

THE CHUMMY PAPER WITH THE STORIES
ALL SCHOOLGIRLS LOVE!

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2^d

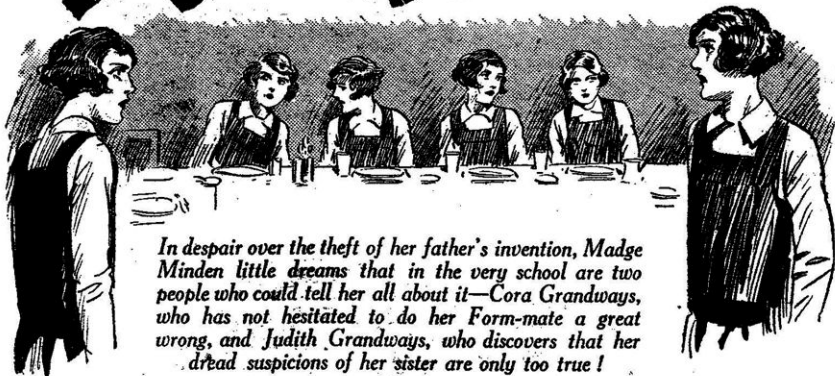


NAOMER "BREATHES IN"!

(A laughable incident in the fasci-
nating long complete Morcove School
story inside.)

Read and Enjoy This Exciting Long Complete Morcove School Story.

SISTERS DIVIDED!



In despair over the theft of her father's invention, Madge Minden little dreams that in the very school are two people who could tell her all about it—Cora Grandways, who has not hesitated to do her Form-mate a great wrong, and Judith Grandways, who discovers that her dread suspicions of her sister are only too true!

A Bolt From the Blue!

PENS down, girls! Books away!" Miss Everard, the chummy mistress of Morcove's Fourth Form, rather took her charges by surprise when she voiced those commands.

But when the juniors saw her step to the classroom door and stand it wide open, surprise gave place to joy.

Only twenty minutes to twelve, yet the Form was to dismiss!

"It is a beautiful morning, girls—" Girlish faces beamed at this promising remark. "So I propose to give you twenty minutes or so at Swedish drill, in the open, by way of a change from lessons!"

Some of the faces lost their beaming expression. Paula's Creel's was one. Paula, that beloved duffer of the Fourth Form, did not like Swedish drill. "Wather too stwenuous, yes, wather!"

And then there was that dusky imp Naomer Nakara, Morcove's royal Fourth-Former from the desert country of North Africa. Her juvenile majesty, Queen Naomer, did not like doing anything by numbers. She much preferred her own spontaneous acrobatic exercises.

"Stand! Quietly now—in double file!" As Miss Everard stayed behind to put her desk straight, there were opportunities for subdued talk on the way. The inventor of Swedish drill came in for many unflattering epithets. The general idea was that it was an awful fag, old-fashioned, boring. Madcap Polly Linton droned a facetious "Left, right; left, right!" bidding Paula to "Pick 'em up, there!"

Out in the sunshine there was the usual fun over lining up two-deep, without supervision, and then Miss Everard came upon the scene, to start at once with a brisk:

"Form fours!" Something in Naomer's way of doing this brought a sharp:

"As you were! Naomer, when you take one pace to the rear, that doesn't mean striding back so that you lose your balance! How often have I told you! Again—form fours!"

This time, Naomer stepped back only a few inches before stepping to the right, and Miss Everard descended upon her majesty to push her into the correct position.

"Now, girls, for the first exercise! Hands on hips. Heels raised. Careful, Paula; don't wobble! Chins in—chest out! Take a deep breath."

Miss Everard saw Naomer with her cheeks blown out. The mistress was about to explain to her majesty that taking a deep breath did not mean inflating oneself like a balloon, when Paula Creel, never very firm on tip-toe, lost her balance.

"Wowp!" Then all the girls who had taken a deep breath let it go in a great burst of laughter, and Miss Everard had to be really cross.

"Attention! Any nonsense, and you will not be dismissed at twelve o'clock! Can't you stand with heels raised, Paula?"

"I find it wather twying to pwerserve my equilibrium," pleaded the elegant one. "I am not stwong, you know."

"These exercises are designed to make you stwong, Paula! The Form—eyes front!"

Miss Everard was instantly aware that all eyes, by being made to look straight to the front, had now found something to stare at—something that was behind her. She turned round and beheld a gentleman approaching from the main gateway, on his way to the porch.

"Mr. Minden!" the girls whispered amongst themselves. "Madge—it's your father!"

He was diverting his steps to come towards the exercising Form, and so Miss Everard went to meet him. In a minute she was back, saying quietly and gravely to Madge Minden:

"You may go, Madge. Your father has something important to tell you."

Great sensation! But it was no use; even Madge's best chums had to stay and get on with the drill, whilst she herself flew to where her father awaited her.

"Daddy!"

"Well, my dear!" he said, with an obvious effort at cheerfulness. "I ought to have left it until a bit later, but—"

"What's happened, daddy? You look—upset!" "Trust her, his only child, to read the trouble in his eyes!"

"There has been an upset," he had to admit. "Let's come indoors, my dear, and we can talk about it. There are questions I want to ask you!"

"Yes, dad? But is it—something to do with—the invention?"

He nodded, already going with her towards the schoolhouse. A few moments later they were alone together in what was known as the Interviewing-room, just off the entrance hall.

"Dad!" Madge exclaimed anxiously, her serious eyes scrutinising his pale, haggard face. "Oh, you look as though you had hardly a wink of sleep last night! Has everything turned out a failure, after all? And I thought you were almost within reach of success!"

"It's worse than failure, Madge," he said huskily. "I have been robbed—"

"Robbed!"

"Of the whole idea, yes," he spoke on. "I came back to my little cabin, out there on the moor, last evening, noticing nothing wrong. But towards midnight, when I went to find a notebook in which to jot down one or two things, that book was gone."

Madge went very white.

"It was a small notebook, my dear, in which I had kept notes as I progressed with my experiments," Mr. Minden resumed, tremulously. "In it, I had written practically a complete specification of the intended patent. Whoever has that book, now, has got hold of my idea."

"You've been robbed of the invention, dad? The thief can go ahead and make use of all your ideas?"

"That's it, Madge. And if ever there was a low-down theft, it's this! I felt nearly crazy when I first discovered my loss. Failure in the end I could have endured with a good spirit, I hope. But to be cheated—robbed—knowing that it must make such a difference to you, Madge dear; you, the only one I have, and for whom I have worked—"

He was checked by her suddenly standing close and putting her arms up to his shoulders, the tears flooding her eyes as she kissed him consolingly.

"Oh, you poor, darling daddy," she faltered. "Oh, what a shame, what a wicked shame!"

Then, as quickly as that great emotion had rushed over her, it passed, and she stood away from him, drying her eyes, no longer trembling but becoming sternly composed.

"Who was the thief, dad—who was it? You have some suspicions—a clue?"

"Ah!" he breathed, gritting his teeth. "A suspicion—yes, I had that at once, Madge! But as for a clue—there isn't one. The only evidence I have is that the cabin was entered in my absence by the laboratory window. It explains how the theft was committed, but it does not throw any light on the identity of the thief."

"But you suspect—"

"Ought I to say it, even to you?" he returned, in a very subdued voice. "I have had, as you

know, Madge, some people camping near my shack on the moor—those Elswicks, rich enough, you would think, to be above robbing a man of my small means, even if they were without common honesty. But the fact remains; Elswick is interested in the electric-lighting industry, and my invention would be likely to hit that industry rather hard."

"The young Elswicks, dad, came prying round your shack one evening when you were away—when I was there, unknown to them," Madge said tensely.

Her father took a turn upon the carpet in silence.

"I went across to their caravan camp in the middle of last night," he resumed at last. "I was in such a state, that I could not wait for the morning. Perhaps it was a foolish thing to do, but I let Mr. Elswick understand that I thought it—fishy!"

"What did he say, dad?"

"We ended by having a frightful row. He said he could prove that he and his wife were away from the camp all the evening. His servants had the half-day off, and did not get in until ten o'clock. Then he angrily asked me if I wanted his son and daughter to account for their movements during the evening. I said I thought they should, and at that we nearly came to blows."

"Sybil and Cyril Elswick were at this school yesterday afternoon, to have tea with Cora Grandways," recollected Madge. "Afterwards—I can't say what became of them. But, dad, early in the evening—quite early—Judy Grandways came to me at tennis, to say that she had seen people hanging about your shack."

The father stared.

"What sort of people, Madge?"

"Judith didn't say. I felt uneasy—knowing that you might be away from the cabin at that time. Betty and a few others came with me to your cabin; but there was not a soul about, and the place was all locked up."

"Did you notice the windows, my dear—whether they were all fastened up?"

"Yes, dad. They were, and it convinced us that no one had broken into the place. So we simply came away. Dad, shall I fetch Judith Grandways?" was Madge's sudden eager suggestion. "So that she can tell you exactly what those people were like!"

"I wish you would," Mr. Minden answered quickly. "The Form-mistress will let her come. Miss Everard knows the loss I have suffered."

Madge flashed away. As she ran out to the schoolfellows who were in the midst of those exercises, she could hardly believe that a few minutes since she had been one of them. This calamity of her father's seemed to make such things as lessons, games and drill foolish and trivial by comparison.

White-faced and serious, she gave Miss Everard the reason why Judith Grandways was required, and that girl was instantly released. Then both girls hurried together to the schoolhouse.

"It is about last evening, Judy," panted Madge, for her companion was looking alarmed at being called away like this. "My father wants you to tell him what the people whom you saw loitering around his cabin yesterday were like."

Judith Grandways stopped in her stride.

"Why?" she jerked out.

"Late last night, daddy found that his invention had been stolen!"

Madge had hardly voiced that sensational

answer than she had to fling out a hand to catch at Judith, steadying her. For Judith, as if the news had dealt her a staggering blow, was looking ready to drop.

Judith's Discovery!

"JUDY dear—I'm sorry! I've given you a shock!"

"It—it's such terrible news!"

"I should not have brought it out so suddenly." Madge regretted, whilst her school-fellow still wore that half-stunned look. "I might have known it would have been a shock to you, you are so sympathetic—"

"Oh, Madge—don't—I mean— Come on; he is waiting!" stammered Judith.

Yet she did not walk on as quickly as before. It was all she could do to affect an eagerness to go in and be questioned by Mr. Minden. For it seemed to her that if ever a well-meant action had recoiled disastrously, it was now!

What could she say, when asked to describe those suspicious characters? What could she say, when she knew of no one who had hung about the shack, last evening—except her sister Cora and the young Elswicks? How could she give evidence against her own sister?

Was she to flounder into a whole morass of falsehoods for the sake of shielding her sister? "I can't—I can't do that!" she said to herself. "Anything but lies!"

Then she was with Madge in the interviewing-room, face to face with Mr. Minden. He had a kindly smile for her.

"Ah, Judith; this is a bad business. I'm sorry to have to bother you with it. Madge has told you? Well, then, will you just explain all about last evening—when, it appears, you warned Madge that you had seen certain suspicious characters hanging about my place on the moor."

"I—I don't remember saying that I had seen them," Judith faltered. "I did go to Madge at the tennis courts, advising her to go across to your place and see if everything was all right. But—I had not seen anyone at the shack."

Mr. Minden turned to Madge with a puzzled frown.

"But, Judy!" exclaimed Madge. "I understood you to mean that you had seen people hanging about the place!"

"I don't think I could have said that, Madge," Judith said more steadily. "I think I hinted that if you went to the shack, you might be in time to see certain people who might mean mischief."

"Anyway," interposed Mr. Minden, "who were those persons, Judith? If you didn't see them near the shack, where did you see them? And what made you think they intended mischief?"

"I was out for a ramble by myself, after tea. Some persons rode by without seeing me, and I did not see them—I could not," Judith added, quite truthfully, "on account of the bushes."

"Well?"

"They were talking about your shack, Mr. Minden, and—and that if you were away it would be a chance for them. I only caught a few words as they rode by."

"And you did not see them, to be able to describe them?"

She shook her head.

"Their voices," pursued Mr. Minden; "were they old or young? Men's voices, or women's?"

"Oh, youngish voices," hard-pressed Judith answered, as calmly as she could.

"Quite young?"

"Not like girls' voices." Again, luckily, Judith was able to put her questioner off the scent, without telling any untruth. Her sister's voice, and Sybil Elswick's, had a much older note than the average schoolgirl's. They had both cultivated a grown-up inflexion as part of their affectation.



White-faced and alarmed Madge asked Miss Everard if she would excuse Judith Grandways, as her father wished to talk to her. Would Judith be able to throw any light on the theft?

"And the man's voice—if there was one?"

"Coarse."

"Would you be able to tell those people again, by their voices?"

Judith bit her lip. Oh, this cross-examination, would it never end!

"Yes, Mr. Minden."

"I see. Well, Judith, I am afraid my hopes are rather dashed, after being raised. From what Madge said, I imagined that you would be able to help me better than this. Not that I am reproaching you, of course. It is a misunderstanding."

"I remember, dad," put in Madge softly, "Judith didn't say that she had been to the shack and seen the people there. I sort of took it for granted, so it's my fault."

"And, Judith, I must thank you, anyhow, for having warned Madge," Mr. Minden rejoiced. "It shows a fine, friendly spirit. Neither you nor Madge is to blame that I was robbed after all."

"I—I am so awfully sorry," gulped Judith, "that you have been robbed. I can guess how you are feeling about it."

"It is enough to break dad's heart," exclaimed Madge, giving her father a sorrowful, sympathetic look.

"If I were quite alone in the world," he murmured, "I would not mind so much. But I am not well off, Judith, and I did hope that the invention would ensure a comfortable future for Madge. She is my all-in-all, now that her dear mother is no longer with us. Her music—I was promising myself that no money should be spared to have Madge properly tutored later on. And now—this."

A tragic pause ensued. It was ended by his saying quietly and kindly to Judith that she could go, and she left him and his daughter still in talk.

It still wanted a few minutes to the midday dismissal, and troubled Judith was thankful that other girls had not yet been let loose. Quickly she mounted to the Fourth-Form quarters, hastening down the corridor and round into the little lobby that led to the study she shared with her sister.

Shutting herself in alone there, she sat down, tapping her fingers agitatedly on the table.

The cabin on the moor—rifled of its precious secret last night! The place entered whilst Mr. Minden was absent, and his great invention—stolen!

To Judith, it all meant one dreadful certainty: her own sister was mixed up in the theft.

Cora, with the young Elswicks, had done this thing! It had been enough for all three of them to gather that their parents wished ill luck to the invention; their callousness and reckless daring had done the rest!

Suddenly the schoolhouse became noisy with all the girls out of class at last. The Fourth Form had finished its drill, and now the juniors were pounding upstairs, racing to studies, slamming doors, calling to one another.

And here was Judith—a girl whose life at Morcove was so different from that of most girls. Term after term, sharing this study with her sister, she knew little happiness because of that sister's callous, selfish ways. And now, knowing that her sister had done such grievous wrong to the father of one of her own Form-fellows, Judith was more than ever miserable.

The door flashed open. Into the study strode Cora Grandways, to fling her school books upon the table, then stand and glare at Judith.

"What's this about Mr. Minden being robbed?"

"You know," Judith said huskily. "Oh, Cora, you sure'll need to be told anything about that, I'm sure!"

"Why shouldn't I need to be told?" retorted the elder sister. "Am I so friendly with Betty & Co. that I am one of the first to hear the news? All I've heard is a rumour, flying round the Form—"

"And did it surprise you?" Judith interposed. "You know it did not, Cora! Oh, don't look like that—trying to appear innocent to me!"

"Judgy, are you crazy!"

"I am the most unhappy girl on earth, I think," was the distressed answer to that. "Oh, Cora—"

Judith paused, her eyes fixed upon Cora's fierce, defiant face.

"I know what has happened, Cora," Judy resumed. "I have dreaded it for days. The Elswicks and father knew that Mr. Minden's invention would hit their business, unless they could prevent it, or—get it stolen—"

"Now, stop!" burst out Cora, striding towards her sister menacingly. "How dare you say such things! What, you accuse me of having had a hand in the theft, do you? You even suspect Mr. Elswick and father of having wanted to get hold of the invention. Shame on you, Judith—shame!"

The younger sister dropped down into a chair, and was silent for a few moments.

"What else can I think?" she sobbed at last. "I want to love father and look up to him, just as other girls love and respect their parents. But so often there have been things. I am not going to name them."

"Come down to brass tacks," Cora said, rapping the table with her knuckles. "This theft—"

"Yes, I must talk about that," Judith said, standing up again and drying her eyes. "You had Cyril and Beryl Elswick to tea yesterday afternoon. Afterwards, you biked with them across the moor to Mr. Minden's cabin."

"That's not true, Judith!" Cora said fiercely, but not meeting her sister's gaze. "All I did was to ride home with them to their camp. You know very well their motor caravans are only a few hundred yards from the cabin!"

"Cora," said Judith, looking at her steadily, "When you were riding with the Elswicks along that moorland path, you passed me by. You did not see me. As a matter of fact I hid, so as to avoid you."

"So as to pry, you mean!"

"No. You know I dislike the Elswicks, and I hated the idea of meeting them. As you rode by I heard the three of you saying what you intended doing."

Cora changed colour now.

"You were talking of seizing the chance to do something, if you found Mr. Minden away from his cabin," Judith said. "That proves, Cora, that all three of you meant to—"

"To break into the cabin and steal? Bah, what rot!" Cora raged out. "Of course, you would put the worst construction on things! We were only going to play a joke on Mr. Minden—a jape!"

"That won't go down with me, Cora. I wish—oh, how I wish I could believe you! But—"

"Shut up! Not another word!" stamped the elder girl, looking furious enough to box her sister's ears. "I won't listen to any more of this!"

"And that is no answer, either," Judith gave back, meeting mad rage with calm fearlessness.

"What you can't say, Cora, on your word of honour, is that you did not have any part in—"

"Oh! I don't give my word of honour to you; just as if! You're not a mistress!" jeered Cora, retiring a step or two. "You're just a nuisance! I can't come up to this study without having you going on at me. Ugh!"

And she snatched up a book, to throw it in Judith's direction.

The missile was dodged, and it knocked over a case of flowers on the top of a low bookshelf, so that all the water was spilt. Some trickled down in front of the shelves, and some of it must have run down behind. Judith would have snatched up a duster to start mopping up the water at once; but Cora cried out:

"Leave it alone! I'll see to that!"

Nor was it another moment before the duster was in Cora's hand—first time for many a day that she had touched a duster. She was always making a litter and leaving her sister to clear it up. Now, to Judith's surprise, Cora was going to mop up the spilt water herself; but before she could make a start the door opened, letting in the Form captain, Betty Barton.

"Cora, Miss Somerfield wants you."

"What! Why?"

"You'll soon know. You're to report to her at once."

"Oh, dash—I'm not going! I—I'm busy! I—I've got to do this—"

"But I can do it," offered Judith, whilst Betty went out as quickly as she had come in.

"You leave it alone!" insisted the elder girl, with a fury that seemed ridiculous. "Let it stay till I come back! Mind, now!"

Dropping the duster, she flounced away, and then Judith—in the very instant that she was alone—crossed to the bookstand and gazed at it. Her face had paled as if some fresh terrible thought had seized her.

After a moment, she went to the side of the bookstand, to lift that end away from the wall. It was heavy, with its loaded shelves, but she managed it.

And then, peering down, she saw a small notebook that had been lying between the back of the bookcase and the wall.

Judith reached down and picked up the book, and she knew it instantly for the one that had been stolen from Mr. Minden's shack.



Judith drew a deep breath as she confronted her sister. "You know very well, Cora, that you meant to send that stolen notebook to father!" she said accusingly.

She Must Shield Her Sister!

SO it was proved up to the hilt!

Cora had helped in the theft of the note-book.

She had even taken it upon herself to have charge of it. Into the very heart of the school she had brought the book—agreeing with her accomplices, no doubt, that it would be safest there!

And now—what was Judith to do?

The younger sister of the girl who had done this thing felt herself weak, incapable of dealing with the terrible quandary in which she had been placed.

To think of Madge and her father, sorrowing over the loss of this little book which meant so much to them, made her want to fly at once to them and return it.

What joy it would have been to be able to do that, seeing their faces light up at sight of the stolen book—recovered! But how could she take it back to them without bringing Cora's name into the whole dreadful business?

So, once again, Judith stopped to consider the sister who never considered her.

One thing was quite plain, however. The book could not remain a minute longer in this study. If Cora should come back—

Judith hastily thrust the notebook into her pocket, lifted the bookcase back into position, close against the study wall. The spilt water remained to be wiped up. She could not stay to do that now, when her one thought was to get away with the book and put it into safety somewhere, before her sister knew!

She ran out of the study; ran past many another junior in the main corridor. Downstairs Judith whirled, and out into the open air.

Later, the book must be returned to Mr. Minden, in some way which would leave him ignorant of the identity of the person who had restored it. But she could not do that now. She had to think of Cora, her sister, whatever happened.

A little after this, Cora herself came stalking down the Fourth Form corridor, looking as black as thunder, after her interview with the headmistress.

Study 12's door was wide open, and Betty, in there, knew that Cora should be coming to speak with her. Betty knew what the headmistress had had to say to Cora. But Cora was in haste to get back to her own study.

She passed Study 12, and darted into her own, finding it deserted. The duster was where she

had tossed it down, only a few minutes since. Snatching it up, she went to the bookcase.

"Dash this spilt water!" she raged, through clenched teeth. "Suppose Judy had gone to wipe it up, lifted out the bookcase, and found IT!"

As she muttered, she lifted out the stand of books, peering anxiously behind it, and then her face went quite white.

The notebook was not there!

She was too staggered, too panic-stricken, to be able to do anything but stand stock still, her eyes dilating with horror.

For the moment she could think nothing but that she was—found out! Then a footstep behind her made her whirl around in guilty panic.

At sight of Betty Barton entering she stamped madly.

"Get out of here!"

"You should have come to my study, then I needn't have come to yours," Betty answered in a level tone. "Miss Somerfield told you to come and see me, didn't she?"

"I don't care a hoot what Miss Somerfield said! Hang the headmistress—and you! Hang all Morocco, I say! I want to be by myself!"

"That's just the trouble, Cora," returned the captain, quietly. "For the present, you are not to—"

"I am going to do as I like in my free time!"

"Not for a week or two. Not while those Elswicks are within walking distance of Morocco; that's what I have been told by Miss Somerfield. You were to come to me, to be fixed up for tennis—any game you like, later on—"

"I'm not playing tennis! I've no use for footling games!"

"If you talk like that—"

"I do talk like that!"

"Then you won't do yourself any good in the long run. You know what you've been told, Cora," Betty said, with slight sternness. "You are not to go off with the Elswicks any more. They are not to come to the school. If I find you going over to see them at the camp—"

"You'll report me—oh, yes! Sort of thing you'll enjoy doing!"

"Oh, dry up!" smiled Betty. "Cora, why will you be so stupid? Look here, it's no pleasure to me to be told to keep a close eye upon you. Play the game, and I will—"

But it was no use saying the rest. Cora had rushed out of her own study, muttering wildly.

She could not give a thought to anything but the notebook, gone from where she had hidden it.

Cora ran downstairs, seeking her sister.

In vain, after that, she scoured the place in quest of Judith. Her sister was not to be found. Frenziedly Cora wondered if Judith, having discovered the stolen notebook, had rushed across to Mr. Minden's cabin, to restore it during his absence. It never entered her head that her sister's loyalty to her would make her hesitate until she had had time to consider how that deed could be accomplished without implicating Cora.

Not until the whole school had been rung into dinner did Cora see her sister again. Judith came in only at the last moment, and so any talk in private was out of the question.

Then, when the girls were up from table, skilfully and deliberately Judith evaded her sister once more. Afternoon school began, and it was Cora's secret misery to be in class, still in doubt as to what really had happened to the book.

That it had not been restored to the Mindens was the one sure thing. Cora had only to steal a glance at Madge, during afternoon school, to mark how sorrowful that girl still was.

At last the dismissal came, and now Cora was furiously determined not to let her sister give her the slip again. As it turned out, Judith showed not the least desire to do any more dodging off. From the class-room she went straight up to the study, and there Cora joined her, having followed her upstairs.

"Now!" panted the elder sister, after slamming the door. "What do you mean by it, Judy? What have you been up to—dodging me?"

"I am quite ready to speak to you now, Cora, and you had better be quiet and listen," Judith said, with a spirited composure that held her furious sister silent. "I have stood about enough, Cora. If I have not done enough for you, as a sister, then— Oh, things must just go their own way, that's all! Cora, I know you helped to steal that notebook! I know you hid it behind that bookcase!"

"That was only to—only for the— I mean—"

"It is no use!" Judith struck in sadly. "You can't hoodwink me, Cora. You and the two Elswicks entered the shack when Madge's father was away, and Cyril and Sybil got you to take care of the stolen notebook, in case Mr. Minden should get the police to search the Elswicks' camp."

"I tell you," seethed Cora desperately, "it was only for a lark, a jape!"

"I can't believe that. No one in the world would believe it."

Judith paused, drawing a deep breath. Then: "You know perfectly well, Cora, you were going to send that stolen notebook to father!"

"I was not! Oh—"

"You are not looking me in the eyes, Cora. You are not telling the truth. Oh, Cora, I feel that all this has just about broken my heart. I can never hold up my head again."

Judith's low voice broke and she turned away her head, biting a lip.

There was sudden silence in the study, and then Judith, sitting down, twisted her hands together and gave way to choking sobs.

Ordered Out of Morocco!

"DON'T be silly, Judy! Look here—"

"I can't help it," was the agonised murmur. "I wish I were dead! Father has over so much money, and yet he would be pleased to know you had prevented Mr. Minden bringing out his invention, though it would mean so much to him and Madge. And you—"

"You're talking a lot of rot—"

"I am not, Cora. Oh, you don't know how I feel—"

"Oh, we've heard all that before! Where is the notebook, anyhow?" stamped Cora. "Let me have it, and I—I will send it back—"

"No—"

"I promise!"

"No!"

The younger sister stood up.

"The book is in my keeping now. I have hidden it for the time being, right away from the school. I would let Mr. Minden have it back at once, but—I can't disgrace you. I must think—"

"How do you mean?"

"I am coming to that," Judith answered the fierce question. "The book is where I have hidden it. You know what I could do, if I chose. Understand, then, Cora, unless the Elswicks go away from this district at once, I shall simply produce the book and speak out! They must be told that my mind is quite made up about that. You

had better tell them to-day that they must be gone by to-morrow evening."

"I shall do nothing of the kind!"

"You must, Cora. I tell you that unless you do, I will not shield you, any more than I will shield them," Judith said steadily. "I give them until to-morrow evening. I mean them to be gone before I take the next step and restore the book, and I cannot keep Mr. Minden waiting."

Cora, during another pause, moved about the room like a roused tigress in a cage. She glinted her eyes at Judith, only to see her sister remaining perfectly steady and determined.

"Do as I say," Judith resumed very softly at last, "and the disgrace will be avoided, and no one will be any the worse for all this. The Elswicks must go, and if they can go by this evening, so much the better. But they must be gone by to-morrow evening, at latest, unless they want me to make everything known."

"You'd never dare!" panted Cora. "Dragging your own sister into it!"

"Have I any choice?" Judith returned desperately. "Isn't it doing the best for you, even now, Cora? Wouldn't I give anything almost to be able to rush to Madge at once and tell her that the notebook is safe! But, for your sake, I am forcing myself to wait."

"And how will you return the book, after all?" sneered Cora. "Without letting it be known—what happened?"

"That is my business. I have thought of a way—"

"Oh, clever! Very wonderful, aren't you? You can do anything—that hits your own family! Fancy a girl going against her own sister, not to speak of her own father!"

It was a taunt so cruel that Judith would not answer it. She went to the window and stood looking down at the games field.

"And why—why should the Elswicks have to go, before you return the book?" Cora asked next.

Her sister turned round.

"For several important reasons, Cora. They are an annoyance to Mr. Minden, where they are. They might try to steal the thing again. But I am not going to argue—"

"Oh, she is not going to argue!" mocked Cora. "As if she were the elder sister. I like that! Judith," she suddenly hissed, "now I've had enough of your cheek! Now it's my turn! Where have you hidden that book? Come on, tell me! Where is it?"

She gripped Judith by the shoulders and shook her.

"I want that book. I will have it! What do you think your father would say if he knew? Come on—tell me where it is—"

"No, I won't—"

"You shall! I'll make you tell me, if I have to—"

But now the door opened, and Cora checked her violent speech and let go her furious hold on Judith. Sharply they fell apart, the elder turning in no pleasant way to receive the unannounced visitor.

Sybil Elswick!

"Hallo, Cora dear," grinned Sybil.

She must have had all the nerve in the world to sail in like this, taking the freedom of the schoolhouse for granted.

"Well, how goes it?" she flippantly inquired.

"I thought I would look across again, dear! My word, hasn't there been some excitement to-day! Mr. Minden's invention stolen, so they say!"



"Did you get permission to come up?" Betty Barton asked Sybil Elswick. "No," said the visitor haughtily. "I thought not; then perhaps you'll kindly go down again," Betty said quietly.

She laughed, then gave a contemptuous look to Judy, standing apart.

"Yes!" she continued, addressing Cora. "You should have been at our place last night! The scene there was! I thought we'd have to send Cyril for the police."

"Yes—er—all right," Cora said flusteredly. "Er—sit down, Sybil. I—I didn't expect you."

"But you didn't mind my coming?"

Before Cora could make answer to that, Betty Barton was suddenly upon the scene. She first looked in from the doorway, then came right into the room.

"Afternoon," she said briefly to Sybil Elswick.

"Oh, how are you, Betty Barton; how's the cap.?"

"Did you get permission to come up?" asked Betty.

"Er—no—"

"I thought not. So perhaps you'll kindly go down again?"

Sybil, at this, looked with round eyes of amazement at Cora; but the latter, although as furious as could be, kept silent.

"Sorry and all that," said Betty quietly; "but my orders are that you must not come into the school."

"Why, I'd like to know?"

"Miss Somerfield would tell you. I hope you'll go, so that I won't have to report to her."

Sybil Elswick jumped up from her chair.

"You're the school's thrower-out, are you? Try it on me, then—just you try!"

"Oh, that'll do. I'm warning you. Cora, here, knows that she is not to see you."

"Although Mr. Elswick is a friend of Mr. Grandways!"

Betty nodded.

"Those are Miss Somerfield's orders."

"Oh, I wouldn't dream of disobeying the headmistress or the captain!" Sybil said shrilly, tossing her head. "But what a school, I must say! Good-by-ee, Cora darling; see you soon!"

This was followed by a low, mocking howl to Betty.

At the same instant, and to Betty's surprise, Judith Grandways crossed the study to go out with Sybil Elswick.

"Betty, may I—see her to the gate?"

"Well, Judith, I don't know. But, yes, that's all right," the captain briskly decided. She knew that Morocco, from the headmistress downwards, drew a sharp distinction between Cora and Judith.

So the younger sister and Sybil went downstairs together, whilst Betty returned to Study 12.

"She is gone."

"Oh, has she?" sparkled Polly, busy with laying tea. "No trouble? I was rather hoping you'd want me to come along and lead a hand. I would love to be captain!"

"Would you?" said Betty.

"Sometimes!" Polly added the qualification. "Not always. I know one thing—Naomer would feel the diff. if I were cap. I would make a new girl of Naomer in a week!"

"If you were ze cap. I would go on strike at once," retorted the imp, bringing cakes to the table. "Bekas I would not stand for it—no! And, what ze diggings, why should I be taken in hand and not Paula?"

"Paula would be another," declared the mad-cap. "Paula, do get up; do show a bit of life! If that's all you can do—for Paula was admiring herself in her pocket mirror—"go along and find Madge Minden and tell her tea is ready."

"Wight-ho!"

"Bekas," shrieked Naomer, "we have got to keep ze eye on Madge, and not let her get down and lose ze appetite!"

"Poor Madge!" sighed Betty. "And I am afraid she and her father really will be poor now that his invention has been stolen."

"And not a clue," added Polly bitterly—"not one blessed clue as to who did the deed!"

A Check to Cora!

CORA'S dominant feeling, after seeing Sybil Elswick ordered out by Betty, was one of maddening humiliation.

Suddenly she was face to face with the fact that she was getting the worst of it all along the line.

Her own sister had taken a firm stand, had started to give orders—to her! And Betty had been more than a match for Sybil.

"Hang it, though, I'll show them!" Cora raged to herself, and next moment she made one of her whirlwind rushes from the study.

Since Sybil Elswick was not to be allowed about the school, she, Cora, would go off and see the girl elsewhere!

Down the last flight of stairs she scurried, ran for the open air, and almost collided into Miss Everard at the porch.

"What's the hurry, Cora? Where are you going?"

"Out!"

"Cora, that is not the way to speak to a mistress!" came the stern rebuke. "Did I see the Elswick girl just now being shown to the gate by your sister?"

Cora did not answer. She was almost choking with anger. There was a desperate recklessness in her looks that the Form-mistress did not fail to notice.

"You cannot go out now, Cora. I know what it will mean. You will only go running after that girl, and—"

"I must go out! It's a rotten shame—"

"New you will stay in bounds until further notice!" Miss Everard decided sharply. "Consider yourself gated, Cora! Stand still when I am speaking! Now go and get your tea, and report to me immediately afterwards!"

The girl's hands were clenching and unclenching as she sulkily turned back at the doorway. Worse and worse! At the very time when she wanted freedom out of school hours she had got herself gated!

"Ugh!" she seethed. "I could kick somebody! As for Judy—wait till her father knows!"

She got her tea at the school tables, her expression warning other girls not to speak to her. Not that they particularly wanted to enjoy her company. Suddenly, after that, she went to Miss Everard's room, putting on a penitent look as she came into the mistress' presence. It went against the girl's insolent nature to appear meek, but she felt she had better forget her pride for once. It would be worth it to get let off the gating.

"Well?" Miss Everard questioned, looking little inclined to relent. "Have you got over your temper, Cora?"

"Yes, Miss Everard. I'm sorry."

"That's right. I, for my part, am very sorry that friends of yours have incurred Miss Somerfield's displeasure. But the headmistress knows what is best for you, Cora. Now that this upset has occurred in connection with Mr. Minden's loss—"

"What has that to do with me and Sybil Elswick?"

"Cora, you are forgetting yourself again. Whether the affair has anything to do with you young people or not, there is trouble between Mr. Minden and Mr. Elswick, and you must remember that you are a schoolfellow of Madge Minden's—"

"I can't help that! I—"

"Cora, you behave as if you don't even care that Madge's father has suffered this terrible loss. You displease me very much."

"Well, can I be let off the gating, please? And then I will—I will be good," Cora humbled herself again.

"No, Cora. In the circumstances it will be

better, I am sure, that you remain in bounds. It is no great hardship at this time of year. You have games—"

"I hate games!"

"Then it is time you learned to like them. Go along now before you annoy me more. And, bear in mind, the Form captain has been instructed to see that you don't get into mischief."

So that was that! Cora stalked out, wishing she could shout and stamp the schoolhouse down. Going upstairs, she encountered girls coming down to dash out to games. Angriily she pushed past them all, snapping more than once:

"Out of my way!"

Thus, in the end, she came back to her study to find her sister there, the picture of anxious thought.

"What did you say to Sybil Elswick?" Cora demanded straight away.

"Only what you would have had to say, Cora, had you been given the opportunity. She knows how things stand, and what my intentions are. I warned her to tell her father."

"And you think she'll do so, do you?"

"Yes, I do. Sybil saw well enough what a mistake it would be to defy me."

"You! Poof! But I don't want any more of your dashed cheek!" flamed Cora. "So get out, sharp! I'm done with you, Judy. I'll write to mother to-night, that's what I'll do!"

Judith picked up a book and went out. She intended to find a seat under one of the shady trees, and sit there reading. It would be better than remaining near Cora. Going up the corridor, she was just in time to encounter Madge, who had not joined Betty and the rest when they made for the open air.

Madge had the usual kindly smile for Judith, and the latter responded in her own subdued manner.

"Going down to the music-room, Madge?"

"I don't know what I'm going to do," was the sighing answer. "I don't feel like music this evening. I might walk across to the cabin and see dad again. He's awfully down at present."

Madge added sadly:

"You see, Judy, nothing has turned up; no light has been thrown upon what happened last night."

The distress in her school-fellow's looks was too much for Judith. At all costs she felt she must convey a hint that things would yet come right.

"If I were you, Madge, I would not worry."

"Oh, Judy," the inventor's daughter laughed incredulously, "wouldn't you? It makes my blood boil when I think of all dad's ideas being stolen. It is so mean—so wicked!"

"I know; it's a dreadful blow for your father, Madge. But I—I have an idea, you know, that no use will be made of the stolen book, after all. I shouldn't be surprised if it is mysteriously returned."

"It's good of you to comfort me, Judy," Madge said feelingly. "But what makes you think it?"

"Even in the case of stolen jewellery and things like that," Judith adroitly argued, "thieves often decide to send the stuff back. They—they get panicky. And, after all, will anyone dare do anything with your father's invention when they know he would recognise it?"

"I wish I could think that," murmured Madge. "I will tell daddy, and see if it comforts him. Oh, just fancy"—Madge's face lit up—"just fancy if suddenly the stolen book does turn up again! Judy, you are not doing anything special at present? I'm not in the mood for tennis or music. Will you stroll with me out to the shack?"

"I—I think I had better not, Madge, thanks ever so. I'll just take my book and sit under a tree, if you don't mind."

And so next minute they parted. Madge was going out to her father's cabin alone, and the last sight of her anxious face left Judith with the thought:

"She shan't look as sad as that this time to-morrow. I will stick to what I said—I must, I must! Whether the Elswicks have gone away or not, by this time to-morrow the notebook shall come out of the place where I have hidden it!"

But little Judith guessed what was to intervene between that worthy resolve and its fulfilment!

No Chance Now!

It was shortly before the dismissal, on the following afternoon, that Judith gave a slight start of surprise as she sat at work with the rest of the class.



"You are to come away with me for a few days," Mrs. Grand-wards said coldly. Judith's heart sank. This was good-bye to all her hopes of setting things right for Madge Mindon.

A private car, coming up the drive, had sounded a double-noted horn, over and over again. Not only was the blaring sound exactly like that of the spare car at home, but the repetition of it—four times—was just like a habit of Judith's mother, when driving.

Judith did not sit near any of the class-room windows, so she could not obtain a glimpse of the arriving car. But she looked across at her sister, and saw that Cora, also, had paused, in sudden excitement at that familiar sound.

It wasn't quite five minutes later when a parlourmaid came to fetch both sisters out of class, and they were told that their mother was here.

Judith, staggered by the surprise visit, could not help noticing that Cora was merely grinning in an artful way. As soon as they were outside the class-room, Judith exclaimed at her sister:

"Have you expected this, Cora?"

"Find out!" was the snappish answer, and they went the rest of the way to the interviewing-room in silence.

Mrs. Grandways was there—handsome, and richly dressed, and petulant looking. She seemed, as usual, to prefer Cora's casual, flippant greeting, to Judith's more earnest and affectionate one. It was another pang for Judith that her kiss was coldly returned.

"But what a surprise, mother!" grinned Cora.

"I have not been feeling up to the mark, so I have come away for a few days—making a little tour on my own," the mother remarked loftily. "I thought I would come this way to see how you were getting on at school. Judy, you don't look quite the thing!"

"Oh, I'm all right—quite well—"

"You don't look all right," insisted Mrs. Grandways, keeping her hard eyes upon the younger daughter. "Run away now, whilst I talk to your sister. You had better be upstairs in your study—"

"And get tea ready, Judy!" the elder girl commanded, gaily. "For three! Mother will have a cup with us."

"Yes, I will do that—although I must see Miss Somerfield," Mrs. Grandways was adding when Judith, so summarily dismissed, withdrew from the room.

She went up to the study, feeling more than bewildered, more than dejected by her mother's chilly bearing.

Try as she would to banish the idea that her mother's visit was the result of a letter written by Cora last evening, that idea stuck. What, then, was she to expect now?

Judith heard the chimes sound half-past three. In a few hours from now, she was to fetch the notebook from where she herself had hidden it. Even if the Elswicks were not gone—but they would be gone! They would never dare flout her ultimatum of yesterday.

Only a few hours from now, and there would be joy for Madge Minden and her father. The book returned!

Or was mother's presence to cause a hitch, so that she would be able to do nothing until to-morrow?

"But, no," Judith calmed her fears desperately, "mother will not stay long; she'll be off again directly after tea. She never does—take much interest."

The white cloth went on to the table, and then Judith set out the tea-things. Sad it was that she could not feel any sense of joy at her mother's visit. But, somehow, she had never been a favourite with either of her parents. They seemed to prefer Cora.

Every time she went home for the holidays, her parents seemed to have become a little more detached from her. She found it harder and yet harder to please them, and always the talk was of money and position in life, things that Cora valued as much as her parents.

Presently Mrs. Grandways came in with Cora. "Now, Judith, I have decided," the mother said at once, "you will come away with me for a few days."

The girl's heart sank.

"Go away with you, mother?"

"Yes. I have arranged with the headmistress—"

"But, mother! My lessons—"

"They tell me you are very well up in the work. It looks as if you have been studying much too hard—"

"She always is stuffing her head with books. mother," put in Cora. "I've told her!"

Mrs. Grandways nodded.

"As soon as you have had tea, Judith, you will go and pack a bag. I am taking you with me for the rest of the little tour, and surely you will enjoy that?"

"But I—oh, of course, mother, it's kind of you, and I—I ought to love going; but—"

"Did you ever know such a misery, mother?" laughed Cora. "That's how she always is! Doesn't matter what you do for her!"

"Well, anyhow, whether you wish it or not," Mrs. Grandways said to Judith in a bridling tone, "you will do as I say. No argument! Let us have tea, so that we may be off at once."

"Where?" Judith could not help asking, in her secret dismay.

"Oh—the evenings are long; I may choose to drive on until it is dark. We can follow the coast road—into Cornwall, say."

Again Judith's heart missed a beat. It seemed to her that now she must cry out in frantic despair.

No use, all her endeavours to put things right for the Mindens whilst saving her own family from disgrace! The whole thing was being frustrated. Intentionally? Oh, not that, surely! But her mother's sudden whim about taking her away—it did mean that there was to be no chance to carry out her plan.

There was to be no chance, now, of going to that spot where the stolen notebook was hidden!

"So make a good tea, Judy," grinned Cora, as they all three sat down. "You may be a hundred miles from Morcove before you get your next meal!"

A hundred miles! If only—oh, if only there had been some warning, so that she could have gone to get the notebook at dinner-time, say! Then she could have taken it away with her, and could have sent it off in some discreet way to Mr. Minden. But she was to be whirled off like this, forced to leave the notebook behind in its hiding-place! It would be safe there, but the delay!

And every hour's delay meant so much more grief for the Mindens!

Whirled Away!

THE hasty meal over, Judith was told to go and get ready at once.

"And I'll come with you, to help you pack!" Cora offered, jumping up to follow her out of the study.

"Yes, Cora, just look after her," Mrs. Grandways approved, coldly. "And meet me down at the car in ten minutes. I will go and say good-bye to the headmistress in the meantime."

Judith was biting a lip white in her anxiety and

dismay as she drifted away, attended by her sister. "What am I to do?" she was asking herself.

There was one moment when she felt that the only answer to that was: "Run to Madge and tell her everything! Tell her where she can find the notebook, and how it comes to be there! No use; you cannot do all that you hoped!"

But still her undying loyalty to her own people revolted against an out-and-out disclosure. Was the whole truth, involving Cora, even if it did not involve other members of the family, to be made known now—now, at a time when cried out himself was in the school? "Something other out within the tormented girl: "Not that!"

Cora helped her to rout out a Grandways' portmanteau from the trunk-room, and then to get it packed—the work of a few minutes. They were carrying it downstairs between them, when various Form-mates appeared, voicing their surprise.

"What, going away, Judy!"

"Yes, she's going for a change of air, with mother," Cora snappishly stated. "And high time, too, I reckon, the trial she has been to me lately!"

The juniors, looking at Judith, became filled with friendly concern, she was so pale.

"We didn't know you were not feeling well, Judy!"

"Oh, I—I'm all right. Good-bye, all of you! Mother is waiting."

Waiting outside, even now, to drive away at once with her!

More girls appeared, replacing those who had gone away, commenting on Judith's looks and rejoicing at the treat she was to have, anyhow. She saw Betty, and Polly—saw most of the Study 12 chums, forming the usual batch. Then she was aware of Madge Minden, and of that girl's surprised cry:

"Judy—going away?"

"Yes, Madge, and so—I mean—"

"Oh, come on; don't stand, gassing!" snapped Cora. "Come on, Judy!"

"Good-bye, then, Judy!" Madge called out with the others. "Hope you have a nice time!"

Then she encountered Miss Everard, who smiled and pressed her hand.

"Good-bye, Judith. Have a happy time, and come back in a few days feeling all the better for it."

Then she was with her mother, at the car. Judith got in behind, whilst Mrs. Grandways resumed her seat at the wheel.

"Well, so long, Misery!" grinned Cora, after handing in the one bit of luggage. "Cheero, mother—and don't be in a hurry to send her back!"

"You shouldn't say such things, Cora," the mother smiled coldly, and then kissed her elder daughter in a careless, farewell manner. "Good-bye!"

And the car glided away.

It gathered speed and was quickly gone from the great school and its scores of girls. The fat tyres purred over the main road, and Judith was tragically aware of being whirled close by the very spot where she had hidden the notebook.

Then they topped a rise, from which they had a wide view over the moorland, and she saw that the Elswicks' motor-caravans were still at the same spot, a mile or so away.

Those people had not gone, then! After all, her ultimatum had been defied! And why?

Was it that the Elswicks knew that mother would be suddenly fetching her away like this? They and Cora—were they going to search for the notebook whilst she was off the scene?

Such were the agitating thoughts that coursed through the poor girl's mind as she was whirled onwards.

The car raced along in the sunshine. Mrs. Grandways, an expert and keen motorist, drove at a great pace.

And behind her sat that younger daughter, white-faced and wild-eyed, thinking of Madge and that girl's father, and of what might happen in her absence!

At dusk, and just before the bell for prayers, Madge Minden sauntered into Study 12, to complete the usual band of chums.

"I am very sorry to hear about Judy Grandways," she remarked feelingly. "I mean, her being run down. She has been awfully kind to me over dad's loss."

"Talking of which—any news?" asked Betty eagerly.

"No," was the rueful answer; "not a scrap!"

Then Polly spoke:

"Much as I like Judy Grandways, girls, I can't worry about her to-night. She'll soon be herself again. It's you, Madge dear—you and your father!"

"Yes, wather!"

"Bekas—?"

"Hark!" said Betty, with a raised finger.

Someone was going by in the corridor, whistling jauntily.

"Cora Grandways," grimaced Polly. "She isn't exactly down in the dumps, without her sister. She wouldn't be!"

A door round the corner slammed; then they could hear Cora even singing a snatch of song, she was so light-hearted.

"If you ask me," frowned Betty, "Cora seems to feel very bucked up about something to-night. And so I wonder—why?"

(END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.)

What is to happen to the notebook which contains the secret of Madge Minden's father, now? Will it fall into Cora's hands again, or will Madge somehow come upon it in time? You must not miss reading next week's great complete Mercove story to learn, so order next Tuesday's SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN at once!

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