"But—but—what on earth—" she bewildered Dawn cried.

"Get out!" Diana raved.

"Diana—" cried Margot.

"And you be quiet!" Diana fumed.

"This is my study, and I'm having no job-stealing outsider in it. Well, Dawn Brandon, are you going?"

"No, I'm not going!" Dawn returned indignantly. "I— Oh!"

And she let out a cry as Diana rushed her tempestuously across the floor, gave her a shove that sent her spinning into the corridor, and then slammed the door in her face!

**Diana's Revenge!**



"JOLLY, jolly good!"

Barbara Redfern said enthusiastically.

"If you ask me,

that film's going to be one of the best school films ever

turned out by a British company!"

"To which," Jemima Carstairs beamed, "there can be no other answer than 'ear, 'ear!'"

"And can Dawn Brandon act!" Mabel Lynn glowed. "Don't you think she was just wonderful in that scene with Miss Jollibell? Of course, it was only play acting and all that, but I felt like blubbing!"

"I dud-did," Bessie confessed. "Not of course, that I'm sen-sen-sen-sentimental—I mum-mean sus-soft, you know! Jolly nice girl, Dawn Brandon! I vote we ask her to tea this afternoon, if you girls have enough money to buy supplies."

"Well, I sure guess that's an idea!" Leila Carroll approved. "Especially as she's going to be a guest of the school. Pretty tough on her, though, being pushed in with Diana."

"And pretty mouldy of Diana," Babs said indignantly, "to behave as she has done! A nice little show of bad temper that was in the shrubbery. We ought to try to make it up to her for that! Well, what about going along and asking Dawn—hallo!" she added, breaking off.

And the chums who were gathered together in Study No. 4 looked at each other. For from the other end of the corridor came a violent bang!

It was followed by Diana's infuriated voice.

"Now stop out!"

"Trouble!" Babs' lips compressed.

"Diana's broken out again! Come on!"

She jumped to the door and tore it open. Quickly she gazed along the corridor, where Dawn Brandon, violently ejected by Diana from the Firebrand's study, stood panting against the wall. She ran forward.

"Dawn—" The young film actress collected herself.

"I—I—" she said. "Oh, my goodness! Diana—" she stuttered dazedly.

"Diana's thrown me out—"

Babs gazed angrily at the door.

"But Miss Primrose," she said, "told you to share this study, didn't she? Dawn, I'm sorry! For goodness' sake don't think this is a fair sample of Cliff House hospitality!"

She knocked at the door, and then, as the sound of angry voices came from the other side of it, she opened it.

Margot Lantham, her pretty face flushed, was facing Diana, whose own cheeks were scarlet.

"Well, I think it's mean—downright mean!" Margot was saying spiritedly.

"Whatever you might feel about things, Di, you've no business to treat guests like that—"

"Guest! Job-snatcher, you mean!" Diana flamed. "You think I'm going to have that awful thing in here when she's deliberately robbed me of my rights? Oh, rats to what the producer said! It's rot—utter rot! And you," she added bitterly, "are supposed to be my friend!"

"Diana, you know I'm your friend! But—"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" Diana said bitterly. "Such a nice, loyal sort of friend, aren't you?" She glared at Babs, flashed a "get out, you!" and whirled back on Margot. "A friendly act, isn't it, to make a pal of the girl who's cheated me behind my back? If that's what you call friendship, Margot Lantham—"

She stopped as there was a step outside. Miss Charmant, her pretty face a little annoyed, paused as she regarded Babs.

"Barbara, what is going on here?"

"Oh, my hat! Nun-nothing, Miss Charmant!" Babs stuttered. "Just—just a bit of an argument."

"Oh!" Miss Charmant paused. She looked in at Diana. "Well, please don't stand about the corridor, girls. Oh, Dawn, my dear, I hope you like your study?"

Dawn Brandon coloured.

"Y-yes."

"You do not sound enthusiastic, my dear."

Dawn turned crimson. Helplessly she looked at Diana.

Diana broke into a scoffing laugh.

"And I don't suppose," she said, "she's feeling enthusiastic! Because, you see," she added calmly, "I've just thrown her out!"

"What?"

"Well?" Diana shrugged. She knew that confession was going to earn her punishment, but when Diana was in her firebrand mood such considerations weighed less than nothing. "I don't want her!" she said. "I wouldn't have



"OH, Diana, have—have I left my script behind?" asked the young film actress hesitantly. Like a flash Diana concealed Dawn Brandon's script behind the arm of the chair. "I haven't got it," she said coolly.

"And don't come poking your nose into this study!"

her in here—the job-stealer! And if you insist that she stops here, I'm jolly well going to clear out!" she added defiantly.

"Phew!" breathed Tomboy Clara Trevlyn from the passage.

Miss Charmant's brow grew dark.

"Diana, you will please be silent!" she said sharply. "And if you have a grain of good manners left, try to remember the rudimentary rules of hospitality! You should feel honoured that the guest of the school is given a place in your study! Still—" she paused. "Dawn, I am sorry," she said simply. "If you prefer me to find you other quarters—"

"I—I really think it would be best, Miss Charmant, if—if you don't mind," Dawn said helplessly.

"Very well. Come with me. Diana, you will consider the imposition I gave you just now doubled! Now, girls, please clear the corridor."

And Babs & Co., with Dawn in their midst, moved off, while Margot, remaining, stared at her sulky-faced friend. She bit her lip a little.

"Diana—" she said yearningly.

"Well, what?" Diana snapped.

"Don't you think," Margot said gently, "don't you think— Oh, Di, why do you keep on breaking out like this? Why the dickens can't you be reasonable? That part in the film must have been meant for Dawn—not you. You just won't see it, that's all. Oh, Di, I do hate to quarrel with you. Why not give up this silly vendetta you've got against this girl and let's all get together and be friends? You know, she is a jolly decent sort—"

Diana glared.

"I know," she said thickly, "that you're talking like a traitress! Quite hypnotised, aren't we," she sneered, "by that doll-faced little wretch? Just because she acts on the films! Oh rats! Get out if you want to!" she added crossly. "And stay out so far as I'm concerned!"

Margot gazed at her sadly, reproachfully. Then she crossed towards the door.

"Di, you—you mean that?" she faltered.

"Yes!" snapped Diana, but dared not look up in case the expression on her face betrayed the lie.

The door opened and closed. Diana started. One faltering step she took towards it, the name "Margot" framing itself on her lips. Then she pulled herself together with an angry jerk. Well, bother Margot! Dash her! If she liked to run after that cat, let her! Why should she humiliate herself by trying to prevent her?

All the same, Diana felt somewhat forsaken and rather lonely. Margot, her chum, had turned against her. Miss Charmant had burdened her with lines. And all because another girl had cheated her of her rights.

Dinner-bell rang, but Diana did not heed it. Moodily she flung herself into an easy chair, moodily lit a cigarette, and then, with a gesture of disgust, flung it, after the first whiff, into the fire. She stretched out her arm towards the pile of magazines and papers on the low table by her side, and then suddenly she sat up. Hallo! What was this?

She had caught up a bundle of type-written papers, on the front page of which was an inscription:

"Script.  
"THE PLAYGROUND OF  
"YOUTH."  
"Part of Maisie Prince."

Her eyes gleamed then. Maisie

Prince, she knew, was the name of the juvenile lead in the film. This, then, was Dawn Brandon's part—this the part which really belonged to her. Her breath came a little faster as she picked it up, as she eagerly read and studied it. Yoicks, what a find!

There was a knock on the door. Dawn herself, somewhat nervously, peered into the study.

Just in time Diana dropped the hand which held the script over the arm of the chair.

"Oh, Diana, have—have I left my script behind?" Dawn asked. "I—I seem to have mislaid it. I can get another from the producer, of course, but if I can find the one I—"

"Well, jolly well go and find it!" Diana cut in. "And don't come poking your nose into this study! I haven't got it!" she added coldly.

Dawn gazed at her. She went out. Diana scowled a little, displeased with herself for telling that fib, but feeling, in the circumstances, justified in it. Well, stuff! The girl had cheated her, hadn't she? Why not give her a taste of her own medicine?

Absorbed, interested, forgetful entirely of dinner, she continued to skim through the script, her excitement growing as she did so.

Why, that part might have been written for her. Couldn't she just imagine herself carrying it off! Her eyes glowed. If she required any further incentive to make a fight for what she believed to be her rights in the film, here it was.

Fortunately for Diana that afternoon was a half-holiday at Cliff House, and therefore dinner an optional meal. As it was, she was not lined for being absent from the meal but, intrigued, her interest and excitement mounting, read on, learning the first half a dozen pages by heart. Time passed, until, with a sigh, she put the script down again, her cheeks aglow, her eyes bright. Then, hearing a commotion outside, she looked through the window.

"Yoicks!" she muttered.

For down there in the quadrangle, the school, unmindful of its half-holiday privileges in the greater privilege of acting in and watching the construction of a film, was gathered, and on the edge of the crowd the cameras were being re-erected. The film people were going to take another shot!

Diana glowed. She looked at the part again. Well, she'd give Langley Runniman another chance—just one other chance. By this time, she thought, he had probably received some communication from her father—or had discovered his mistake. Pausing just a moment to fluff up her blonde hair and smile at her reflection in the mirror—how possibly could that frowzy Dawn's looks come up to hers?—she strolled out of the school.

"Hallo, Di!" Barbara Redfern, at the head of the Fourth Form, sang out. "Di, this way; we want you in the crowd."

"Then," Diana said loftily, "jolly well want!" And she stepped on amid the titters of the girls, and confronted the producer. "Oh, Mr. Runniman!"

He looked at her.

"Yes, Miss Royston-Clarke?"

"I suppose you've heard from my father—"

"Why, no."

"Then," Diana said easily, "that's all right! But you can take my word for it, there's a mistake! My father did, really and truly, intend me to take the part of Maisie Prince. I'm sorry for Dawn Brandon, but I think you must admit that I've got first claim? What

scene are we going to shoot now—the fire-drill one?"

He shook his head.

"Miss Royston-Clarke, I'm frightfully sorry—" he began.

"Well, don't waste time in apologising; let's get on with the washing!" Diana returned impatiently. "Where do you want me to stand?"

"I'm sorry," he repeated, but with a hint of firmness, "but there's no mistake, Miss Royston-Clarke! Your father's very express instructions to me were to give Miss Brandon this part. He never even mentioned your name in connection with it! Now, please, will you stand aside?" he added gently.

"We must take advantage of the light while we still have these exterior shots to take, and you are holding up the production."

Diana glared. But there was no doubting that the producer had made up his mind. Sulkily, she moved away.

Hang them all! If it would only rain or snow or something—if something would happen to spoil that beastly film! They didn't want her. She, with all her marvellous personality, her talents, was thrust into the background to make way for that cat, Dawn Brandon! Well—

And Diana's eyes suddenly gleamed. If she couldn't jolly well act, Dawn Brandon shouldn't! And if she—Diana—wasn't going to be in that film, there wasn't going to be a film!

She moved away. Nobody noticed her going in the general bustle of preparation for the next shot. Inspired by her desire for revenge, she made her way towards the Pets' House, there to be greeted at once by a noisy clamour of dogs—the majority of them belonging to girls acting in the film.

"And if," Diana told herself, "I let them free, what a helter-skelter rush by their fond and silly mistresses to retrieve them! No crowd means no film. Di, old girl, we'll give Cliff House the thrill of a pets hunt!"

She chuckled again. Yes, hunting their own dogs would certainly keep anxious pet owners busy until the light was too feeble to finish that shot. Moreover, as it was a half-holiday and the animals were restive in the expectation of being taken out, her task was rendered the more easy. Up the line she went, releasing one dog after another until, in a barking, noisy, frisking, clamouring crowd, they were all gambolling about her legs. Then she marched towards the gate.

She opened it.

"Go on, dogs!" she cried.

In a swarm the dogs, yelping and yapping, went streaming through the gates.

Diana regarded them with a supercilious smile. This was grand; this was fine. Serve everybody right. It would take ages to recapture all those frolicking animals, and in the meanwhile—

Then Diana started.

"Hi!" she cried, in sudden consternation. "Yoicks! Hi!"

But as well try to control the clouds as that madly excited mob of pets. For what happened then was by no means according to Diana's plan. Diana had not seen Miss Primrose's cat Waffles playing with an old burst tennis ball fifty yards from the gates. But the dogs spotted it at once. Excited barking went up.

The cat, with one fierce hiss in the direction of her arch-enemies, turned tail. Like a streak she shot away, and after her in full and excited cry, went the dogs—heading straight for where the film was being shot!

**Her Coach—in Secret!**



**J**UST at the critical moment they arrived on the scene.

The cat came first, shooting between the legs of the cameraman, busily focusing his machine. Then, with a rush, came the pack!

Too late Mr. Runniman turned, to be bowled over with a yell. Too late Miss Jollibell sent up a scream of warning. "Look out—"

And then, with a scream, herself found her legs swept from under her.

The cat dashed on. But now the crowd, recognising their pets, had broken up. Girls were frantically screaming names; "Abbe! Brutus! Ting!" as the dogs, tearing on, came right among them.

"Woof, wuff!"

"Wow, wow!"

Such screams, such pandemonium all at once, such a scene of indescribable confusion.

Runniman gave a groan.

"Oh, great Harry! Great Harry!" he moaned. "Girls!"

"Girls!" shrieked Miss Charmant.

"Girls!" thundered Miss Keys, the gym mistress.

"Girls!" shrieked Miss Bullivant.

But the girls at the moment were too busy and too apprehensively rounding up their pets to heed those cries. Where Waffles had vanished none knew except Waffles.

The dogs, deprived of their prey, turned the hunt into a scamper with their mistresses. Girls dodging this way and that; puppies and dogs scampering out of their range; girls chasing and being chased, all over the quad.

Diana, from the Pets' House, saw. She watched in a little dismay. Then, as the need for self-preservation came to her, she pulled herself together.

"Yoicks! Out of this, Di!" she told herself.

Hurriedly she pushed the gate to. She trotted out. But at that moment a cry came from Barbara Redfern. Babs had seen her!

"Diana!"

Every eye turned in the Firebrand's direction. Everyone realised what Babs had realised.

"Why, the cat!" fumed Clara Trevlyn. "She let the dogs out! She's not going to get away with it! After her!"

And a rush was started.

Diana glared. She was spotted! What rotten luck! Now the crowd was after her! That meant being dragged back before the whole and angry school to face punishment, and Diana had no relish for that prospect then. Towards the gate she flew, and by the greatest good fortune in the world she caught the bus, then in the act of passing, and leapt on to it.

Babs & Co. streamed out of the school gates in time to see Diana's mocking wave. Done them!

She chuckled as the bus bowled on. Well, whatever sort of music she had to face, she had spoilt the film for that day. That was something, at all events. But now what was she to do?

"Courtfield, miss?" the conductor asked.

"Oh, yes, please!" Courtfield it should be. She'd go and see Mrs. Griffiths again. Perhaps she could explain to her what sort of a frock she wished her to make. True she had not got the design of the dress she had promised with her, but she could sketch that at Mrs. Griffiths' home.

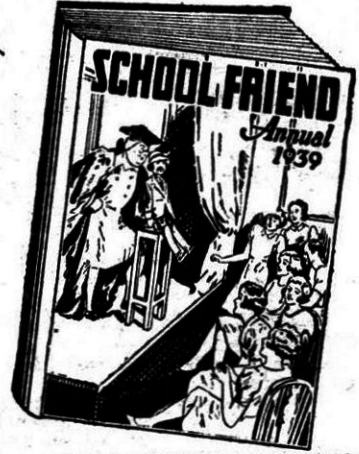
Characteristic it was of Diana that

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she thought no more of the trouble which awaited her on her return to Cliff House. Her mind was running on altogether different lines. At the Courtfield Market Cross she alighted from the bus, tripped across to the fruiterers, where she purchased an expensive bunch of black hot-house grapes; from the fruiterers she went to the confectioners, where she bought a huge box of chocolates, and from there to a cake shop, where she selected some delicious little cakes. Then she called a taxi.

And thus armed she presented herself at Mrs. Griffiths' house ten minutes later.

It was Mrs. Griffiths herself who opened the door to her—Mrs. Griffiths looking pale, with her arm done up now, not in a simple bandage, but a great splint. Her eyes sparkled at the sight of Diana; the pale cheeks flushed.

"Oh, miss—" she faltered.

"Here we are!" Diana laughed.

"Phew! I feel like Father Christmas! Here, Mrs. Griffiths—for you! The chocolates are for you, too, but the cakes are for both of us—and what about a cup of tea to have with them? No, don't worry, I'll get it if you show me where everything is. But I say, is the arm worse?" she added in concern.

"Oh, it—it's nothing, miss—"

"Nothing?" Diana eyed her straightly. "Mrs. Griffiths, what has happened?" she asked. "I can see the

arm has been rebandaged, and I want to know! Now!"

And Mrs. Griffiths explained. Her doctor, apparently, had dropped in just after Diana had left that morning—on a purely friendly visit. He, of course, had inspected the arm, had stated that the wound she had sustained was taking the wrong turning, and had rebandaged it in splints, ordering her not even to move it.

"Oh, yoicks, I'm sorry!" Diana said sincerely. "Well, if the doctor said that, doctor's orders must be obeyed! Now just you sit there—please! Tell me where I can find an apron, and then you and I are going to have the loveliest tea, and I'm going to tell you all about the new dress I want you to make. Eat those grapes, please, while you watch me—grapes, for some unknown reason, are supposed to be frightfully good for invalids!"

She laughed. Gay Diana! How amazed even those who knew her best at Cliff House would have been to see her now! Nothing sulky, imperious, firebrandish, about this Diana—this was the generous, heart-meltingly lovable Diana of the good turns and the sunny smile.

No wonder Mrs. Griffiths' eyes followed her mistily.

At last tea was ready and Diana, full of vivacity, sat down with her hostess. They talked as they ate and drank, but though Diana, in her own subtle way, tried to drag out of Mrs. Griffiths some

## 8 "The Firebrand's Bid for Film Fame!"

details of her past film career, Mrs. Griffiths was so obviously afflicted with painful memories of that career that Diana felt mean in pressing the subject. Somehow, however, that conversation gave rise to the film now in the process of being made at Cliff House.

"And, of course," Diana said, with little regard for the real truth, "I'm taking juvenile lead in that, Mrs. Griffiths! Such a wonderful part, too! Why, I know a lot of it by heart, already. Perhaps," she added, anxious to show off, "if only to an audience of one, 'you'd like to see me do a bit of it after tea?'"

"I'm sure," Mrs. Griffiths assented, "nothing would please me more, Miss Royston-Clarke! Perhaps," she added hesitatingly, "as this is your first big part, I could give you a hint or two? I used to teach girls sometimes during my own film career."

Diana's cheeks flushed at that; her eyes sparkled.

So when tea was cleared away—again by the insistent Firebrand—Diana did her rehearsing, while Mrs. Griffiths watched critically from the armchair. Eagerly enthusiastic was Diana, never doubting in her own mind that she was destined for the part of Maisie Prince, pausing now and again to look for comment from Mrs. Griffiths, and then throwing herself wholeheartedly into the part again. Mrs. Griffiths smiled.

"You have all the right ideas, Miss Royston-Clarke," she said, "but there are one or two little ways in which you betray your amateurism. Your arms, for instance. Don't throw them about too much. Use your hands more. You have very beautiful and very shapely fingers, you know, and they can be made to give what you are doing quite a lot of expression. Do not look so bored when you are first supposed to meet the headmistress; that is more of an adult pose. Remember, acting a schoolgirl, you should be rather wild-eyed and dismayed than otherwise. Now let me see you do it again."

Diana did it again—profiting from the criticisms. She did it again, and again, and felt herself, every fresh time, gaining more and more mastery over the part. Oh, this was fine! This was ripping!

"Very good!" Mrs. Griffiths summed up at last. "But, Diana, you must let me help you more. Given a little further tuition, you will make a first-class actress, my dear. Such an actress as—" And then she stopped. "But my work!" she exclaimed suddenly. "Oh, Miss Royston-Clarke, what can I do about that? Since you came I have had a fresh order—a skirt. It's wanted urgently."

"Let me do it," Diana said instantly. "No, please!" she added, as the woman opened her lips to protest. "Just tell me what to do, and there you are! After all, one good turn does deserve another."

And happily she sat herself down at the machine; willingly she worked. Good needle-worker as she was, it was not long before the skirt was finished, and, with a laugh, she rose, one suddenly wary eye upon the clock. While Mrs. Griffiths thanked her, almost with tears in her eyes, she put on her hat.

"Oh, please cut out the gratitude," Diana said. "Whatever good turn I've done, you've more than repaid, Mrs. Griffiths. May I come again to-morrow?"

"My dear, come as often as ever you wish," the woman assured her. "I—I didn't know there were such girls as

you in the world," she added falteringly.

Diana laughed as she left. She was then in a very happy frame of mind indeed. But no sooner had she arrived back at Cliff House than fresh trouble met her. A group of girls in Big Hall turned at her entry. She felt herself the focus point of a score of penetrating glares. Then Rosa Rodworth came over to her.

"Clever, weren't you?" she snapped. "I beg your pardon?" Diana said haughtily.

"Who let the dogs out of the Pets' House, and ruined the afternoon's film show?"

"Oh!" Diana grinned. "Oh, that!" she said.

"Pretty beastly sort of thing to do, wasn't it?" Rosa glowered. "After we'd all given up our half-holiday to act in the film."

"Did I," Diana asked loftily, "ask you to give up your half-holiday for the beastly film? In any case, you were only wasting your time. The real film—with me in the leading role, of course—has yet to be made. Eh? Oh, yes, Dulcia?" she added, as Dulcia Fairbrother, head girl of the school, loomed up beside her.

"You're wanted," Dulcia said, eyeing her contemptuously, "by Miss Primrose, Diana. I think she, too, wants to discuss the half-holiday with you."

## Diana Sticks at Nothing!



MISS PRIMROSE did. Miss Primrose, indeed, was in an angry mood. Apart

from listening to a lecture which lasted ten minutes, Diana left the study richer by an hour's detention. But was Diana dismayed?

Not a scrap.

For the lecture, like everything else which Diana had no wish to hear, went in one Firebrand ear and out at the other. As for the detention—well, time always to tackle that when it arrived. Even while the lecture was being delivered, indeed, Diana's thoughts were running off at a tangent.

If Diana had been resolved to take the juvenile lead in the film this morning, she was a thousand times more resolved now after the encouragement given to her acting by Mrs. Griffiths.

The only thing now was to get an opportunity of proving that to Langley Runniman. How to do that?

And so Diana that evening was seen little of again. She spent the evening, indeed, in her own study, reading the part of Maisie Prince, gesticulating before her mirror, and thinking of ways and means.

Perhaps that was just as well for Diana, for after her revengeful exploit of the afternoon, she was not looked upon with favour by the Fourth Form.

"I say, it's ripping, isn't it?" Barbara Redfern beamed, in the Common-room that evening. "I must say old Primmy's being a sport over the film. We're shooting again to-morrow morning before lessons, girls—that is, if the weather's good, and I've got a small part opposite Dawn in the gymnasium scene. And guess what else? Langley Runniman says that we shall finish all the exterior shots in the next two days. And after that—"

"Oh, yes, after that?" a dozen voices breathlessly chorused.

"We're all going to be allowed time off to visit the studios to make interiors

—and some interiors are going to be made in the school itself."

"Oh, ripping!"

"And Mr. Runniman says, at the end of the week, that a party of us can go along to the studio's theatre and see the first rushes of the film before it is cut."

The Fourth Form whooped. So, in other parts of the school, did other Forms. But Diana, deep in her own activities, heard and knew nothing of that—Diana, indeed, did not even know that, despite her attempt to frustrate the fire-drill scene that afternoon—that scene, after her somewhat hasty departure, had been successfully shot.

The only interest she displayed at all in the Form's activities, indeed, was when, later that evening, joining the Form as it trooped up to bed, she spoke to Babs.

Then she said:

"Are we shooting again to-morrow morning?"

"Yes," Babs said.

"Oh, good! What time?"

"Well, immediately after breakfast, if the weather is good," Babs returned.

"Why?"

"Oh, nothing!" Diana shrugged and smiled—a slow, inscrutable smile, which caused Babs to gaze at her sharply. "Oh, by the way, what's happened to Dawn Brandon?" she added. "Have they found her another study?"

"They have not!" Babs retorted, rather sharply. "Dawn is occupying the guest-room while she stops here, with permission to visit any study she likes. Anything else you want to know?"

"No, thanks!" Diana said, and smiled again. "Thanks awfully!" she added mockingly.

And she undressed and went to bed, still with that same thoughtful smile on her face. The smile was still there when, without a word, she rose next morning, washed and dressed, and went downstairs. Until breakfast she kept to her own study.

But as soon as breakfast was over, she sauntered along to the guest-room. Amy, the maid, in the act of finishing the tidying of that room, looked round as she entered.

"Morning, Amy!" Diana said brightly. "Miss Brandon about?"

"She's just gone off for her morning bath, Miss Royston-Clarke." Amy volunteered.

"Has she? Thanks! Then," Diana decided, "I'll wait for her. Leave the room now, Amy; you can come in and finish later in the morning. I want to see Miss Brandon alone," she added.

Amy nodded. She went off. But as soon as she had gone Diana chuckled. Swiftly she padded through the communicating door which led to Dawn's bed-room. The room, thanks to Amy's labours, was neat and tidy, but Diana noticed at once that on the dressing-table all Dawn's make-up was laid out. Several pots of various solutions and liquids used for make-up purposes stood there, together with a large, black-japaned box which contained an imposing assortment of grease-paints.

Diana's eyes gleamed.

Through the window she saw the cameramen erecting their apparatus. Half the Lower School was already in the sunlit grounds, eager for activities to begin.

Quietly Diana padded back to the next room. From the writing-table she took up the ink-bottle. With the bottle in her hand, she stepped back to the bed-room and inverted the ink over the film star's grease-paints. A steady stream of black fluid gushed forth.



"Now," Diana breathed, "try to make-up with that, Miss Clever Dawn Brandon!"

Carefully she closed the lid of the japanned box. Then she took the bottle back.

Wiping her fingers, she carelessly sauntered out, joining Babs & Co. as they stood at the bottom of the school steps watching the preparations in front of them.

At that moment Mr. Runniman hurried up.

"Miss Brandon!" he called. "Where is Miss Brandon? We want to fix the cameras."

"Miss Brandon," Diana said, sauntering forward, "is not here. Still," she added haughtily, "I am, so why worry? Where shall I stand?"

"Miss Royston-Clarke, please!" Runniman said testily. "I thought you already understood Miss Brandon is required for this sequence? And Miss Brandon has orders to be on the set at nine o'clock. We want her purely for technical purposes at the moment—"

"I know. Focuses and all that. Well"—Diana faced up to him—"what about letting me stand in for her?" she added. "There's no harm in that, is there?"

The producer gazed at her. Truth to tell, he had been just a little troubled by Diana's insistence that this was her part. After all, she was the daughter of the Enterprise's financial manager, and if only for that reason he did not want to offend her. If Diana, instead of ridiculously claiming the juvenile lead, was willing to act in this subordinate capacity, he would be glad to appease her.

"Well, yes; that's a good idea!" he said. "Very good, Miss Royston-Clarke. Go over there, will you—just there, near Miss Redfern. That's right! Now, please, just loll about—not far one way or the other. Cameramen!" he ordered.

Diana laughed. This was her chance—her chance! Having successfully delayed Dawn Brandon, she'd now show what she could do. Runniman wouldn't give her a chance to rehearse; Runniman, this time, should have no alternative but to watch her rehearse! Now she'd show that Brandon thing up!

So Diana, instead of gently moving about for the benefit of the cameramen, began to act.

Cliff House blinked. Cliff House, not understanding at first, stared. Diana, confident in her own ability, utterly self-conscious, mistook the wondering silence for the silence of appreciation. This, she guessed, was to be the fire-drill scene she had interrupted so disastrously yesterday, and the fire-drill scene—or Maisie Prince's part in it—Diana began to act.

"Help, help! The school is on fire!" she cried stridently.

"My hat!" exclaimed Babs.

"Make sure my mother is not in her room!"

"Golly!"

"And look—look! Oh, my goodness, what shall I do?" Diana went on.

"Take a running kick at yourself, I should think!" said Frances Frost. "What's the matter with the nunny? Is this some sort of disease?"

"Here—here, what's this?" the producer stammered.

But Diana did not care then. She was getting into the skin of the thing, thrilling with her own performance. This way and that way she flung herself, finally grabbing an imaginary fireman and frantically pointing up at the school building. Then suddenly there was a yell of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat! Di's acting the fire-drill scene!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Diana, hearing the yell, paused, flaming round.

"Well, what's the matter with you?" she cried. "This isn't supposed to be comic!"

"No, Di dearest; but you are!" sobbed Freda Ferriers. "What's this in aid of?"

"I'm doing the fire-drill scene!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well," Diana flared, "what is there to laugh about in that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Diana clenched her hands. She couldn't understand it. But just then Mr. Runniman came bustling forward.

"Miss Royston-Clarke," he said, "I'm afraid we don't want that. The camera can't range!"



QUITE calmly, Diana emptied the ink bottle over the young film star's grease-paints. "Now," she breathed triumphantly, "try to make up with that, Miss Clever Dawn Brandon!"

"Well, if you jolly well want to know, I wasn't doing it for the camera!" Diana retorted sulkily. "I was just doing it to show you that I can act Dawn Brandon's head off! Was that good?"

"Quite good, Miss Royston-Clarke."

"Then why don't you let me play the part?"

"Because," Mr. Runniman explained patiently, "Miss Brandon is in the part. And, in any case, we have finished with that," he added. "We shot the fire-drill scene yesterday!"

"Wha-at?"

A howl of quivering laughter went up at the expression on the Firebrand's face.

"Yesterday afternoon," the producer added, "after we'd put the dogs back. But, ah, here is Miss Brandon!" he added, as that girl came rushing out of the school. "Miss Brandon, why are you not made up?"

Diana scowled. Quivering with fury, she turned away. All her efforts wasted! Instead of showing up Dawn Brandon,

she had shown up herself—made herself the laughing-stock of the school! Diana choked.

But attention had switched from Diana now to Dawn Brandon herself. Dawn, rather desperately, was facing the producer.

"Mr. Runniman, I—I'm sorry," she said, "but I can't make up! Somebody has filled my make-up box with ink!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Babs.

"Then—then—"

"And—and I've got no more grease-paints!"

"But," Mabel Lynn cried, stepping forward, "I have, Dawn! I've got a complete make-up box belonging to our dramatic society, and if you would care to use that you're welcome, I'm sure. Mr. Runniman, may she?" she added eagerly.

"Thank you!" Mr. Runniman said. "I'd be obliged, Miss Lynn! All the

same, I don't quite understand this," he added, frowning. "Ink doesn't get into make-up boxes unless somebody puts it there! Ah, here is Miss Primrose!" he added, as the headmistress, rather concerned, fluttered on to the scene; for Miss Primrose had not given permission to-day for morning lessons to be missed, and had come to inquire about the delay.

"But who," she asked, when informed of the cause of the delay, "could have done a thing like that? Miss Brandon, you have no idea?"

"No, Miss Primrose."

"Nobody except the maid has been in your room?" Miss Primrose asked.

"Not that I know of."

"Then perhaps," Miss Primrose said, "the maid had some sort of an accident, and was frightened to tell you. I will have a talk with her."

"You needn't!" Diana cut in impudently.

"Diana, I beg your pardon?"

Diana shrugged.

"I said you needn't," she said, and

wondered even as she said it why she did. "Amy Withers had no more to do with messing up that cat's make-up box than you yourself, Miss Primrose! Because," she added, and everybody who heard gasped, "I did it!"

Miss Primrose's eyes opened wide. "Diana, what are you saying?"

"Just," Diana said, with a resigned shrug, "the truth! I just don't want any servant to be frightened into having to face up to you for what I did, that's all. I did it because I wanted to keep Dawn out of the film this morning, and not because I wanted a maid blamed. Well?" she added defiantly.

"Diana—why, bless my soul!" gasped Miss Primrose. "You will go to my study—at once!"

### Mrs. Griffiths' Secret!



"PENNY for 'em, Dawn!" Barbara said cheerfully.

Dawn Brandon looked up with a little sigh. "I was just thinking of

Diana," she said.

The scene was Study No. 4 in the Fourth Form corridor; the time early in the evening of the same day.

Since the shot of the morning—fortunately aided by Mabel Lynn's make-up box and Mabs' expert aid in helping Dawn to make-up—there had been no further filming at Cliff House, a heavy mist during the afternoon making photography impossible. Tea in Study No. 4, with Dawn as the guest of Babs, Mabs, and Bessie, was just finished.

Babs frowned slightly at the last remark, voiced with such sincerity. She too, off and on, had been thinking of Diana—Diana, who all that afternoon had been grinding away in detention class. Additional punishment had been a special report to her father.

"And what about Diana?"

"I don't know." Dawn shifted restlessly. "I was just thinking how splendid it was of her this morning to own up to save the servant from getting into a row. A girl who can do a thing like that, Babs, can't be all bad."

Babs shrugged.

"Diana's not all bad. There are times," she added, "when we're jolly pleased to know Diana. But you never know; you can never trust that girl. Give Diana her way, and she's a ripping girl. Thwart her, and—"

"And she's your enemy," Dawn nodded. "That's what I've been thinking. That's why I'm rather worried. You know, I would like to be friends with her. I heard a lot about her from her father before I came here, and I've been anxious to know her. Her father has done a lot for me—more than I can ever repay him for—and he's always been so glowing about his 'Di,' as he calls her. Babs, I—I do think I'll go and have a word with her," she added.

Babs looked apprehensive.

"Dawn, you know what happened yesterday?"

"Never mind; I'll risk that!" Dawn smiled. "No, Babs, please don't come with me. Perhaps she'll talk to me alone."

She went out, while Babs, looking at Mabs, shook her head. But Dawn was to be unlucky. When she looked in at Study No. 10 she found it empty.

Diana, in fact, was at that moment journeying down to see Mrs. Griffiths. Her detention tasks were finished.

There was time to get down to Court-field and back before call-over.

It was half-past six when she reached Mrs. Griffiths' house—that good lady unfeignedly glad to see her, but, unfor-

tunately, with bad news. The skirt Diana had made yesterday, though done according to the customer's instructions, had not been done to customer's measurements.

"Which means," Diana said, with a sigh, "we've got to do it again—or part of it. Well, well, don't look so cut-up, Mrs. Griffiths! It won't take long. If you can manage to unpick the seams I'll run it up again. Hallo, we've no cotton in the bobbin! We haven't run short?"

"No, my dear; there's plenty in my work-box in the next room. Wait a minute."

"No, no; let me get it," Diana said. "Tell me where it is."

"On the table under the window. A little basketwork-box. You'll find two reels in there, I think."

Diana tripped out, while Mrs. Griffiths, supporting the to-be-altered skirt on her injured arm—still heavily swathed in bandages—commenced to pick the stitches with a pair of scissors worked by her sound hand.

The wickerwork basket—one of the very old-fashioned variety—was, as Mrs. Griffiths said, on the table underneath the window. Diana threw back the lid, frowning at the assortment of odds and ends inside the case. Now where the dickens were those reels of cotton? Impatiently she snatched it up, and then gave a cry of annoyance as the thing slipped from her fingers, and, with a soft thud, landed on the carpet, spilling its contents in a circle around it.

"Dash!" Diana fumed.

She stooped, rather peevishly snatching the now empty workbasket towards her. As she did so she blinked, for what she had considered to be the bottom of the basket suddenly flapped open and closed again. Momentarily intrigued, Diana stared at it; then, espousing a small loop of ribbon affixed to one corner, pulled. She whistled as the whole of the bottom of the basket rose upwards in response to the tug.

The basket had a false base!

But—Hullo, what was this?

For in the cavity now revealed by the removal of the bottom, was a photo. It was a photograph obviously taken several years ago—a photo of a young girl, very good-looking, whom Diana knew at once. And she caught her breath as she looked at it, for it was a photograph of—

Dawn Brandon!

Dawn Brandon's photograph in Mrs. Griffiths' workbox!

"Eh? Oh, yes; coming!" Diana said, as Mrs. Griffiths called from the adjoining room; and, hurriedly stuffing the contents of the basket back, took her reels of cotton and rejoined her hostess.

"I—I had rather an accident with the workbasket," she said. "The thing upset, and—and, well, something fell out." She paused a moment, noting that the woman's eyes had gone to the photograph in her hand, that she had given a sudden start; and something suddenly—Diana could never have told what—warned her not to say that she knew the girl.

"Mrs. Griffiths, this was in the false bottom of the basket," she said. "Who is it?"

Mrs. Griffiths was visibly agitated.

"You—you found that?" Her words were almost a whisper. "I—I never knew! Miss Royston-Clarke, please!" she said, and her voice quivered a little, and her hand trembled ever so slightly as she extended it. For a moment she gazed at the photograph. Diana saw a curious change of expressions come and go in her face. Then suddenly, almost passionately, she caught the photograph in both hands and tore it across.

"Mrs. Griffiths!" Diana cried.

For answer, Mrs. Griffiths, her face most dreadfully white and tense, rose. She tottered rather than walked to the fireplace, and threw the pieces into the flames.

Diana watched, wide-eyed. A thousand questions trembled on her lips, and yet somehow she felt almost awed as she watched the woman, her shoulders bowed, move back to her seat; as she saw her, still trembling, sit down again, and then silently resume her work as if nothing had happened.

Just for a few moments Diana felt almost afraid to speak. But thrilled, too—oh, most dreadfully thrilled! Why did Mrs. Griffiths act as if she hated the original of that photograph?

"Mrs. Griffiths, who is she?" she burst out suddenly.

Very slowly the woman lifted her head. There was a strange expression on her face as she answered.

"Miss Royston-Clarke, please don't ask!" she said, with a quiver in her voice. "She—she is a girl—a girl—"

And here she averted her face. "A girl," she went on, a sob creeping into her voice, "who broke my heart!"

Diana turned her own head away at that. Poor, poor Mrs. Griffiths! How worn, how harassed, how utterly spent she looked all at once, making Diana feel ashamed, indeed, that she had ever introduced that photograph. Yet, at the same time, she was a thrill. What had Dawn Brandon done to this woman? How had Dawn Brandon broken her heart?

Again something seemed to tell her not to mention Dawn's name.

She did not say anything. The words, somehow, would have seemed inadequate and worthless. But, strangely stirred, she sat herself down at the sewing-machine and commenced to work.

She came to the end of the hem. And then she looked round as muttering words fell upon her ears.

"Yoicks!" breathed Diana.

For Mrs. Griffiths, as though exhausted, had fallen asleep in her chair. She was evidently disturbed, and, evidently the recent little scene was occupying her mind. As Diana leaned forward, almost without daring to breathe, she caught words.

"Dawn—oh, Dawn!" Mrs. Griffiths whispered agitatedly. "Why were you so wicked?"

Diana sat perfectly still. The lips moved again.

"I will never forgive you for what you have done!" the sleeping woman said.

Then came an electrifying sentence: "You shall never, never act on the films while I can prevent it!"

Diana did cry out then—in surprise, in jubilation. What was this? Oh, what was this? Dawn, obviously, had done something terrible to this woman—something she could not forgive, something which was concerned with her film career. All along, Diana told herself now—without any proof whatever, but believing it at once because she wanted to believe it—she had suspected something sneaking, something crooked about Dawn Brandon. And this was the girl who had her part in the film!

Yoicks, what a card up her sleeve now!

Then suddenly Mrs. Griffiths' eyes jerked open into wakefulness. She stared at Diana.

"Oh, my goodness, I do believe I've been dozing!" she cried. "Diana, have you finished?"

"Yes, Mrs. Griffiths."

"My dear, what a sweet, kind girl you are!" Mrs. Griffiths said. "If only I could do something to repay you—"

But Diana laughed. Privately, Mrs. Griffiths had done more than repay her, she considered. She had something definite upon Dawn Brandon now—what, she didn't know; but it would be easy enough to bluff. Eager as she had been to get here, she was doubly eager now to get away.

She got away, forgetting, in her excitement, that she had intended to ask Mrs. Griffiths for a further try-out of the Maisie Prince part.

Only by mere seconds did she arrive at Cliff House before gates were closed.

Entering Big Hall, she found the school in a state of excitement. On the board was a notice, and around that notice full fifty girls were gathered. Diana pushed her way towards it.

Her eyes gleamed as she read it:

**"NOTICE.**

"Weather permitting, the big school rebellion scene in the film 'Playground of Youth' will be shot to-morrow morning, preceded by a small scene in which ten members of the Upper Third Form will take part. For this purpose the school is excused morning lessons.

"(Signed) P. PRIMROSE  
(Headmistress)."

The big scene! The greatest scene in all the film—the scene in which Maisie Prince led the rebellion against the headmistress! Such a part that—the part which, Diana considered, had just been written for her. Dawn Brandon was going to get away with that, was she? Not if she knew it!

She turned to find Barbara Redfern staring at her.

"Hallo, Di! Why the eagerness?"

"Who's eager?" Diana snapped.

"Well, you are, aren't you?"

Just fancy leaving the letter-rack without taking your letter from it? That came in with the afternoon post," Babs added.

Diana started. She looked at the rack next to the notice-board. True enough, there was a letter there—in her father's handwriting, too. Now, perhaps, she'd have some evidence that the part was intended for her. Feverishly she snatched it down; stepping from among the crowd, read it.

She frowned.

For the only time her father mentioned the film was in this passage:

"I hear you will be shooting the big rebellion scene on Friday, and, as I shall be back by then, I intend to pop in and have a look at it. I hope you are enjoying yourself acting for the film, Diana."

Acting in the film! But he didn't mention that she was intended to have the leading juvenile part in the film. He never mentioned Dawn Brandon's name either. But, of course, he was just assuming that she had the big part. Why else should he say "I hope you are enjoying yourself acting in the film"?

It is to be feared that Diana, when she required, could twist any combination of words or phrases to suit the needs of her own moment.

Watched by Babs, she marched off. Babs looked at Mabel Lynn.

"Diana," she said with a conviction of her knowledge of the Firebrand, "is on the warpath again! What new bee has she got in her bonnet this time?"

"Oh, blow Diana!" Mabs said peevishly. "Why worry about her? I say, Babs, what shall I wear in the rebellion scene? You know the girls are all supposed to have broken out and discarded school uniform?"

Diana, meanwhile, had reached the

guest-room. She knocked. The voice of Dawn Brandon bade her enter.

Dawn was seated at the writing-desk when she came in, scribbling a letter. She rose, with a glad smile of surprise, as she saw her visitor.

"Why, Diana, fancy you calling upon me!" she said. "Are we at last going to be friends?"

She extended her hand. But Diana, breathing heavily, just looked at it, her features growing hard. Dawn's eyes flickered a little.

"Diana—"

"Oh, be quiet!" Diana snapped. "Cut that out for a start! I've just had a letter from my father," she added.

"He's coming to-morrow."

"Oh, Diana, I'm awfully glad!"

"But," Diana went on ruthlessly, "he doesn't mention you in it—or the part you've cheated me out of! Well, for the

**A Hint of Trouble!**



IN a thin and tremulous whisper Dawn's voice sounded.

"Diana—oh, Diana, what do you know about her?"

Diana compressed her lips. For one moment she felt sorry as she saw the expression on the other's face, but she hardened her heart.

"You'd like to know, wouldn't you?" she answered. "Well, I know a lot more about her—and you—than you think. Afraid—eh?" she added, as the girl shrank back. "Wouldn't be particularly pleasant if I let out what I know. And I won't if you do the sensible thing. Well, for the last time, are you going to get out of that film and let me have the part?"



MRS. GRIFFITHS looked at the photograph of Dawn Brandon, a variety of strange expressions flitting across her face. Curiously Diana watched her. Diana was wondering what a photograph of her enemy was doing in this house.

last time, are you going to hand that part over?"

Dawn hopelessly shook her head.

"Diana, why be so foolish?" she asked wearily. "How can I hand it over? I'm being paid to play in it."

"Are you," Diana harshly repeated, "going to hand it over? Don't beat about the bush. Plain yes or no!"

Dawn eyed her contemptuously.

"No!" she said definitely.

"I see! All right!" Diana showed her teeth. "Then perhaps," she said, "you'll be jolly glad to hand it over before I've done with you! Perhaps you won't have any choice in the matter when I've exposed your past!"

"My past? Diana, what are you talking about?"

"You know very well what I'm talking about!"

"I assure you I don't."

"And you needn't," Diana sneered, "try to act the innocent with me! I suppose you've never heard of a woman called Mrs. Griffiths?"

And she felt a glow of triumph as she saw the consternation her utterance of that name evoked; for Dawn, turning suddenly deathly pale, took a staggering step back and eyed Diana as if she were a ghost.

"Oh, Diana, don't—don't be cruel!"

"Are you?" Diana blazed.

"Diana, I've told you—no!"

"No?" Diana glared. After the sensation her bombshell had caused she had half-expected complete surrender.

But "No!" Dawn said, and, despite her distress, her agitation, she said it in a firm tone which could brook no argument.

"You'll be sorry!" Diana threatened.

Dawn, white to the lips:

"I'll risk that!"

Diana glared again.

Off to her study she went. There until bed-time she sat in lonely, sulky, brooding silence, thinking of ways and means. But when the bell rang for bed she was a little brighter, and again that same inscrutable smile was playing about those lovely, curved lips of hers. Diana, the Firebrand, had found a way.

And again Babs eyed her, wondering from Diana's expression what new mischief was in her mind.

But Babs, like the Form, had other and more important things to think about than Diana. Used to the Firebrand's sudden outbursts and tantrums



# OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

*Always interesting, chummy and helpful is Patricia's weekly letter to you all. No wonder she is such a popular young person. Young, gay, and cheery, and with a delightful sense of humour all her own—she is a friend after your own schoolgirl hearts.*

**N**OW that Guy Fawkes Day is safely over, your Patricia has decided that it's not a bit too early to think about—

Yes, Christmas!

In fact, I have been doing more than think about it. I have actually started to buy some of my presents.

I don't know whether I told you before—but this Patricia of yours finds it extraordinarily difficult to save her pennies! So each year I have resolved to start this Christmas present buying really early, buying one present per week.

This year, for the first time, I have actually carried out my resolution.

Already I have three little presents tucked away in a drawer of my dressing-table—which I keep locked—and now and again (every time I feel like being extravagant) I open the drawer and gloat over my secret hoard.

I'm only hoping that I shall be strong enough to resist wearing the bracelet that is among my collection—which I had intended for my rather rich friend, Esme!

Perhaps I'd better look that drawer again and lose the key—just to be sure!

## ● Christmas Thoughts

Doesn't it amaze you, when you come to think it over and count up, what a great number of presents you have to give.

My Christmas present list seems to grow longer and longer each year!

I was reading in the newspapers that Queen Mary gives no fewer than seven hundred presents every Christmas!

If I had that number to give, I think I should start buying them on January 1st each year.

Our young princesses are two other people who believe in preparing early for Christmas.

Princess Elizabeth intends to give some of her friends calendars this year. These calendars will be decorated with photographs that she has taken herself with her own camera.

I have seen calendars on sale, by the way, which have a sort of frame in the front—all ready to have a "snap" slipped into.

Such a gift, containing a photo of yourself, would be loved by members of your own family who live some distance away from you, I'm sure.

The princesses are also going to give presents of bulbs in hand-painted bowls. Of course, there are the early-flowering variety that should be in bloom by Christmas.

Princess Elizabeth is also hoping to make some miniature Christmas puddings all by herself—and to give these away.

I think that's a brilliant notion—for you do know, don't you, that Christmas puddings actually improve with keeping?

Which reminds me that mother will be making our Christmas puddings very soon now, and I'm wondering what coins she will put in them now that the new threepenny bits are not suitable for cooking!

## ● For Cold Mortals

I don't suppose you sturdy young things would dream of going to bed with a hot-water bottle. But perhaps mother likes one sometimes. (And, in any case they are always used when some member of the family isn't too well, aren't they?)

So if you're thinking that it's about time you made mother a present—even if it isn't her birthday, but just because you love her—what about making a cover for the family hot-water bottle for her? I'm sure she'd love it.

For a rubber hot-water bottle you would require a strip of woollen material (or velvet or velveteen) measuring about twenty-eight inches by nine inches.

Fold it up with a flap-over at the top

FOR CHILLY NIGHTS.



and then seam the sides and hem around the flap part.

The bottle slips right inside—covering the stopper as well, for this often gets hot—and ties with two bows of either ribbon or tape.

For the aluminium hot-water bottle—which is hotter even than the rubber one, I always think—you would require a piece of material measuring about twelve inches square.

Seam the bottom and side and make a large hem at the top. Thread ribbon or tape through this and pull up so that it ties easily.

There, that's the actual covering. But having made those, I'm sure you'd like to decorate them—just to give them that expensive look.

A lucky cat, made of two circles of material, triangles for ears, and a tail shaped like a hockey stick, would be quite easy to cut out and sew on to the front of the cover.

Stitches make his whiskers and also the wall he is sitting on so serenely.

Three simple stars are other easy-to-make designs. You just cut the stars in different sizes from any material that contrasts with the actual bag, and either hem or buttonhole-stitch them into position.

## ● Wool Smartness

Isn't it amazing how the craze for knitting has lasted? At first it was only jumpers that were hand knitted. But now the expert knitters—and it doesn't take long to become an expert—make skirts and jackets as well. And very smart they are, too, with a real "tailored" look, pleats and all!

Caps and scarves to match are also smart in knitting—and even the daintiest and most slim-fitting of undies can be hand knit at home.

Personally, I think it is largely the very clever wool manufacturers we have to thank for this. For nowadays there are such varieties of wools for every imaginable purpose.

There are tweedy wools, as sturdy as the hills themselves; there are baby wools as light as thistledown, and dainty wools—in fact, wools to suit every mood and every knitter.

## ● Wool-Winding

I hope when mother asks you to wind some wool for her that you don't make it into a hard, hard ball.

Wool should always be wound loosely, you know, otherwise it tends to stretch. So you should wind it over your fingers all the time, letting it slip very gently through your other hand as you wind.

I always make my balls of wool egg-shaped, you know. One or two people have asked me how 'tis done, and I have just said: "Ah!"

But I'll tell you nice people.

You wind the wool always in the same direction. That is, always up and down, never up and down and then across.

And while we're in this woolly mood, I wonder if you know what makes the best wool-holder—next to a human person, of course.

If there is no one available to hold the wool for you, or if the family is all too busy doing something else, then you should loop the skein over the open ends of a small clothes horse.

It's much more handy than the usual chair-back.

Bye-bye till next week, my pets!

Your friend,

*Patricia*



**S**KATING looks like being more of a craze than ever this winter. Wondrous new ice palaces are springing up all over the country to meet the demand for this grand winter sport.

So, of course, schoolgirls are anxious to join in.

The schoolgirl who can skate already will know just how to set about it. She'll don her skating outfit under her thick coat, tuck her boots under her arm, pay her admission to the ice-drome—and then skate away for the afternoon or evening session.

But what about the beginner? Lots of you, I know, would love to skate, but are not quite sure how to set about it.

#### WATCH, FIRST

Well, I suggest that the first thing you do about this is to speak to the family, and make up a party either with them or your chums. Then you can all trot off to the ice-drome next time you have a spare evening.

Don't skate on this first visit, but go as watchers—just to get the "feel" of the place and to see how you'd like it.

You can enter most ice-dromes as a watcher for a shilling, you know—and there are special "bargain hours" at some, which brings this price lower still.

After this first visit I'm pretty certain that you'll long to skate.

Then come the problems.

For the schoolgirl, clothes need not be a worry at all. You can wear your school skirt as long as it is fairly full—or your school tunic. You must have a warm jumper with it—and perhaps a scarf and cap to match.

#### A QUESTION OF COST

Skates, I'm afraid, are expensive—if you want to wear your own. The skates themselves cost about ten shillings, and if attached to special skating boots about twenty-five shillings.

But if a generous father or kind aunty

# IT'S SKATING TIME AGAIN

*An article that will help all who would like to take part in this "Queen of Winter Sports"—but are not sure how to begin.*

or uncle should be thinking of giving you a super-present—well, that would solve the difficulty, wouldn't it?

And to own your own skates really is well worth the initial expense, for you'll save lots of money that you would otherwise spend by hiring them.

But the girl who doesn't intend to skate regularly, who just wants to visit the ice-drome now and again for a special treat, will find it less costly to hire skates. You can have the use of skates and boots for the skating session, and the cost will be about a shilling in addition to your entrance fee.

If you are a non-skater at the moment, but feel you might become another champion like Cecilia Colledge or Sonja Henie, it's a good plan to get some really expert instruction before you strike out on the ice for yourself.

Perhaps one of your chums is a good skater—in which case I'm quite sure she would give you some lessons at home. Otherwise you can have the services of an instructor at the ice-rink which costs about three shillings a lesson.

#### HOME PRACTICE

But if you're intending to be a just-for-fun skater, meaning to pick up the intricate steps and movements as you go along, then all you need is a little advice before you start.

It's positively astounding what a strain skating is on your ankles. If you don't do some ankle-strengthening exercises before you go on the ice, you'll find your ankles will ache most uncomfortably. (Though, of course, this will soon wear off.)

A very good exercise that I think will appeal to you, is to stand in your bare feet, holding on to the back of a chair. Then rise up on your toes, like a ballet-dancer, and down again. Do this twelve times.

You'll feel it doing your ankles good—and, incidentally, it slims them. So that's cheery news, indeed, isn't it?

After your ankle exercises, you should try your skates and boots on (if you have your own) and practise standing in them.

Don't stand on a stone floor, for that is bad for the steel blades of the skates. On the other hand, don't stand on mother's carpet, for that's bad for the carpet.

So I suggest that you either stand on an old piece of linoleum or "matting," getting the "feel" of your skates, and to accustom yourself to balancing.

After all these home tricks, you should be ready for that trip to the rink.

#### READY TO START

The first thing you must be prepared for there is BUMPS—and plenty of them.

Practise standing on your skates again, keeping close to the edge of the rink. When you feel pretty steady, you can try striking out.

But do remember that skating is very different from running. In skating you stand with both feet together, and then push BACKWARDS and slightly outwards with your left foot, gliding forwards with your right at the same time.

To hold hands with a chum is definitely a help. But experts say a beginner becomes proficient more quickly if she refuses this help and struggles along on her own.

With practice those struggles soon cease, and you find yourself gliding round at speed with every confidence—reveling in every moment.

#### DO'S and DON'TS for the Ice.

DO remember that skating is one of the hungriest-making past-times yet invented, and have a meal before you set off for a session.

DON'T get in the way of the experts if you are just a beginner. You'll get some black looks if you do—and you might be knocked over by accident.

DO take an extra coat or cardigan for sitting out while the dancing is in progress. You'll be toastily warm while skating, but find it a much chillier business watching.

DON'T hesitate to speak to other young people of your own age at the rink. There are sure to be lots of chummy girls there who are only just waiting for the chance to be friends.

DO inquire about becoming a member of a chosen ice-rink. The membership for a year costs very little, and entitles you to all sorts of privileges. It is particularly worth while if you intend to skate regularly and often.

DON'T forget that skates need care. If they are not going to be used for some time, they should be rubbed over with Vaseline and left like that during their resting time. The Vaseline should be wiped off, of course, before you wear them again.

## A PRESENT FOR AN INVALID

*A dainty bed-jacket that any schoolgirl who likes sewing could make.*

**WOULDN'T** this dainty little bed-jacket cheer up an invalid? I can't think of a present that would be welcomed more by someone who has to stay in bed for some time.

(It would also be received with hugs by someone who was not an invalid, too, I'm thinking. For it would certainly be just the thing to slip over a nightie when breakfasting in bed!)

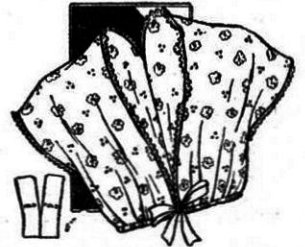
If you're nimble at sewing, you can make this jacket in a jiffy. You will require just two straight strips of material measur-

ing thirty inches long and twelve inches wide. Mother's piece-bag might produce these, but if not, perhaps you could buy three-quarters of a yard of crepe-de-Chine or some other silky material.

Hem the long sides of both these strips of material, and then join two of the long edges for about twelve inches.

Now fold the two pieces over, and join up the sides for about six inches. This, you see, leaves the armholes all ready made for you, without any stitching at all.

Hem the bottom edge and thread ribbon



through to gather up and tie in a pretty bow in the front.

Trim the neck and armholes with baby-lace—and it is finished.

There, don't you think it makes a lovely gift? I'm sure the receiver of it would think so!

(Continued from page 11.)

as they were, the Fourth had long since learned the wisdom of leaving her to get over them—so long as they did not interfere with the Fourth. To-morrow was to be the school's most exciting filming day. The dormitory was agog. Diana listened to the talk without making any contribution herself. Still without speaking, she undressed and climbed into bed. The mistress on duty came to turn out the lights presently, and, excited chatter dying away into drowsy mumbles, the Fourth Form was soon fast asleep.

For a long time Babs lay awake, however, her mind excited by the thrill to come, thinking of the film, of Dawn, of Miss Miranda Jollibell, and, lastly, of Diana—Diana, that strange girl who could have scored such a success among her schoolfellows—Diana, who, as usual, was reaching for the moon. Foolish Diana!

And yet somehow Babs did not feel easy. She had seen that smile on Diana's face; she did not trust it. If Diana had abandoned the idea of impressing the producer, Diana, it seemed, had by no means abandoned her claim to film fame. What was in Diana's mind?

And, strangely enough, when Babs awoke next morning Diana was not in her bed. Not, indeed, until after breakfast did she see her to talk to again. And then it was to meet Diana dressed all ready for going out, her head held high, a flush of rosy triumph already in her cheeks, and a gleam in her eyes which somehow warned Babs. She stopped her.

"Hallo, Di! Going out?"  
 "I am!" Diana said. "Oh!" she added, and a momentary scowl flitted across her lips as Dawn came up the corridor hesitantly, stopping a yard away. "Good-morning!" she said.

"Good-morning!" Dawn said quietly.  
 "Changed your mind?" Diana asked pleasantly, while Babs, not understanding, blinked.

Just for a moment Dawn hesitated, then her answer came.

"No!"  
 "Thanks!" And Diana's lips curled disdainfully, though Babs noticed that Dawn had turned a little pale. "I suppose you know," she added in a tone that was significant, "that my father will be present at the filming? By the way, Babs, what time is the filming?"

"Why, half-past eleven," Babs said.  
 "And they shoot the Third Form scene before it, don't they?" Diana asked with such studied carelessness that Babs knew it was asked with some motive.

"Why, yes."  
 "Thanks!" Diana smiled again. "Then don't worry about me. I shall be back. Oh, yes, I shall be back!" she added, and shot a look in which there was an unmistakable challenge at Dawn. "Just in time," she added sweetly, "for the great film shot. Bye-bye!"

And, making an arch of mockery of her delicate brows, she strolled off along the corridor.

Babs eyed Dawn; she noticed with surprise that she was trembling slightly.

"Dawn," she said, "what is it? What did Diana mean?"

"Nun-nothing," Dawn said. "Oh, Barbara, please—please don't ask questions!" she burst out. "Don't!"

"You mean—?" Babs paused. No; it was unfair to ask. But her inner conscience told her something of the truth, and her eyes suddenly gleamed.

Something in that stressed reference of Diana's to the big film shot; something, most decidedly, in that "Have you made up your mind?"

Babs went on alone to Study No. 4, to find Mabs in the act of examining a bundle of clothing she intended to wear in the film scene. She put it down when she saw the expression on Babs' face, however.

"Well, penny for 'em!" she teased. "What's the matter? Somebody threatening another war—or something?"

"Diana!" Babs said.  
 "Eh?"

"Diana's plotting something!" Babs looked at her. "And Diana's plotting something against Dawn! I don't know what it is, but I think we've had about enough of Diana and her little pets. If she can ruin that film, she will. She's ruined enough already, goodness only knows!"

"Well, yes," Mabs said, staring. "But why the reason for this hunch?" Babs told her what had happened in the corridor, ending with:

"Diana mocked Dawn. She said her father would be here for the big shot. Dawn, although she stood up to her, seemed to be afraid. What does that suggest?"

"That Diana knows something about Dawn?"

"That's it! That's just it!" Babs nodded. "And, whatever it is that Diana knows about Dawn, she's going to use against her. Just like Diana to choose the dramatic moment when Dawn's stepping on the set to make her film to drop her bombshell! She's gone out now—goodness knows what for—but when she comes back she'll bring the bombshell with her."

"And she's coming back?" Mabs asked.

"At half-past eleven."  
 They stared at each other, both of them disturbed then.

"Then—then what are we going to do?" Mabs asked.

Babs looked at her strangely.  
 "Fetch my young sister," she said.

"Doris? But what—?"  
 "Never mind. I'll fetch her. At least," Babs said, a glimmer of mischief in her eyes now. "I'll go and see her. Shan't be long!"

And while Mabs, considerably mystified, blinked at her, Babs walked out of the room.

She reached the Third Form Common-room. Doris Redfern, in the midst of an excited crowd, which was preparing for the film shot, beamed round with a bright face.

"Hallo, Babs! I say—"

"Doris, come outside a minute," Babs said. "I want to talk to you."

Doris detached herself from the crowd. In the passage, Babs faced her.

"Doris, you'd do a favour for me if you could?"

"Why, Babs, of course!"

"And you wouldn't like to see the film ruined?"

"Oh, Babs, what rot!"

"Or Miss Brandon getting into some sort of a bother?"

"Why, of course not! But—"

"Then," Babs said, "listen to me! Please do as I say. In half an hour you and your little crowd will be called upon to play in the film. They want to shoot your scene before the big one. Well, this is my proposition. Take your crowd and hide somewhere, so that when you're called you can't be found."

"But—but that means we shall miss the film!" Doris objected.

"No, it won't. Because," Babs said, "I'm going to suggest to Mr. Runniman, when you and your little crowd can't be found, that we shoot the big scene first, and yours afterwards!"

### Her Moment of Triumph!



**D**IANA ROYSTON-CLARKE was smiling as she knocked at the door of Mrs.

Griffiths' humble home in Fore Street, Courtfield.

For Diana had made her plans, and Diana was confident of success.

She had made up her mind that Mrs. Griffiths guarded some shameful secret of Dawn Brandon's past. Every scrap of evidence she had been able to gather together pointed to the fact. Dawn had broken Mrs. Griffiths' heart. Dawn had been described by Mrs. Griffiths as wicked, but, more surprising than anything else, was that announcement: "You shall never, never act in the films while I can prevent it!"

Mrs. Griffiths, then, had some power over Dawn. Mrs. Griffiths, Diana believed, could stop Dawn's activities at this present moment. Well, Mrs. Griffiths would—but Mrs. Griffiths, until the exact moment arrived, should not know what she was going to do.

There was a great deal that was theatrical in Diana Royston-Clarke's make-up. She liked timing her blows to a dramatic moment. And what moment could be more dramatic than just before the big scene at Cliff House was being shot? What more dramatic than that Mrs. Griffiths should be brought face to face with this girl who had harmed her just at the moment she was stepping on to the set—and with her own father as a witness?

And afterwards—  
 Well, who was to say that she should not take Dawn Brandon's place in the film? Her own father would insist upon it.

The door opened. Mrs. Griffiths, her arm still done up in bandages, stared in surprise.

"Why, Miss Royston-Clarke, I never expected you—"

"No?" Diana laughed. "But here I am!" she said. "And here," she added, "you're not staying much longer, Mrs. Griffiths, because I want you to come back with me to Cliff House School. There are friends there I want to introduce you to."

"But, Miss Diana," Mrs. Griffiths answered simply, "I—I can't come to your school! I haven't any decent clothes!"

"Oh, never mind that!" Diana said loftily.

"And—and I haven't cleared up!"

"Well, never mind that, either." Then, as the woman still hesitated, she frowned. "Well, come on!" she said impatiently. "Let's clear up together! Look here, let me do the clearing up," she added eagerly. "You go and get dressed."

And thus it was arranged. Mrs. Griffiths went upstairs, and Diana set to work.

A quarter to eleven came before Mrs. Griffiths re-appeared, dressed in a neat dress, rather out of fashion, but as spotless and clean as if it had just left the shop. In her hand she had her bandage.

"I—I'm sorry for being so long," she said, "but it is rather difficult to dress with a damaged arm, and now, you see, the bandage has come off. I wonder, Miss Royston-Clarke, if you would mind dressing it for me?"

Diana gave a cluck of impatience.

But, obviously, she had to do it. She rebandaged the arm, but by that time it was five minutes to eleven. At last, however, they got out. Five minutes' walk to the taxi rank—and no taxis in sight.

Another precious ten minutes they waited, until a car was available. Diana, almost frantic then, bundled her companion into it.

Phew! Thank goodness! They would be just in time.

The taxi chugged off. Twenty minutes later it bowled through the gates of Cliff House. At once Diana's eyes sought the quad, swarming with girls, with cameras, and film paraphernalia. She saw Dawn Brandon laughing, in the midst of Babs & Co.; she saw, farther on, Doris Redfern & Co. moving in front of the cameras. But no sign of her father. Still, that didn't matter.

She laughed suddenly. The fact that

she saw her eyes fasten upon Dawn, as she saw Dawn, with a hoarse cry, give a step backwards, and Mrs. Griffiths stand as if she had been turned to stone.

Face to Face!



**D**IANA, in that tense moment, held her breath. Now for it!

But her triumph suddenly gave place to surprise. Surprise gave place to bewilderment, and bewilderment to consternation.

She saw Mrs. Griffiths' face working; she saw the light of joy, of hope, of surprise that welled into Dawn Brandon's eyes, and she felt dazed when these two, with no more than a strangled cry, tottered towards each other—and, yes, fell into each other's arms! And from Mrs. Griffiths went up

to me. Mrs. Griffiths, you don't want Dawn to go on the films?"

"No," Mrs. Griffiths said. "Dawn—"

"Then," Diana said, seeing escape at last, "that's all right! Because here she is now, acting on the films—or about to act. Well, you've found her, Mrs. Griffiths. Take her away. I'll take her part, as I'm entitled to. Where's Mr. Runniman?"

"Miss Royston-Clarke, I am here," the producer said, coming forward.

"You heard what happened. You know Mrs. Griffiths is Dawn's mother. Mrs. Griffiths," Diana said, "refuses to allow Dawn to act on the films—and rightly, too! Well then, now you've just got to have me for the big scene. And," Diana stated eagerly, "I'm ready! If you'll only give me ten minutes to make-up—"

Very seriously and gravely the producer gazed at her.



TRIUMPHANTLY Diana swung open the taxi-cab door. "Mrs. Griffiths," she cried, "you may come out!" Next moment Mrs. Griffiths and Dawn Brandon were face to face, and Diana, smiling, waited for the young film star to be denounced. But instead—

Doris & Co. were in front of the cameras proved that the big scene had not been filmed yet.

"Taximan, drive towards the cameras!" she ordered, and then turned to her companion. "Mrs. Griffiths, just stop in the taxi until I ask you to come out," she hastily added. "There's a girl there I want to see first."

"Y-yes," Mrs. Griffiths said, a little tremulously.

The taxi drove up. Everybody turned to stare. And everybody blinked as Diana, a triumphant smile on her face, stepped out, gazing with supercilious superiority about her. She saw Dawn. She beckoned her.

"Oh, Dawn!" she called, in honey-like tones.

"Yes?" Dawn Brandon said. "There's someone here I want you to meet," Diana went on, smiling. "Please, Dawn, do come!" she added, as Dawn, suspicion in her eyes, paused. "She's fearfully anxious!"

Diana caught her arm. Towards the taxi she led her, and then suddenly threw open the door.

"Mrs. Griffiths," she cried, "you may come out!"

And Mrs. Griffiths came out. She stood; she looked round in a little bewilderment. And Diana exulted as

a sobbing "Dawn!" From Dawn a tremulous "Mother!"

Mother! Diana jumped as if she had received an electric shock. Dawn and Mrs. Griffiths mother and daughter!

"Dawn!" cried Mrs. Griffiths again, and hugged Dawn to her. "Dawn! You—you—after all this time! I—I've always felt that I would never, never speak to you even if I met you! Dawn, why did you disobey me? Why did you go on the films in spite of my wishes? Why didn't you write?"

"But, mother—oh, mother," Dawn sobbed, "I did write! I had no reply. I thought you had disowned me. I made inquiries for you. You had moved away."

Babs & Co., thrilled, awed, stood watching the scene. It was Diana's turn to be bewildered then.

"But here—wait a minute!" she said thickly. "What's all this? Dash it, I never meant—"

"And to you, Diana," Mrs. Griffiths said, with a beaming face, "I owe it all—yes, all! Dawn, this girl is my friend. This girl has helped me, has saved me. This girl has brought us together again!"

"Diana!" cried Dawn.

"But—but—" Diana stuttered. "Please, please wait a minute!" she cried. "Oh, for goodness' sake listen

"I'm sorry, Miss Royston-Clarke—" "Sorry?"

"Yes. But, you see, the big scene has been shot!"

In spite of the dramatic tensy of the moment, a yell of laughter went up from the surrounding girls at the utterly stupefied expression on the Firebrand's face.

"Shush—shot?" she stuttered.

"Shot—yes," Mr. Runniman nodded.

"There was a slight hitch," he explained. "The Third Form, who should have been in the shot which preceded this one, could not be found at the moment. They were wanted, and acting on Miss Barbara Redfern's suggestion, I decided to shoot the big scene first."

Diana's face was a study. She glared at Babs, however, and realised the truth.

"So!" she said, between her teeth. "You—you eat! I might have guessed! And—and Dawn was in it?"

"Yes."

"Then," Diana flashed—she still had one card to play—"you can jolly well scrap it! You'd no right to employ this girl against her mother's wishes, and you knew all along my father intended me to have the part! Well, jolly well shoot it again—or wait till my father arrives."

"Your father," a voice put in, "has arrived!" And Diana blinked round to see Mr. Royston-Clarke before her. "Di, old girl, don't look so ruffled!" he said jovially. "You've got something wrong here somewhere. I never intended you to have the big part—"

"What?"

"I intended it," Mr. Royston-Clarke said patiently, "for Dawn!"

Diana stared at him.

"Because," Mr. Royston-Clarke went on, "Dawn is my protegee! For years I have wanted her to have this opportunity—that is why I am backing this film. Why—Mrs. Griffiths!" he exclaimed in wonder, and went to her and smiled at her, and while Diana, feeling suddenly that she had been wafted into a world of dreams, stared, they spoke together for a minute. Then he turned. "Di, you wonderful kid!" he said softly.

Diana gulped. The situation was becoming more unreal than ever.

"You wonderful kid!" he said. "Why didn't you tell me? Why didn't you let me know that all the time Mrs. Griffiths was your friend, that you were secretly planning to bring Mrs. Griffiths and her daughter together again—"

"I—I—I—" choked Diana.

"Because," he went on, "that's what I would have liked you to do. Di, I am proud of you—for doing it. You know that Dawn and Mrs. Griffiths had been separated for years—utterly through a misunderstanding and the work of another woman who, hating Mrs. Griffiths for her success in her film days, worked up the great scandal against her which caused her to leave the films. But though Mrs. Griffiths left the films, Dawn Brandon—as she called herself; that is purely her film name, of course—wanted to go on them."

Diana blinked. Babs & Co. stood tense.

"Dawn," her father went on, "got a small part—through me. In the meantime, I was working to prove Mrs. Griffiths' innocence and induce her to come back on the films. Mrs. Griffiths, hating the films after her experience, wrote and told Dawn to come home at once—and Dawn, thanks to the job I have mentioned, never got the letter."

"Mrs. Griffiths apparently decided that Dawn had deserted her, while all the time Dawn was breaking her heart thinking her mother had deserted her. Mrs. Griffiths moved. Dawn, because she could do nothing else, carried on with her film career, anxiously trying to find her mother in the meantime."

Diana stood numbed.

"And then, at last, I got the idea of making Dawn a feature player in this film. I thought that if her film name was blazoned forth her mother would be bound to hear of it, see the film, and find her daughter. And you, Di, you have done that for me," he added proudly. "Di, oh, Di, how ever can I thank you?"

"Or I?" Dawn asked softly.

"Or I?" Mrs. Griffiths slid her arm about her daughter's shoulder. "And now that I know all, now that my name is cleared at last, guess what is going to happen, Miss Royston-Clarke? I am going back, at your father's request, into films. I shall act in films with my own daughter! Diana, how wonderful of you!"

"And—and the film?" Diana stut-tered.

"The film," her father informed her, "will go on, Diana—with Dawn in the leading part. But Dawn has just suggested something to me, and I think it is a very, very good idea. She suggests,

Di, that a small part be written in for you. How would you like to act—with Dawn and Mrs. Griffiths?"

But Diana, for a moment, did not reply to that. As though Mrs. Griffiths and Dawn Brandon were unreal, she was staring at them, a queer welter of emotion rising within her haughty frame. After all she had schemed for; all she had done—

She had hoped to get this part for herself; she had hoped, by betraying Dawn to her mother, that something would happen to Dawn and make her own ambition impossible. Instead of that, she had merely succeeded in reuniting a long-lost daughter and mother.

That for her pains!

"Diana," Mrs. Griffiths said yearningly, "say—yes!"

Diana gulped. A small part? No fear! Not she! And yet—yet—

Well, why not? Wasn't that what she had wanted all along? Wasn't this the chance to show she could act this girl's head off? She'd do it! She'd let Dawn see, even now, that she was a better actress than she was!

"Then—yes," she said.

And a few days later she did act the part, and being the self-assured, confident Diana, had no doubt at all, when she had finished, that when the film was released it would be said that school-girl Diana Royston-Clarke had completely stolen the picture, had made the juvenile star, Dawn Brandon, appear the veriest novice.

The rushes she saw confirmed her in that belief.

Impatiently she waited for the day

when, after the film had had its preview in Courtfield, the local press gave its verdict. And eagerly, the following morning, she bought the "Courtfield Times"; with a smile of satisfaction snatched it up to read:

"We must congratulate Dawn Brandon upon a brilliant performance. Surely this girl has the makings of a star which will, before long, dazzle the whole film firmament? While we congratulate Miss Royston-Clarke on her performance, however, we feel bound to say, by contrast with Miss Brandon, that she has much to learn. Good enough in its way, Miss Royston-Clarke's part in the picture was altogether too over-acted and over-done, and gave the unfortunate impression that she imagined the film had been written for her. We advise Miss Royston-Clarke, if she performs in future, to use more restraint—"

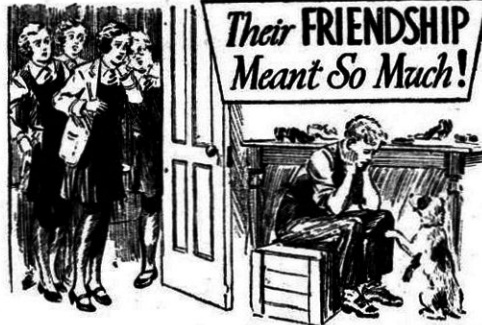
"Restraint—bah!" Diana flamed out, and angrily crumpled the paper in her hand. "If that's what they think of me—if that's their idiotic version of my acting—I'll never touch films again! Oh, blow everything, blow Dawn Brandon—blow her mother. Blow—"

And there Diana paused. She scowled thoughtfully.

"And yet—and yet," she muttered, "I believe she's glad that I brought them together, I believe— Oh, dash!" she finished irritably. "I hardly know what I believe!"

And the Firebrand stamped from her study.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY



Page-boy Boker! Chery, good-hearted and obliging. No wonder Cliff House in general—and Babs & Co. in particular—liked the young fellow. That was why the famous chums came to Boker's aid when, through no fault of his own, he made dangerous enemies. For his mother's sake, Boker was desperately anxious to win a prize in a local pet show. But to other people, bent on certain unscrupulous plans of their own, Boker was an obstacle. And so—Boker had to be removed! Thus it was that there came a time when the friendship of Babs & Co. was the only thing which could save Boker from undeserved disaster. Then, in startling fashion—but Hilda Richards tells you what happened in next week's superb Long Complete story. Don't miss it.



Romance, Glamour, and Breathless Excitement in this superb story.

# Princess to Save Leiconia!



## FOR NEW READERS.

**PAMELA COURTNEY**, an English girl living in the romantic little Balkan kingdom of Leiconia, is asked to impersonate the Princess Sonia. Sonia must go abroad in order to save the country—but nobody, except Prince Alphonse, must ever suspect that Pamela has taken her place. Thrilled beyond measure, Pamela agrees. She is so like the princess that a wig makes her Sonia's double. Her chief adviser is the Grand Duke Bernard, who does not know of the masquerade, and whom she dislikes and suspects. She learns from a young Leiconian, **PAUL NALDI**, a secret helper of Princess Sonia, that the duke is plotting to seize the throne. In the Princess' name, the grand duke has a young peasant arrested on a false charge, knowing that this will infuriate the people against the princess. He is thrown into the castle dungeons. Pamela and Paul plan to release the prisoner in secret. On the night set for the release Pamela is holding an informal party in the palace when news comes that an intruder has been seen in the grounds. The grand duke turns out the guard, with the order to shoot the intruder if he tries to escape.

(*Nb* the read on.)

## Paul Trapped!

**A**S the grand duke strode from the room, there broke out a buzz of voices, and Pamela found herself surrounded by her guests. Hurriedly they tried to reassure her; tried to dispell her obvious alarm. "There is no need for alarm, your Highness—"

"The man will be caught!"

"He cannot escape the guards—"

"Don't be upset, my dear." This from tall, aristocratic Prince Alphonse, who alone knew of Pamela's masquerade. Comfortingly he pressed her hand. "Why are you so scared, child?" he whispered. "This is not like you. Even if the prisoner has escaped—"

White-faced, inwardly quivering, Pamela looked up, forcing herself to smile.

She was not thinking of the prisoner. She had no need to. She knew it wasn't he who had been seen beneath the balcony of her boudoir. It was—

"Paul! It was Paul," Pamela's rioting mind told her again and again. "And they're going to search. They'll find him! They'll shoot—"

Somehow Pamela managed to retain a semblance of outward composure. Even now, when it seemed too late for

her to do anything to prevent her young friend's daring efforts to release the prisoner from ending in tragic disaster to himself, she must do something—anything—to try to save him.

Swiftly she drew Prince Alphonse on one side, and in low tones, inaudible to the others, told him the truth.

The prince, who knew of Paul, looked shocked.

"But what ever are we to do, my child? The duke has already issued orders for the young fellow to be shot if he tries to escape."

"Then I must countermand them!" Pamela said keenly.

## A CHARMING NEW FRIEND FOR PAMELA— BUT, IN SECRET, A SPY FOR HER ENEMY, THE GRAND DUKE!

She made for the door, but the prince grasped her arm.

"Careful, my dear," he whispered anxiously. "You'll be running a terrible risk. If the grand duke suspects—"

"I'll be ever so careful, uncle," Pamela said, a little tremulously, and then she was hurrying from the room, followed by the curious stares of her guests.

Away she raced, panic driving her on. Panting for breath, she reached a landing. Ah! Her own boudoir—there it was, that cream-coloured door.

She entered, and in swift strides reached her clothes-cupboard. It was spacious, a room in itself, and thrust right at the back was a large trunk. Pamela, groping under the carpet, found a key, opened the trunk, plunged in both hands, and brought out a bulky bundle, containing two uniforms; one for Paul, the other for the prisoner.

In a moment it was dumped beside her; the trunk was relocked, and the key replaced in hiding. Then, grabbing up the bundle again, Pamela sped out of the compartment, across her room, and on to her balcony.

Her heart was pounding. It was beneath this very spot that her maid had detected Paul. Was her young friend still here? And what of the guards—

Cautiously she tiptoed to the balustrade and peered over. In the vivid moonlight that now transformed the beautiful grounds into a fairyland of silver and silhouette, she could see for a quarter of a mile.

From different parts of the grounds came startling, ominous noises.

Parties of Civic Guards were already hunting for the mysterious figure!

Suddenly she saw a group, their jackets a splash of colour as they beat the bushes with swords.

"Paul's hiding. He couldn't have got clear in time," Pamela breathed.

"They'll find him. They're bound to."

But—no, they weren't! Not if she found him first! And she'd got to find him. She'd got to get down to the grounds without being seen. Even now there was a chance that Paul would be saved, and the young prisoner released, after all.

Pamela did not hesitate, but sped back through her boudoir. To reach the grounds by clambering over the balcony would be madness. But she knew a far better way of reaching the grounds; safer, quicker, and completely secret. The passage in the art gallery!

To reach the gallery Pamela chose the ancient, iron-runged ladder up which Leiconia's most famous painter, Almaviva, had climbed every day, three hundred years ago, while working upon his masterpiece, "The Siege of Troy."

It was a perfect gallery, circular in shape, and lined with beautiful pictures. But Pamela had eyes only for the great Almaviva's handiwork. She halted before it, dropped her bundle, and, studying the crowd of tiny figures at the bottom of the canvas, put the tips of her fingers on four of them.

Then she pressed. Instantly there was a slight whirring sound, and the entire canvas slid upward. An opening, as large as two doors, yawned before her.

In a twinkling Pamela and her

By

**DORIS LESLIE**

precious bundle were in the passage beyond. A tug brought the canvas sliding down into place again. The light was blotted out. She was in inky darkness. But, groping with one hand, stepping carefully every inch of the way, Pamela moved on.

Hours seemed to pass, and still she had not reached the end of the passage. Oh, she'd never get there in time! Paul would have been found by now. She'd failed him—

She began to hurry. Sometimes she stumbled and tripped; sometimes she barked her shins and elbows against the rough stone walls. But on and on she went, faster and faster, gasping for breath.

Then, suddenly, she saw it—a tiny light set in a solid curtain of blackness. The lock of the secret door in the palace wall! And so close that another two steps would have brought her cannoning into it.

There was a catch this side of the door. Fumbling, she found it, snapped it back. The door swung open. Heart pounding, she stepped through on to the broad gravel path, with the palace wall stretching away for more than a hundred yards on either side of her, and, having drawn the door closed again, scanned the grounds.

No sign of Paul! No sign of anyone. But sounds from the distance told her the hunt was still in progress.

Slowly, peering at every shrub and tree, she moved away. Yard after yard she covered. And then, near the end of this wing of the palace, she stopped, heart leaping.

A figure was crashing through the bushes towards her. The moonlight, shining full upon him, showed her his desperate face as he floundered on, plainly on the verge of exhaustion.

"Paul!" she cried, starting forward.

"Paul!"  
Then she stopped short. For other figures had sprung into view; the figures of a dozen Civic Guards who, appearing from different spots, armed with swords and rifles, hurled themselves after the fugitive!

### The Grand Duke Plots Anew!

PAMELA stood there, transfixed, for perhaps two seconds. With a great effort, she managed to rouse herself, and, darting to one side, dropped behind a bush.

Paul could never escape on his own account. He was too exhausted. Long before he reached the secret door, he would be overtaken or else a rifle-shot would ring out, and he'd—he'd—

Pamela, gulping, drove that awful contemplation out of her mind.

On hands and knees she waited. Paul would reach this spot soon. She could hear him now, only a few yards away, and getting nearer and nearer.

A shadow cut across the ground in front of her. Wide-eyed, she looked up. It was he! Half-rising, she flung out a hand and grabbed his arm as he floundered by.

"Paul!" she gasped. "It's me—Pamela! Quick! Drop down here—get into the bushes—leave everything to me—"

So exhausted was Paul that he fell beside her. Panting great gulps of air, he stared at her, trying to speak but unable to utter a single word. But, as Pamela gave him a desperate push, he understood and began to crawl into the bushes.

Pamela did not wait to see if he was completely concealed. She sprang up,

## THRILLS and MYSTERY with your CLIFF HOUSE CHUMS in this magnifi- cent story—



It is one of the four magnificent NOVEMBER issues of The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY, Now on Sale. Don't miss it, whatever you do, and remember to ask for No. 656. The other three fine numbers are:

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turned towards the oncoming soldiers, and screamed at the top of her voice:

"Help, help!"

By the time they had reached her and formed a protecting ring, she was some yards from the bushes.

"Your Highness," cried a burly sergeant, in great agitation—"the fugitive—did he attack you?"

Pamela, pretending to be thoroughly scared, shook her head.

"No. He—he dashed past me—he went that way—"

And she pointed, well wide of the spot where Paul was in hiding. The sergeant barked an order that sent his men rushing on, then paused before Pamela.

"A thousand pardons, your Highness, for this unfortunate occurrence," he said apologetically. "And a thousand thanks for your assistance!" He gave his moustache a complacent twirl. "Whoever the man is, he cannot escape now, as he himself will realise—too late—when he finds his flight brought to a stop by a twenty-foot wall. Again I ask your pardon, your Highness, and if I might be so audacious as to suggest—" He shrugged. "You understand? Danger, your Highness—for you—"

"I understand," Pamela told him with a smile, "and I don't mind con-

fessing that I'm longing to get back into the palace again. Good-night, sergeant—and congratulations!"

Whereupon Pamela turned away. But as soon as the sergeant had dashed on, she turned back to the spot where Paul was hidden. A moment later she was kneeling beside him.

"Oh, Paul, are you hurt?" she cried anxiously.

By this time Paul was more like his old self. He grinned and sat up.

"Scared, that's all," he admitted ruefully. "And a little puffed as well. But it seems I'm in your debt this time, Pamela," he went on, a hand on her arm. "Thanks so much. I never knew that girls had such courage."

Pamela flushed a little.

"Which only goes to show your ignorance of most things, Master Naldi," she said lightly. "But—quick!" she added. "Before those men find out they've been tricked and come tearing back. Look, Paul, here are the uniforms—one for you and one for the prisoner. You can change yourself in the secret passage. Perhaps it's a good job there are so many guards about to-night. Nobody will notice an extra one—"

"Which isn't exactly a compliment to my appearance," Paul objected, as they hurried towards the door. "Oh, by the way, what do you think of it?"

And, taking his hand from his mouth, he turned.

Pamela jumped. Paul's upper lip was now adorned by a false moustache.

"Ghastly!" she said, with a grimace.

"But effective, don't you think?"

"Deadly!" Pamela agreed.

"Good!" Paul swung open the door.

"Well, addio, Pam!" he said, more seriously, taking her hand. "I wish I could show my gratitude for what you've done for me to-night."

"You can, Paul," Pamela told him.

"Why, you're doing so now—helping the prisoner to escape. Please be careful."

The door closed.

Pamela, alone, stared at it for a moment, and then, turning briskly, sped away.

DESPITE THE lateness of the hour, Pamela's informal little party had resumed. It was through the grand duke's insistence, more than anything else, for secretly he felt in the mood for jubilation.

True, the unknown intruder had escaped in the most extraordinary fashion, but then probably, as the princess herself insisted, it had merely been one of the palace staff. The most important thing of all, as far as he was concerned, was the fact that the prisoner was still secure in the dungeons. He had ascertained that much before joining in the search for the intruder.

In quite a gay mood the grand duke was chatting now with some of the guests.

Pamela watched him. A dangerous enemy indeed!

But—oh, if only she knew what had happened to Paul, how he was faring in his daring attempt to release the prisoner! She could scarcely conceal her anxiety. She'd got to do something to take her mind off things. Another dance, perhaps.

Pamela rose and was about to signal to the conductor of the band when there was a tap at the door and one of the Civic Guard, looking strained, entered. He saluted towards Pamela, and then turned to the grand duke.

"Your Excellency," he said, speaking hesitantly, "I regret my intrusion, but I have information of the utmost gravity to impart—"

The grand duke, sipping wine, frowned.

"Indeed?" he said. "Well, go on"—as the man hesitated. "What is it?"—  
 Pamela caught her breath. No need to tell her what it was! Paul's rescue attempt! It had been discovered! Either he had succeeded, or else—  
 She waited, her face pale.

"Your—your Excellency," the Civic Guard gulped, "it—it is about the prisoner—"

"The prisoner!"  
 The grand duke jerked upright. He stared at the guard.

"Are you trying to tell me—"  
 The guard braced himself as if for an ordeal.

"Your Excellency," he said, "the prisoner has—"

"Yes—yes?"  
 "Escaped!"

Pamela nearly cried out in relief and joy. Flushed, she turned her head away to hide her feelings. Paul had done it!

The grand duke's glass dropped from his fingers and smashed to atoms on the floor. Incredulously, he glared at the guard.

"Escaped!" he exclaimed.

The guests stared at the two central figures in that little drama. And Prince Alphonse, fingering his neat beard, glanced quickly at Pamela.

Then came a sudden, furious exclamation from the grand duke.

"When did this happen?" he rapped. "You don't know? The gaoler can't say? Very well!" He turned and bowed to the guests. "Pardon me, if you please," he snapped, and stormed from the room.

There was a long silence, broken at last by excited murmuring among the guests. Prince Alphonse stepped to Pamela's side.

"So you have won your point after all, my child?" he whispered, with a smile.

Starry-eyed, Pamela gave voice to her happiness and relief in one soft-breathed:

"Yes."

**T**HE GRAND DUKE, choking with rage and chagrin, went straight to his study, sent for a string of subordinates, raved and questioned them, and then summoned his principal accomplice, Ricardo. A tall, thin, lantern-jawed fellow, used to these tantrums, he entered with a smile.

"Well, Bernard—and what is it now?"

"That girl!" grated the grand duke. "She's gone too far, You've heard, I suppose?"

"About the prisoner? Yes. Amazing!" Ricardo began to light a cigarette, but, pausing, looked sharply at his chief.

"But, Bernard, you cannot mean—"

"I do!" gritted the grand duke.

"Sonia's behind the escape. Of course she is. Look at things for yourself, Ricardo. First of all she tries to persuade me to pardon the man; and then she is caught in the grounds at the very spot where a fugitive from the guards disappears. Hang it, man, the whole thing's as plain as a pikestaff!"

"So she was helping him to escape then?"

The grand duke gave a shake of his head.

"Oh, no." His eyes glittered. "That wasn't the prisoner. He was still in the dungeons. I've discovered when he must have slipped out—during the changing of the guard. No, my friend, that person in the grounds was—"

"Well?" prompted Ricardo, as the grand duke paused.

"Her accomplice!"  
 Ricardo looked staggered.

"Accomplice?" he repeated. "Accomplice?" And he went on repeating the word, still holding the lighted match and staring at the grand duke, until the flame burned down to his fingers. With a scowl, he flung the match away.

"I see you are perturbed, Ricardo," said the grand duke grimly. "And with good cause. An accomplice for the princess, working against us, even if his activities be confined to this particular affair—which is doubtful—suggests grave danger. For me—"

He stabbed a finger at Ricardo.

"For all who are working against the Princess Sonia!"

"I—I suppose," Ricardo faltered, nursing his fingers, "I suppose there can be no mistake?"

"Impossible! There must have been an accomplice. At the time of the prisoner's escape the princess was under my eye. No, Ricardo, she has an ally—an ally who has got to be brought to book at all costs!"

"Granted, Bernard. But—how?"

The grand duke, a figure of suave confidence, folded his arms.

"I have just thought how, Bernard. A spy!" He chuckled. "That's what we need. A spy! Someone to watch the princess—someone whom she will never suspect, but regard as a friend."

"And where is such a person to be found, may I ask?"

"Here—in Tolari. My niece, Juanita! An ideal girl for the task, unknown to Sonia, or anyone at the palace, discreet, resourceful, and—well, yes,"—the grand duke winked—"not too scrupulous. I'll get on to her straight away."

And with a crafty, exultant grin that boded ill for the unsuspecting Pamela, her arch-enemy reached for the phone!

**A New Adventure!**

**N**INE o'clock the following morning.

Pamela, a trim, attractive figure in spick-and-span riding clothes, almost jauntily beginning her descent to the breakfast-room, lightly twirling a riding-crop.

She reaches a landing. A scarlet-jacketed figure salutes. She smiles.

"Good-morning."  
 "Good-morning, your Highness."

She traverses one long, wide, red-carpeted staircase. Another landing,

bedecked with flowers and ferns. A maidservant, polishing the oak panels, drops her duster and bows to an awkward curtsy.

Another smile.  
 "Good-morning, Maria!"  
 "Oh, good—good-morning, your Highness."

Pamela continues serenely on her way. More staircases, more landings; the vast main hall; other Civic Guards springing to attention, two to fling open the double doors of the breakfast-room, flunkies beyond, who bow as she enters; Prince Alphonse, with a charming smile, handing her to her chair; the grand duke, surlily rising in his place, scowling; then Pamela, settling down at the table, begins her meal.

Another day in her role of Princess Sonia has begun!

**I**T WAS with a double purpose that Pamela went riding that morning. First, because she loved riding, and this was the first time she had availed herself of the ever-present opportunity to indulge that fancy. Secondly, because she was longing to see Paul again; to hear from his own lips every little detail connected with his triumph last night.

And so it was that, once clear of the palace, Pamela rode straight to the foot of the mountains where Lake Buono nestled in a woody valley. There, in the White Deer Inn, Paul was staying.

Suddenly she espied Paul. Wearing breeches and a white shirt, with his sleeves rolled up, he was vigorously chopping down some small saplings near the lake.

"Cooooo!" Pamela called, and canted towards him.

Paul looked astounded as she dismounted.

"You," he burst out, leaning on a long-handled axe, but he was obviously delighted to see her again.

"Well, I hope so," Pamela smiled. "If it isn't, I'm in for a nasty shock. You're energetic," she added, indicating several fallen trees. Then her face lit up. "Oh, but do tell me, Paul—what happened last night? I'm simply dying to know. You got away all right?"

"Oh, no," said Paul, eyes twinkling. "I'm still in the dungeons." He grinned, and, dropping the axe, took



"THAT way!" cried Pamela, pointing along the path. "He went that way!" At all costs she meant to prevent the palace guards finding her fugitive friend.

Pamela's arm. "Chump! Of course I got away all right," he said. "And so did the prisoner. It was easy. The fellow's back with his mother now. You should have seen her face when he walked in!"

"I'd have loved to," Pamela said fervently. "She's happy now, I know. But, Paul." With sudden anxiety she looked at him. "Nobody knows that I helped you?"

"They don't even know I was helped," Paul replied. "Too dangerous, Pamela. I'm awfully glad you popped up this morning. There's something I want to tell you. But, I say," he went on eagerly, "how about some strawberries and cream?"

"Oh, gorgeous!" Pamela cried. "Where?"

He nodded towards the White Deer Inn, just discernible through the trees. "Over there," he smiled, and led the way.

As they drew near to the inn, Pamela's eyes sparkled.

It really was the most thrilling-looking building she had ever seen, all black and white, with little turrets and gables, and long, spindly white chimneys, just for all the world as though it had been transported here from some fairy tale.

"Isn't it quaint, Paul?" she cried. "I wish I lived in it!"

"What, when you've got a palace?" teased Paul.

"Well, a palace is awfully nice, of course," Pamela conceded, pretending to be most serious about it, "and I love mine. But all palaces are somewhat alike, aren't they? But I'm sure there can't be another place like this."

With a laugh, Paul halted at one of the doors of the inn. There were several of them, some black and some white, but each was adorned with a grotesque but rather comical brass knocker.

One door boasted the grinning face of a very old man; another, a dog, begging most appealingly; a third knocker took the form of a long pipe.

"In you go," Paul said, holding open what appeared to be the main door, for that was decorated with the replica of a deer.

Pamela, excited and curious to discover what the place was like inside, was about to obey when she stopped, pulling a face.

"Golly, Paul, we nearly forgot!" And she swiftly arranged her gaily coloured scarf about her head so that it completely hid her distinctive wig.

Paul pursed his lips in a silent whistle. A close shave, this! For it would never do for the princess to be recognised in such circumstances as these. The story would spread, and probably reach the ears of the grand duke, and his suspicions might be aroused.

"Good for you!" Paul whispered, as he ushered her inside. A fat, red-faced, and extremely jovial innkeeper greeted them profusely. Pamela, careful to keep her scarf in position, returned his greeting with a smile, and then, following Paul to one of the spotlessly laid tables, gazed around at the various features of the room.

It had a rafted ceiling, from which hung several brass lanterns; white-washed walls, adorned with pictures, muskets, and swords; and a multitude of dinky little ornaments, with a simply enormous cuckoo clock holding pride of place on the mantelpiece, and seemingly anxious to call attention to itself; for at the very moment when

Pamela looked at it, it popped out and announced the time.

But the thing which thrilled Pamela more than anything else was a portrait in oils, draped with the Leiconian flag, which hung immediately above the clock. For it was a portrait of—herself—at least, of the girl whose part she was playing!

The jovial proprietor took Paul's order, and almost at once two bowls of delicious strawberries and a big jug of thick cream were placed before them.

"Scrumptious," was Pamela's comment as she ate.

"Better even than that!" chuckled Paul.

They chatted while they ate, and at last Paul led her out of the inn to a quiet spot. His face was suddenly serious.

"It's about the peasants, Pam," he said. "Now, listen!"

He went on to tell her that although the release of the prisoner had been effective in stemming the feeling of resentment against the princess, it was not quite sufficient.

"You see, old thing," explained Paul, "it wasn't only that fellow being imprisoned that upset the people. There's still something else."

"What?" asked Pamela.

"Taxes!"

"Taxes?" Pamela frowned. "But—but I don't quite understand—"

"I'll explain," said Paul. "For years the peasants have had to pay taxes, Pam. In good times they didn't mind; they could afford to pay. But these days they can't afford it. Some of them can hardly afford to live," he added, his face hardening. "Well, some weeks ago they were promised relief from the taxes, and papers giving them it were sent to the palace for approval."

"But I haven't seen them," said Pamela, staring.

"I didn't think you had, old thing. I don't expect anyone's seen them except the grand duke. But the trouble is this, Pam. The peasants were told that those papers would be sent back, approved, at once."

"And—they haven't been?" Pamela guessed.

"They haven't even been acknowledged," was Paul's bitter reply.

And when Pamela, stirred by this news, asked for fuller details, her qualms increased. The papers would have relieved the peasants of considerable hardship. Their taxes would have been abolished. But, instead, their poverty grew steadily worse, and all the time they were blaming her—saying that she was responsible—that she could not even be bothered to keep her promises.

When Paul had finished, Pamela's eyes were gleaming.

"I've got it," she said steadily. "You want me to get hold of those papers?"

"That's the idea, Pam. Try to get hold of them by to-night. They'll be somewhere in the grand duke's study, for a certainty; probably his desk. Get hold of them, old thing, and bring them here—to me. You think you can slip away?"

"I think so," Pamela said, smiling.

"Good! It oughtn't to be hard. And"—Paul's face lit up—"we'll have a spanking time! There's going to be a festival. You know, folk-dancing, singing, feasting!"

"A festival?" Pamela echoed, her eyes sparkling. "Oh, how gorgeous, Paul! Where shall I meet you?"

It was soon arranged. They were to meet by the hollow oak in Tolari Forest at seven o'clock. And then Paul saw Pamela back to the spot where her horse was tethered. A few moments later, waving until she lost sight of him

through the trees, she was cantering back to the palace.

Pamela's concern at the ominous frame of mind of the peasants did not last. Rather to her surprise, even though she had no opportunity during that afternoon of searching the grand duke's study, she began to feel quite optimistic about everything.

"Those papers'll make all the difference," she told herself excitedly. "Even though the peasants don't know who brought them, they'll know they came from me, and that I'm not so bad as I'm painted."

Immediately after dinner that evening Pamela got into action. Excusing herself to Prince Alphonse—the grand duke had a prior engagement, it appeared, for which both she and the prince were extremely thankful—Pamela slipped up to her boudoir.

But that was only to allay the prince's suspicions. She didn't want to tell him of her mission. It would have been awkward, whatever his attitude. If he had forbidden it she would have been in a quandary. If he had agreed to it, then she would have made him an accomplice.

Far, far better to leave him in ignorance.

When Pamela, returning downstairs, reached the hall, she went straight to the grand duke's study just as though everything was perfectly normal. So it was—until she was inside, with the door shut.

But from that moment onwards Pamela's behaviour became most unorthodox. She flew to the elaborate desk. She tugged open the main drawer, running through every paper and document she could find. Unsuccessful there, she turned to another drawer, and then, that also drawing blank, bent down to another.

Her heart was pounding. She'd got to find those papers.

"Hallo!" exclaimed a voice at that moment. "What on earth are you doing here?"

Pamela froze. For a moment she remained, stooping, her back to the door, simply petrified.

A girl's voice—a girl's voice that was entirely strange to her! And it had said; had demanded—

Recovering herself, Pamela straightened up and turned. She did so not too swiftly, remembering that she must appear indignant, not startled. It would never do to let this mysterious person guess how she really felt.

She saw, standing in the doorway, a tall, good-looking girl, with fair, wavy hair and pretty blue eyes—a girl who, having stealthily opened the door a few moments ago, had been watching Pamela's every movement during all that time with narrowed, crafty eyes.

But the craftiness had gone when Pamela turned. The stranger's eyes twinkled inquisitively for a moment, then suddenly filled with dismay.

"Oh, your Highness!" the girl stammered, dropping a quick curtsy. "Oh dear, I'm so sorry! I—I didn't know it was you!"

"Who are you?" Pamela asked quietly.

"Why, don't you know, your Highness? I'm Juanita—Juanita Borgioli."

And Juanita, the Grand Duke Bernard's niece and secret confederate, came forward with the friendliest and most winning of smiles.

**A NEW and 'dangerous enemy for Pamela—and one who will appear to be her friend. Unless Pamela is very careful disaster awaits her. You really must read what happens in next Saturday's SCHOOLGIRL.**

Further gripping chapters of our great thrill and mystery serial.

# Guests at Mystery Manor!



**FOR NEW READERS.**  
HILDA FARREL, with her chums BERYL LORIMER and JUDY BROUGH, and her clever dog MARCUS, go to Hawley manor for a holiday as paying-guests. The manor is owned by the father of LAVENDER MORTIMER, with whom the girls become friendly, and is the Mortimers' means of livelihood. A strange woman is "haunting" the house, using secret passages, in one of which the girls find a paper referring to hidden treasure. A woman detective, THELMA HARKNESS, arrives to solve the mystery. Shortly afterwards the chums find a clue suggesting an old mill near by is connected with the mystery. They see a light in it and go to investigate.

(Now read on.)

"I'm the Ghost, Mr. Bates!"

"**W**HATEVER we do, we mustn't wake anyone," warned Hilda Farrel anxiously. "And we'd better be pretty careful with the broken window glass, too."

Hilda, Judy, and Beryl stood beneath the broken window of the manor house, and carefully moved the ladder into position. The darkness gave them cover, and now that Marcus, inside the room, had stopped barking, there was a hush that could almost be felt.

"Most of all," Hilda resumed, when the ladder was in position, "we don't want to wake up Thelma Harkness."

"My golly, no!" agreed Judy. "She'd put her foot down, and, what's more, she'd want to find that secret tunnel herself."

"And get the treasure," added Beryl. "You know, I wonder if detectives get a share when they find treasure? Did you ever hear the story—"

"Shush!" warned Hilda.

It was no time for chattering, and certainly not a time for Beryl to explain to them a book she had once read. For she could never remember the incidents of a story in the right order, and only remembered half-way through something she should have mentioned at the beginning, and more often than not muddled one book with another, adding little bits she had really seen in a film.

So wisely Hilda silenced her. Then, with as much silence as possible, they entered by the broken window. Thoughtfully Hilda first made use of the hole in it to undo the catch, and then to open the window wide, so that they made a normal entry, or as normal as entering a window six feet above ground level could be.

Even Beryl managed it safely, and then, in the darkness, they stood still, listening.



"Marcus," called Hilda softly, after a pause.

She was rather surprised that Marcus had not trotted up to meet them. Almost nothing that Marcus did now could have surprised Hilda. All by himself, he had found his way into the Old Mill, and then, apparently by a subterranean passage, back to the manor house. So it was but natural to expect him to roam his way through the house to meet them now.

But there was no sign of Marcus; no sound either. His barking had ended after Hilda had urged him to be quiet, so he was presumably awaiting them somewhere in the house with his usual patience.

## THE CHUMS SUSPECTED OF CAUSING ALL THE TROUBLE AT THE MANOR—BY THE VERY PEOPLE THEY ARE TRYING TO HELP!

"He must think we're mutts!" breathed Hilda. "I dare say getting into the Old Mill was as easy to him as getting on to the bed, and yet we, with all our human brains, can't find the same passage."

Hilda tiptoed forward, wondering just where they were in the manor house. It was such an immense, rambling place, that she could not easily get her bearings, and for a minute or two she paused, thinking things over.

Marcus had been heard in the hall, and they were in a part of the house that overlooked the tennis courts. Working it out, Hilda decided that they had actually climbed through a staircase window, and were now going down to a lower corridor.

Suddenly Judy gave a soft whisper. "Ssssh! Hark!"  
Hilda and Beryl stopped and listened.

By  
**ELIZABETH  
CHESTER**

In the still of night even faint sounds could be easily heard, and an odd noise came to them now.

For a moment Hilda was perplexed, and then the explanation dawned on her.

"Marcus scratching at a door," she murmured. "He's shut in, or trying to find us, and there's a door barring the way."

But Judy demurred.

"That wasn't the sound I meant," she said. "It was a— a clanking noise."

"Clanking?" echoed Beryl, on a note of horror, and she went cold all over.

All three girls stiffened then, and unconsciously moved closer together, as though for mutual comfort, for all three associated clanking sounds with ghosts. To hear the clank of a chain in the night in such an old house as this brought to mind all the age-old ghost stories they had heard.

Even though none of them believed that the ghostly Cavalier who "walked" the floors of the manor house, was more than a fake, they suffered a chilling thrill as once again there came that

sound which had first caused Judy's warning hiss.

It was indeed the clank of a chain, a metallic sound, quite unmistakable, and with it there came another—a soft, sighing moan.

"O-oh!" breathed Judy, and clutched at Hilda.

"Quiet—not a sound!" Hilda breathed.

They waited, motionless, holding their breath, muscles tensed. And as they listened it became obvious to them that those sounds came from the floor above.

"Someone playing ghost—the woman!" said Hilda grimly. "My goodness, we've got to trap her now. In another minute she'll be scaring the whole house!"

And she started to climb the stairs. Whoever was playing the ghost was doing so not merely for the exercise;

they were after the treasure connected with the house." But any noise they made could have serious results.

If Mr. and Mrs. Bates and their daughter ever got into their heads the fixed idea that the manor house was haunted, they would pack their things at once. Not only would there be no staff, but apart from Hilda & Co. there would be no paying guests.

Hilda went swiftly but softly up the stairs, hoping to make so silent an advance upon the prowler that she would take her unawares.

Judy and Beryl followed, Beryl reluctant—although, with the choice either of following her friends, or of remaining in the dark alone, she preferred the former as the lesser of the two evils.

The corridor off the landing was in almost complete darkness, the night being so black that practically no light at all filtered through the windows.

But Hilda groped her way, putting her hand against the wall, and feeling for chairs or any other article of furniture that might cause her to stumble and so give the "ghost" warning of their approach.

Presently she picked up her bearings,

and knew that she was not far from her own room.

And because of their swiftness and caution they were now quite near to the "ghost."

The chain clanked more loudly, accompanied by an odd clicking sound, and every now and then there was a sigh and a moan.

Hilda would have been scared herself, but for her deep conviction that these sounds were not made by some bodiless spirit, but by a living creature—the mystery woman.

As it was, her one thought was to capture her—red-handed, as it were—to flash on the torch and reveal her as a trickster.

There was only a corner of the corridor to turn, and the "ghost" would be just ahead. A sudden flashing on of the torch, and she would be caught napping.

But that chance did not present itself, for a wild cry came from one of the rooms.

"Hark! Hark! It is a ghost! It is! It must be! Wake up! Wake up! Hark! Oh, my goodness!"

And the voice tailed off to a scream. "Mrs. Bates—" gasped Judy.

Hilda, jumping round the corridor, flashed on her torch, but she was too late to see the "ghost"; and at that moment Mr. Bates flung his door open, and, tying the belt of a dressing-gown, stepped into the corridor.

The light flooded from his room; and Hilda drew back, treading accidentally on Judy's foot.

Judy let out a gasp; Beryl, bumped into, squealed. But all three dodged out of sight, and Hilda switched off her torch.

"A ghost— It certainly sounded like one!" exclaimed Mr. Bates in shaky tone.

"Shut the door! Shut the door!" cried his wife.

Hilda had had time to think by now, and she decided that it was a moment for a daring chance to be taken.

"Mr. Bates!" she called.

Mr. Bates swung round with a jerk, and stared at Hilda in silence for a moment before finding his voice.

"Have you seen a ghost?" he exclaimed. "I heard sighing and moaning and the clanking of chains; the house is haunted!"

But Hilda had decided to take the blame to save the situation.

"I'm the ghost, Mr. Bates," she said cheerily. "It was only us you heard. And as to chains—why, how about this?"

And, so saying, she unhitched Marcus' chain, which had been tied round her waist.

Awkward for the Chums!

WHAT the outcome would be of this confession, Hilda did not know, but she realised that it would be better for her to be blamed for upsetting the new guests than for a ghost to be held responsible.

What she had not bargained for, however, was the sudden influx of other people. First Lavender came on to the scene, and then Miranda; next Lavender's father; and, finally, the woman detective—Thelma Harkness.

"What ever's happening?" asked Lavender sleepily, blinking as she came down the corridor, candlestick in hand.

"It's a ghost!" called Mrs. Bates shrilly.

"A ghost?" faltered Lavender, and looked anxiously at her father, for this was what she had feared.

Mrs. Bates' voice alone was enough to tell her that to-morrow she would pack and go.

"Oh dear!" faltered Lavender.

"Are—are you sure?"

"A ghost—or just noises?" asked her father.

Hilda left the explanation to Mr. Bates, who was eyeing her sternly.

"I think," he said, "that we have been unnecessarily alarmed. These three girls are to blame. Possibly they think it is amusing to disturb our night's rest by playing ghost, groaning, and rattling chains—"

Hilda, feeling Lavender's eyes upon her, coloured slightly, as she realised that just for the moment, at least, Lavender really did believe that they had been as foolish as Mr. Bates suggested.

"Playing ghost?" said the harsh voice of Thelma Harkness, and the woman detective—fully dressed, as though she had not yet been to bed—stepped forward. "So that's the explanation, is it? These girls playing jokes. A fine way to behave!"

But Hilda was not going to sit down under such a direct accusation as that, for she meant only to take the blame

Your Editor's address is:—  
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Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

BETWEEN OURSELVES



MY DEAR READERS,—It's no good. I simply can't keep Claudine out of the news. My very confident and determined niece is apt to do something spectacular at the slightest excuse, and her latest excuse—following her horse-riding adventure, which I recounted last week—concerns Guy Fawkes Day!

It was probably my fault, in the first place, for when Claudine, full of smiles and loaded with parcels, appeared at my house on the evening of November 4th, accompanied by a ruddy-faced young brother, and announced that they'd come to celebrate firework day, I ought to have known better.

But an uncle—especially an Editor-uncle—can't be churlish, can he? Besides, it was Claudine's brother's birthday that day, and he did so want to have his celebrations before all his pals.

So into the garden we trooped, for Claudine to take immediate charge. It was hopeless for me to suggest that I might be allowed to direct operations—or that young Bobbie himself should be allowed to let off one or two fireworks, as they were his, after all.

"Oh, I can do it, thanks, uncle," Claudine said brightly. "It's too risky for Bobbie, anyway. He might hurt himself or go and set fire to the whole lot all at once."

Then, while Bobbie and I settled down to await events, Claudine went to work. She arranged the fireworks in a neat pile, selected "just a harmless Roman Candle, uncle," as she described it, applied a match, and with a beam at her young brother, held it aloft.

Unfortunately it was not a Roman

Candle—unless Roman Candles have changed out of all recognition since I was acquainted with them. The firework started with a pleasing and extremely pretty shower of stars, and then—Bang!

"Off it went, like a gun. Claudine, with a shriek, let go and skipped back. The firework fell—of course. But not to the grass. It landed on top of that neat stack of its companions, and next moment—

Bangitty-bang-bang-bang! The whole lot had exploded like a gunpowder factory.

"Oh kik-crums, sis," Bobbie bleated verging on tears, "I sus-say, you've been and set them all off!"

Claudine, terribly shame-faced at first, presently brightened.

"Well, uncle will buy some more, won't you, uncle?" she said.

And—there you are. What could I do but agree? But I took every care to see that nothing went wrong with the next batch!

Now I must very quickly tell you something about next Saturday's magnificent long complete Cliff House story:

"THEIR FRIENDSHIP MEANT SO MUCH!"

It features not only Babs & Co., but the school's very likeable page-boy, Boker, whose cheeriness, efficiency, and good-heartedness have endeared him to everyone. Boker is forced to undergo a terrible ordeal.

His mother is seriously ill, and to help her, Boker means to enter his pet dog for an important show and try to win a money prize. But unfortunately there are ruthless enemies at work, striking for some mysterious reason at Boker. From bad to worse grows Boker's position, until he is faced with disgrace and dismissal.

And then it is that only the friendship of Babs & Co., which has consoled and helped him all along, can possibly save him.

Don't miss this grand Hilda Richards story, nor next week's other fine features—further chapters of our two enthralling serials and more of Patricia's Bright and Useful Pages.

With best wishes,  
Your sincere friend,  
The Editor.

for having frightened people accidentally.

"We didn't play the ghost," she said in reproof. "But we were walking down the corridor, and I had this chain of Marcus'—"

"Why?" demanded Thelma Harkness grimly. "This wants explaining. What are you doing in outdoor clothes at this hour? Look at your muddy shoes!"

Hilda looked down at her shoes and nodded.

"We took the dog for a scamper."

"The dog is inside," said Thelma Harkness. "I heard him a moment ago. I went round the house; and every door is fastened. How did he get in?"

Her eyes were upon the girls shrewdly; and Beryl was about to blurt out the truth, when she caught a look from Judy. The underground passage was to remain their secret, not to be shared with Thelma Harkness.

"Burrowed his way in, perhaps," said Hilda lightly, with more truth than most of them there guessed. "But that isn't the point, Miss Harkness. We haven't played ghost intentionally. If we terrified Mr. and Mrs. Bates and Miranda, I am very sorry. We didn't mean to."

Lavender, immensely relieved, accepted that explanation quite gladly.

"Of course not!" she said. "I'm sure of that. But perhaps it would be as well not to walk about with shoes on at night," she added mildly. "These boards do make odd, creaking noises."

Mr. Bates looked at the three girls with disapproval.

"I should like to believe that it was accidental," he said. "If it was not, it was a disgraceful thing—unworthy of your intelligence or education," he said to Hilda.

Then he gave a look at the others. "Good-night!" he said. "This matter can be discussed more fully in the morning."

"It can," said Thelma Harkness grimly. "My eyes are beginning to open."

Lavender, relieved by Hilda's explanations, and eager to make light of any suggestion of a ghost, laughed.

"Mine are beginning to close," she yawned. "Mr. Bates is right. We'll go into it in the morning."

"Yes," said her father slowly, frowning at Hilda, Judy, and Beryl, "we will go into it all in the morning. Good-night!"

He turned; and Lavender, with another yawn, turned away, too.

"Good-night, all!" she said. Thelma Harkness remained, arms akimbo, facing the chums with a keen, suspicious glint in her eyes, and a certain hostility and truculence of manner.

"Some people are fooled more easily than others," she said cryptically; and added as she turned away: "You'd better free your dog."

But Marcus, although he had been shut in but a minute or two beforehand, needed no freeing. His pattering steps could already be heard, and a moment later he came into view, ears down as he ran to greet Hilda.

"Good-night!" said Miss Harkness.

"Good-night!" answered Hilda. Then, with a soft word to Judy and Beryl, she went to her room, switching on the light.

"Well?" said Judy, frowning. "Looks as though we're under suspicion of playing ghosts."

"Can't be helped," said Hilda lightly. "It had to be explained somehow, and everyone believed us except Thelma."

"FETCH it, Marcus—fetch it!" cried Hilda, as she threw the bone through the window of the Old Mill. Judy also urged their pet to seek his prize. If he did, he might lead them to the secret entrance.



"Oh, Thelma!" said Beryl witheringly. "I think we ought to call her Winkie."

"Winkie! Why, Winkie?" asked Judy, puzzled.

"That's what mother has called the new kitten at home," said Beryl.

"What's that got to do with it?" asked Hilda.

"His eyes are just opening," explained Beryl. "When Thelma Harkness said hers were, it reminded me of Winkie."

"Winking usually means one eye closed," said Judy, with a chuckle. "But we're the winkers in this case. Miss Thelma Harkness isn't as smart as she thinks. I bet she'd give her eyes to know our new clues to the treasure."

"Quiet's the word," warned Hilda, anxiously looking about her. "Don't forget that the walls here have ears. There are secret passages, and the smart detective knows her way about in them. She may hear what we're saying."

And, in case she could, Judy said quite loudly that she thought Miss Harkness a dud detective.

"Marcus," said Hilda, stooping down, "you're a wonder. How you do it I don't know, but you have a knack of solving mysteries, and to-morrow, my pet, you're going to show us the secret way to the Old Mill."

"And where the treasure is. I bet he knows already," said Judy, and yawned.

"Bed!" commanded Hilda. "We've done enough for to-night."

Beryl borrowed Hilda's torch, and she and Judy tiptoed to their room.

But when at last Hilda got into bed she did not at once fall asleep; she began thinking about Thelma Harkness' accusation that they had been playing ghost, and wondered if Lavender's father believed it—and, if he did, what action he would take.

Without arriving at an answer, Hilda nodded off to sleep—and slept none the less peacefully, because in the Old Mill a light was burning and a woman was searching; for it was a case of ignorance being bliss!

### Tricking the Detective!

LAVENDER MORTIMER was worried and perplexed. To see to the work of the house, she had had to rise early on the following morning, and, according to plan, had aroused her father, too, since he, as butler, would have a long, hard day before him.

But what worried Lavender was not so much the work as the suspicion which had fallen on to Hilda & Co.

Morning teas had been taken to the paying guests, and breakfast, with the aid of the daily woman cook, was now being prepared. But in the middle of it Lavender had been summoned by her father.

Mr. Mortimer, dressed as the butler, paced up and down in his study, brow wrinkled.

"I don't understand it at all, Lavender," he said. "I like those girls and I trusted them, but Miss Harkness has opened my eyes to one or two things."

"Such as?" murmured Lavender.

Her father drew up, pursing his lips. He was not a man with a dominating will, and could rather easily be led. At the moment he was being led by Thelma Harkness, detective.

"Do you think she's much good, daddy?" Lavender asked.

"Good? Why, yes!" he said, surprised. "Don't you?"

"I don't know," said Lavender slowly. "She hasn't done much yet."

"Umm! She got back the missing coat, and, but for the interference of those girls, I really do think she would have captured that mystery woman," Mr. Mortimer said, frowning. "Really, I am beginning to wonder if those girls aren't behind it all."

Lavender gave a little jump. The idea struck her as being really silly, considering that Hilda, Judy, and Beryl had been so helpful from the start.

"Daddy, you mustn't believe all Miss Harkness says," she reproved gently. "It's her job to suspect everyone, and I dare say she'll suspect me before she's through."

## 24 "Guests at Mystery Manor!"

Her father sat down and smoothed his hair back—the little there was of it. "Oh, no, dear! Come, come!" he said. "There's a difference between you and these girls. What Miss Harkness pointed out to me was that we have only their word as to that warning message they were supposed to have received when they came—asking them to keep away."

"And?" prompted Lavender.

"And they, alone have seen, this mystery woman," he added keenly. "Miss Harkness has, too, daddy," said Lavender.

"Ah, but only when they were on hand! They might have had a disguise which they cleverly hid," he pointed out. "And don't forget they found that clue to the supposed treasure. How? The dog is supposed to have found it. Fiddlesticks! Miss Harkness thinks that they had it when they arrived, and that's why they are here. They are here to find the treasure."

Lavender was silent. Viewed from that angle, it could look as though Hilda, Judy, and Beryl had really come to the house to find the treasure, inventing the mystery woman to serve their own purpose; and yet she had taken such a liking to them that she really

Lavender was all eagerness for them to go, for if the treasure could be found, then her and her father's troubles were over—supposing that the treasure was even only half what it was reputed to be.

"But don't forget that Thelma Harkness is up against you," she warned Hilda. "So be careful not to look as though you are playing ghost—because she seems to impress daddy a whole lot."

Hilda had already guessed that, but, nevertheless, she was glad of the warning, and with Lavender's best wishes for success, she rejoined her friends in the lovely gardens of the rambling old house.

In broad daylight there seemed nothing at all eerie or ghost-like about the place. Indeed, with the autumn flowers and the smooth lawns, it looked a pleasant, happy, restful home. Hilda, Judy, and Beryl, despite their rather late night, were feeling just in the mood to enjoy it.

"Just the morning for some tennis," said Hilda. "Or even boating on the lake. A shade too cold for a swim, though."

"Ugh—much too cold, you mean,"

Marcus did not quite understand. He ran to the mill and looked back.

"You'll never get him to understand," sighed Beryl.

Hilda did not intend to rely only on mere words, but brought from her coat pocket a nice juicy bone begged from the kitchen.

"This is for you, dear," she said, holding it down for him.

Marcus licked it and tried to get a grip, but Hilda drew it away.

"Not yet, Trick," she said.

Up went Marcus' ears. He knew that he had to earn the bone by performing a trick, so he sat up first of all. When that did not win the bone, he tried to stand on his fore-paws, kicking his back legs in air. Then he died for his country.

Judy and Beryl laughed at his comical expression of hope after each trick, but Hilda became quite severe.

"Now, Marcus, wait and be intelligent, my silly pet," she said. "I haven't told you the trick yet. All you have to do is to fetch this bone."

Hilda, puzzling her friends as much as Marcus, then walked towards the Old Mill, and looked up at the broken window through which they had seen the flickering light, the night before.

Stepping back, she took aim and threw the bone.

Neatly enough it sailed through the broken window of the Old Mill, falling inside with a dull plomp.

"Fetch it, Marcus!" Hilda cried.

Marcus stood staring at the broken window, looked in pained reproach at Hilda, and then went round the mill, twice looking for a way in.

Suddenly, however, he darted to the bushes on the left of the mill and disappeared.

"Follow him!" cried Hilda.

Close behind him they ran to the bushes, and Judy, leading by a yard, gave an excited cry!

"He's going down a hole! It's a tunnel—the secret tunnel into the mill. Hurrah!"

"Found!" chirped Hilda.

But even as they reached the hole they heard a sharp cry from behind them.

"Stop!"

Hilda wheeled and uttered a gasp as from the opposite row of bushes beyond the old clearing that led to the mill stepped the woman detective.

Woof! came a bark from Marcus inside the mill.

Hilda made up her mind. No intervention by Thelma Harkness was going to prevent her finding the way into the Old Mill.

"Run back and ask her what she wants; you two—run past her—keep her there," said Hilda briskly.

Judy and Beryl, turning, ran back as suggested to the woman detective, and Judy gave a sharp cry and pointed to a spot well behind Thelma Harkness.

"Look!" she cried.

The woman detective turned. It was Hilda's chance. On all fours she groped for the secret hole down which Marcus had gone, and then, although it was only just wide enough, she dropped through.

**WHAT** will Hilda discover inside the secret tunnel? There are several big surprises in store for Hilda & Co. next week, so be certain to share them with the chums, won't you?

## "THEIR QUEST AT THE WINTER SPORTS"

That is just one of the splendid stories now appearing in our companion paper, the "Girls' Crystal," and the author is Daphne Grayson.

You will also enjoy "Secret Friends of the Speed Girl" and "Loyal to the Boy Sheik"—two grand serials.

Complete stories featuring Noel Raymond, the young detective, Pat Lovell, the girl reporter, and Kaye of the Kennels, also appear.

## IN THE "GIRLS' CRYSTAL"—NOW ON SALE—2d.

felt that she knew them all well and could trust them utterly.

"Oh, daddy, it's just rubbish!" she said a little wearily. "And I've got the bacon to see to. If Miss Harkness can prove she's right—then I'm wrong. But I honestly do think she's wasting time if she suspects those girls."

And Lavender, looking at the clock, hurried down to the kitchen to help the cook. But before she had time to do anything much the kitchen door opened, and Hilda glanced in, beckoning her.

"I'd like to explain about last night," said Hilda anxiously. "Just in case you think we did play the ghost, Lavender."

And Hilda left out nothing, describing how they had lost Marcus, heard him in the Old Mill—and then, without seeing him in between, had next heard him in the manor house.

"And there was someone playing ghost," added Hilda. "Although who—unless the mystery woman—I don't know. Anyway, that's the truth, and that's all that happened, Lavender."

Immensely relieved, Lavender smiled at her happily.

"Of course it's the truth," she said. "And my word—how thrilling. So there's a secret passage or tunnel from here to the Old Mill. If we can find it we'll really be getting somewhere."

"Just what we think," Hilda agreed eagerly. "So I suggest we go hunting before breakfast. If we are a bit late you'll understand."

said Beryl, who was dressed in warm tweeds, and still did not feel quite warm enough.

Marcus, gambolling along, was as happy as they were, and not understanding how serious the ghost problem was, or how much the treasure mattered, he was free of all care.

Only the trouble of the moment was real trouble to Marcus, and now there was none at all.

At least, there was none until, darting amongst the bushes, whence a faint movement came, he was brought face to face with the enemy.

To Marcus there was only one enemy in the old manor house—Thelma Harkness, who had smacked and scolded him.

"Woof!" said Marcus, drawing up.

Thelma Harkness regarded him with hatred.

"Quiet!" she hissed.

Hilda, a hundred yards ahead, saw Marcus in the bushes and called to him.

"Come on, Marcus—show us the way in. Buck up! Never mind the cats and rabbits."

Naturally Marcus could not explain why he was loitering, so after a brief hesitation, he ran after Hilda, sniffing the ground and then galloping.

"Whoa," said Hilda in tense tone, for they were in sight of the Old Mill.

"This is where you go to ground, Marcus. Remember getting into that place there?" she asked him, pointing.