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TWO FINE COMPLETE TALES, TWO GRAND SERIALS,
NEEDLEWORK NOTES, COOKERY HINTS, CROSS WORD PUZZLE, ETC.

The Schoolgirl's Own 2^d



FOUND AT LAST!

An incident from this week's splendid complete tale of Betty Barton & Co. of Morcove School.

A MAGNIFICENT COMPLETE TALE DEALING WITH
 ZONIA MOORE THE RUNAWAY SCHOOLGIRL!



STUDY TWELVE'S TRIUMPH!

By
MARJORIE STANTON.

It is a hard task indeed which Betty Barton and the chums of Morcove have undertaken, and it looks as though it is beyond their power. But things do not always turn out as expected, and there is a surprise in this fine story.

Study 12 Bega a Favour.

"COME in, please!" It was the cordial voice of Miss Redgrave answering a tap at the door of her own private room at Morcove School.

"Well, Betty dear—and you, Polly, pair of inseparables that you are! What can I do for you this time?"

The Fourth Form captain and her more roguish-looking chum rather sheepishly returned the mistress's affectionate smile.

"It is going to be rather a special favour, please, Miss Redgrave," Betty Barton stated frankly.

"A very big favour," chimed in Polly. "If—if we—"

"Could do what?" laughed Miss Redgrave. "Out with it!"

"Could have the morning off, please!" blurted out both girls, with an inclination to laugh at their own boldness.

"To do what?" was Miss Redgrave's next question, asked more in play than out of any desire to be fussy. "It is a 'halfer' this afternoon, girls, so you will be having the whole day off, if—if I give you permission!"

"Yes, it's a big steep," was Polly's characteristic way of expressing herself. "Still, Miss Redgrave, you know us well enough, don't you, to be sure—"

"That you won't get into mischief? Oh, yes," Miss Redgrave hastened to assure them, with less levity. "I can always trust Study 12. And you wish me to trust you implicitly this time, do you, to the extent of not demanding the reason for your wanting the special leave?"

"Well, we are—we shall be awfully grateful—"

"I know! Some little scheme of yours that is to bring off a pleasant surprise for the Form in general!" conjectured Miss Redgrave, thinking of an afternoon picnic, or something like that, for which the captain and her chum wished to make secret preparations. "Very well—of course, girls,

I can let you off. Your studies are never in arrears."

"Thanks, Miss Redgrave—oh, thanks ever so!" promptly cried the delighted couple. "We shan't forget this, and we'll do our best to repay you."

And, already retreating towards the door with her chum, Betty added eagerly:

"May we be off now, then?"

"What a hurry you are in!" commented the youthful mistress banteringly. "Only five minutes since we rose from breakfast! But the early bird gets the worm, they say—in your case the cream-buns and other things, I suppose! Run along, the pair of you!"

Betty and Polly fairly danced their way out of the room. As they closed the door behind them, Polly waved a hand as if she was wanting to shout "Hip, hip!"

Their high-spirited rush upstairs told its own tale of great excitement on the part of both girls. It was such a whirlwind rush, in fact, that Polly, for one, collided with Cora Grandways in turning the corner to go along the Fourth Form corridor.

"Here, where are you getting to!" snapped handsome Cora viciously.

"Sorry!" chuckled Polly, sprinting on with Betty.

"Give you something to be sorry about next time!" Cora, the spitfire, muttered, glaring after the receding figures. "What's all the excitement about, I wonder?"

But she was not sufficiently curious to turn back and resort to her quite common practice of listening at a keyhole! It was left to another girl of despicable nature to do that.

Just as Betty and Polly went whirling into Study 12, where some chums of theirs were waiting about for them, Miriam Loveless came away from her end study, round the corner, to go downstairs. On the way past the door of Study 12, which was now closed, she overheard just one excited exclamation.

"It's all right, we've got permission to have the morning off! So now, girls!"

Polly Linton was the one who was conveying the glad news breathlessly.

Outside the door, Miriam abruptly halted to hear more, if she could. The morning off for some of the Study 12 chums! What did that portend?

She had the gravest personal reason for wondering.

"Then you'll get away at once?" she overheard Madge Minden conjecturing.

"This very instant!" came from Betty. "We must shadow that woman at the farmhouse all day. Hush, though, in case—"

Miriam was off in a flash along the corridor, guessing that the door would be suddenly opened cautiously by one of the girls, to make certain that no one was hanging about outside.

Miriam was pale as a ghost with sudden fright as she hurried on downstairs. Only those few words had she overheard just now, and yet what a lot they told her, and into what a panic of dismay had they thrown her!

There was the intention to keep a close watch upon her own mother's movements all day! Certain girls had got permission to be absent from school this morning, and they were to do the shadowing for the present. Then, by-and-by, when the whole school was set free for its usual "halfer," other girls would take their turn.

What was to be done?

Miriam was already letting action answer that question.

Without daring to waste time in asking leave of absence for herself, she went just as she was out into the open air and across to the cycle sheds.

Hastily she extricated her own bicycle from amongst the somewhat entangled array of machines, and wheeled it into the open.

"Hallo, going for a five-minute spin before school?" some other girl belonging to the Fourth Form remarked, as Miriam came riding past without a hat.

"Yes!" Miriam sang out, whilst she knew that it was out of the question that she could be back in less than an hour.

So she would be in trouble again, for a certainty, with the Form-mistress. Never mind. How could one bother about the possible penalty for a mere breach of discipline, when one's entire future demanded this sudden rush to be in time to warn mother!

And now, as she pedalled out through the school's gateway, the guilty-minded girl had warning of what a desperate race it was going to be.

She sent a glance over one shoulder in the direction of the schoolhouse, and saw Betty Barton and Polly Linton just rushing across to the cycle-sheds!

Down went Miriam's head towards the handle-bars. Whirr, whirr, whirr, the pedals whizzed rapidly, sending her scorching along the road. Even so, she wanted to go even faster!

If she should lose in the race, if anything should happen to prevent her getting to the lonely farmhouse in advance of those other girls, it would be an utter calamity! Irreparable disaster, perhaps! For this was the very day when her mother was to smuggle Zonia Moore out of the neighbourhood—take her right away, at last, to the other end of the country!

With a suspicious watch being kept upon her movements, how could mother dare do anything of that nature?

Whirr, whirr, whirr! Faster, faster, now that a

slight incline in the road was favourable to a really terrific speed.

Once again she shot a backward glance over one shoulder, without slowing up to do so. Her machine swerved, and she was nearly landed in the ditch. But the frightened look had been worth while; it had shown her nothing of the two other girls coming on behind her.

They were on the way, though, that was certain. Perhaps they might even have seen her going off in advance of them, or been told that she had suddenly gone off on her bicycle. If so, they would know what to think.

Faster then, if possible—faster!

While yet Betty and Polly were pedalling at a good pace along the road to Barrowdale, Miriam Loveless was rushing down the lane to the lonely farmhouse.

Running her machine out of sight behind the hedge on the other side of the lane, she darted back to the wicket, flew up to the front porch, and went staggering into the house.

"Mother, where are you? Mother—quick!" was her gasping entreaty. "I've come to warn you, mother. There is danger—danger!"

Can It Be Done?

MRS. LOVELESS was above stairs when she heard the front door crash round against the wall and that alarming cry from her schoolgirl daughter.

In an instant she was hurrying down. Miriam agitatedly closed the porch-door, and advanced to meet her mother at the foot of the dim staircase.

"Danger, Miriam? How—where?"

"Oh, it's awful!" panted the schoolgirl. "For some reason or other, certain girls at the school are going to shadow you all day! They are on the way now—"

"What, coming here?"

"Yes! Luckily, I overheard a bit of talk, and I got a start of them. But they won't be another minute, perhaps!"

The crafty woman who had duped poor Zonia into believing that they were mother and daughter now looked utterly staggered. She passed a hand across her brow.

"And this—this was to have been the day for me to smuggle Zonia away!" she said wildly.

"If I am to be watched—"

"You can do nothing, mother. You must stay around here, and carry on just as if you had only the day's work to think about. And yet—"

Miriam sighed loudly, in a hard-driven way.

"How can we leave Zonia where she is for the rest of the day—until to-morrow? I had a note from the Spenlows this morning. They say they may be returning by an early train from London."

"Those spying schoolgirls," flared out Mrs. Loveless, "I'd like to give them a thrashing! But for them we would never have been landed like this. Miriam, Zonia must be got away—she must be!"

"But how? Oh, I ought not to be standing in talk!" Miriam exclaimed, trembling with fear.

"Those girls—"

"Keep calm; I'm thinking," the mother struck in, making her own effort at calmness. "Yes, there is only one thing to be done. Miriam, you must be the one to get Zonia away!"

The girl looked amazed at the suggestion.

"You know where she is," rushed on Mrs. Loveless, growing more and more composed. "Contrive somehow to get to her, in secret. Pretend you have discovered her by accident—"

that's the idea! Pretend to befriend her. She is certain to jump at your offer of help. I have so made her dread being found by her former companions."

"That's all right, mother; I—I can do all that, I hope," Miriam suddenly whispered eagerly. "Decide quickly, though, for I simply must get away before Betty and Polly turn up! Where is Zonia to go—what is she to do—when I have got her on the run?"

"You must manage to warn her to keep away from this place," came the impressive answer. "Tell her that she will be running into the very girls she wishes to avoid."

"No; I shall pretend not to know her as Zonia, the missing schoolgirl," was Miriam's sudden inspiration. "She won't want to tell me who she is. I'll act as if I had found just a homeless girl, and I'll give her money."

"All the money you have, Miriam."

"Yes, a couple of pounds, mother; to enable her to travel by train somewhere. Oh, what a desperate business it has become!" Miriam fumed, turning towards the kitchen. "But we must manage somehow. I'm off, mother, by the back way."

"Very well. For your own sake, Miriam, you had better not bungle things."

And well enough Miriam knew she had better not, indeed, if she still wanted to be the protégé of Mr. and Mrs. Spenlow, whilst that wealthy lady and gentleman continued to mourn the ill-fated daughter who had been lost to them all these years!

On the point of lifting the latch of the back door, she suddenly desisted, and crept to the kitchen window, to peer out.

"My goodness, there they are!" she panted, catching a mere glimpse of Betty and Polly just beyond the boundary of the neglected back garden.

Instead of cycling all the way to the farmhouse, they had stalled their machines beside the main road, and had come on foot across a field.

Now they dropped out of sight, doubtless intending to lurk around unseen, watching and waiting for Mrs. Loveless to make a move. But for the moment—and Miriam felt that it was the only moment left to her—the two girls could not have begun their close surveillance.

Rushing away from the kitchen, Miriam was instantly at the front door. She lifted the latch and stole out, stooping low as she walked. As an extra precaution, the girl avoided the path to the wicket, and wormed her way diagonally across the front garden, overgrown evergreens screening her.

Then it was her desperate task to go on all fours and struggle through the front hedge, regardless of scratching thorns. Hatless, and with clothes rumpled, she wriggled out at last into the lane, and went quickly downhill.

By making off in this direction, she was sheltered by one of the grassy banks that lined the way just there. Her bicycle she dare not fetch away from where she had concealed it. It would mean working out on to ground that the watchers, lurking behind the back garden, could command with their eager eyes.

As regards the bicycle, her only hope was that the two girls would not scout over the ground, lying round about the farmhouse. If they did—well, they would find the machine, and it would tell them that she had raced here this morning,

for a purpose they could guess! But most likely the couple meant to remain where they were, to carry on their vigil.

At the bottom of the lane, Miriam crossed a little bridge that spanned a brook, and then bore to the left, following the windings of the stream. She had got to recross to the other side, and was looking all the time for a means of doing so.

Neither another bridge nor any stepping-stones did she come upon, and at last she desperately took a flying leap.

Crash! She landed heavily on the other side, one foot slipping from under her into the water. Yet in an instant she was up again and going on.



HAD ZONIA ONLY KNOWN! Suddenly from the recesses of the cave the figure of a girl came slowly forward. Then, in the half-light, Miriam Loveless stood face to face with Zonia Moore—the girl she had so successfully duped!

After working round over rough ground, to avoid being seen by the two girls who had settled down to wait and watch the farmhouse, it was for Cliffedge Bungalow that Miriam made.

In any case, she did not need to approach the place with any caution, for she was entitled to go there at any time. All Morcove School knew that she had been entrusted with the keys of the place by the Spenlows during their absence.

Miriam took the latchkey from her frock pocket as she passed in at the wicket-gate. Out of breath with running, she hurried to the porch, and let herself into the bungalow, going straight to the kitchen.

There, from a dresser-hook, she took another key, one that was too big and clumsy for anybody to carry about in their pocket.

It was all she appeared to want, for in a few moments she came out by the bungalow's front door, pulling it shut behind her.

With many a guilty glance this way and that, the desperate girl traversed the headland grass to where a steep break in the cliffs made a deep combe, with a zigzag path leading down to the shore.

Down the path Miriam went, with quick, stumbling steps, and when she reached the seashore she turned to the right, to go a little way along under the beetling cliff.

Then suddenly she stopped, for here was the seashore cavern which was rented along with the bungalow, the private lock-up cave which the original owner of Cliffedge had acquired as a boat-house.

And now Miriam's need of the key taken from the dresser-hook became apparent. The entrance to the cave was fitted with fence-like gates, and these were locked together.

As she rattled the big key into the lock, the girl took care to assume a distinctly jaunty, careless manner. She whistled a catchy two-step, then hummed the same tune loudly whilst throwing one of the gates wide and mincing into the cave.

"Suppose everything is all right down here, but it was just as well to come and have a look round," she talked to herself, well aware that she must be having a listener. "I should hate the Spenlows to come back from London and find—Hallo, what was that sound—a rat?"

Artfully, she went through all the pretence of being mildly curious about the faint scuffling sound which had come from the far end of the cave. After a moment, she fell to whistling again, at the same time advancing farther into the cave.

"Phew, what does this mean? Footprints in the sand!" was her sudden fresh display of amazement. "Someone has been here, although we kept the gates locked! It's funny! I wonder if—"

All this was said aloud, the rocky walls of the cavern giving a clear note to the murmuring voice, and now Miriam carried pretence a step farther.

"Hallo! Is anyone there?" she called, with make-believe nervousness, into the deep gloom. "You had better come out, whoever you are!"

There was no answer.

Like one who is still suspicious, and also a good deal afraid, Miriam timidly stepped on into the deepening gloom. The cave gave a turn, and round the bend she was almost in groping darkness. All at once, however, she clearly saw, or pretended that she saw, a slight dark figure, huddling down to keep out of sight.

"Here, what are you doing, hiding there?" Miriam burst out in a scared tone. "Why, it's a girl! Oh, my goodness, it is— Who are you? Get up! Come here and explain!"

Then from the gloomy recesses of the cave there came a sound of heavy sighing, as of one in utter despair. The challenged figure rose erect and came forward.

In the half-light of the cavern, Miriam Loveless and Zonia Moore stood face to face!

Her "Friend"!

"WHY, who are you, then?" Miriam began, well knowing the other girl's name and all about her. "What are you doing in this cave? It's private—kept locked—"

"I know—oh, I know!" burst from the long-sought-for Zonia distressfully. "But I—I have been under orders to be here. My m— I mean the person who brought me here, she said it would do no harm."

"Perhaps not," answered Miriam. "But what

on earth does it mean! Have you been sleeping here—living in this cave altogether?"

"For a little while, yes," Zonia was bound to own frankly. "You—you are a Morcove girl, perhaps? You are not wearing the hat, but as a rule only Morcove scholars are to be seen along the shore."

"I belong to a family who are renting the bungalow overhead, as it happens," Miriam evaded airily. If she could get out of admitting that she belonged to Morcove, so much the better!

"Ah, of course!" Zonia exclaimed, with an air of getting her wits about her at last. "That accounts for your having a key to let yourself into the cave."

"Yes, and how have you been getting in here?" asked Miriam, with the sort of smile one gives a cheeky person. "You must have had another key!"

"I—yes, I have it now. There—take it, will you?" begged the poor, unsuspecting victim of so much trickery and scheming. "I shall have to go, of course."

"I'd like to know where you got this from!" Miriam commented tartly, as she took possession of the second key. But she was artful enough not to press the point. Needless to say, she knew that her own mother had provided Zonia with the means of going in and out by the locked gates.

"And now you talk of going away?" the crafty girl went on. "Where? I don't want to be inquisitive, but surely you must be very peculiarly situated?"

"I am," answered Zonia sadly. "And I will be ever so grateful if you don't make any fuss or—tell people. It must seem strange to you—"

"Jolly strange, to say the least! However, I suppose you are something of a gipsy, is that it? You've got the looks of one—your face and hair."

Zonia did not answer. She was realising that this other girl had not charged her with being the missing schoolgirl. As a more recent comer to the neighbourhood, she might not have heard about the runaway. But if she had, then it would be courting the accusation to admit that one had been brought up by gipsies as a child.

"Anyhow, I feel sort of sorry for you—I do!" Miriam hastened to say, with a smirking smile. "I have such a jolly nice life myself, whenever I find a girl who is having to rough it, I want to help her. Do you want help?"

"Oh, in one way I want help badly, indeed I do!" was Zonia's emotional answer. "But that is not help which you could ever give me. I—"

"What I mean is this; are you homeless, starving, or in need of money?"

"I have a home and parents to go to," came the far from glad answer. "I would much rather be adrift on the world, I feel, than have to go back. But one's parents are one's parents." Zonia's underlip trembled a little. "Whilst I am still so young I must make my life with them," she finished tragically.

"Do they live in this district?" Miriam was compelled to ask now. Craftily she had got to convey a hint to Zonia that the farmhouse was being watched.

"My parents—my mother, at least—she is staying in these parts for awhile. I—I don't know your name, miss, and I'd rather not tell you mine. Only leave me free to go away—for no harm has been done—"

"Oh, you are free enough to go," Miriam said carelessly, moving aside to let the other girl go

by. "I don't know what to make of you!" And she laughed, as if to imply that she suspected Zonia of being not quite normal.

"Here, wait a moment, though!" Miriam exclaimed airily, causing Zonia to halt abruptly. "You do look such a pale, pitiful object, I must do something for you. I suppose you can do with a little money?"

"I would be ever so grateful, and would promise solemnly to repay you as soon as possible, if I could have your name and address. I hate being——"

"Oh, when I give, I give!" laughed Miriam, whilst she drew what money she had from her pocket. "You need not think I am going to miss what I let you have. A pound note and two halves. Like the lot, would you? I'm sure!"

She chuckled at Zonia, who was staring amazedly.

"Two pounds, miss! But——"

"A lot to you, does it sound? Funny, and I think nothing of spending a fiver! There, catch hold, and for goodness' sake don't make a fuss. Oh, she is going to cry, the silly!"

"You are so good to me—so kind and trusting!" was poor, duped Zonia's sobbing outburst. "With this money I can hope to—but I mustn't say it. You'd begin to think me a wilful, wayward girl. I am nothing of the sort! Only——"

"You wish you didn't have to go back to your parents?" Miriam took her up, with a very good imitation of a compassionate smile. "Your mother doesn't happen to be that woman who lives at the lonely old farmhouse—a woman who has done some charring at our bungalow?"

The dim light in the cavern showed Zonia turning yet a shade paler.

"Why, what makes you think that?" she asked, unable to conceal her dismay.

"The woman is your mother, then? I thought so! Your looks told me so!"

"You think I am like—like my mother?" Zonia faltered very sadly. "But looks are nothing. So long as one's nature is—different——"

"Now I understand!" Miriam seized the chance to say boldly. "Your parents are not what you would have them be, and that's why you have got adrift from them! Well, it's only doing you a good turn to warn you not to go back to that farmhouse."

"Why not?" gasped Zonia.

"Because I believe there are certain people who have something against your mother and father. Anyhow, they are watching the house—girls they are—schoolgirls. I came by there this morning, and saw two girls sort of standing on watch."

"Schoolgirls, you say!" Zonia said in great agitation. "Oh, then, I must not—no, I dare not go home to the farmhouse. Yet what shall I do! Oh, the misery it is to be——"

"I tell you what," Miriam struck in softly, "I'll do you one more good turn, for I'm awfully sorry for you. When you slip away from here, get out on to the open moor——"

"Yes, yes! And then?"

"Let's name a place on the moor where I can find you later on," was Miriam's artful suggestion. "I'll find out if all's well at the farmhouse, and let you know. Shall I?"

"Oh, if you will!" was Zonia's fervent outburst. "Then I can be certain, before I do go home, that——that——"

"That you are not running into trouble that really belongs to your parents! Just so," Miriam

nodded. "Well, get away now, and be at—let's see——"

"The crossways on the moor, if you know it?" Zonia suggested tensely. "Later on in the day—towards evening?"

"That's the idea! All right, go along now, and—— Hark, though! My goodness," Miriam gasped, her airy tone giving place to one of wild dismay. "Someone calling for me—coming here to find me!"

"Some girl, by her voice," Zonia whispered, in even greater dismay. "Oh, don't let me be seen! Please—please, let me hide again!"

"All right, yes—back there!" Miriam just had time to urge the long-missing scholar, before the cavern gates creaked open to let somebody enter.

"Miriam Loveless! Is Miriam there?" called a voice hollowly.

"Yes, who is it wants me?" answered Miriam, walking forward.

And she saw Madge Minden standing there.

If Only She Had Known!

MADGE MINDEN! One of the Study 12 chums; a girl who had been as anxious as any over the unknown fate of missing Zonia Moore! And at this very instant, if Madge could only have known it, Zonia was within speaking distance of her!

But it was the saddest part of poor Zonia's hard case that all the noblest attributes of her character were compelling her to avoid being found by those who loved her best. Why else had she kept out of their way all this time, if it was not because she had been forced to believe that it was best to do so, for the sake of those she herself loved so dearly!

This was the pathetic situation then; Zonia in hiding at the darkest and remotest part of the winding cavern, whilst towards the well-lit entrance Madge Minden stood confronting Miriam Loveless.

"Telegram for you, Miriam," was Madge's quiet announcement, and she held out the buff-coloured envelope, which Miriam, snatched at excitedly.

"It has been opened!"

"Yes," Madge said as calmly as before. "Miss Redgrave felt entitled to open it, since you could not be found at the school. Then she asked me to walk across to the bungalow and see if you were there. You were not; but I thought I had better come down to the shore and visit this boat-house cave, in case you were here."

Miriam was hardly paying heed to the explanation. Tearing out the flimsy sheet, she gave wild eyes to it.

Her worst fear realised! The wire was from Mrs. Spenlow, saying that she and her husband would arrive at the bungalow that afternoon. The message had been sent off en route.

What a crisis this was! Zonia still in the cave; and supposing something happened even now to prevent her slipping away? Supposing the Study 12 chums, of whom Madge was one, were taking it into their heads to watch the bungalow as well as the farmhouse? Their hanging around would involve the extreme risk of Zonia being observed when she made for the open moor.

"I can't come back to school now, tell Miss Redgrave," the agitated girl exclaimed irritably. "She knows from the telegram that my people are returning this afternoon, and I must do a few things beforehand."

"It is your look-out," said Madge quietly;



WAS THIS HER MOTHER? "Just wait a bit, you girls!" interposed Mrs. Loveless. "This girl has nothing more to do with any of you, so there! She'll tell you herself—tell you that I am her mother!" The Morcove girls gasped!

"but you have already annoyed the Form-mistress by going off without leave."

"You give her my message, that's all you need concern yourself with!"

"I will give her a polite version of your message," was Madge's reply, after which she walked out of the cave.

The sound of that quiet, refined voice, which was Madge's, upon Zonia's eager ears—how it had taken the hapless girl back to the old days when life was free from care. So deeply was she stirred, poor Zonia, that where she crouched in hiding she suddenly gave way to a flood of tears. If only—ah, if only one could rush out with the eager cry: "Madge dear, I am here! Let me go back with you, to be with all of you again!"

But no, it was not to be imagined! She had been claimed as the long-lost daughter of a man and woman who were shady characters, and the child of such people could never again see the inside of Stormwood School, or the home that used to be hers.

If she did yield to the almost overwhelming longings she would be sorry ever afterwards. It would be her shame and sorrow to know that she had done the thing that enabled her unscrupulous parents to extort money from Betty Barton's parents, when already that kind couple had done so much for her.

So, with her dauntless spirit still unbroken, bravely the duped girl listened to the faint sound of Madge's receding step, conquering the impulse to disclose herself.

After hearing that dear chum of old in talk with Miriam, it was difficult for poor Zonia to think quite the same of the latter girl. When at last the new-found "friend" came stealing back

to her, to say that all was safe once more, a vague feeling of mistrust and dislike assailed Zonia.

"You are a member of Morcove School, then!" Zonia exclaimed.

"I didn't say I wasn't!" Miriam retorted saucily. "What difference does that make?"

It was Zonia's turn not to answer. She thought it strange that this girl, as a Morcovian, had not instantly guessed that she had really discovered the missing scholar, about whom there must be such anxiety at the school. But it was not to Zonia's interests to make comments which would proclaim her as being the long-absent runaway.

"At the crossways, then, later in the day," Miriam impressed upon her dupe, as the latter was going off. "How are you off for food?"

"I have had sufficient, thank you, and I still have some left in this," Zonia answered, displaying a small satchel that she was carrying like a handbag.

"Then you can manage," remarked Miriam, and Zonia, giving a nod of assent, took the first cautious steps that were to leave her, in the end, alone on the open moor.

Miriam went well in advance of the willing fugitive, with the understanding that a warning cough was to be given if anybody was found to be hanging around on the headland. But all went well—too well for the crafty, heartless little wretch who was going to profit so tremendously by the whole scheme. Madge had gone along the shore to return to the school, and it was "all clear" for Zonia when she had climbed the combe-path to the grassy headland.

Another minute after—that, and she was making off towards the vast moorland, where anybody could so easily go into hiding. As for Miriam Loveless, she repaired to the bungalow, exulting over the way the Study 12 detective work was being baffled.

Once again those girls had been outwitted! Once again Zonia herself had been cleverly duped! For now the position was simply this. Later in the day she—Miriam—would scout round and see if her mother was still under observation. If she was, then Zonia must be sought at the rendezvous on the moor and told to keep away from the farmhouse.

On the other hand, if mother got an opportunity of leaving the farmhouse, because the Study 12 girls had tired of the vigil, she herself could go to the crossways on the moor and then be off—with Zonia!

"Either way, it's all right," Miriam gloried in thinking. "If I can't bring mother and Zonia together again before nightfall I can do it after dark. Those piffing girls can't be out and about by night. I can, if I want to!"

And so, feeling quite jaunty again after so much panicky action, she felt it was time to enjoy a cigarette.

The Duper Duped.

WIGHT you are, geals; I am weady!"

Paula Creel's beaming look went with the words, as she came to her study doorway, where several of her best chums were clustered.

It was just upon two o'clock, and these girls who now went hurrying downstairs were the "relief" that had been promised Betty and Polly, in connection with that secret watch upon the farmhouse.

"So, girls, you are off for the afternoon?"

smiled Miss Redgrave, standing in the sunny porch as the chums went by. "I suppose you have arranged to meet Betty and Polly somewhere?"

"Yes, wather; haw, haw, haw!" chuckled Paula. "We pwactically awwanged all that after breakfast, didn't we, geals? Wather, bai Jove!"

"There is some mystery into which I shall not inquire!" laughed the youthful mistress, observing how excited the scholars looked. "Well, you'll be telling Betty and Polly that there is still no news of Zonia, worse luck. But don't worry, girls; don't let it spoil the 'halfer' for you more than can be helped."

"Ah, but we are thinking about Zonia all the time," said Helen Craig, as she and her companions set off towards the cycle-sheds.

As soon as they were off and away on the machines, Madge Minden exclaimed gravely:

"It amounts to this, girls—unless we bring off something to-day, we shall have to be a little more explicit with Miss Redgrave about what we are thinking!"

"Bai Jove, you are wight!" agreed Paula. "At the wisk of bwinging charges against Miwiam before they can be pwoved, we shall have to speak out. But what a great relief, bai Jove, if only we can find out a bit more!"

Serious nods marked the others' agreement with this sentiment. Hardly any more talk transpired, and the silence helped to show how anxious and heavy-hearted the girls were feeling.

Quickly and soberly the five of them—Madge Minden, Paula Creel, Tess Trelawney, Helen Craig, and Naomer—pedalled along the road, soon drawing level with Cliffedge Bungalow. Nor did they fail to send stern glances in the direction of that pretty holiday haunt on the breezy headland, being aware that Miriam was indoors, awaiting the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Spenlow from London.

Just above a mile farther on the Morcovians pulled up; then wheeled their machines off the road, to stall them out of sight amidst a clump of bushes. For it was not advisable to proceed farther along the road. The greatest caution had got to be used in linking up with the two who had been patiently on watch for hours close to the farmhouse.

Warily the five girls went across field after field, often having to scramble through prickly hedges rather than clamber over stiles. Betty and Polly had given them a pretty exact idea as to where they would be found; as it happened, however, an encounter took place in quite a different spot, causing quite a mutual surprise.

For, whilst Madge and her companions were still working on as fast as caution would allow, who should suddenly pop up in front of them but Polly Linton!

"Hallo, girls, there you are, then!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! Weady for the fway, Polly deah—what? Anything to weport?"

"Yes, how do things stand?" clamoured Madge, Tess, and Helen, whilst Naomer looked ready to start capers of delight.

"Nothing doing!" was Polly's glum announcement. "The woman hasn't stirred from the place ever since Betty and I settled down to watch. She is simply indoors—"

"What doing, Polly?"

"Goodness knows—housework, I suppose! Betty is still watching, of course. She got me to come back to meet you, because we have an idea that

it would be better if a couple of you scouted from the other side of the farmhouse. It's none too easy to watch the whole place from one point."

"Very well, dear," Madge nodded. "We'll do as you suggest. As for you, Polly, you must be feeling fed up with the whole business—"

"I'm not going back to the school, if that's what you think!" Polly exclaimed, with her dogged smile. "I shall wait here for Betty to rejoin me when you have relieved her. And most likely we shall sit and talk; sit and rack our brains, as we have been doing all the morning—"

"Yes, wather; pwccisely as I was wacking my bwains, bai Jove, duwing classes!" Paula said ruefully. "Geals, if the mystowy of Zonia Moore is not cleared up soon, bai Jove, I shall have a bwreakdown!"

The feeblest grins greeted Paula's rather desperate jest. The uncertainty, the suspense, the grave suspicions that could not be proved—how it all was wearing out the girls!

The "relief" moved on again, and Polly dejectedly sat down in a little sun-trap formed by a clump of bushes to await Betty's coming. It might have been very pleasant to laze there in the sunshine for awhile, with the linnets twittering around, if only there had been freedom from the mind-racking anxiety.

Still unsolved, that strangest of all problems—what had Miriam Loveless to do with the mystery of Zonia's disappearance?

Suddenly Polly was greatly startled.

She heard a faint sound as of someone prowling close at hand, although she knew it could not be Betty, for the prowler was going towards the farmhouse, not coming from it.

Who was it, then?



HER REAL PARENTS AT LAST!

"But what does it all mean?" gasped Zonia. "Are you going to prove that Mrs. Loveless is not my mother?" "We are going to prove that you are our daughter—ours!" cried Mr. Spenlow, while his wife opened her arms to the girl.

Quickly kneeling around, to peer through the bushes that almost encircled her, she saw Miriam Loveless!

That girl, making across country like this to go to the farmhouse!

If there had been any doubt in Polly's mind about the suspect's desire for secrecy, that doubt would have been dispelled very speedily.

Even as the Study 12 girl was keeping watch, whilst crouching out of sight, she saw Miriam suddenly take fright and drop on all fours amidst some heather.

This was because she had heard or seen Betty coming from the direction of the farmhouse.

Polly was now thrilling with excitement. Ideas were rushing in upon her brain. She realised the need for an immediate change of tactics. The watch must be withdrawn, so as to induce Miriam to go into the farmhouse. And very likely she and the woman would come out after awhile together. If so, the thing would be to follow them.

As soon as Betty's step was audible, Polly boldly rose up and advanced to meet her in the open. Well aware that Miriam was lying concealed close at hand, the Form captain's chum began some talk that was to lull their suspect into a feeling of security.

"Could have fallen asleep in the sunshine, Betty! Heigho," yawned Polly, "what a waste of a glorious afternoon it is. I say, I vote we give it up now, Betty."

"Give up the watch?"

"Well, yes," Polly answered, as if she had got "fed up." "We shan't do any good by letting those girls hang about, like we hung about all the morning."

At the same time, however, Polly conveyed a look that Betty was quick to understand.

"Oh, if you think so, all right," Betty shrugged. "Shall we go back then and tell the girls they may as well quit?"

"Yes, let's!" urged Polly eagerly. "Before the afternoon is wasted."

Betty promptly did a right-about turn, and together the couple strolled off in the direction of the farmhouse, without displaying further caution.

Then Polly began a whisper.

"Good job you guessed what I meant by that wink of mine, Betty! Close to where you met me, Miriam was lying concealed, listening!"

"What! My word, I had no idea it was like that, although I could tell—"

"She wants to get to the farmhouse, but has been afraid of being seen by some of us. Evidently she knows that we began a watch upon the place this morning," Polly whispered on excitedly. "So let's draw off the watch, as she heard me propose—"

"To resume the watch when she has gone into the house?"

"That's the idea!" grinned Polly. "Let the pair of them get together, and then perhaps things will happen. For all we know, they may lead us a fine dance. Never mind!"

"If only they would lead us to where Zonia is!" sighed Betty fiercely. "She is somewhere in the district we are certain!"

Meantime, a little way behind, Miriam was counting on being able to rejoin her mother at the farmhouse before half an hour was out.

She had heard Polly complaining of the fiasco the vigil had proved, and Betty—or so it seemed to Miriam—was also "fed up." They were going to call off the other girls, and most likely seek their

bikes and get away into Barncombe, to get a nice "halfer," after all.

It would not have been Miriam, however, to take rash chances.

She had no intention of approaching the farmhouse until she had actually seen the girls draw off.

"The best of it is, I know how many there are, because I have counted the bicycles that are left behind amongst the gorse," she exulted. "Seven in all—that means, five girls, in addition to the two who watched all the morning!"

What was her joy, then, ten minutes later, to see seven girls precisely drawing away from the vicinity of the lonely farmhouse. Miriam little dreamed that for once the duper was being duped!

Taking care to be out of sight whilst the Study 12 chums roamed past, apparently making for where they had left their machines, as soon as they had gone she stole out from her ambush and flew like the wind for the farmhouse.

Now or Never!

FOR the second time that day the farmhouse door suddenly whirled open, and the schemer's daughter breathlessly burst upon the scene.

"Now mother—quick! I have done it—I mean, I have got Zonia away from the cave, and I can tell you where to find her! But—"

"But what possessed you to come here, Miriam, when the place is being watched?"

"No, the girls have given up watching," was the elated answer to Mrs. Loveless's dismayed exclamation. "I know all about Betty Barton and the rest—what they are doing! If you go at once, mother, you won't be seen!"

"You are sure, Miriam? Because—"

"Positive! Oh, mother, do hurry and get your things on," urged the excited girl. "Then I'll come with you, to show you where Zonia has promised to be. If the girl isn't there now, she'll turn up later."

"Very well, then!" Mrs. Loveless said, and with the words she rushed aloft to her room to do more than put on her outdoor things.

When she came hurrying down, after a minute or so, she was carrying a small handbag.

"Things I need for the journey," she remarked darkly. "I shan't be coming back here if I get hold of the girl!"

Trembling with excitement, Miriam went out into the porch, whilst her mother did the locking up. During the brief wait, the girl was on the look-out for danger; but it was her joy to remain as convinced as ever that no one was still hanging around.

None too soon for the nervous girl, Mrs. Loveless at last joined her in the porch, drew the door shut and locked it. Then they set off together, going downhill to the bottom of the lane.

After that it was a case of working out across the desolate moorland, the pair of them stooping as they walked whenever there was fairly open ground to cover. But what with the undulations and roughness of the ground, and the dense growth of bracken and gorse, they were seldom in danger of being seen from afar.

"There—that's the crossways, mother!" came Miriam's tense whisper at last. "I wonder if Zonia is hiding anywhere close at hand? I shall have to find some plausible excuse for having come with you, shan't I?"

"You can pretend, Miriam, that you wanted to be sure that I would not pitch into her too much,"

Mrs. Loveless was suggesting, with a leering smile when Miriam burst out:

"Look, there she is! She is showing herself, because she has seen that it is——"

"Her mother!" chuckled Mrs. Loveless. "And the kind girl who befriended her this morning! Well, we are all right now, Miriam—we have won through! This just about ends all trouble for us!"

She started to run towards the girl who had been so shamefully tricked from first to last, and began at her the instant they were confronting each other in the heather:

"Now then, my girl, you just come along with me! None of your nonsense! You owe it to this kind schoolgirl that I have been able to meet you here, when——"

"Zonia, Zonia!" was the sudden chorus of joyous yells that rang out. "Zonia, Zonia—at last, at last!"

And Mrs. Loveless and her daughter turned quickly to see a whole pack of Morcovians coming on at a rush through the heather, waving excitedly, joyfully, as they still yelled in chorus:

"Zonia—at last!"

Found Like This.

"ZONIA dear!"

"Hooway! Hoowah!"

"Ooo, yes, queek—queek! Eet is Zonia!"

"At last, Zonia dear!" shouted Betty Barton once again, above all the general chorus of delighted cries. "We have found you——"

"With Miriam and this woman, too!" yelled Polly. "Proving that we were right, after all! Proving that all along they have had something to do with your being missing!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove!"

Whilst these and other breathless exclamations were coming from the chums, Zonia herself was giving the greatest signs of distress.

As for Miriam and her mother, desperately they were trying to recover their shaken nerve and be ready for a fresh game of bluff.

For them the worst had happened. At the last critical moment, Zonia had been discovered—and discovered, too, with them!

"So what does it mean, Zonia?" clamoured Betty. "Tell us, dear! Oh, we have been so mystified, worried——"

"Yes, wather! My deah Zonia, it has been weally dweadful——"

"We not think we ever see you again, Zonia! Let me kees you queek, because I love you just ze same as ever!"

"You girls—you just wait a bit!" Mrs. Loveless managed to interpose sharply. "I'm going to tell you at once, this girl has nothing more to do with you, so there!"

"Nothing more to do with us? But—oh, how ridiculous!"

"She'll tell you herself," was Mrs. Loveless's daring retort. "She'll tell you that I am her mother——"

"Her mother! You!"

"Yes, Betty dear—all of you," poor Zonia faltered emotionally. "Oh, why have you tracked me down like this! If I could have come back to you, don't you think I would have? But my life is altogether changed. This woman has proved that I am her daughter——"

"But what if she has?" burst out Polly wildly. "Why should that make any difference? Why——"

"I will tell you!" Zonia cried out in a hard,

driven way. "I never wanted you to know, but now you must be told. My choice was this: Either to go away with my mother and father, to live my life with them, or else to let your parents, Betty dear, still pay for my schooling and take care of me, in which case my father and mother would have had to be bought out."

"You mean, paid some money on condition that they left you alone in the old, happy life?" exclaimed Betty. "Well, then—oh, Zonia, why didn't you, dear!"

"No," the spirited girl answered firmly. "I could not be so weak, so unfair and ungrateful to your parents, Betty. They have done so much for me in the past. How could I let them be swindled?"

"Bai Jove, the geal is a bigger bwick than we even thought her!" was Paula's beaming comment. "Now we begin to see, geals——"

"Yes!" Polly said tensely. "If that is the explanation—oh, what a world of credit it does you, Zonia dear!"

"Miss Somerfield must know—all Morcove must know at once," declared Betty. "You will come back with us——"

"She will not!" interposed Mrs. Loveless again. "She will!" insisted Betty. "We shall see to that!"

"Yes, wather! Geals——"

"And as for you," the Form captain spoke on to Mrs. Loveless scornfully, "you and Miriam Loveless, you will both have to come with us! There are things—many things—that still need explanation!"

"As, for instance," said Polly, staring sternly at Miriam, "why you have taken a hand in helping this woman to lead Zonia Moore such a trying life! What is this woman to you, that it has been worth your while to mix yourself up in the business? How is it that your people, the Spenlows, have known nothing about all this?"

"Zonia is worn out, and the best thing we can do is to take her along with us at once to the school," Betty said flatly. "Come on, Zonia darling——"

"Oh, but——"

"You want to come, dear?"

"Want to come! If you could only know how I have longed to be back in the old life," Zonia wept tragically. "But it is no use. You have heard me say——"

"It was brave and unselfish of you, dear," Madge exclaimed, "to want to spare Betty's parents from being swindled. But now, anyhow, they have got to know, and if they choose to save you from what is evidently going to be an unhappy life, you cannot stop them."

"That's the position," agreed Betty heartily. "And you may be pretty sure, Zonia, that my parents will gladly pay anything to have you left alone by——"

"Ah, don't say it in front of my mother!" implored Zonia, dashing the tears from her eyes. "She'll only see her chance of making an even harder bargain! It is going to be such a wicked shame that the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Barton should be abused! No, let me go away with my mother, and——"

"Your mother is no mother at all if she is ready to use your future happiness as a means of driving a bargain," Betty said bluntly. "Anyhow, it is not a matter for us girls to discuss. You just come to the school with us, dear, and put yourself in the hands of Miss Somerfield."

"Yes, come on——"

"Queek, queek, Zonia, you do eet!"

"Bai Jove, wather!"

"She won't do it!" cried out Mrs. Loveless fiercely. "Enough of your interference, you little busybodies! Now be off, and understand that a mother has a right to say what her own daughter shall do. She is not going to the school!"

"You seem to be precious afraid of a full inquiry!" Polly said, drawing a bow at a venture. "Why can't you yourself face our headmistress?"

"You will have to, anyhow," declared Betty. "Zonia is coming with us, and we invite you to come, too."

"And, Miriam," Polly said, turning about to give a grim smile to the long-suspected scholar, "what have you to be afraid of? You have done nothing wrong, have you? Oh, no!"

How much Miriam had cause to dread an investigation, her looks testified at this moment. She was as white as marble; her eyes were wild with dismay.

And, suddenly, in her dire panic, she slunk close to Mrs. Loveless, and not only plucked her by the arm, but whispered in great agitation:

"Come away—come away, mother—I mean—"

"Mother!" Polly shouted excitedly, as she and her chums all caught the whispered word that had slipped, in this agitating moment, from Miriam's lips. "She calls her mother!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Zonia, what does that mean? Do you know anything about this?" Betty asked sharply. "She appears to be your sister!"

"I—I know nothing about the girl," gasped Zonia bewilderedly, "except that she came upon me, this morning, when I was hidden in the bungalow-cave. Sister—how can she be my sister?"

"How has it been proved that you are that woman's daughter?" returned Betty doubtfully. "It has been proved, Zonia?"

"Yes. She—she showed me papers. Otherwise I would never have believed her."

"She has shown them to you and no one else, it seems," was Betty's comment. "Well, she will have to show them to Miss Somerfield now, and my parents, and—"

"Look here, you just stop giving yourself such airs!" Mrs. Loveless fairly shrieked at the girls. "My daughter is done with you. She is to come with me—"

"With us, we have said, and we mean it!"

"Yes, wather! Zonia deah—"

"Come on, Zonia darling!"

Then Mrs. Loveless did the last thing that was left her to do. She violently put herself between Zonia and the chums.

"You be off, all of you!"

"No, mother; I must go with them!" Zonia herself broke out agitatedly. "Now that I have been traced, I must face Miss Somerfield. It was different when I was succeeding in keeping out of their way and could hope to leave Mr. and Mrs. Barton in ignorance. Now they are bound to know, and so I shall go to the school!"

"You won't!"

"She will!" Betty and all of them shouted together, and next moment they had made good their firm assertion.

They closed in on the alleged mother and her daughter, to wrest the latter away. Mrs. Loveless struck out wildly to fend off the girls, but they outnumbered her. A bit of a scuffle, and Zonia

was safely amidst her triumphant, joyful chums, being urged to run on with them.

"And now, come to the school yourselves, you two—if you dare!" Polly shouted back at Miriam and her mother defiantly. "And don't forget to bring those proofs with you!"

"All right, you wait and see!" stormed back the woman; but even as she said the words, she knew in her heart that she dare not accept the challenge.

Proofs! The only proofs she had ever produced were papers borrowed for the time being from the Spenlows' bungalow. The documents had had to be returned as secretly as they had been borrowed, or Mrs. Spenlow would have missed them.

No, the game was up. At sight of the long-duped Zonia going off with her loving chums of Morcove School, there was nothing else for Mrs. Loveless and her daughter but to turn and flee in the opposite direction, with the knowledge that they would be lucky indeed if they escaped arrest by-and-by.

And, although it might be that Miriam herself would be deemed by the law too young to be punished with imprisonment, was she not to pay dearly all through life—as she deserved to be made to pay—for her part in the fraud?

Never again for her comfortable life she had known as the Spenlows' protégé! No more grand dressing and indulgence of her luxurious tastes! Her living to get now.

A life to be lived, such as was the very one she had been ready to let Zonia live, knowing all the time that that noble-hearted girl was the long-lost daughter of wealthy parents!

The Wrong Made Right.

ROUND about half-past five that evening, a fine car-drew up at the porch of Morcove School and set down a lady and gentleman.

Giving the names of Mr. and Mrs. Spenlow, they anxiously inquired if Miriam Loveless was in the school?

"You might explain to your mistress," Mr. Spenlow said to the maid who admitted them, "we have just got back from London, and we expected to find Miriam awaiting us at Cliffedge Bungalow. We have been there—"

"Only to find the place deserted," chimed in Mrs. Spenlow agitatedly; "and one room in a nice state! There must have been an accidental fire in the drawing-room whilst we were away—the room is gutted!"

At this instant Miss Somerfield herself came hurrying forward, and whilst the parlourmaid was withdrawing, some most excitable talk started between Morcove's headmistress and the visitors.

"Miriam? No, she is not here, but I can tell you who is here," was one exclamation from Miss Somerfield. "Zonia, the poor girl who has been missing for so long. She—"

"That girl—the one in whom we have been so interested ever since we saw her portrait at the Barncombe Art Show?" cried Mrs. Spenlow. "Oh, what a blessing that she has turned up again. But, my dear Miss Somerfield, that has nothing to do with Miriam, surely?"

"It has a very great deal to do with Miriam, I fancy," Miss Somerfield answered, conducting the bewildered visitors to her private room. "I will tell you all I know."

It took a few minutes to do this, and all the while her listeners were agape with mingled amazement and horror. Only when Miss Somerfield was winding-up her bewildering narrative did that

pained expression of the Spenlows give place to a wistful one.

It was as if suddenly they were seeing that a great joy for them was to be the outcome of so much that it had been appalling for them to hear. Excitedly they spoke together:

"Miriam gone off, you say, with a woman she addressed as mother? Then it means that her mother and father have been in this district unbeknown to us! And you say that Zonia has been given to understand that she is that same woman's daughter?"

"Yes!"
 "Impossible!" Mr. Spenlow exclaimed emphatically. "The two girls can't both be daughters of that woman! If it was Miriam's mother, then the girl Zonia has been imposed upon!"

"But why?" was Miss Somerfield's perplexed cry. "That is what is so puzzling all of us!"

"Why? Ah, I think we shall soon be able to tell you," Mrs. Spenlow said, starting to tremble

faint with excitement, and her husband gave her his tender support.

Miss Somerfield, for her part, was finding delight in all the high-spirited commotion, as she opened the study door and ushered the visitors into the packed room.

"Girls, here are Mr. and Mrs. Spenlow——" the headmistress began, to be cut short there with a chorus of welcome for the visitors.

"Haw, haw, haw, yes, wather!" beamed Paula. "Geals, geals, anothah gweat pleasure, what?"

"Zonia darling, this is because you are here!" Betty cried out gaily. "Mr. and Mrs. Spenlow—they have always been so interested in your case, as we have been telling you. And now——"

"And now, let us see this Zonia in the flesh at last!" was Mr. Spenlow's quick remark. "You are Zonia?" he went on tenderly, as that girl was pushed to the front by her happy chums. "The girl whose portrait so interested us some time back!"



YET ZONIA MUST HIDE! "You give the Form-mistress my message," said Miriam insolently. "I'll give her a polite version of it," retorted Madge. The sound of that quiet refined voice took Zonia's mind back to those happy days when life was free from care.

with excitement. "If it should prove to be that Zonia is the dear child my husband and I lost years ago, then— Where is Zonia, please? May we see her?"

"By all means," Miss Somerfield eagerly assented. "She is with her chums upstairs now. Shall I send for her?"

"Could we go up instead? Oh, please——"

"Certainly," was again the hearty assent, and next moment the headmistress and her two visitors were ascending to the Fourth Form studies.

From famous No. 12 there was issuing a most uproarious noise, suggestive of a festive gathering. It sounded very much as if a big "spread" had been followed by someone's attempt to make a speech, which speech was being punctuated with terrific hear, hears, and yells of laughter, and hand-clapping.

But Mr. and Mrs. Spenlow, as they were led towards that study, could show no sign of amusement. They were profoundly agitated. On the point of entering, the lady seemed to come over

"The portrait, beautiful as it was, did not flatter you, my dear," Mrs. Spenlow said, earnestly studying the one-time gipsy-girl's features. "But tell us, what were the proofs that you were shown concerning your parentage?"

"There was a birth certificate, please," Zonia said softly. "I did not look at it—I was feeling too upset at the time. But there was no room for doubt. There was another paper, recording my description; a memorandum made out at the time I was stolen from my parents by gypsies. It mentioned a small mole on the left arm, just above the elbow, and I have a mark like that."

"You have!" Mr. and Mrs. Spenlow cried out together. "But so had our own child—the one we have been seeking for years!"

"And we had just such a bundle of proofs ourselves," Mr. Spenlow rushed on, whilst his wife became too agitated for speech. "They are amongst the rest of our papers at the bungalow. Zonia, if I should get those papers as quickly as possible, and show them to you, would you

recognise them as being the same that were shown to you by that woman?"

"Yes—oh, yes!" was Zonia's emphatic assurance. "Although I never looked closely at them, I would recognise them again. But what does it all mean, please? Are you going to prove that I am not really the daughter of that woman after all? Oh—"

"We are going to prove that you are our daughter—ours!" burst out Mr. Spenlow, whilst his wife suddenly opened her arms for Zonia to run to them. "It is as good as proved now!"

"Phew!" whistled Polly, whilst Paula beamed: "Bai Jove!" and Naomer did a sudden caper: "Then this explains it, girls!"

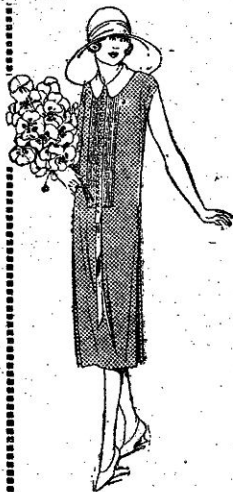
"Dear child, yes, yes, you belong to us!" Mrs. Spenlow tearfully assured the overwhelmed girl who was in a mother's loving arms at last. "The mole above the left elbow proves it. We shall be able to produce the written evidence—"

"Evidence that Miriam must have borrowed from amongst your private papers," Betty broke out, "to enable that other woman to deceive poor Zonia! My goodness, what a swindling business it has been! But never mind, Zonia darling. You understand, dear?"

"I—I am trying to, yes," was the emotional answer. "And even where I don't understand, I can take it all for granted. Oh, you are my mother, my own darling mother—I feel it!" the overjoyed girl sobbed, clinging passionately to Mrs. Spenlow.

"Where is that woman? Let me find her!" Mr. Spenlow suddenly burst out furiously. "Let me get the police after her! There has been a wicked conspiracy to bound this poor girl of mine into a life where she would have been lost to all old associations for ever!"

"So that Miriam might still go on enjoying the life you gave her as one you had adopted out of pity?" Miss Somerfield rejoined.



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"Yes, wather. Outwageous," Paula could be heard joining in the chorus of contempt. "Pwison is the place for fwauds like that!"

"And prison it shall be for Miriam's scheming parents, anyhow," Mr. Spenlow exclaimed fiercely, turning to rush away to the telephone. "I'll get the police to—"

"Oh, but wait—listen! Father—for you are my father, my own darling father," Zonia said sobbingly; and he caught her to himself as she came to his arms, and kissed her.

"Yes, yes, dear child—"

"Then, father, don't go, but stay with me and mother," Zonia implored, half hysterical with joy. "Even if it means letting those wicked persons go unpunished, stay here—"

"I not know what to do; I zink I stand on my head for ze joy!" Naomer cried out gleefully.

"Then let the Lovelesses go!" was Mr. Spenlow's sudden smiling answer to Zonia's entreaties.

"But it is all so overwhelming," Miss Somerfield interposed, beaming with joy. "I think you had better come apart with your dear parents for awhile, Zonia, and then by-and-by you will see your old chums again."

"The chums who saved me!" was Zonia's ardent murmur, as she suffered her own overjoyed mother to lead her away. "Betty darling—Polly—all of you! I must go for the present. But you know that never again, after this, will I be long apart from you! Never will I cease to bless and love you for all you have done for me!"

She went out, weeping with the joy that had so overwhelmed her. A few moments, and Study 12 was harbouring only its usual batch of chums.

"Well, wonders will never cease!" was Polly's gasping comment on it all, at last. "Just fancy, girls—"

"Yes, wather, haw, haw, haw! And geals, I do wealise that if it hadn't been for you, with your brilliant bwains—"

Paula got no further. Whether it was because the girls objected on principle to hearing their praises sung, or whether a certain pair of them, anyhow, had got to "let off steam" somehow, it would be hard to say. But suddenly Polly and Naomer made one of their skittish runs as Paula and that young lady went toppling backwards into the armchair.

"Heap! Ow! Groogh! Dwp it, you wascals—dwp it!"

"Ha, ha, ha! He, he, he!" pealed Polly and Naomer, as they sat on Paula's lap together. "That's how we feel, Paula darling!"

"And I feel a weck, a wuin—look at me!" that spick-and-span scholar was able to lament at last, being allowed to sit up and survey herself in her pocket mirror. "You are, you know, incow-wigible!"

"Well, do forgive us, Paula darling! After all," pleaded Polly bitterly, "it isn't every day that a thing like this happens!"

"Geals, I forgive you fweely—yes, wather," Paula said, her pretty face wreathed in smiles again. "When I wealise, geals, that the vevy gweatest blessing in the world has happened to our own deah Zonia—thanks to her chums of Study 12!"

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

Back again amongst her old chums—and with parents of her own now! Zonia's cup of happiness is full, and the cunning schemers who thought to rob her of her inheritance are baffled at last. Next week a splendid new series of Morcove School tales commences, the first of which is entitled: "The Fourth Form Cheat!"