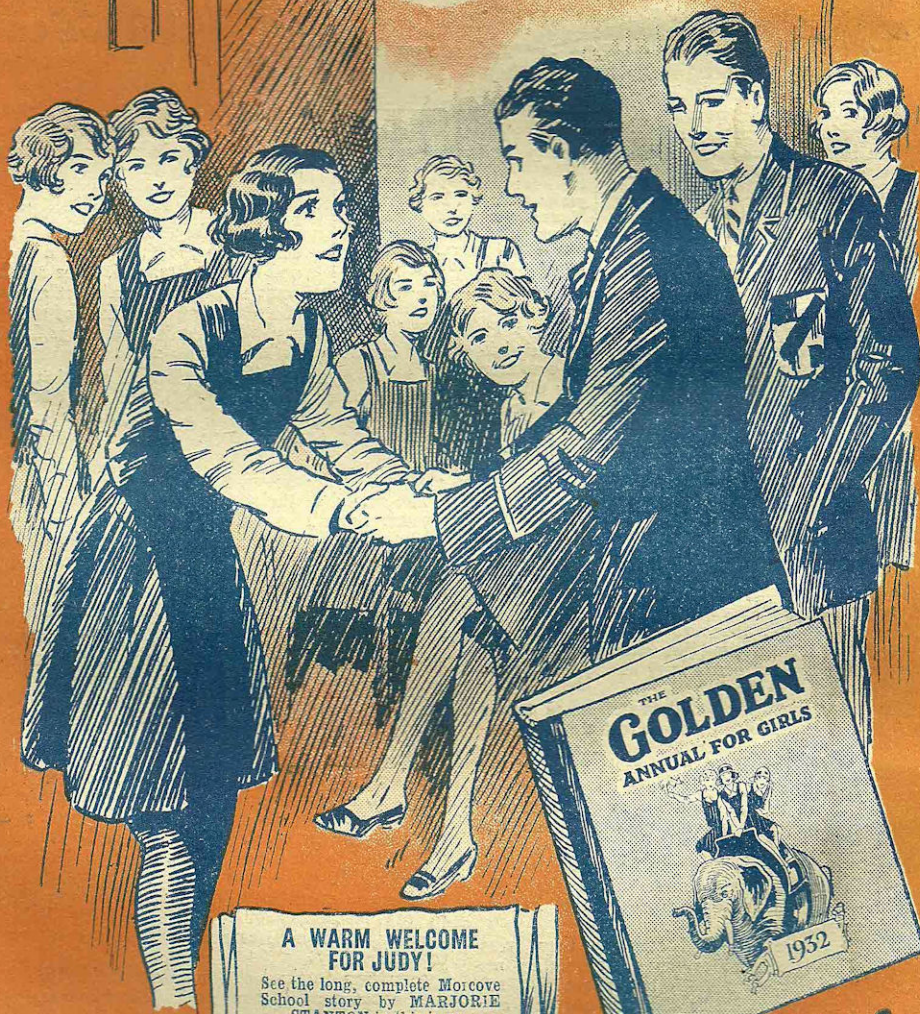


LONG, COMPLETE TALE of MORCOVE SCHOOL WITHIN!

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2^d



**A WARM WELCOME
FOR JUDY!**

See the long, complete Morcove
School story by MARJORIE
STANTON in this issue.

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4/6**

An Appealing, Long Complete Story of Morcove School, Featuring Judith Grandways and the Chums of Study 12.

Hetty Lets Out the Secret!



After the Match!
MORCOVE'S Fourth-Form hockey team had won its "away" game against Barncombe House School. So it was now celebrating its victory by having tea at the Barncombe Creamery!

Betty Barton, captain of the Form, had said a gay: "Come on, girls; let's turn in here!" Whereby she had implied that her joyous schoolmates and chums must consider themselves her guests.

As for all the bicycles, they were parked as usual in the bakehouse yard, so that passers-by in the quaint old High Street had no idea what a lively scene there was in the tea-room at the back of the fine shop, with several waitresses quite on the rush, and such a chatter-chatter!

Two boys, wearing the Grangemoor colours, knew nothing of what was going on inside the popular rendezvous as they alighted from their machines outside the teashop.

It was a scene, however, which both boys took in and under-

For the sake of keeping the peace with her utterly selfish sister, Judy Grandways has to deny herself all the pleasures dear to every schoolgirl. She would love to join in the Form's high-spirited fun, but she knows what the result would be: quarrels, "rows," and unsisterly "scenes"! But if only Judith had known Hetty Curzon's secret! What a difference that would have made to her unhappy life at school!

stood at the first glance, after passing inside; and Jack Linton said to his great chum, Dave Lawder:

"Hallo, do you see this, Dave? D'you see who's here! Methinks I hear the sound of girlish glee!"

Dave gave his quiet smile. He could tell that Jack was going to descend upon the jolly tea-party, which included his, Jack's, own madcap

sister Polly, demanding explanations in the right playful manner.

"And what," inquired Jack, reaching the happy gathering a couple of moments later, "does this mean, pray?"

"Go away and order your own," his sister Folly bade him firmly. "No gate-crashers allowed. We might find room for Dave, though!"

"You girls do yourselves well, I must say,"

Jack commented on the laden plates. "Do you see this, Dave?"

Quiet Dave did not respond. He was busy returning smiles of welcome from one Morcovian and another.

BY
MARJORIE STANTON

"Hot tea-cakes!" remarked Jack. "Buttered toast, sandwiches, Swiss-roll, cream-buns! These days!"

"Bekas we have ze appertites!" shrilled that dusky imp, Naomer Nakara, who was girl-queen of Nakara in North Africa.

"I am very glad you have the money, too," sighed Jack. "Any chance of a—"

"No!" said Polly implacably.

"Yes, bekas—shift up ze bit, Paula—"

"Wowp! Not so wough, Naomer!" protested that elegant junior, Paula Creel, after an elbow in the ribs. "There, is that Bettah, bai Jove?"

Jack came back with two chairs, and placed them for himself and his chum.

"Anyone would think you girls had won a match or something!"

"We have won—"

"What!" He affected his great astonishment. "Do you hear that, Dave?"

"Let's see!" cried Betty, who had the teapot. "It's sugar for both?"

"And, queek," said Naomer, "what will you boys have?"

Jack made his eyes bulge.

"What, are we allowed to choose?"

"You are allowed everyzink!"

Polly was still keeping up the sisterly pretence of resenting her brother's intrusion. She did this by being most gracious towards Dave, now that he was seated next to her.

"Well, Dave!"

He accepted the cup that came along to him with a nod; and accepted offered tea-cakes with another nod.

"He doesn't speak," complained Polly despairingly. "If I must have a brother, I do think I might have one who chooses a sociable chum."

"We chaps, no time for talk," said Jack.

"Not when you go at your tea like that, Jack!"

There were peals of merriment, which did not diminish when Jack conferred a slighting glance upon his sister.

"We chaps work; that's what you don't understand, Polly. None of your Study 12 frivolity for serious fellows like Dave and me. You girls should have been at Grangemoor this week!"

"We would rather have been where we were—at Morcove," declared Polly. "Work—so you should! It's what boys are meant to do at school. And you don't look bad on it, either!"

She turned again to Dave, to find him smiling at a certain girl who was sitting opposite him.

"Yes, Dave, we've got Judith Grandways with us this afternoon!" was the madcap's hearty comment. "We actually got her to join us at tea for once!"

"I was thinking," Dave said, still meeting Judith's eyes across the table; "pleasant surprise."

The rest had become very attentive. For once Dave had let them know what he was thinking! But he had dried up again already.

"And Judy Grandways helped wonderfully in the match," spoke Betty Barton. "Played a wonderful game, didn't she, girls?"

"She did!" was the chorus.

"And she ought to do this sort of thing more often," Polly rejoined. "Mix more with all of us!"

"Yes, wather!"

"Bekas, eet is a jolly rotten life you have, Judy, with that sister of yours. We know—"

"Any more tea, anyway?" Betty inquired, for Naomer's tongue, as usual, was running away with her. "There's heaps more!"

All tongues were let loose now, except Dave's, perhaps. But then, nobody ever expected him to say anything. In his case, the ability to pay polite attention to several girls at the same time, and to let his quiet smile show how he relished all the nonsense-talk, made him just as welcome as was lively Jack.

Activities at Morcove; activities at Grangemoor; games, and club doings, and the coming Christmas "hols"—all were chatted about in turn. Even Judith Grandways was quite vivacious this afternoon—a thing so remarkable that it actually drew another comment from Dave after the rise from table.

"Glad you had Judith with you all," he said softly to Polly, on the pavement outside the tea-shop. "It's done her good!"

"She might be a different girl altogether," was Polly's response, "if only her sister Cora didn't lead her such a life. Naomer shouldn't have mentioned it at tea just now; but—well, you know, Dave, what it is!"

He nodded. Some of the girls had already gone round to the bakehouse yard to secure their machines. Jack was still in the shop, paying for all, as he and Dave had, of course, insisted.

Judith was amongst those girls who had scampered round *tea*-the yard.

"We had an awful job in getting her to join us for tea," Polly told Dave. "But we just wouldn't take no this time."

"She's a good sort, Polly."

"Isn't she? We all feel awful sorry for her at Morcove. But perhaps you know, Dave. You generally know everything. Well, good-bye, and best of luck!"

Jack came out of the tea-shop, just then.

"I feel better!" he announced. "Well, it's been a great treat, Polly—although you were there. Ta-ta, old thing! Put in a word for me when you write home. Say I'm hoping for a remittance—always hoping!"

"The week after next—the hols!" rejoiced Polly.

She sped away to get her machine, and Jack and Dave were left to say good-bye to the other girls, as they came back in twos and threes.

And now Judith Grandways showed how unused she was to being one amongst so many light-hearted juniors. Her good-bye to Jack and Dave was totally different from the easy-goingness which marked other girls' parting remarks. Those others had had so much to do with the two boys; she had not.

It would not have been jolly Jack to let the good-bye be anything but a merry one; but when Judith turned to Dave it was a case of one rather shy and serious nature meeting another.

"Good-bye, Dave Lawder?" she smiled simply. Dave had a very attractive smile; and he smiled now.

"Bye, Judy! So glad. And if I don't see you again before Christmas—"

A look said the rest. "Ah, Christmas!" murmured Judith; and a light seemed to pass across her face and be gone again instantly. "I hope you have a happy time, too. Well"—smiling again—"I must be off, or Cora will wonder what on earth's become of me."

"Er—Judy—"

She paused in the act of mounting her machine. "Send you a card at Christmas—may I?"

"Oh, I'd like one, Dave! But—why should you?"

"I don't know."

But he did know. Only, as usual, Dave was not going to say!

What Does Hetty Know?

CRASH, crash, bash—crash! Thus, more or less, bicycles were being slammed away by Betty & Co., half an hour later, in the shed at Morcove School set apart for this purpose.

"Bekas—we are ze girls of Morcove School!" sang Naomer, looking well-warmed up after the ride home from Barncombe. "So, altogether, bekas we won, we won, hurrah!"

"Behave!" cried madcap Polly, giving the dusky one a severe look, and then dashing off as madly as anybody. "Hooray, only a week and then the hols!"

"Yes, wather, great wejoiings!"

Into the great schoolhouse they stormed; out of the dreary half-light of the dying winter's day into all the warmth and brightness of the school they loved. Miss Everard, their Form-mistress, appeared whilst the juniors were discarding hats and coats. "A wiu? Well done!"

"But not too much noise, girls, as you go up!"

"Right-ho, Miss Everard!" was the general promise—lightly given and promptly broken.

The Fourth Form hockeyists had to let the Fifth Form know—and the high and mighty Sixth, for that matter—the word defeat was unknown to them. They won their matches, they did!

So there was much pounding upstairs and banging of study-doors all down the Fourth Form corridor.

Last of all came Judith Grandways down that corridor—walking alone. Her step was light, her face suffused with a look of happiness rare for her.

The study which she shared with her sister Cora and another girl—Hetty Curzon—was round a corner, all by itself. As Judith turned aside into the lobby much of the hubbub became inaudible, and she heard instead her sister and Hetty chatting in the study.

Quietly she let herself in, at once noticing a tea-table which had been laid all anyhow. Cora and Hetty had finished tea some time ago and were sitting away from the table—sprawling at ease, that is to say, in arm-chairs.

"Here she is!" said Cora, as if they had been talking about Judith. "At last! What do you mean by it, Judy?"

"You know I was in the team for this afternoon—"

"That's no answer!" flared up Cora. "Where have you been all this time? Instead of being back so as to get tea for Hetty and me! Did I say you might stay out like this?"

"You could hardly call it staying out, Cora," submitted Judith gently. "We're none of us late. Only, the others decided to have tea at the Creamery."

"And you stayed on with them!"

Cora turned to Hetty, whose very smile was enough to encourage a nagging of Judith.

"She's been hanging about with the Form captain and her lot! What do you think of that for the latest?"

"I don't see that it is anything to complain about, Cora," said Judith quickly. "How often do I go out?"

"We wanted our tea, and it wasn't there, ready for us!" seethed the elder sister, shaking a pointing hand at the tea-things, now waiting to be cleared away. "We had to lay it ourselves!"

"Well, that didn't hurt you for once, did it?" said Judith, with a pleasant smile; but Cora was not to be won round.

"Don't you start this game, Judy!" came as viciously as before. "You're a nice sister, you are! When you know very well that I can't stick Betty or any of them!"

"If I'm wanted to play in the team, Cora, then it's only right that I should—"

"Shut up! You know very well what I'm driving at! If you must be keen on games, like all those others, then I suppose nothing will stop you. But when it comes to going off to after-match tea-parties with Betty & Co., I say, No! Get that?"

Judith, biting a lip, shrugged and turned; and then her sister flew at her and spun her round so that they faced each other again. Meanwhile, Hetty was so free from distress—was even so amused—that she could calmly dip into a box of chocolates and start stripping one of its silver paper.

"Well," panted Cora—for Judith was looking spirited now.



"Queek, what will you boys have?" shrilled Naomer. Jack Linton made his eyes bulge. "What! Are we allowed to choose!" he said in mock surprise. "Yes, you are allowed everyzink!" Naomer said generously.

"You had better be careful, Cora. I haven't come back, after thoroughly enjoying myself for once, to be upset by you. Let's forget it now."

"You talk like that to me! Then they have been setting you on to do that, have they? Advising you—I know—not to take any notice, even though I'm your sister!"

"Nothing of the sort," Judith dissented strenuously. "How can you pretend they are the sort of girls to do such a thing as that! They're much too sporting—"

"Oh, they're marvels, all of them, we know," sneered Cora. "The captain and her toadies—"

"Betty hasn't one toady."

"She'd like to have one in you! There's nothing she'd like better than to draw you away from me!"

"Absurd," Judith said; and she began to clear away the tea-things.

"Isn't it obvious, Hetty?" the elder sister appealed to that girl. "They have been getting at her this afternoon. Look at her now—the airs she is giving herself!"

"Really, Judy," said Hetty, with a false-sweet smile, "I do think you might consider your sister's feelings."

Then Judith set down the laden tray that she was going to take away.

"And you, Hetty Curzon—I think you might have the decency not to—not to try and make things worse than they are, between me and Cora."

"Wha-a-at!" screeched Cora.

"She's too fond of doing that," Judith turned to face her bullying sister again. "Goodness knows, there has always been rows enough, without any need for her to interfere on your side."

"On my side! Whose side should she be on? Yours? You've got Betty and that lot, haven't you?" flamed Cora. "So you've come back, determined for a row, have you?"

"No, Cora—you know jolly well I haven't! I hate scenes. How often have I given way—taken the unkindest things from you without a word, simply for the sake of peace," Judith said. "You're my sister. I have to remember that, and I say at least that I think Hetty might remember it, too. I'd be ashamed"—she turned upon seated Hetty—"to make strife between sisters!"

Cora fell back a step, pointing a hand scornfully at Judith.

"And that, Hetty, is the girl who has been out to tea with Betty & Co.—her sister's enemies!"

"They're not your enemies!" cried Judith indignantly. "It's you, Cora, it's you! And I do know this, matters have been a hundred times worse since Hetty came to Morcove, and—and—Oh, I won't say any more," she broke off. "Now, let's stop."

"When you've had all the say—huh!" sneered Cora. "Well, I'm very sorry I am your sister."

"So am I sometimes," broke from the younger one. Then she again set down the tray, this time to smear sudden tears from her eyes. "Oh," she pleaded, "for goodness' sake, let's have a bit of peace! I'm sorry. I—I—"

"Sorry you've got me for a sister! Go on, say it again!" panted Cora. "Well then, you can't be sorer than I am—there! You're nothing but a misery."

"You make me miserable. I could be happy," Judith gulped. "I am happy, with other girls."

"Then go to them, I don't care! Get out of

here, we don't want you," raged Cora, striding to the door to throw it wide open. "It's the same at home; it's what mother and father feel about you—I'm sure they do! They get sick of the sight of you! Get out!"

Insensate rage was possessing Cora now, she had to find a better outlet for it than her tongue could provide. Her sister was going out, with the tray, and suddenly she, Cora, took a high kick, sending tray and all clean out of Judith's hands.

Smash! Whang—clatter!

"And now clear up the mess!" was the fierce remark with which Cora, smiling savagely, turned her back.

Hetty went off into a fit of quiet laughter.

"Good job our study is where it is, Cora darling," she chuckled. "I don't know what they would say, if they heard, or knew, what goes on sometimes!"

"Who cares?" said Cora, treating kneeling Judith as non-existent now. "If I haven't an excuse—well!"

Silence ensued, except for Judith's hasty rattling of bits of broken crockery on to the tray. Hetty, lolling back in the armchair, could see how white Judith's face was; yet Hetty still only smiled.

As quickly as possible Judith had all the smashed and damaged tea-things gathered up from the carpet. She rose up and passed out, her white face quivering—and there was Betty Barton, looking half decided about coming into the study. So often the captain's intervention only made things worse for Judith.

"What is it now, Judy?"

"Oh—nothing, Betty. Don't go in—please!"

At this instant the door went slam! Cora had driven it shut with a kick.

"She'd better not come in," was her scowling remark. Then she laughed, noticing how Hetty smiled. "Am I just too awful, Hetty?"

"Oh, I can't very well blame you," was the bland reply. "Too bad of Judy to expect to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds."

"That's what I say! I've a good excuse!"

"Oh, yes, you have a good enough excuse, Cora. As strong as anybody could want," Hetty added, with a strange, musing smile, "if you only knew."

"Why, what do you mean?" jerked out Cora, her brows going up. "There's something I don't know, is there? Judy has been going behind my back more than I've been aware, is that it?"

Shaking her fair, pretty head, Hetty laughed. She was obviously amused.

"You're very—mysterious," exclaimed Cora pettishly. "Hetty, tell me—come on; tell me!"

"Oh, I couldn't!—No, I am not going to tell you, Cora. It wouldn't be right!"

So saying, Hetty jumped up, as if to seek a diversion; but in a moment she had her school-mate standing domineeringly in front of her.

"Now, Hetty, when you know what a good pal I am to you! You'll tell me—you must!"

"Cora, I just can't. At any rate, not now," was the less-provoking addition. "It's something that you would never, never guess; never dream of! And that's all I am going to say, so there!"

"But," gasped Cora, "that only makes it all the more—mysterious! Why can't I be told?"

"You'll probably be told before very long, Cora; the way things are going."

"There you are again! Oh, you're an idiot, Hetty, and really I don't see what there is to laugh about."

"I oughtn't to laugh, I know," sighed Hetty, becoming very demure in a moment. "For it is no laughing matter. And now I am going up to the attics to have a smoke on the quiet. You coming, too, Cora?"

"No! For I think you're a wretch not to tell me, Hetty!"

"Oh, all right!"

And, laughing again, Hetty Curzon whisked out of the room, in full enjoyment of this strange secret that she would not share with a soul!

A Schoolgirl's Sorrows!

JUDITH GRANDWAYS' turning up in the domestic regions of Morcove School with a damaged tray laden with smashed crockery caused some ac-

cident. She was going to seek a dust-bin outside, but one of the kitchen-maids eagerly offered to do everything for her.

"An accident, miss! Dear, dear, how unfortunate!"

Accident! Little did they suspect how much worse than a mishap the affair had been. Nothing less than a sister's temper—the same rage that had made a misery of her life, both at school and at home, for years on end.

"Thanks!" smiled Judith.

"You're welcome, miss. I'm sorry for you really!"

Judith turned back, thinking; they might well be sorry for her. Life was becoming harder for her every day at the hands of her sister.

No matter how she tried to please; no matter how much she gave in, it did not help in the least. Somehow or other Cora always found an excuse for making trouble.

"I've been no better than a fag to Cora and Hetty all this year—and yet I still can't be happy in my own way."

She drifted about the ground-floor of the school-house, where there were no other girls to encounter, for it was a sociable hour, and, of course, there were chummy gatherings in many a study upstairs.

"They all have their friends! But I—I daren't show my face where I would be welcome, without making life unbearable afterwards!"

She thought of Study 12 in particular. There, evening after evening, gathered some of the best girls in the Form—the most good-natured as they were, also some of the jolliest. If only she could go to Study 12 now. It would be: "Yes, come in, Judy! Have this chair!" And then to sit and listen to all the happy talk that was going on; to revel in such pleasant company, as she revelled in it this afternoon, at the tea-table in Barncombe.

Poor Judy Grandways! Her brain was still in a turmoil resulting from what had taken place just now. She seemed to hear, still, an echo of the violent crash of the tea-tray—a noise typifying



"Now clear up that mess!" shouted Cora Grandways angrily, quite oblivious of the fact that she had caused it. Judith stood white-faced, while Hetty Curzon went off into a fit of laughter.

all the violence and turmoil that her sister gloried in.

Presently she found herself at the threshold of the Fourth Form class-room. It was deserted, only one light switched on, the windows open at the top to give the great room its nightly airing. Very likely no one would come down to this class-room this evening. Being Saturday evening, there was no "prep.," and so even a school-book was not likely to be wanted that had been left behind at the dismissal. Other girls had enough of the class-room during the week; they were not going to come near it in their free time. But she—

There it was; she could not help it, if it must be in this room or the library for her to pass away the time.

Judith drifted into the class-room. A weariness of spirit was upon her that made her seek her own seat amongst all the rows of deserted desks. She could tear a sheet from the end of some old exercise-book and kill time by writing home. The library was far more comfortable; but there might be a few girls there, reading or writing, and Judy wanted to be alone.

Ah, but how awful it was; what a thing to try and keep from others as much as possible—this constant, dreadful strife! There were girls in the Form who did not always hit it off together. But strife between sisters!

She rummaged out pen and paper and wrote the school's address, then began:

"Dear Mother—"

After that, however, her pen rested. She stared dully at the two words, realising how even they fell short of the accepted idea of things. Other girls, she knew, began their letters for home much more affectionately. There might be flippancy, but the very flippancy evidenced adoring love. "Dear mother—" Formal—cold! And yet how else could she address herself to one who had never been anything else to her but just that?

Judith laid down her pen and thumped both elbows upon the desk, to rest her chin between clenched hands. Her mind was refusing to give itself to letter-writing. It was straying back to this afternoon—the hockey match, and herself a member of the team. It had been such a grand, such a lovely game—a battle royal, and her side the winner. Then the tea-party at The Creamery—what a treat that had been to her!

Nothing, as the saying was, for other girls to "write home about"! To them, it was just an ordinary happy incident in their life at school. But to her it had been a golden hour that would remain a golden memory.

Such a spirit of friendship, Betty and the rest so glad to have her; then the unexpected appearance of Jack Linton and Dave Lawder. How fast the fun had gone then, with Jack as a foil for his madcap sister!

And Dave—quiet Dave, with his way of looking right into you, as if he did not want you to talk; he could read you—easily! All that was in your mind, anything that was lying heavily upon your heart.

And Dave had promised to send her a card at Christmas. He had asked, in his serious way, if he might. Knowing that she would be at home then, which meant being still with her harsh sister, but with this great difference—she would be away from friendly schoolmates.

Christmas! It was close at hand now. The week after next the end of Term, and so home to the sort of Christmas that it always was—at home. A tremendous display of the family's wealth, lots of grand parties at home, and a going out to other parties with Cora and Hetty. For Hetty Curzon was quite a member of the family—"more like a sister to Cora than I am now!" Not only so, but dad and mother seemed to find in Hetty something that they missed in her, Judith. Strange, but so it was.

Suddenly she hid her face in her hands and sobbed aloud. Those words that Cora had used, just now—unkindest words of all! "Mother and father—they get sick of the sight of you!"

Words that could have been forgotten soon, perhaps, as being only the outcome of frothy rage; but they were true, they were true! It had been getting like that at home lately—more and more so, every time she went home. Mother and father, colder, more distant, harder to please. Cora, basking always in the smiles of their approval; Hetty Curzon even the same! "But I—they don't even seem to like me—"

And so, for her, Christmas was to mean—What else could it mean but being a kind of Cinderella at the hearth? Not left at home, perhaps, whilst others went to the parties; but at those parties—made to feel just as she was made to feel here at school! Uncomfortable, ashamed, and always Cora's nagging to put up with; every days full of upsets!

"It can't go on!" was Judith's inward cry to herself. "And yet it must! I'm her sister, her sister! To keep the peace I must go on with it!"

The tears trickled through her fingers as she sat there in the dim and otherwise deserted classroom, both hands hiding her stricken looks. At last she was weeping as she had never wept before. It seemed to her that something had happened to-day that had brought the trouble to a head.

She had allowed herself, for once, to mingle happily with others, only to have it made clear to her, afterwards, that such joys were not for her.

"The one thing I hate more than anything else—these rows with Cora. Yet for every moment I do spend with girls like Betty and Polly, it means a quarrel. Oh, I wish—I wish—"

But now, suddenly, there fell a hand upon her bowed shoulders, startling her greatly. Her head went up, exposing her face in all its tearfulness to the compassionate eyes of a girl who had entered so silently as to take Judith quite by surprise. It was the Form captain.

"Judy?"

"Betty," she faltered back, in great confusion. "Oh, I—I—I didn't want to be seen, like this."

"This is too bad," said Betty. "I knew there had been another upset. You should have come to Study 12, Judy."

"Ah, I couldn't, Betty! Why should you be bothered with me? The kinder you are, the more I feel bound to keep away."

"Will you come now?"

"No! No, Betty—"

"Do, Judy. And try to forget for a little while—"

"No! It can do no good; oh, it only makes things worse, Betty. Go back to your chums—"

"Judy, I can't. I have been thinking about you all the time. What a rotten shame it all is! You're not getting a chance of happiness these days."

Judith conquered her misery by a visible effort. Keeping silent, she at last took up the sheet of paper which bore only those two words, "Dear Mother," and tore it in two.

"Why, don't you feel you can tell even—" was the surprised comment by Betty, and then she stopped. After a turn about the open part of the class-room, whilst Judith was dropping the scraps of paper into a basket, the captain resumed:

"Judy, it may seem an unusual suggestion, but don't let it offend you. I wouldn't dream of making it, only I can't bear to see you going on like this. Shall I—write to your mother?"

"You!"

"Let me, will you, Judy? After all—surely Mrs. Grandways, if she knew—"

"Oh, no, Betty—no!" was Judith's agitated whisper. "Don't dream of doing such a thing—please! It's like you to be so awfully kind; but—promise, promise me, won't you?"

"Of course, Judy, unless you wanted me to—"

"It would never do," she sighed. "Think how Cora would take it! Oh, I must just go on, that's all, Betty. It always comes back to that, you know; I must go on. And there is nothing any of you girls can do; nothing anybody can do. I am going upstairs again now. Perhaps I can get Cora to—agree to a fresh start on both sides."

A look entreated Betty not to offer to accompany the broken-hearted girl upstairs, and so they

parted, the captain gazing sadly after Judith as she went away.

A Warning to Hetty!

"HETTY—"
"Well?"

Fair-haired Hetty, standing with Cora in a pitch-dark attic, had to remove a cigarette from her lips to make the whispered response.

"I do think you might tell me, Hetty!"

"Oh, be quiet, Cora, there's a dear. Now I wish I hadn't said anything!"

"But—"

"Sh! We shall be caught, if you're not more careful."

"Who cares!"

Cora, after all, had joined her partner in this out-of-the-way attic where many a "gasper" had been smoked in secret before to-night. The two girls did it simply because they liked to think of it as a stolen pleasure. The stealing to the attic and then the stealing out again—it all seemed a great "lark" to them.

New Hetty had smoked her second cigarette down to its end. She dropped the glowing stub and trod upon it, whilst Cora whiffed away quickly, wanting to get finished with hers first.

In a few moments Cora dropped hers and trod it out.

"Yes, let's go down, Hetty. You pick up the ends to get rid of them."

Hetty did so. She did such things at times for Cora. After all, it paid to be "obliging." Hetty was in clover these days, Mr. and Mrs. Grandways having reasons for treating her as one of the family.

When the arrangement first started, she had been treated to constant reminders that there was charity in it; but all that had stopped now. That was what it meant to have played one's cards so well—although the cards were not all played yet. Hetty still had one more—up her sleeve!

Stealthily the one miscreant made her exit from the attic, to be followed a moment afterwards by the other. Then Cora craftily suggested:

"You come along later, Hetty. We don't want to go down together."

"Right-ho!" the fair head nodded.

So handsome Cora warily descended, alone, to the dormitory floor, when she could throw off all caution. A mincing step, to which she hummed a tune, took her to the Fourth Form dormitory, where she brushed her teeth and rinsed her mouth, to be rid of the taint of tobacco-smoke.

That done, she spent a minute in front of one of the dressing-table mirrors, admiring herself as she ran a comb through her glossy hair. At times she thought Hetty so awfully pretty, Cora had to take an extra-careful look at herself, to make sure that the balance of looks was still in her favour.

She was left in no doubt about the superiority of her looks now.

For the mirror had certainly shown her a face whose beauty depended a great deal upon fiery-flashing eyes and a striking expression.

Regaining the Fourth Form corridor, Cora whistled the tune she had been humming. Study 12 was one of the last she went by, and she noticed a pause in the talk going on in there—as if they knew it was she and had been talking about her. Well, let them talk! She didn't care what they said, or what they thought of her way of treating Judith.

"Misery! So there you are again, eh?" grinned Cora, as she flaunted into her own study. "Well, Face-ache, got over your tempers?"

She kicked the door shut behind her, and then yawned in a bored way.

"How glad I'll be when term is over. Morcové is a beastly hole. It's positively—poisonous!"

"Yes, the hole will soon be here now," Judith responded quietly. "And then—Christmas. Cora"—rising suddenly—"do let's remember that Christmas will soon be here."

"As if I'm likely to forget! You don't know how I am counting the hours! Parties, dances, pantos! See if I don't have more of a fling than ever—and no more Morcové for a bit, anyhow!"

She suddenly stopped her exultant grinning to stare at Judith, who was waiting to say something serious.

"Well?"

"Cora—Cora dear—"

"Cora, dear-r-r"! And just now you were saying—"

"I know I was, Cora, and I'm sorry. Perhaps I did provoke you, and so will you?—I mean, if only because Christmas is coming, when we all ought to—"

"Oh, help—don't start preaching! That I simply can't stand. I'd far rather you said more unkind things," jeered Cora. "About wishing you weren't my sister, you heartless, wicked girl!"

"But," Judith persisted, with pathetic desperation, "seriously, Cora, can't we make up our minds—after what happened just now? No more quarrels? I'll try harder than ever—oh, I will, Cora! If you will only remember that we are—sisters!"

"As you wish we weren't, don't you? That's right, look like a wet week! But what do you want, then—a sort of bargain? I don't know so much!" Cora smiled heartlessly. "I'll have to make conditions. You're not to have anything to do with Study 12, for example!"

"Oh, Cora—"

"I thought so! You can't consider my feelings. I must be always giving way to you. But I tell you again, I'll not have you siding with my enemies. So long as you go on doing that, you needn't come whining to me—or preaching. And

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there's another thing. You've been going behind my back!"

"Oh, Cora, I haven't!"

"You have! Hetty says that I'd be more disgusted with you than ever, if I knew what she knows!"

"About me? How can she say such a thing!" gasped Judith. "Oh, she is a horrid mischief-maker, if ever there was one! There's nothing that I'd be ashamed for you to know, Cora! It's beastly of Hetty to pretend—"

"You had better not let her hear you calling it pretence!"

"Has she said exactly what it is there is against me?" challenged Judith hotly.

"No, she hasn't. I wanted her to tell me, but she won't!" was the sulky answer. "But she did say, it's no laughing matter, so there!"

"Where is Hetty?" Judith cried furiously, rushing across to the door. "This settles it! The girl is simply doing her best to drive us further apart. Now I will speak my mind to Hetty—I will! Yes, it's you I'm talking about!"

Cora chuckled.

"Here's Judy, waiting to call you a liar, Hetty!"

With a smiling disdain that was just as cruel as anything that resentment could have inspired, Hetty with her hand on the door, said:

"She had far better go and get her bath. It's time for her batch now—the others are going along. And you know, Judy, what matron is if—"

"Oh!" Judith said frantically. It was maddening, not to be able to deal with this here and now; but this was what happened so often. She would have to be in time for that bit of school routine which now claimed her. To be late for baths was as bad as being late for class. Indeed, it was if anything a far more serious offence. Morcove had all the latest facilities, but the vast number of girls rendered a strict adherence to the time-table necessary.

Judith strode out of the study—but turned back.

"I'll see you in the morning, Hetty Curzon!"

"I'm afraid I shan't bother myself," was the disdainful retort which drew quite an admiring laugh from Cora.

"That's right, Hetty; don't you put up with it!"

Out in the lobby again, Judy took a moment for calming herself. She knew that she was white to the lips; could feel herself trembling. And now she was to hurry along and join other girls whose hour it was for baths, and only too well she knew what light moods they would be in.

They were! The mere fact that Polly, Naomer, and Paula were in the batch made it certain that there would be fun.

Not that Paula wanted it to be any occasion for "twinvolity." Paula, however, lent herself so well to affectionate teasing, she was if anything quite the centre of skittishness.

They were soon finished, and slipping off dressing-gowns to get dressed again. There was the usual grumbling over this latter business. The lucky ones were those whose turn would come at bedtime, for then there was no need for getting back into day clothes. Hardly a day passed at Morcove but what some girls tried to "swop" turns with those who would be bathing last thing at night. But Authority made it a very difficult thing to "wangle."

"And now," cried Naomer, in higher spirits than ever, when her toilette was completed, "for ze fresher! Come on, Paula!"

"Let me alone!"

Peals of laughter went up from others who were rushing to get dressed again.

"You don't look happy, Paula!"

"I am not," wailed the languid one. "I'm sure I've received a chill. The wretched showah was leaking, twickling cold water all down my back. And now my hair don't come dwy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Betty turned to Judith, to see if she was able to take any share in the merriment.

"How was the water when you went in, Judy? I came out like a boiled lobster!" chuckled the captain.

But next minute Betty was done with all levity. Others had scampered away, leaving her and Judith alone together in the room.

"Judy dear, I've been thinking about you," the captain resumed gravely. "There's one thing I can do—ought to do, in fact. It's not right for me, as captain, to allow a girl in my Form to go on like this. If I knew that one girl was being bullied from morning to night by another, it's my job to take action."

"She's my sister, Betty!"

"And that makes it very difficult, I know. Still, I've made up my mind. I shall give Cora final warning, if this goes on any more I shall see Miss Everard about it."

"Oh, Betty, don't go doing anything like that," was the earnest entreaty. "I'm sure it will do no good—only make Cora more your enemy—"

"That won't trouble me, Judy!"

"But it will only make her do things when no one's about. Besides," Judith urged softly, "I am doing something myself about it all. One thing I will not stand, any longer, and that is Hetty's part in it all. I can fight her, if I can't fight my own sister!" And Judith's eyes flashed.

The captain touched her admiringly on the shoulder.

"I get you, Judith! And I'm with you there—all the time."

"Ah, but I—I don't want you to—show yourself siding with me," Judith exclaimed. "Please, Betty, let me fight my own battle! I would far rather you did."

"But what's the use of a captain, at that rate!" Betty grimaced. "But at any rate, Judy, you know you can always count on me! And I won't give Cora away if I can help it!"

"It would all be so different," Judith mused aloud, "if Cora were not my sister. But you must see how it is, Betty. Even if anything you did could get—get the nagging and all that stopped at school, it would only be worse in the hols."

"I know!" frowned Betty. "Oh, I hadn't overlooked that either. It certainly is a wretched business. I mean, no one really can interfere between sisters!"

"I can assure you, Betty, if Cora were not my sister—then you would never need to worry about me," Judith remarked as spiritedly as before. "I would never have stood, for a single day, what I have had to put up with from Cora if—if she hadn't been my sister."

"Then all I can say is," finished Betty, "you deserve a far better one, Judy. Coming down now? Look here, come along with me to Study 12. The girls—"

"I don't think I will, Betty, thanks all the same. No, I had better not."

And so, once again, Judith Grandways, with all her sorrows, remained alone—apart from school-mates who would have gladly had her in their

midst. Once again there was a pleasure self-denied, Judith realising tragically that she must do nothing to draw others into all the strife.

Tickets for Two!

THERE was an irritating smile from Hetty Curzon for Judith, next morning, in the first moment that they were alone together.

Plainly Hetty was ready for anything that Judy might have to say to her, in fulfilment of her remark, last evening.

But it was Sunday, and somehow it seemed wrong to Judith to have any strife to-day. Ah, but what a shame it was that strife could ever exist in a place like Morcove School.

She stayed only long enough in the study to find something that she wanted, then went out. Not a word had passed between herself and Hetty, and doubtless that girl was highly amused at this "climb down."

"But let her wait," Judith said to herself. "When I do start, I shan't end in a hurry! To put up with my own sister is one thing; but I'm not going to put up with Hetty any longer—and I won't!"

Study 12's door was wide open as Judith sauntered by it. She glimpsed Betty and others—the usual lively throng, making the best of this pleasant hour between breakfast and the one service of the day. Some of them called out to her, invitingly:

"Judy!"

But no, she would not go in—dare not, if there was to be any avoidance of a scene marring their happy mood. At this very moment Cora was coming along from the stairs, looking pettish.

"Judy, I can't find my gloves for church! Where are they?"

"I don't know, Cora—"

"Well, find them! Look sharp!"

"Have you looked—"

"They're not where they should be, and why should I hunt round? Hurry up!"

Judith hastened away. Sunday, and yet it was to be just the same old strain of weekdays. What else could she do but allow herself to be bullied by her sister, when the alternative was strife that left her burning with shame! Other girls, if they did not always hit it off together, could at least have a truce sometimes. But from Cora's tongue there was no peace to be had, ever.

In the cloak-room downstairs Judith found an

outdoor coat of Cora's—hung upon a wrong peg—and she dived a hand into each pocket, seeking the gloves.

Schoolmates came and went with lightning speed, during those few moments, free from care, unflustered, exchanging chummy remarks. But the gloves were not there, and Judith had to find them in time, or there would be that flare up.

"You're not going to be late, Judith?"

"No, Miss Everard!"

The Form-mistress had sauntered up, to voice a brisking, but genial word, if necessary.

"We've got a most lovely Sunday, Judith, I'm sure—nearly the last one this term! But what's the trouble?"

"Nothing, Miss Everard.

I'm only looking for—for some gloves. I think they must be upstairs—"

"But," exclaimed the Form-mistress, and she stared hard at a tiny piece of pink paper lying upon the cloak-room floor, "w h a t ' s that?"

It lay almost at Judith's feet, yet Miss Everard was before Judith in stooping to pick it up.

"This, Judith—you see what it is?" came with a sudden sternness that made several other girls look round in the act of taking down their coats.

Between the ends of two fingers Miss Everard offered the piece of pink paper for inspection. The torn half of a cinema-ticket—the half that a seat-holder retains!

Judith's cheeks changed to a colour almost as pink as the incriminating piece of paper, then the high colour ebbed right away,

leaving her face paler than before.

"The Barncombe Cinema," said Miss Everard. "Who has been to the cinema with this ticket? Girls do not have a ticket each when they go with permission, in parties. The mistress in charge has all the tickets. I shall have to know the meaning of this!"

She was looking hard at Judith, standing close to a lot of coat-pegs where only one coat now hung. Cora's!

"That your coat, Judith?"

"Er—no—"

"No, it isn't, I can see! This is your sister's," realised the Form-mistress, handling it. "And so you were looking for Cora's gloves, were you, in the pockets?"

No answer from Judith!

Miss Everard dived a hand into one pocket, and



Feeling a gentle hand on her shoulder, Judith looked up, her eyes brimming with tears. "Oh Betty," she sobbed, "I didn't want you to see me like this!"

drew out an exactly similar scrap of pink paper, but more crumpled. It had been more snugly caught in the lining.

"Another!"

With that one shocked word, the Form-mistress went away, and Judith found herself following the mistress upstairs—along the Fourth Form corridor—round into the lobby at the far end—and so into the study where Cora and Hetty were chatting together, lolling in armchairs.

"You girls," said Miss Everard, with bracing sharpness, "will you please stand when a mistress comes in? Thank you! And now—what about these?"

She showed the two halves of the tickets.

"Yes, look at them! They came out of your coat-pocket, Cora Grandways. Now I only wish to know—did you have Hetty Curzon with you when you went to the cinema without permission, or was it your sister?"

"But—but we've never been to the cinema without permission!" burst out Cora glibly. "Have we, Hetty?"

"That," said Miss Everard, "whilst it makes it all the worse, Cora—for it is a falsehood! It leaves me in no doubt. You had Hetty with you. Very well, to-morrow morning you will both go to the headmistress."

"But, Miss Everard—"

"No more now. It is almost time for service." And the Form-mistress walked out.

Instantly, Cora made one of her silent rushes of great fury, seized her sister, and shook her. She went on shaking her until Judith's head must have been swimming, whilst the hissing whispers came:

"So that's how you hit back at me over yesterday, is it, you little wretch, you sneak! And the tickets were not in my coat—they were not! It's a rotten trick—"

"Cora!" gasped her sister, trying not to fall from sheer giddiness. "Be quiet, be quiet! Oh—"

"No, I won't leave off!" panted the elder girl. "I'll teach you to get me into rows like this! I'll—"

"Here, that's enough!" struck in the voice of Betty Barton. "Now you'll come with me, Cora."

That girl let go of her sister to start trying to writhe and wriggle free from the captain, who held her fast. It was a scene of intense fury, for even Betty, although she was keeping calm, had to wrestle desperately.

"You're coming with me, Cora!"

"I'm not! Get away! Betty Barton—"

"You're coming with me!"

Nor was it a couple of moments before Cora found herself being hustled round into the main corridor—where Miss Everard was turning back, to know the meaning of the noise!

Somebody's Mother!

"NOW what's the matter, Betty? This disgraceful commotion!"

"I'm sorry, Miss Everard," the captain answered breathlessly. She had released Cora; the pair of them were flicking hair and clothes to rights. "I have to report Cora at last. It's no use; she can't go on any longer, making her sister's life a misery!"

Miss Everard bridled still more. She fixed stern eyes upon Cora, who, shrugging, turned to walk away, muttering.

"Come back, Cora! Stand there! Now, Betty?"

"She bullies Judith from morning to night.

For a long time I've been worried about it all. The whole Form knows that poor Judy doesn't know a moment's happiness!"

"Yes, bekas—"

But Naomer's eager interruption was cut short by Polly, who clapped a hand over the dusky one's mouth. Naomer and Polly were amongst those who now formed quite a big crowd in the corridor.

"Judith hasn't wanted me to speak to you about it, Miss Everard. But the way Cora flew at Judith just then— Oh, it can't go on!" Betty protested hotly.

"I should think not, indeed! One sister bullying another!" cried Miss Everard, looking greatly shocked. "Very well, Betty; that is quite enough for the present, but thank you for bringing it to my notice. Cora, there will be a full inquiry into this also in the morning. Now, all of you, don't stand about. If you are ready for service, go down."

Most of them, however, were far from being ready, and there was a general hurrying back to studies, to get hymn-books and, in many cases, hunt for needle and thread to make loose buttons fast. Moreover, on Sunday morning, was inspected in proper church-parade manner.

"Yes, well," said Pam Willoughby, rejoicing the captain and others in Study 12. "I'm very glad you've done it at last, Betty!"

"High time!" agreed Polly heartily.

"Yes, wather!" Paula was chiming in, when the head of Cora Grandways came round the edge of the door.

"You wait!" she hissed at Betty.

Ignoring this, Betty picked up her gloves.

"Come on down, girls! Out of the way, please," she said to Cora, as if only now noticing her; and then Cora drew back, leaving the doorway clear.

"Where's Judy?" Betty wondered aloud, in the corridor.

There were girls ready to call out that Judith had run upstairs. So Betty, with a meaning nod to Polly and the rest, ran off. In the dormitory on the floor above she came upon Judith hurriedly putting away a handkerchief after crying.

"Never mind, Judy dear. Perhaps things will be better for you after this."

"How I wish you hadn't, Betty!" was the tearful comment. "You know what I said last night."

"Just couldn't help doing what I did. I say, Judy, Polly and the rest are waiting below. Won't you come with us?"

"Oh, Betty, that would be great!" said Judith, and her lashes glistened again.

She was at service with the rest of the girls, and the organ was fluting, there were rainbow lights shining from stained-glass windows, and in a moment all would be standing to sing.

Moment for Judith to feel again most poignantly the sweetness and grace of life that other girls could help to make, and yet be such a boisterous, jolly lot at other times! Whilst she and Cora—sisters, and yet there was never anything but strife. Always ill-nature and malice to make life so different from what others found it to be!

The singing started, but Judith's voice could not join in. Betty and Polly had put her between them in this pew, this morning—and oh, how Judith appreciated the kindness of that action! That it should be necessary—their support for her,

when a sister was the cause! That she and Cora should not be sitting together—even here!

It was in the middle of the short winter's afternoon, and Judith was taking a saunter round the school grounds—alone. The sun was sinking redly and early towards the level horizon of the sea; robins were trilling sweetly in the shrubberies. And whichever way she looked she could see schoolmates strolling about in chummy batches. Again, a moment for her to feel what a lot there was in life that was good—and to her it was denied.

They were sure to be talking about the coming "hols.," those other girls. Holidays—Christmas! If there had been the faintest hope that some sort of a truce might be patched up, it was gone now. After what had happened this morning, Cora would be all the worse towards her in the holidays.

Nor did home offer any equivalent of a protecting influence like that of the headmistress. It was terrible to have to realise that mother and dad, at home, didn't appear to care; but so it was. "They're not like real parents to me," Judy could not help summing up so many past experiences.

She drifted further from the schoolhouse, although it could soon be time to go in to tea. Already many of the other girls were trending towards the porch, chatting animatedly the while. But then, they had studies to go up to, where tea could be all the nicer and more leisurely, this afternoon.

Soon she was the only girl still staying out of doors. The loneliness of the broad playing-fields and the gloom of the departing day were hers, as loneliness and gloom seemed fated to be her lot in life. Yet the alternative—going indoors, up to that study which held Cora and Hetty—was one that made her even glad to be out here in the waning light. At least she was being left in peace.

"And I wouldn't mind staying on at Morcove after the school has broken up," ran her sorrowful mind. "I'd rather be here than at home. How is it, I wonder, that I don't seem to belong at home? What Cora said yesterday, and I can't help feeling it's true! 'They're sick of the sight of you!'"

Her musings ended there, abruptly, and she turned round on the dewy grass, for someone had come up behind her, voicing a gentle:

"Excuse me—"

Judith felt a little startled. This was a well-dressed woman who had come across from the gateway; a total stranger, smiling apologetically, yet blended with the smile there seemed to be a serious, wistful look.

"I have run out of petrol," the lady explained, and gestured that her car was standing not far from the school gateway. "Can you tell me, please, the nearest place where I could get a fill-up?"

"There is nowhere nearer than Barncombe," Judith answered. "But I dare say they would let you have some at the school garage. In fact, I'm sure they could!"

"Just enough to get me into Barncombe? That would be a relief," was the fervent comment. "I'm afraid I've been losing my bearings altogether in the last hour or two. I'm a complete stranger to this district. But I hate to bother anyone."

"If you'll come with me?" said Judith. "I'm sure there is no need to ask permission at the schoolhouse. It has happened before, you know, and Miss Somerfield—our headmistress—has gladly come to the rescue. We'll go straight to the garage, shall we? This way!"

"Thank you so much! But am I keeping you—away from your tea? You're the only girl out here!"

"I'd like to arrange it for you," said Judith, smiling for the first time that day.

She was stepping brightly all at once, feeling cheered by this stranger's presence at her side. In a curious way she felt quite drawn towards the lady, who now glanced at her as if feeling a counter attraction.

"But what a huge school!" came the remark, half a minute later. "This is Morcove, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"I have been right out of things!" the lady commented, with a rueful laugh. "Never mind; once I get going again I'll soon be all right. It's a straight run from here to Barncombe, I take it?"

"Oh, yes, and only a few miles."

"I made the mistake of coming across country, although the map didn't seem to show any main roads exactly that would take me to Grangemoor School."

Judith stopped dead.

"Grangemoor School!"

"Yes—why?" smiled the stranded motorist.

"Oh—only that I—well, we all happen to know it so well." Judith was walking on again with the lady. "That is a very fine school, too—just as famous as Morcove; but it's all boys, as you know, of course. One of the girls in my Form has a brother at Grangemoor. Have you a son at Grangemoor School?"

The lady did not answer, and Judith felt rebuffed. In any case, she reflected, it had been a stupid question to ask. If the lady had a son at Grangemoor she would hardly have been likely to lose her bearings; she would have been to the school before to-day, almost certainly.

They went round to the spacious side yards, around which Morcove's garage and other out-buildings were ranged. The under-chauffeur was just then going away to his cottage, but he halted when he saw Judith and the lady.

"Mr. Pettigrew," said Judith, after running up to him, "could you let this lady" have enough petrol to get her into Barncombe?"

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"Certainly," said the chauffeur, and he touched his hat to the lady. "I can give you enough to get you the whole way, ma'am."

"Oh, but—"

"It's a thing that happens to anybody on these roads, sooner or later," he smiled. "I'm sure Miss Somerfield would—"

"Then you must let me pay you for the spirit!"

"I can't do that, ma'am! Car on the road? Right; I'll take a couple of cans—"

"One will be heaps!"

He nodded another "right!" and stepped across to the petrol-store briskly, the lady now turning again to Judith.

"I mustn't detain you, my dear. Thanks once again! When do you break up for the holidays? And aren't you feeling very excited already about going home for Christmas?"

Judith could not answer. Emotion had rushed over her again, and there was a stricture in her throat—a strangling clutch. How kind people were—even strangers!

"Well, I hope when the time comes you have a very, very happy holiday! You don't happen to know when Grangemoor breaks up?"

"I think it's the week after next—a day or two after us," said Judith. "There were two Grangemoor boys having tea with some of us yesterday. Polly Linton's brother, and his chum, Dave Lawder—"

Judith paused sharply. She thought the lady had given a violent start just then.

"And they talked of breaking-up, did they?" the leading-on question came, quite composedly, next moment.

"Yes. They were full of excitement!"

"I see! Good-bye then, and thanks once again!"

The lady hastened after Mr. Pettigrew, now that he was going away with the petrol and a funnel. The light was fading with that rapidity which belongs to December afternoons; yet Judith, strangely, seemed to feel that the world, if anything, was suddenly brightened. It was extraordinary what an attraction the lady had had for her. Altogether apart from ordinary politeness, there had been a charm, a personal magnetism, making Judith wish she could meet her again.

Somebody's mother at Grangemoor, was she? After all, she might be the mother of some boy, and until to-day she had been prevented from visiting his school.

"And it may be wicked of me to think so," ran Judith's sorrowful mind, as she turned to go into the schoolhouse, "but I almost wish she were mine!"

Strange News for Morcove!

IT was at the close of morning school, next day, when Cora received an ominous command in connection with the report that Betty had at last made about the bullying of Judith.

The Form was passing out, sharp on twelve. It had worked hard, and that was Miss Everard's habitual reward to the girls—a prompt dismissal. But Miss Everard looked a little stern as she picked upon Cora during the march-out.

"You are to go to the headmistress, Cora Grandways, about yesterday!"

Cora made a point of grinning.

"And you, Hetty—I don't know about you," the mistress added, giving the girl in question a very direct look. "You had better be in your study, in case you are sent for. You the same, Judith," was added, in a gentler tone.

Outside the class-room, Cora said aloud: "Now for it—eh? Well, who cares! Good-bye-ee, Hetty; shan't see you again! Going to be expelled, boo-hoo!"

"Don't be so absurd," smiled Hetty, with that blandness which jarred upon other girls almost as badly as did any insolence of Cora's. To show that they did not want to listen to any of their remarks, juniors hurriedly dispersed, many making for the open-air and games.

So Judith was almost alone in following Hetty upstairs.

They reached the study, Hetty humming lightly to herself, Judith looking more than serious—sternly determined to seize this fitting opportunity for a talk.

"You can put that down," she said, for Hetty had taken up a magazine. "And listen to me, Hetty!"

"I may not choose to listen!"

"Then you'll be making a big mistake. I don't think you know me, Hetty. Just because I have given way to Cora time after time, for the sake of avoiding strife, that doesn't mean I am bound to give way to you. You are not my sister!"

"No—that's one blessing," retorted Hetty.

"Not the only one you have to be thankful for, is it?" Judith gave back steadily. "It's something to have been as good as adopted by my people, isn't it? Would you ever have come to Morcove; would you have such a good time in the holidays, if—"

"Oh, remind me that it's a case of charity—go on!"

"I don't want to make out that it's anything of the sort," Judith disclaimed strenuously. "Father and mother are very well-off; it's nothing wonderful that they have done what they have for you. At one time your father helped mine to become so rich; and now you've lost your father, and so it's the least we Grandways can do—"

"We Grandways!" laughed Hetty. "But go on!"

"What I do mean to remind you of—is this! It's a poor return to make, Hetty—your bad influence upon Cora. I'd be ashamed, if I were in your position. Instead of doing your best to bring us together, you do your best to drive us further apart."

"Do I? How?"

"In a hundred different ways—you know you do! You've been at it ever since you came to Morcove! The other girls know, and they despise you for it. And if father and mother get to know—have you thought what it may mean?"

"Oh, threats!" said Hetty, with a calm, false-sweet smile. "Jealousy has brought you to that at last, has it? You'll turn your father and mother against me if you can—if!"

"Well, they certainly wouldn't approve of your encouraging Cora to treat me as she does. I know I'm not—not like Cora, in the eyes of mother and father," Judith continued tremulously. "Somehow I'm a disappointment to them, I know. Still, they are surely fond enough of me not to wish my life to be made the misery that it is. At any rate, I warn you, Hetty! If you still keep on using your bad influence over Cora, I shall speak to my parents about you, as soon as I get home."

"You can please yourself—"

There was a pause. Hetty took a turn about the study, and then Judith added, impressively:

"Father and mother will never uphold you!"

"Think so?" Hetty finished, with a sudden self-

confident stare. "You try it, then—you just try!"

"How can they!" cried out Judith, "when I am as much their daughter as Cora is! That makes you smile—"

"Well, you are rather—dramatic!"

"I've just about had enough," was the spirited protest. "I'm going to end this state of things. You can't call me unfair, Hetty! There's my fair warning to you; only promise to do the decent thing in future, and I'll never breathe a word at home about what has gone on all this term. I shall hate complaining—"

"Oh, you perfect girls who 'hate' telling!" laughed Hetty. "Betty 'hates reporting'—but how about yesterday?"

"She couldn't help herself. You and Cora—you went on and on, until Betty could stand it no longer. Not a word against Betty! She—"

At this instant the door flew open, letting in Cora.

me see what she is, better than ever, in the last few minutes!"

"Why, what has she been saying?"

"Oh—only that she'll get your father and mother to wash their hands of me. I'm a bad influence!"

"I help to make things worse between her and you. She is going to tell your father and mother—"

"She had better!" seethed Cora. "Of all the untruths! As if I needed you or anybody else to make me wild with Judy, morning, noon and night! When there she is, always hanging round the very girls who are against me! What about Betty & Co.? There's influence for you! Haven't they been doing their best, all along, to get Judy to forget that she's my sister?"

Forced to pause for breath, Cora now suddenly remembered something.

"You're to see the headmistress, Hetty. I forgot. It's about those cinema tickets. I'm



"Girls—girls! What do you think!" Polly Linton was yelling as she ran, "What, Polly, what?" her schoolmates clamoured, and it was not long before Polly had told them the wonderful news about Dave Lawder.

It meant another sudden pause—dead silence except for the slam of the door, as Cora heeled it shut.

"You weren't long!" commented Hetty lightly. "Well?"

"Judy, you clear out!"

"I'm in the middle of a talk with—"

"Clear out!"

Hetty laughed at this, remarking, as the younger sister withdrew:

"It doesn't seem to have done you much good, Cora—going to see Miss Somerfield!"

"Hang Miss Somerfield!" scowled the handsome one. "As for Betty Barton—if I don't get even with her some day! And I don't take the least notice, so they needn't think it, any of them!" she raged on. "Let the headmistress write to my people; I don't care! You know very well, Hetty, what Judy is!"

"I do," nodded Hetty. "She has been letting

gated for the week; but if I want to get out, I'll get out."

"Am I to see her now?"

"I don't know—"

"Oh, then I'll wait until I'm sent for," smiled Hetty. "As for Judith and her threats—"

"Take no notice, Hetty. I'll stand up for you, if you'll stand up for me at home. Wait till we get her to ourselves, in the hols! You know," Cora continued, her eyes gleaming, "I can't make out why it is, but every day I seem to feel less able to put up with Judy."

"I'm not surprised," was the bland response—one that caused Cora to give Hetty a searching look.

"You say that, Hetty—although she's my sister. Oh, don't be such a mystery, looking like that, and hinting! And there's what you said the other evening, about if I knew! You haven't told me yet. I do not think you—"

Cora broke off, to glare at Judith, who had quietly re-entered.

"Well?"

"Did you tell Hetty to report? The headmistress is waiting for her. I've been sent to—" "Trust you to be ready for any nasty errand!" snarled the elder sister. "Ugh! And don't you stay here, Judy!"

But Judith did remain, after Hetty had walked out in pert fashion. The sisters were alone together then, Judith braving that smouldering anger of Cora's which was liable to blaze up at any instant.

"How did you get on with the headmistress, Cora?" came the inquiry at last.

"I refuse to speak to you! Pretending to look sorry now, when it was all your fault—yours and Betty's! Get out of my sight!"

Accustomed as Judith was to unbridled rage, there was a vehemence about it now that made her blench.

"Very well," she said, and went away again, drifting round into a corridor that was deserted, for so many girls were out in the open air.

Along to the stairs she wandered, and passed down to the ground-floor. For appearance' sake she supposed she had better go into the open, although she must not think of joining in any game. If possible she would avoid her schoolmates, for they would know what to think of her pallid looks. Her sister, treating her the same as ever, though the headmistress had—

"Miss!" came the appealing cry that halted her, on her way out by the front porch. "There's someone in your Form wanted on the 'phone—Miss Polly, if you could find her!"

"Polly Linton? Oh, then," Judith answered briskly, "I'll run and tell her. She's at games, I'm sure!"

"And I'll hold the line—thank you, miss!" cried Ellen, Morcove's most popular parlourmaid. "It's her brother, say!"

Nodding, Judith flew out to the field, streaking for that section where a lively bit of hockey practice was in progress. Polly was there, playing like the rest as if this were a match.

The field of players, in the excitement of so keen a game, took no notice of Judith until she was right in their midst, singling out rosy-cheeked, breathless Polly with the cry:

"Stop, Polly—stop! The 'phone!"

"What!"

"Your brother—ringing up from school—"

"Oh!"

Madcap Polly sprinted away, mop of hair jumping up and down as she ran, after casting down her hockey-stick.

Betty picked it up.

"Here you are, Judy—you take on! Come on, just the thing for you!"

"Bekas—remember last Saturday!" shrilled Naomer.

As if she, Judith, were likely to forget it, ever! The match, the rare thrill of being in the team that was fighting on to victory; the tea at The Creamery, afterwards; Jack and Dave—Dave Lawder, with something about him that was so brotherly! And then the return to school, and the old, old misery once more—

"Now, Judy!"

The little white ball was hers for the moment. The same keenness that was others, possessed her instantly. She laughed over the tussle that presently developed; flashed this way, that way; was like any of the rest of them for the time

being. The ball—the goal—smack! had that done it? Yes!

"Ha, ha, ha—goal! Well done, Judy!"

"Warm work, bai Jove—what?" beamed Paula. "My gwacious—pouf! Weally, I think I must wethire now, yes, wather!"

"We had better all stop!" laughed Betty breathlessly. "Here's Polly coming back—with news, I should think! What is it this time, I wonder?"

The madcap was fairly yelling—"Girls!"—as she came galloping back from the schoolhouse. So there was a rush to meet her.

"What DO you think!" she panted, a moment later. "You know Dave Lawder?"

"I seem to have heard of him!" chuckled Betty.

"Yes, wather!"

"You know," Polly panted on, "there has always been such a mystery about him. I mean, as to who is people were, and all that! Brought up by that old fogey of a lawyer, who simply dotes on him, but—"

"But what—what?" clamoured the crowd.

"That's all at an end now," said Polly. "A lady visited Grangemoor School last evening, and she turned out to be—Dave's mother!"

Never Again!

JUDITH was in the crowd of girls that had mobbed around the madcap. She heard many a gasp of amazement.

"It's what Jack has been telling me," she insisted excitedly. "He rang me up on purpose!"

"Well, fancy! Just—fancy! Dave Lawder—"

"Bai Jove, incedible, yes, wather!"

"Bekas—"

"Seems impossible—too good to be true!"

"It is true, anyhow!" cried Polly. "I know no more than that. The line was rotten, and I couldn't get Jack to tell me any details. He says he's going to write."

"How nice for Dave. I'm so glad!" exclaimed Madge Minden. "We have always felt so sorry for him—no father or mother."

"And I suppose his mother, now she has turned up, is awfully nice," Helen Craig rejoined.

"Bound to be!" said Pam Willoughby serenely. "Can you imagine Dave Lawder having a mother who is not a ripper?"

"Wather not, bai Jove!"

"Then why on earth," marvelled Betty, "has Dave heard nothing about her until now? Who is she? Where has she been all this time? She can't have seen him since he was just a tiny tot!"

"I wonder if she is the lady who was here yesterday?"

There was a startled turning to look at Judith, for it was she who had interjected that quiet murmur.

"Here at Morcove, Judy?" several cried.

"Yes. About teatime—a lady who had run out of petrol on the road. I took her to the garage, and whilst she was getting fixed up she made the remark; she was on her way to Grangemoor School."

"What was she like, Judy? What was she like?"

"I happened to mention that Polly's brother was at Grangemoor, and that made me also mention Dave Lawder. I thought at the time that she gave a kind of start, when I—"

"What was she like, Judy?" they clamoured again.

"Ooo, queek, you say, Judy!"

"Well, she was very sweet indeed; I took to her

at once. Something about her that was—kind and—and rather serious."

"Reserved," suggested Pam.

"Yes, that's it—"

"Dave over again!" burst out Polly. "Oh, it was she, Judy, right enough! Can't we all imagine, girls; Dave could not be what he is, unless he had had a mother who was—"

"Don't say 'had had,' Polly; he's got a mother now!" Betty laughed gaily. "Really, though, it wants some getting used to—"

"Gorjus!" capered Naomer. "Bekas, eet has come in time for ze hols., hooray! And we must have ze cellerbration, don't forget!"

"If we could get them to come over to Morcove!" cried Helen.

"Yes! Oh, I do want to see Dave's mother," sighed Polly frantically. "Judy, you were lucky yesterday! Why didn't we all see her! Tell us some more, Judy!"

"Yes, Judy! Every word she said!"

"But she said so little—only that she had lost her way. She was fairly tall, with lovely eyes."

"Dark eyes?" guessed Polly. "Eyes that look right into you? Dave again!" she laughed. "Well, jolly good luck to Dave! It's grand—it's great!"

The hockeyists of a few minutes ago drifted slowly towards the schoolhouse, discussing the great sensation. They stood still again, every tongue going, then went on once more, able to talk of nothing else. Judy came in for continual questioning. Her schoolmates wanted the minutest details about yesterday's stranded motorist.

And all the time she had thoughts and feelings in connection with the astounding affair that must have been so different from her schoolmates.

By a strange freak of fate, she had been the one Morcovian to see and talk with the lady yesterday. She knew, far better than she could describe, what a rare charm that lady possessed, what a kindly nature hers must be.

Judith was for drifting off again, but the girls would not let her go. At any moment they might think of some question to ask her, about yesterday! When the gong went for dinner, she was still with her Form mates; and then Cora and Hetty came upon the scene, together, to find her such a centre of interest.

At table, the Fourth Form kept up the chatter about Dave Lawder. All the tremendous surprise and the gladness was now being shared to the full by Miss Everard. Like the headmistress, she had always had a warm corner of her heart for quiet Dave. He and Jack were known so well at Morcove—the result, of course, of Jack's close relationship to Polly. So the Form-mistress was as eager as any of her girls for further news.

"I give you permission, Polly, to ring up your brother," Miss Everard said, after the rise from table. "He may be able to tell you more now."

"Oh, thanks, Miss Everard!"

But Polly and the crowd that hung about her, at the 'phone, met with disappointment. Jack was out at games, and whoever it was answered the 'phone did not mean to go in quest of him. "There must not be this use of the telephone by the scholars," said Grangemoor, solemnly!

"So that's that," grimaced the madcap. "What a school! Well, I must wait for his letter—which will probably be only a postcard!"

Sure enough, it was only a postcard; but the message it conveyed, coming into Polly's hands next morning!

HOPE TO BE OVER ON WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, WITH DAVE.

"Girls, see this!"

That joyous cry of Polly's came whilst letters will still be given out. Judy was there, waiting—she hardly knew why, for when was there a letter for her, from home? Never. And yet, every morning, she found herself waiting like this, the wistful though recurring: Perhaps, at last, mother had written to her, by way of a change from writing to Cora.

Of course, no mother could be expected to write to two daughters at the same school; and Cora was the elder. Judith made all allowance for this. Still, mightn't mother, just once in a while, make the change?

"Grandways!" the surname on an envelope was called.

"Here!" Cora answered, and instantly Judith was being pushed aside. "Out of the way, Judy, that's mine!"

She turned and slowly worked clear of the eager throng. Letters were being opened and read, pretty eyes asparkle. As for Judith, she might steal a glance at her sister, going away to share the letter with Hetty, and that was all she would get, for having attended the giving-out of the morning's postbag.

Soon after this it was time to think about first school. That meant going up to the study, to collect books. In the Fourth Form corridor, she found Betty coming away from one of the studies in a brisk, jolly manner. It was as if the Form captain were carrying out some pleasant task that meant a rush-round.

"Oh, and you, Judy—next Wednesday!" Betty gaily pounced upon the passer-by. "We want all those whom Dave and Jack would be glad to see! It'll be a big party. Study 12 can never hold it! But we can use the music-room, I'm sure. So—"

"Oh, Betty, it's awfully kind of you, but—"

"No refusals, Judy!"

"You know how I am placed, Betty. I'd love to come, but—"

"You must make up your mind to come!"

"Well, I'll—I'll think about it, Betty."

"Do!"

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They parted instantly, for Betty had other studies to visit, and no time to waste. Judith sauntered on, encountering her sister and Hetty a few moments later. They were coming away from their study, and they swept past her. Then she heard Hetty murmur something to Cora, who chuckled.

All the high-spirited hub-bub that preceded school—it seemed to die away into very significant silence, as Judith closed the study door after entering. So there seemed to be a door closing always between her solitary self, and the life which others enjoyed.

Her sister had left the letter from home lying upon the table. Judith crossed over and took it up, feeling fully entitled to do so. It was a letter intended for both of them, surely. There must be some mention of—

No, not one. She read the letter right through, and dropped it down, sighing hard. Not a word about her or for her—not a word! Yet mother had not forgotten Hetty. "Tell Hetty . . ." occurred more than once. Why was it—why?

"Worse and worse as times goes on," Judith mourned. "Now I seem to be quite forgotten at home. I wrote to mother last Thursday; I have written regularly."

She started to gather up some books and primers, then desisted, going to the window. Instantly, however, she turned away, so as not to see other girls, out at play, so many of them made happier than ever by their having heard from home this morning. About the coming holidays, and Christmas.

Suddenly she said a fierce NO! to the tears that wanted to well up from her heart. Never again must she give way to the bitter disappointment. She must not pine for what could never be hers. But since that was the case, then she must turn in other directions for happiness—she really must!

Taking up her books, she went from the room, and a few seconds later she was at the wide-open door of Study 12.

"Betty—it's all right about to-morrow. I'll come!"

"Right-ho, Judy! So glad!" And Betty was jotting down Judith's name upon a long list, as that girl went away.

"I suppose Cora has acted decently by her for once, and made no objection," was the captain's delighted comment. "It's done Cora a bit of good, being pulled up by the headmistress?"

"Must have done!" agreed Polly. "Judith looked, just then, as if—as if things were changed."

"Then, look here, girls—what about inviting Cora and Hetty?"

"Oh, Betty!"

"No, bekas—"

"Which will make it practically the whole Form," Betty continued. "And think how much better that will look, supposing Dave's mother should come along as well!"

Polly was rather tight-lipped of a sudden.

"It'll spoil the whole thing, Betty."

"Not if Cora and Hetty have decided to toe the line? And don't forget, Judith will be all the happier if they're present."

Polly brightened.

"Yes, there's that! Oh, you do as you think best, Betty!"

"Yes, bekas, after all, zere will be plenty for everybody. So long as I don't have to sit next to Cora or Hetty," Naomer added.

With just one minute more to go before the bell clanged its summons, Betty scooted away in search of Cora and Hetty. She found them together, downstairs.

"Er—Hetty and Cora—will you join the rest of us, at tea-time to-morrow? It'll be in the music-room, we hope—a sort of celebration over Dave Lawder."

"No, thanks!" declined Cora, twisting a shoulder at the captain; and then Hetty shook her head, holding it high.

"You'd rather not?"

"Much rather not—as I should have thought your common sense would have told you!" Cora snubbed the captain.

"I only thought—as Judith will be—"

"Judith what?" snapped Cora. "Judith has accepted?"

"Oh, yes!"

At that instant the bell went, putting a check upon what would have been a most certain rush by Cora and Hetty in quest of Judith. There ensued the usual flocking of girls towards the class-rooms. Betty saw how savage Cora looked at being balked by school routine; saw how Hetty smiled; and so she realised—they were both the same as ever!

"I was wrong, and Judith will back out for a cert," was Betty's glum reflection. "As soon as Cora goes for her—poor old Judy!"

But that again was an erroneous conjecture.

If Cora and Hetty had not changed—Judith had, at last! She was to let them know it, too, when next they came together in the study which they shared.

Hetty Curzon's Disclosure.

"HERE she is! Now, Judy—what's this about your accepting the captain's invitation for to-morrow?"

"I have accepted it—that's all."

Judith's answer must have warned her sister and Hetty that she was in the mood to please herself for once. They looked at each other quickly.

The Form had just come out of class, and Judith, although she had not wasted time in coming up to the study, had found its co-tenants were before her.

"You're not going, Judy!"

"I shall go," was the calm reply to that.

"I say I don't want you to go—there!"

"I can't help that, Cora. Whatever I do I can't please you, so I might just as well go my own way."

Cora took a forward, domineering step.

"So you thought, Judy, just because I got a talking-to from Miss Somerfield, I'd not dare to raise any objection? You made a mistake, a big mistake! I don't care a hoot for the headmistress or for anyone. I'm the elder of us two, and I know that father and mother would say you're to do as I wish."

"Oh, don't bring father and mother into it, please!" Judith implored. "It's bad enough, without that."

"Would you still go, if you knew that your parents didn't approve?" Hetty interposed craftily.

"That's setting a trap for me!" Judith flashed, drawing herself as she looked across at Hetty. "But you'll not catch me like that, Hetty Curzon. I know I've always done my best by dad and mother, and I wouldn't dream of disobeying them. Only, what encouragement do I get?" she spoke on. "It seems as if I can do as I like, so long as I don't trouble them at home. Not a word for

me when mother writes to you, Cora. I'm forgotten; I'm not even inquired about, let alone any little message that there might be, surely!"

"Well, and whose fault but your own?" snapped Cora. "When you're at home—do you do us credit?"

"I don't disgrace the family, anyhow!"

"Meaning, that you do, Cora!" smiled Hetty. "Really, Judy, isn't this rather—"

"There's no need for that, Hetty!" Judith cried. "You are only trying to do your best, as usual, to set Cora off again, and I am not standing it. Do you hear, Hetty?"

"I'd like mother and father to be here," said Cora fiercely, "to hear you going on like this. First me, your sister, then Hetty! You miserable, jealous girl, with your sneaking, and your siding with the very ones who have a down on me and Hetty!"

"That's untrue!" Judith protested hotly. "Betty and the rest no more want to quarrel with you than I do. But, just as you glory in making my life a misery, so you glory in making trouble for them. You've been so beastly to them I'm ashamed to go near them!"

"Ashamed of you, Cora; did you hear that?" smiled Hetty.

"What sister wouldn't be ashamed?" Judith protested. "But my mind is made up now. For the rest of this term I shall go my own way, and if the other girls are kind enough to want me with them, I shall let them see—I'm done with giving up every bit of pleasure for the sake of you, Cora!"

"And when we three go home for the hols.—then I shall have word with mother and father about it. My mind is made up about that as well. I shall ask them, straight out, Cora, did they ever intend Hetty to drive us further apart!"

"You dare!" Cora seethed. "You say one word—"

"Oh, but I shall! I can't believe that they mean Hetty to—"

"Now shut up!" stamped the elder sister. "No, listen! You're not to go to that Form tea-party—"

"I am going, and nothing will stop me!"

Judith suddenly strode to the table and caught up a writing-pad.

"And as for Hetty there," she continued, drawing off to the door, "I won't even wait for the holidays—no, I'll do it by letter to-day! I'll write to mother. For it's too unfair—oh!" Judith ended on a note of utter heartbreak, and she ran out of the study, taking the writing-pad with her.

Cora walked to the door, kicked it shut, then faced round. She looked frightened.

"The little monkey! She means it, Hetty! Who would have expected her to show such sudden spirit? And what are we to do if—"

"Oh, let her write to your mother if she wants to write!" shrugged Hetty. Then she laughed. "I think I know what it will result in—at last!"

"What then? How do you mean?" jerked out Cora, staring. "There you go again, Hetty, with your mysterious remarks! Isn't it going to turn father and mother against you, if Judy does complain?"

"No, I don't think it will!"

"You—don't! But, Hetty, after all—Judy is my sister!"

There was a pause, due to some hesitancy in Hetty. She took a look out of the window; then she faced Cora again.

"Judy is not your sister!" she said quietly.

Such a shock had gone through Cora when those words were voiced, she felt as if she were coming round after being stunned into total insensibility—with no knowledge of how long she had been like that.

"Hetty," she gasped, "are you mad?"

"Oh, no!"

"But—what you said just then!"

"It's true, Cora."

"True? How can it be? Oh, you really must be cracked, to say such a thing! Judy not—not my sister! Why, it's ridiculous!"

"Sh! For goodness' sake, Cora, not so loud!" Hetty implored softly. "We don't want others to hear. I—I ought not to have told you, I suppose. But I—I felt I must, at last, and I do think there was some excuse."

"You weren't supposed to know, is that is?" panted Cora, drawing nearer. "Hetty, tell me all you do know. Oh, quick, for really I—"

"She is not your sister, and sooner or later she has got to know it," Hetty whispered, with Cora, white-faced as she listened. "It's silly, I think, keeping it secret, when every day you and she only quarrel all the more. The same with your father and mother; Cora; isn't it obvious they are finding it harder and harder to—treat her as if she really were a daughter?"

"She is so different from me!"

"And you can't help disliking her. And they—well, it may have been all right at one time; but



Judith stopped dead. "You are going to Grangemoor School?" she asked the stranger in surprise. "Yes, why?" smiled the stranded motorist, and Judith could not help thinking how wonderful it would be to have a mother like this sweet-faced woman!

I suppose," Hetty reasoned softly, "every passing week brings out a little more of what's born in you. That's why you and she can't help quarrelling more and more, and it'll be my excuse if I'm asked why I let you into the secret. I shall say that it was more than I could stand—to be here at Morcove with the pair of you, and seeing you having so much trouble with her."

Cora gave a quick nod.

"Yes, that's all right, Hetty. That excuse ought to answer. You can say it made me miserable to have a sister giving me so much trouble, and so you told me—"

"To take a load off your mind, yes! But—"

"But, Hetty, how did you get to know? My parents never confided such a thing in you, surely!"

"Sit down, and I'll explain," whispered Hetty, finding a seat for herself. "It was my first night in your home, Cora—after we girls had gone to bed. Your father and mother sat up late, and your mother thought I was asleep when she came into my room; but I wasn't!"

"You pretended?"

"Only because I was a bit shy, being new to the house. Your mother, thinking I was asleep, beckoned Mr. Grandways to come in and look at me, lying there, and then they spoke to each other."

"What did they say, Hetty?"—cagerly.

"Well, your mother said how pretty I was, and all that, and how I gave such promise, and your father agreed. And then I heard Mrs. Grandways say that I'd be a better companion for you than Judith would ever be. That surprised me, of course. But Mr. Grandways—he agreed, and then Mrs. Grandways, still looking down at me, as I could tell, said: Yes, and it was a pity now that they had ever adopted Judy."

"She said just those words?" breathed Cora.

"Phew! Well, I'm-jiggered! But what else, Hetty? This is frightfully exciting!"

"Your father agreed with your mother about that as well. There was something about 'if only they had known'; meaning, I suppose, that they felt Judy to be turning out a sort of—well, a sort of bad bargain!"

"I don't wonder," muttered Cora. "If she is only an adopted girl, then I wonder that father and mother have gone on as long as they have! But, Hetty, what does it all mean? Who are her parents, then? Are they still living, or was she an orphan when they—adopted her?"

"It's no use asking me," returned Hetty, in a guarded tone. "I've told you all I know, Cora. And now, don't you go blurting it out to Judy herself."

"But why not? Why shouldn't I tell her?" exclaimed Cora, jumping up from her chair. "Wasn't it only the other day that she was saying, she wished we weren't sisters? Serve her right then, if she now finds her wish come true, and sees what it feels like NOT to be a Grandways! Where is she—"

"Cora, stop—stay here," Hetty implored, with what was rare agitation for her to manifest. "No, you mustn't tell her—oh, you mustn't!"

"But I want to! Let me go—"

"You can't, you mustn't! Why not wait, when I'm certain that if she does write to your parents, slanging you and me, she'll be put in her proper place by them."

Cora had Hetty hanging about her, detainingly. She shook herself free, then moved about the study agitatedly.

"Her place!" she muttered at last. "A fine one it should be then, by rights!"

"I do think it was time you knew," purred Hetty. "I have often longed to let you into the secret, but I felt afraid. There's one thing about us—we do get on well together, don't we?"

Cora licked her dry lips, her gleaming eyes straying back to the door.

"No," Hetty whispered again. "You mustn't, Cora!"

"All right," was the reluctant answer. "For the present, anyhow! But the next time she gets me in a rage—she'll have the truth from me, straight out!"

Not Her Sister!

THERE was a letter ready for the post in Judith's pocket, when she went into afternoon school.

It was one that she had written in the library, before dinner—a long letter to her mother. Fresh from that latest scene between herself and Cora; when Hetty had been doing her best to aggravate the trouble, Judith had found her pen racing over page after page.

She knew that she had just cause for complaint; that there could be nothing more contemptible than the game Hetty was playing. Surely her parents would put a stop to it at once, when they were told!

And yet poor Judith had hesitated about posting the letter. Not a word in it that was not true and justified a thousand times over; but—oh, it was so hateful, to have to complain!

After school she wandered about for several minutes, before going to the school's post-box. At last she drew the letter from her pocket—and then tore it up.

"No, I just can't send it after all! I'll wait until I get home for the holidays."

But she was as determined as ever to please herself about going to to-morrow's festive gathering in the music-room.

It was one thing to shrink after all from denouncing Hetty's shameful conduct; it was quite another thing to give way to Cora again. "That I will never do!" was Judith's murmur of unflinching resolution.

Betty & Co. saw something of Judith, after tea. They were treated to the pleasant surprise of finding her looking in upon them voluntarily! Later, when "prep" had been knocked off—Judith doing hers in the library—she quite surprised the Form by turning up in the music-room.

Lots of girls were down there, "seeing about to-morrow." In other words, there was very little serious discussion of how the tables should be arranged, but unending talk about Dave Lawder, some music, some dancing, and much fun and frolic.

Judith stayed to the end; but although she quite enjoyed herself, there was no sense of real freedom from the old constraint. At moments the thought crashed in upon her mind with devastating effect upon her rare happiness:

"I shall never hear the last of this from Cora. There will be another scene about this; and how can I hope not to let it upset me!"

But there was no scene. A few minutes before prayers she went up to the study, nerving herself for the expected ordeal, and instead, not a word was said by Cora.

The same next morning. The day's routine began without any flare-up. Judith inferred that

it had done wonders—her making a determined stand at long last. Now she wished she had done so months back. She was even inclined to reproach herself for not having tried the drastic remedy sooner than this.

If only—oh, if only Cora would be a little different, from now onwards! She, Judith, seemed to have found the right way at last. Giving way, out of sheer dread of strife and the shame it caused, did not good.

School ended for the day at twelve o'clock, and then the Form could get busy with early preparations for the afternoon's great occasion.

And all the time, Judith was taking a share in such joyous activities. Never before had she been such a real Morcovian! Last Saturday's part in the hockey-match had been as nothing, compared with this, for something in her corresponding with the real jollity of other girls. Then she had been haunted by the dread of what her sister would say; but now—

"Nothing will be said," was her happy conviction. "Pity! I might have tried this method ages ago."

The time came for her to slip upstairs, with others to make herself tidy for the tea-party. It was when she was laying down comb and brush at a dressing-table, that one of her schoolmates came in with the remark:

"Cora wants you, Judy!"

Polly flashed round.

"I wouldn't go, Judy! You know what it will mean!"

But Judith—could she carry the defiant policy as far as that? So she was asking herself, as she went downstairs. "Besides, Cora may be going to be quite all right. I'm sure she has been totally different since yesterday mid-day."

The Fourth Form corridor was deserted. Girls were mostly upstairs, putting on something different for the occasion, or else downstairs, putting finishing touches to the music-room tea-table.

The silence of the corridor gave place to the murmur of Cora and Hetty's voices, as Judith passed round into the lobby at the far end. It seemed to her that Cora and Hetty were having some hasty argument. Hetty was speaking disuasively, whilst Cora maintained an excitable: "I shall!"

Then Judith entered the study.

"You want me, Cora?"

"And so I have to send for you, do I?" came with all the old truculence, causing Judith to go pale. "For the last time, Judith, are you going to attend that stupid affair in the music-room?"

"I am, Cora. I cannot see the slightest reason why you should object. Those of us who have always liked Dave Lawder—"

"Hang Dave Lawder!" blazed out Cora. "Who's he? Only a chum of Jack Linton's! But you want to go to the party, do you?"

"Yes, Cora. I—"

"Then go!" was the furious cry, coupled with a waving-away gesture. "I don't care! Be with Betty and the rest as much as you like, now! But Betty needn't think it's any triumph for her, to have lured you away from me!"

"She hasn't done that, Cora! There has never been the least attempt—"

"You can go, I tell you!" stormed on Cora. "And you shan't have any excuse for saying that I've spoiled your pleasure, this time! You want to enjoy yourself, do you? Then let me tell you something that should make you perfectly happy!"

"Cora!" interposed Hetty; but she was flourished out of the way.

"I'm going to tell her!" panted Cora. "She has asked for it. What about last Saturday? 'I wish you weren't my sister!' You ought to be going to be wonderfully happy, getting your wishes! You wished to go to this rotten, silly party—and you're going! You wished that I weren't your sister—and I am not your sister, so there!"

Judith stared, speechless.

"Now are you happy enough?" Cora resumed, husky with fury. "Do you get that, Judith? Whatever else I am—I'm not your sister!"

It was an agitated murmur from Hetty, who was striking her hands together in a frightened way, that left Judith with the appalling thought; Cora was not out of her mind. There was—there must be—truth in what she was saying. Hetty's looks confirmed it!

"You shouldn't have said it, Cora!" gasped Hetty.

"Well, I have said it, and now she knows, and the whole Form can know as soon as it likes! Then perhaps allowance will be made for me, that I never have felt like a sister towards her! She's not my sister, and now, Hetty, come on out with me, and leave her—leave her to go and enjoy their precious parties!"

Cora was striding to the door as she finished. Judith made a dart at her—put out a detaining hand, only to have it struck down.

"Cora!" was Judy's agonised cry then. "Oh, Cora—what you've been saying? It isn't true—how can it be? Who has been putting such a—such an idea into your head? Is it you?" Judith turned up Hetty fiercely.

"I have only told her what I know to be—the truth," Hetty answered faintly. "If you can't believe it, then write home about it!"

"Yes!" Cora spoke, from the doorway. "You are very fond of writing home. Now write home about that! Come away, Hetty!"

And in a moment they were gone, the door slamming behind them. At that moment Judith was standing like one turned to stone; but suddenly she became unsteady.

Her groping hand found the back of a chair to hold—and then she dropped down into the chair, and, folding her arms upon the table, hid her face in them whilst she sobbed.

Sunshine and—Tears!

"HURRAH! There they are!"
"Ooo, queek, queek! Out of ze way, Paula!"

"Wowp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Alone in the study, Judith roused out of that stricken state, saying aloud to herself:

"What shall I do?"

What was she to do—not only immediately, but in all the time to come!

She grated back the chair and stood up. After sweeping a hand across her forehead she walked to the window. Yes, there were the two boys from Grangemoor School; but Dave's new-found mother had not come with them upon this visit. Jack and Dave had ridden over on bicycles.

Judith turned away from the window, sighing. Her schoolmates were making a joyous commotion, swarming downstairs to meet the lads at the porch. It was a noise that became fainter as she listened; then she heard it coming louder than ever, from the open air.

"Hurrah! How are you, Dave? Congrats, Dave!"

"And yet he's just the same Dave Lawder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What am I to do?" Judith was saying to herself.

With some idea of going down to join the festive throng, she sought a small mirror and looked at herself. But her face was white, and she shook her head hopelessly whilst laying down the glass. Impossible! The girls must not see her looking like this.

"Perhaps I'll not be missed. I hope so. And yet—they've laid for me. And only a few minutes ago they knew how I was looking forward to it all—"

The lively chattering changed to a prolonged murmur, telling her that her schoolmates and their visitors had all gone into the music-room now, closing the door.

She seated herself again, elbows on the table, clenched hands pressing into her cheeks.

Shrieks of laughter came from the music-room downstairs. Judith sat up, deep in thought. No use saying to herself that it was too big a thing to be thought about, so soon after the first shock. She simply must consider at once—how it altered her life completely!

Suddenly a door banged downstairs; then she heard someone calling:

"Judith! Where are you, Judy? Aren't you coming?"

Finally, the study door flew open in front of Polly.

"Now, Judy, what does this mean? Never mind, dear; come down and join them all! What has Cora been saying to you this time?"

Polly did not expect that question to be answered. She was already drawing her schoolmate out of the study.

"The boys have asked after you, Judy, so you mustn't disappoint them. I believe Dave is terribly happy; but he is just as silent as ever! His mother couldn't come; she had to go to London yesterday on urgent business. We are all dying to find out why she had never claimed Dave before this. He doesn't offer to explain, and we don't like to worry him."

The talk and laughter grew louder as they descended to the floor below and approached the music-room doorway. Then they went in, and up rose Jack and Dave promptly, to be greeted by Judith.

"Jack," she said simply, with a smile that was costing her what an effort; and then: "Well, Dave? It's nice to see you!"

They were shaking hands, and it was making a pleasant little incident for others to regard delightedly.

"I was not to see you again, Judy, this side of Christmas," Dave smiled seriously. "Where are you sitting?"

"Queek, she can have my place, next to you," shrilled Naomer, jumping up. "Bekas, I can take mine to ze piano stool!"

"But what are you taking?" inquired Polly, and there was a burst of merriment. Naomer was helping herself very freely, before moving.

Judith took the vacated seat, and Dave resumed his, on her right hand. He offered her the choice of dainty sandwiches or toasted scones.

"It was your mother, then," she said, to make conversation that might conceal her agitation, "whom I met last Sunday for a moment, Dave?"

He nodded.

"I thought her awfully sweet, Dave. You must be very happy."

"Yes, I am all he said. Then: "How've you been going on, Judy?"

She was saved from having to make an evasive answer by being able to say: "Thanks," as her teacup came to hand.

"Weren't you awfully surprised, Dave? But, of course, you were!" she laughed.

He smiled, but said nothing. He became alert to the general conversation, which never flagged. But presently he had a quiet remark for her, when the table-talk was at its loudest.

"What about that speech we were to have, girls?" cried the madcap, a moment later.

"Paula?"

"Yes, yes!" And there was a tinkling of teaspoons against saucers and clapping of hands.

"Go on, Paula!"

"Weally—er—"

"Hear, hear—r-r!"

"And so—er—if I can find a few notes—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All wight, geals, I won't keep you a moment—"

"That you won't!" said Polly, giving Madge a certain roguish look which caused that talented musician to fly to the piano. Then Polly looked at her brother Jack.

"For—r—r!" he began to sing, at the top of his voice, whilst Madge crashed out an opening chord on the piano.

"For Dave's a jolly good fee-ell-low,
And Dave's a JOLLY good fee-ell-low!
For Dave's a jolly good FEE-ELL-LOW!—
And so say all of us!"

"With a hip, hip," bellowed Jack, bringing a chummy hand down bang upon Dave's shoulders.

"Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Dave! 'Sh, silence!"

So Dave stood up.

"Thanks," he said; and smiling all round the tea-table, he sat down again.

Then the Form went into convulsions of laughter. Just like Dave! Chairs were pushed back, whilst Madge kept the piano going, and then Miss Everard came in, all smiles, and there was such great jollity, such a stir, no one noticed Judith when she slipped off alone.

"So Dave, I hear you are to have special leave, instead of waiting for breaking-up day," Miss Everard came up to him to remark presently.

"That's what it is to have a mother!" was madcap Polly's comment.

"It is a great nuisance to have a brother, I know that!" jested Polly, a few minutes later. For Jack was wanting a dance with her. "No," she refused, "find somebody else! Find Judy Grandways, for I want her to have—Hallo though, where is Judy?"

Judy was alone in the study, upstairs, with the door closed; alone and in the dark, crying silently.

END OF PART I.

Be sure to read—

**"THE PROBLEM JUDITH
MUST FACE."**

By MARJORIE STANTON

in next Tuesday's

SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN—2^D