

"Pam's Midnight Adventure" COMPLETE MORCOVE TALE WITHIN

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2^d



WILL PAM BE IN TIME?
A stirring incident from this week's fine Morcove story.

A FINE STORY OF SCHOOL-LIFE AND OF ADVENTURE, FEATURING BETTY BARTON AND CO. OF THE FOURTH FORM AT MORCOVE



Pam's Midnight Adventure

By MARJORIE STANTON

With every hour the amazing Swanlake drama becomes more and more exciting. And now the time has come for Pam Willoughby to take action—boldly and courageously—against those who are plotting so cunningly in the absence of her parents.

Between the Acts

“H, I have had enough of tennis, girls!”
 “Same here, Polly.”
 “Bai Jove—pouf! These hawd courts, geals, they wather take it out of one, what?”
 “They seem to have taken it out of all of you,” laughed Betty Barton, captain of the Fourth Form at Morcove School.

“Weduced to an uttah state of pwestvation, yes, wather!” simpered that languid junior, Paula Creel.

“But you don’t want a rest!” cried madcap Polly Linton.

“Pweicely what I most gweatly desire, Polly deah. I— Ow! I say, I— Gow! Stahp it, Polly!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Where’s Naomer?” wondered Helen Craig, gazing around.

“Gardening,” smiled staid Madge Minden.

“Wha-a-at!”

“Anyhow, she went to see if her lettuces were big enough to eat yet,” chuckled Helen. “As they were only sown a couple of days ago—presumably not.”

“It would be Naomer to grow something to eat,” was Polly’s mock-scornful comment. “Let’s find her and see how the crop is doing.”

Now that spring had come to Morcove there had been the inevitable revival of interest in the really beautiful gardens kept by the headmistress.

“Shame to go in yet awhile,” said Betty, now that all the stray tennis-balls had been raked up.

“Shall we go round the gardens?”
 “I weally don’t think I can dwag as faw—”

“But we can drag you, Paula.”
 “Er—thenks, Polly deah, but I—er— Ow! Do leave me alone!” wailed the oft-teased one, fending off to the playful madcap. “Don’t you wealise I have acquired a tennis elbow.”

“I’ll come,” remarked tall Pam Willoughby. “Although I want to keep an eye open for Mrs. Eastman when she turns up in the car.”

“You’ll be able to do that from the gardens,” said Betty, and Pam, nodding, joined in the general saunter away from the tennis courts.

The mellow sunshine of early evening was enhancing the springtime sheen of well-kept grass and tender new foliage. An ivied wall was all shimmering leaves, and here and there golden daffodils nodded amongst their tall green spears. As Betty and her chums of Study 12 neared the gardens the song of birds grew louder.

It became a full chorus, with which a pleasant murmur of girlish voices blended very well. Those girls who were already looking round the

flower borders were not inclined to be noisy in their admiring comments; the very loveliness of the place and the golden evening hour had a subduing effect.

Suddenly, however, the chums encountered one girl who was in a very exasperated state. Naomer Nakara.

"Bekas, no lettuces yet—not one!" complained Morcov's royal and dusky scholar from the desert country of North Africa. "Not a blessed sign of one."

"There!" sighed Polly disappointedly. "And we were hoping to buy some. Any radishes, Naomer?"

"Don't you try to be funny. Bekas—"

"Mother said two cauliflowers, please, and she will pay to-morrow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But her youthful majesty was not amused. She stormed away, although her chums were soon to see her again. Naomer came back, lugging a great watering-can full to the brim.

"Bekas what zey probabubly want is a jolly good refresher," said Naomer. "Eet has been sunny all day."

"But it will rain before long," Polly rejoined calmly. "To-night, according to the glass. In which case the slugs will be busy. Still, carry on, Naomer. Far be it from me to—"

Polly broke off there. She was suddenly fascinated and like others had to wait and see how long it would be before Paula knew that her pretty ankles and shoes were being freely watered by Naomer's watering-can.

Paula at the moment was tidying her hair, and Naomer was apparently absent-minded. There was just time for some elbow-nudging and winking, and then—

"Womp!" went off Paula with a sudden leap. "Gow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What ze diggings!" shrilled Naomer, coming out of her day-dream. "Bekas—"

"You wascal, Naomer! Ow, ugh!" capered Paula. "All over my shoes, ow! Dwenched, bai Jove—drowned!"

"I very sorry. As eef I want to waste good water on you."

"Then hold it the other way!" squealed Paula. For Naomer seemed to have lost her head and was still copiously sprinkling the elegant one's feet and ankles.

"Staph it!" howled Paula.

"Stop what? Oh, zis!" And now at last Naomer looked down at the watering-can and saw how its contents had been depleted. She yelled:

"What ze diggings, after all that fag-nuzzingk left!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, Paula, be ze sport and run—"

"What!"

"And get him filled up again for me, zere's a good sort. Bekas—"

"I wefuse! I am fwufious!" cried Paula, looking as dignified as possible whilst standing on one leg and whipping off a shoe to drain it. "I have a stwong suspicion, bai Jove, that you did that on purpose!"

"Ooo, I like zat! Girls, did I do it on purpose?"

"Yes-s-s-s!" was the chorus. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not ze bit of eet!" declared her royal impishness virtuously. "Bekas—"

"Hark!" was the interrupting cry from Polly, and then as a motor-horn sounded again from

down by the main gateway she looked at Pam.

"That will be Mrs. Eastman, Pam."

"Then I'm off."

Pam had a "see you later" smile for others as she promptly turned to hasten a. But before she had gone half a dozen yards or three of her chums came scampering a her.

"We may as well go indoors with you, Pam." She gave a pleased nod and smile. Her sister mate, Helen Craig, was one of the companionable spirits, Betty Barton was another, and Polly Linton a third. The fact that this particular trio represented the best brains in the chummyery may have accentuated Pam's pleasure. It was certainly a time when she could do with shrewdness as well as loyalty in others.

"So she's come!" Polly mottred, as if the arrival of Mrs. Eastman meant a great deal. "Question is, whether she will try to wangle a stay for the night."

"If she does," murmured Betty gravely, "then we shall know for certain. I reckon."

"I think so, too," nodded Helen. "And isn't that Miss Somerfield's own belief, Pam?"

"It is," came Pam's calm response. "It may not have been the Eastmans who broke into the schoolhouse last night and ransacked my study for that bundle of papers. It may have been our other suspect—"

"That Hindu johnny," interjected Polly, nodding.

"But if it was the Eastmans, then we may depend," Pam carried on the serious discussion, "she will be all for getting a chance to spend the coming night at the school."

"On any pretext," added Helen. "Well, in a way it was lucky that Miss Somerfield had asked Mrs. Eastman to come over to dinner this evening from Swanlake. At the least, it gives Miss Somerfield a chance to study the lady on the quiet, so to speak."

Pam received this with an assenting nod, whilst brisking up her step. She and her present companions could see that the car after flashing up the drive was already at the porch. A door of the motor slammed, and then they glimpsed Mrs. Eastman, that young and excessively beautiful lady who, with her equally youthful husband, had rented stately Swanlake.

The couple had rented the place furnished during the absence of Pam's parents overseas. As Pam herself knew, Mr. and Mrs. Eastman had supplied good credentials, necessary in the case of a grand country house packed with treasures. But just recently the bona-fides of the temporary tenants of Swanlake had come under very grave suspicion.

"That's Muriel Floddon answering the door," exclaimed Betty.

"A nice girl, Muriel," said Helen heartily. "I do hope she stays on at Morcove. She's got over the shyness she felt when she first came to train as a maid at the school from her father's home on the Swanlake estate. She's happy."

"Or would be," Pam rejoined quietly, "if only that French maid from Swanlake would leave her alone. But it will soon be all right for Muriel. Zelie Duval will have to go back to Swanlake with Mrs. Eastman. It was the reason why Miss Somerfield asked Mrs. Eastman over for this evening; to talk about Zelie and then take her back."

Betty glanced at Pam.

"You find it hard to care for Zelig now, Pam, although she really belongs to Swanlake."

"She should not have butted in over here," frowned Pam. "Her jealousy of Muriel Floddon has been disgusting."

"Foreigner, Pam."

"Yes, well. But I'm afraid I've got tired of making allowances for that. Foreigner or not, Zelig must understand that there is such a thing as fair play."

No more was said, for the girls were almost at the porch, and now they ran for indoors.

There was no one about. Muriel, Morcove's maid in training, had evidently conducted the lady visitor to Miss Somerfield's drawing-room. As for girls—the whole schoolhouse was probably bereft of them, the evening being so fine.

"I don't know if I shall be wanted," Pam

minutes will serve for me to slip into something decent if word does come."

"Mademoiselle—"

"Oh, Zelig, don't pester, please! You would do far better to get ready to go back to Swanlake."

At that the French maid turned pale.

"It is that you are determined I shall go back?" she whispered tensely.

"I am sure it is highly advisable."

"And you will advise it, mademoiselle?"

"I don't suppose for a moment I shall be consulted," Pam smiled. "Do remember I am only a pupil here, Zelig, and that you are mother's maid, not mine. Girls, we will go on up—"

"But wait."

Zelig's cry of persistence came as she took a



Paula leapt into the air with a wail of anguish as Naomer mischievously emptied the watering-can over the elegant duffer's dainty ankles!

mused aloud. "But I shall go upstairs to my study, in case. You'll go up with me?"

Instead of answering, the three other girls were bound to pay heed to a sudden rapid footfall, and Pam, frowning again, murmured:

"That sounds like Zelig. Let's slit, girls."

But it was too late. One of her excitable rushes brought the French girl to where the girls were standing at the foot of the stairs, and the imploring cry came:

"Ah, mademoiselle! One moment, I entreat!"

A Present for Pam

"ZELIE. I—"

"But, mademoiselle, it is that Mrs. Eastman—she is here!"

"I know, Zelig."

"Then it must be that I go up with you, petite. Ah, mademoiselle must let her Zelig toilette her, for surely there will be the invitation to dine with the headmistress and her guest from Swanlake."

"I hope not," said Pam. "Anyway, five

stride that put her between the girls and the stairs. And now Pam stood taller than ever.

"Zelig, you forget yourself."

"Mademoiselle, pardon, but it is that you forget, I think, how I live to please you," the French maid retorted huskily. "Oh, mademoiselle, why will you not let me wait upon you, do all for you! I would have you look so beautiful in readiness for that invitation. I would do your hair—"

"For the last time, Zelig, no, thanks. I shall see you again before you go," was added, with great gentleness.

"Très bien—very well," Zelig said almost in a whisper, and she bowed low. But afterwards it was a decidedly angry Zelig who wheeled about and walked off, chin in air.

"What can one do with a girl like that," sighed Pam to her chums, as they went upstairs together. "When most of the trouble is that she really likes me so much."

"Her look, when you spoke about her getting ready to go back to Swanlake," said Betty. "She wants to stay on here, Pam."

"I know she does—and she can't. It means that she has to share Muriel's bed-room, and you can imagine the bullying there would be."

There was a thoughtful silence after that, lasting until the four of them had arrived in the Fourth Form corridor.

"Better make it Study 12," was Betty's chummy suggestion to Pam. "The others will be up any minute now."

So coming to Pam and Helen's study first, they only looked in there, seeing it in a state of tidiness that certainly justified Polly's comment:

"Wonderful! This study may have been upside down this morning after that raid in the night; but who would believe it now!"

"Helen and I have Muriel to thank, it's my belief," Pam remarked softly. "Muriel and Zelig were told off to tidy up the study, and I'm sure Muriel had to do most of it. Comes of my being in school at the time."

They passed on to Study 12 where Polly sparkled:

"Now this—this is not quite so tidy."

It certainly was not. Study 12 had suffered no raid last night, but it rather looked as if it had.

"Can't start prep yet awhile," said Polly, plumping down into a chair. "Um! You don't want to dine with Miss Somerfield and Mrs. Eastman, Pam? I rather wish I were going to."

"You do?"

"Yep. Why should Miss Somerfield be left to do all the studying of Mrs. Eastman," complained the Sherlock Holmes of the Fourth Form, for so madcap Polly had been called more than once. "Shouldn't wonder if Miss Somerfield gets bamboozled."

"Oh, Polly."

But Polly was not wholly serious, and she laughed along with the others.

"There's one thing," said Helen, with resumed seriousness. "The bundle of papers that the Eastmans may be after are locked away in Miss Somerfield's safe now. So I don't see how on earth they could ever be stolen."

A pause ensued.

"Must be funny," remarked Betty of a sudden, "to sit down to dinner, as Miss Somerfield is going to do, with a person you suspect of wanting to commit a robbery. They don't seem to be going to send for you to join them, Pam; but here comes Naomer, anyhow."

"Hey, steady!" exploded the madcap next moment, the dusky one having dashed in very boisterously. "And no opening the corner cupboard, kid."

"Yes, bekas I must have a snack!" panted Naomer. "And a refresher, quack! What ze diggings, after all ze gardening I have done!"

And the dusky one opened the cupboard door, only to close it sharply again, hearing an adult voice in the corridor. Naomer for the moment fancied it must be the Form-mistress.

Next instant all the girls in Study 12 were brought to their feet by the arrival of young Mrs. Eastman.

There she was, at the study's threshold, still wearing the motoring things in which she had arrived at the school a few minutes since. A most gushing smile was hers, and she exclaimed in a tone of great friendliness:

"Oh, Pam dear, so there you are! I'm a bit early, so I thought I would pop up to see you. How are you, Pam?"

"Quite fit, thanks, Mrs. Eastman."

"And the rest of you? That's right. And what lovely weather we have been having, girls. Although I am afraid a change is on the way. In fact, I shouldn't wonder if a wild, wet night sets in, the glass is so low."

She laughed purringly.

"I shan't relish the drive back, if we do have rain. But, Pam dear, some chocs for you to heat round."

Even Naomer did not look at all enraptured at the large, handsome box of "assorted" was proffered. As for the other girls, they could hardly withhold mistrustful looks. Somehow this evening lovely Mrs. Eastman seemed more falsely fair than ever. The endearments for Pam were far too gushing.

But Pam, of course, could only advance and accept the beribboned box.

"Thank you, Mrs. Eastman; but you shouldn't!"

"My dear, I am living in that lovely country house that is your own ancestral home, so I feel we must be friends. When are you coming over to see me again, Pam? It must be soon. But what is this that Zelig was chattering about to me just now. Your study raided last night by a burglar or somebody?"

"Yes, well"—Pam serenely eluded the prying remark—"they got nothing for their trouble, anyhow. Zelig goes back with you to-night, by the way."

At that moment the room darkened and some of the girls glanced to the window. There must have been a heavy cloud suddenly curtaining the down-going sun.

Mrs. Eastman gave a bored sigh.

"I suppose I must take the girl back with me, although I have no use for her, Pam. We do not entertain; live very quietly, you know. We had enough of the gay life in India, my husband and I. But I am going to enjoy dining with your headmistress this evening."

She turned to pass out, including all the girls in a parting smile. Not one of them intended to speak, however softly, until she was well out of hearing, and so a heavy silence prevailed, one that caused them to hear her exclaiming in the corridor:

"Oh, you again, Zelig! Has Miss Somerfield wondered what has become of me?"

"Mais non, miladi. It is only that I wish to speak with Mademoiselle Pam."

"Oh, I see."

In the study Pam gave a little annoyed gesture. The other girls chuckled.

"Mademoiselle—"

"What is it now, Zelig?"

She was at the room's threshold, her sallow face full of a miserable, appealing look.

"If you would give me one moment."

The room darkened still more.

"I'll come back, girls," Pam said, stalking out to comply with the French maid's desire for privacy.

A few moments and they were alone together in Pam's own study; and then most dramatically Zelig burst into tears.

"How I am sad," she sobbed wildly, "that you will not show me the little kindness, you, mademoiselle, for whom I would die!"

"Zelig—"

"It is that your dear mother would not wish you to treat me so cruel. All I ask, mademoiselle, that you speak for me to stay on here at the school."

"Zelie, my mother would have been most displeased with you had she been here to see you showing such jealousy over Muriel. I have told you, I want to be kind to you as well as to Muriel; but you spoil yourself, you disappoint me."

"Then I am sorry, mademoiselle; I ask pardon. *Vla!*" the French girl cried, suddenly going upon her knees and wringing her hands in front of Pam. "Like this before you, petite, I protest. How I am sorry, and will not offend again—*jamais, jamais*. Never, never!"

This interview was most upsetting for Pam.

"Get up, Zelie dear, and I'll gladly take your word for it that you're sorry. Nothing more shall be said about it by me ever."

"And you will plead to let me stay on with you, petite?"

"As to that, Zelie, no, I think it will be much better not to—"

"Mademoiselle!"

"For your own sake, Zelie, as well as Muriel's, you had far better go back to Swanlake to-night with Mrs. Eastman."

"That woman, she is not my mistress. I detest her. I will not be servant in a house that has that woman for a mistress."

"It is only for a little while, Zelie, and you know you were left behind like the rest of the staff to be of use to anybody who might rent Swanlake. Come, come," Pam entreated very tenderly, "make the best of things, Zelie, and when my mother comes home from abroad she will be grateful."

"She would wish me to be here with you."

"Nonsense; and I am not going to hear of it."

"Ah, but that Muriel—"

"She is different, Zelie. Mother herself arranged for Muriel to be trained as a maid at Morcove. So, no more, but just be a good girl and—"

"It is not the way to make me good," Zelie suddenly flared out, falling away from Pam as if done with her. "I ask only that, and you deny me. *Très bien!* But if you think I can be good, when it makes me mad—mad! As for that Muriel, that dot of a woodchopper's daughter—"

"That will do, Zelie."

Zelie's face then was a study of ill-suppressed rage. Spasms seemed to twitch the marble-white cheeks, whilst the large dark eyes dilated and held each a spark of fire.

"*Très bien, mademoiselle.*"

And Pam was alone.

She sat down, inclined to ponder deeply. The recent encounter with Mrs. Eastman had left one more distrustful of her than ever. Had it been Mrs. Eastman or her husband who had raided this study last night, hoping to get hold of what she, Pam, called the "Temple of the Moon" papers?

She had found that name for the documents, because they related to an ancient temple out in India known as the Temple of the Moon. They were papers which a certain Professor Donkin had left behind at Swanlake when called away at a moment's notice in connection with some other matter of antiquarian interest out in Egypt.

Enough had happened to convince Pam that the Eastmans had a motive for wanting to possess that papers. It looked as if it were the real reason why the couple had rented Swanlake—so as to have a clear field. Well, the papers were

now in Miss Somerfield's safe, so that was that. Even so, last night's raid over here at the school remained a very alarming thing. It showed that someone, desperate to get hold of the documents, knew that they had been brought away from Swanlake.

But the difficulty was this: In addition to the Eastmans, there was one other party who formed an object of suspicion. The Hindu!

Was it he who had broken into the schoolhouse last night? Or was it the Eastmans? Pondering quietly like this, Pam worked back to a conclusion arrived at earlier in the day, the same conclusion which Miss Somerfield, when confided in, had reached.

One would be able to tell by the way Mrs. Eastman comported herself this evening. Any attempt to "wangle" an invitation to remain for the night at Morcove—that would mean a lot.

A freshening evening breeze suddenly gusted in at the open window billowing the curtains. Pam got up to partly close the window, and then she saw how the sky had clouded over.

Blowing up for a rough night. And what was that Mrs. Eastman had said about dreading the drive back through rain and wind? Was that to be the ruse, to secure a night at Morcove School?

"But Miss Somerfield will be on her guard," was Pam's comforting thought. "Mrs. Eastman may angle for an invitation to remain on for the night. She won't get it!"

Standing still after a thoughtful turn or two about the study one other comforting thought Pam could speak aloud to herself, smiling as she did so.

"The papers are in the safe, and that should be good enough."

And so it might have been if only—if only there had been no Zelie.

Schemers Both

TOWARDS eleven o'clock that night a car went swishing up the be-puddled drive leading to the Swanlake mansion.

The wind was high and the rain was pelting down; yet here was Mrs. Eastman driving back from Morcove with Zelie Duval.

Balked! The one as much as the other balked in what had been a similar desire to pass at least this one night at the school.

No wonder there had been sullen silence all the way back in the car. No wonder Mrs. Eastman alighted at the Swanlake porch in a very bad-tempered way, giving a vicious stab to the bell-press, whilst Zelie looked as white-faced and fierce as ever, waiting under cover of the porch to be admitted.

Back again, the pair of them!

Bolts were shot back, a chain was rattled off the fastening, and then the great front door was opened by young Mr. Eastman.

He smiled, none too pleasantly, although it was only his wife who noticed this. Zelie was too occupied with her own broodings to pay close attention to either husband or wife.

Back again! Sent home to Swanlake like this, whilst that woodchopper's daughter still remained at Morcove. Eh, bien! One would know what to do now.

Thus Zelie's secret, passionate thoughts, whilst Mrs. Eastman going first into the house flung the remark over a shoulder.

"You can go to bed, Zelie. I shan't need you."

"*Merci, miladi! Bon soir!*" the French girl bowed.

"Good-night."

Mr. Eastman stayed to bolt up again, and whilst he was doing this he heard the chauffeur plashing round to take over the car and put it away for the night. The young wife sauntered to the library where there was a good fire and dropped down into a chair.

Pettishly she removed her hat, loosened her motoring coat, and then relaxed, sighing bitterly. Her husband strolled in.

"Huh!" he grimaced. "So it didn't answer?"

"No."

"Rotten!" was his comment. "We may not get another chance. When I saw how wet the night had turned I felt sure you'd manage to stay."

"I didn't dare make any suggestion," his wife exclaimed in a tight-lipped way. "Miss Somerfield had her doubts about me. I could tell, the moment I got to the school. I had all my work cut out, Lawrence, to remove her suspicions."

"And you think you did that?"

She shrugged.

"I did my best, anyhow. And it's no use looking like that; if I had made the wet night an excuse for asking to be slept at the school she would have guessed that I wanted a chance to lay hands on the papers."

"Then she knows that Pam took them away from Swanlake?"

"Oh, yes. Pam had handed the papers to her headmistress, to put in the safe, of course."

"Um! So that's why I didn't lay hands on them in the girl's study last night. Well, I shouldn't have expected the girl to go to her mistress about it somehow."

"Pam is Pam," muttered Mrs. Eastman, getting up to stand at the fender. "Besides, she did not say what the papers were until this morning—after last night's raid. Then, I take it, she told Miss Somerfield a good deal."

"Miss Somerfield hinted—"

"Miss Somerfield did not hint anything, except that a Hindu might possibly have been the person who broke into the school last night."

"A Hindu? Ah!"—and Lawrence Eastman fingered a clean-shaven chin. "So they know there is a Hindu in the case. Come, that's not so bad, Elsie, is it? I mean to say, any suspicion—it doesn't rest entirely upon us."

The young wife shrugged.

"We share in the suspicion, and that's bad enough. But there's one thing, Lawrence!" came with a brighter look. "My visit to Morcove this evening was not altogether a wasted one."

"Why—what?"

She turned away from the fire to stand closer to him so that the talk might be continued in a still more subdued manner.

"Can you make skeleton keys, Lawrence?"

"Skeleton keys? H'm! But I'd have a good try, Elsie, anyhow, if—"

"Listen then," she whispered. "And then say I am not as sharp as needles. Before dinner at the school there was time for me to do—this!"

With the word she turned to a fair-sized attaché-case that had been with her during the evening. Snapping back the fastenings she opened the bag and instantly displayed before her husband's startled eyes a cake of soap.

"See, Lawrence? Impressions!" she whispered, pointing to several markings on both sides of the cake of soap. "When I got to the school I had that Zelig to see to me upstairs. You know how she chatters. It was her chatter that largely told me how matters stood. I hadn't then opened

this bag with its box of corks for the Willoughby girl. An idea came. I pretended I had come without my key for the bag."

Lawrence Eastman was too excited for speech. He could only nod an eager: "Yes, go on!"

"I asked Zelig if she could get me some keys to try upon the bag, and the young idiot went away and came back with—"

"Miss Somerfield's keys?"

"Yes. The complete bunch. I didn't know, of course, which was the key of the safe. But I got Zelig out of the room and took impressions of all the likely keys. Soap from the washstand was the very thing."

"Elsie, you're a marvel!" her husband gasped, taking the cake of soap to scrutinize the impressions closely. "There may be the very making of us!"

"It's up to you now, Lawrence. I shall be very surprised if one of the keys that you can make with those impressions to go by doesn't do the trick. As for getting into the schoolhouse again—pooh!" she laughed. "That's nothing."

"Only better not be in too much of a hurry perhaps?"

"It won't be too soon by the time you've made the keys," he was answered softly. "Remembering that there is someone else after the papers all the time."

"Hunda Khan, yes," muttered Lawrence Eastman, and he cast such an uneasy glance around, as if the very name haunted him, that his wife smiled disdainfully.

"Ay, but it's all very well," he scowled then. "I don't want to get knocked on the head. The Temple of the Moon may hold millions in gold and jewels, but I'm not keen on losing my life in the attempt. I stop at that."

"Yes," she said tartly, "you would. Well, I've done my bit for to-night, at any rate. I'm going to bed."

There was such a night silence in the great old house as made even her light footfall audible in the dim-lit hall and on picture-hung staircase. Servants had gone to bed, their temporary master having said that he would wait up for the car's return from Morcove.

Mrs. Eastman's loitering step took her to one of the best bed-rooms on the first floor. It did not surprise her that the lights were on; but she gave a slight start at finding Zelig in the room.

"I thought I told you to go to bed, Zelig?"

"Miladi, pardon. It is only that my devotion to you is so great. Always there is something that Zelig can do to save miladi trouble."

"Your devotion to me, Zelig, is not so great that you wanted to come back with me to Swanlake, n'est ce-pas?"

"Ah, miladi! That is how I am torn between my devotion to you and my love for la petite mademoiselle."

"She didn't want you at the school apparently?" smiled Mrs. Eastman carelessly.

The French maid's only response was a little laugh whilst taking the lady's discarded motor-coat and hat.

"Never mind, Zelig, I appreciate you, if others don't," said Mrs. Eastman. She had a vague idea that this girl might come in useful, if only as a tittle-tattler. "And you are safer here than at the school, you know"—with another smile. "That Hindu person who tried to break into Swanlake a few nights ago, he has transferred his attentions to Morcove School, it seems."

"Oui! But, miladi, for that reason I must now fear for mademoiselle's safety," Zelie said willyly. "It was her study, remember. Ah, miladi, if only la petite could be at Swanlake; how I would be happy then."

Mrs. Eastman turned round and gave Zelie a full look.

"Come here, Zelie. So," with a playful tap upon the girl's shoulders, "you wish Pam Willoughby were here in her own home? Impossible, I'm afraid, although I might—yes, I might be glad to have her company. It is lonely here."

"It is terrible," said Zelie, clasping her hands. "Ah, miladi, impossible, you say Mais non! For—écoutez! Listen," she whispered. "It is that I, Zelie Duval, can suggest a way, oui! But perhaps miladi will be angry?"

"No, Zelie, you only amuse me. When then do you suggest? Be quite open. It may end in my being grateful. I found it so different," Mrs. Eastman threw out as carelessly as ever whilst stepping to the dressing-table, "when Pam Willoughby was here for that one night."

"Miladi, it is this. At the school there is much anxiety now about the mystery of last night's raid. The headmistress—ah, I was not there to-day without keeping my eyes open. Mademoiselle herself, she, too, is how you call it? Worried."

Again Mrs. Eastman turned round to stare.

"Well?"

"Miladi, how if I tell you that I have informa-

tion which I will only confide to mademoiselle?" the French maid said very softly. "You ring up the school, you say how it is that Zelie—Oh, Zelie is a dolt, oui, but how can one be angry with her? It is her devotion that is making her say: 'If mademoiselle will come to Swanlake, she shall be told. No one else.' Then what happens, think you?"

Mrs. Eastman did not immediately answer. For a few moments she stood looking hard into Zelie's eyes, and after that she took a few reflective turns about the room.

"It will be something, Zelie, that you want to tell Miss Pam in connection with the Hindu?"

"But certainly, miladi. It can be that I have seen him again—that monster. It can be anything."

"Whether true or not? So you are like that, are you, Zelie?"

"Oui, I am like that!"

Zelie said it fiercely, defiantly, her glittering eyes never wavering as they met Mrs. Eastman's.

"I see. Very well, Zelie, we will talk about it in the morning."

"Merci, miladi. And there is nothing more to-night?"

"Nothing more, Zelie, thank you."

"Bon soir, miladi; bonne nuit," the French girl murmured, bowing herself away to the door. "Happy dreams."

The door closed between them.

"Happy dreams of what?" young Mrs. Eastman muttered to herself. "Of the Temple of the Moon perhaps?"

And suddenly she gave a smile that seemed to be covetous and exultant.

Called Away

"BOOKS away, girls. Naomer, remember that you are to stay behind."

"No, plis—"

"Yes, I say. For talking in class after I had warned you."

"But I was only whispering, plis."

"It's the same thing. The rest, dismiss."

"Sweendle," said her royal impishness, remaining seated whilst the other girls eagerly stood up to march out of the Fourth Form class-room. "Whoa, Paula, queek, just a meenit!"

Paula Creel had to stop, if only because the dusky one, next to whom she sat in class, was clawing her by the skirt.

"Don't tear my twock off, anyhow, Naomer!"

"First of all," said the imp, "pop up to ze study and get me a snack, bekas I have had nothing since break. What ze diggings, I am not going to stick here and starve."



"Pam dear, some chocolates for you," Mrs. Eastman gushed, proffering the lovely box. But somehow Pam and her chums could not believe that her friendship was sincere.

"Weally, Naomer, I don't see why I should—" "You do as I tell you, Paula, or you will get it in ze neck."

"I wouldn't," said Polly witheringly, "take the least notice, Paula. Ha, ha! Look at her!" the madcap teased back at detained Naomer. "Kept in. Booh!"

"You go and boil your head," the imp advised the madcap. "Hi, Paula, don't forget!"

"Ah, deah, I suppose I must," sighed the amiable duffer, passing out with the rest. "Pwetty twying, though, after a stwenuous morning in class."

"That sounds as if you don't feel up to a bit of praccer, Paula," chuckled the captain.

"I do not, Betty."

"Poor thing. Well, I do. Come on, girls, let's get out to the field. It has stopped raining, thank goodness!"

"Going to be fine for the rest of the day," was Pam's opinion. "Good time for it to clear up—twelve o'clock."

Then she briskly detached herself from the crowd that was surging for the open air. Pam had suddenly noticed Muriel Floddon in cap and apron on the look-out for her.

"Hallo, Muriel! How's the world serving Muriel?"

"Fine, thank you, miss," laughed the maid in training. "And, please, miss, I was to ask you to report to the headmistress at once."

"Oh, bother! What about, do you know, Muriel?"

"I'm afraid I don't, miss."

"Right-ho, I'll step round. Er, Muriel, I shall be free at the same time again this evening if you'd like to do some more arith or French or anything."

Muriel's eyes sparkled.

"It is good of you, miss. I'm finding it ever such a help. But—"

But Pam was already hastening away. She was never the girl to wait to be thanked, and she had read in Muriel's looks that great gratitude was wanting to find expression. Simply because she, Pam, had found time now and then to help Muriel, with those lessons by which the girl was hoping to improve her chances in life, as if one needed to be thanked for a little thing like that.

"Ah, yes, come in, Pam!" the headmistress was ready to respond as Pam tapped at the door marked "Private." "I have something to tell you in regard to Swanlake."

"Mrs. Eastman has been on the 'phone with me this morning, Pam. It appears that that French maid has been talking very strangely."

"About me? Oh, is that all!" smiled Pam in a not-surprised way. "Yes, well, I'm afraid I did lose patience in Zelig, when—"

"But it's nothing like that, Pam. Apparently Zelig Duval has something to divulge in connection with the whole affair, and she will only say it to you."

"Oh, she wants to come over to the school again."

"Mrs. Eastman thinks you should go over to Swanlake, Pam, instead of Zelig's coming to Morcove."

"And that would be better, I think," put in Pam eagerly. "Much better."

"All things considered, Pam, I am inclined to agree. If Zelig can throw any light on the affair we ought to encourage her to do so. For we are still quite in the dark. On the other

hand, we really do not want to be saddled with Zelig again."

"No! It doesn't answer, Miss Somerfield."

"Mind you, Pam," pursued the headmistress very gravely, "I would not dream of allowing you to go to Swanlake at this time, only I have been bound, as you know, to acquit Mr. and Mrs. Eastman of all complicity in the affair. I told you, Pam, the morning after Mrs. Eastman had don't to dine with me, I found it impossible to don't her bona-fides."

Pam received this in dubious silence.

"It is no use, Pam; that visit of hers was to be the test, and Mrs. Eastman came out of it quite all right. Trust me, I was on the alert with her, but never once did I have any suspicion confirmed. It was the other way about."

Miss Somerfield added, with quiet emphasis:

"That wet night gave Mrs. Eastman a good excuse for angling for an invitation to be slept at Morcove. It is a bad road over the moor—"

"Oh, I know it is."

"And she was driving herself. Yet she never even hinted that she would like to stay the night at the school. So, Pam, I am thankful to say that she and her husband really can be acquitted of any desire to get hold of those papers."

Pam's eyes as this was said glanced aside to the safe, and then the headmistress gave a reassuring nod and smile.

"They're still there, Pam, so it's all right. I don't doubt that your study was raided by someone who wanted to get hold of those papers. To that extent, Pam, you were right in what you thought. But that it may have been the Eastmans—no."

"Then you don't mind my going over to Swanlake as I am wanted there?"

"Provided you have one of your chums with you, as before. I see no objection, Pam. After school to-day."

"And sleep the night?" Pam suggested. "Be back in time for school in the morning?"

Miss Somerfield became reflective.

"Pity, Pam, this did not come about yesterday—our Wednesday halfer. Then you could have gone over after the midday dinner and got back the same night. You could get back this evening, of course, but the weather is tricky and those roads are so bad. Mrs. Eastman would like to have you for the night—"

"Then, please, Miss Somerfield."

"Very well, I think that will be best. It is your own home, Pam, and the Eastmans—well, I am quite satisfied that they are everything your parents deemed them to be when they let them have the place. But you must take a chum, Pam," was the reminder, as Pam prepared to go out.

"Oh, rather, Miss Somerfield! I'll arrange about that now."

Nor was it another minute before Pam was careering on to the games-field to interrupt a practice-game that had Betty and many others well on the go.

"SOS!" was Pam's joyful way of apologising for the butting-in. "Don't all speak at once; but who'd like to come with me to Swanlake by-and-bye?"

"What, again!" cried Polly. "Oh, hip, pip!" And she twirled her hockey-stick. "To-stay the night, Pam?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Not Polly," laughed Helen. "She went that other time."

"But how ridie!" the madcap exploded. "Of course I must be the one. Isn't that right, Pam? I have handled the case so far."

"Have you?" grinned Betty.

"I was handling it with Pam until it was taken out of our hands by Miss Somerfield, worse luck!" grimaced Polly. "Of course, if headmistresses will butt in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I really think Polly had better be the one," Pam smiled, "much as I should like to have any or all of you others. There is something in Polly's having been with me before."

"Not to mench," said Biddy Loveland, "that Polly is our Sherlock Holmes."

"Yes, where's my clay pipe?" jested the madcap, and she started a walk round, using the hockey-stick as a pretended pipe of enormous dimensions, the crooked end being the bowl and the other end held to her lips. "All I want is another ounce of shag and I'm all right."

"Take care!" warned Helen gaily. "That Hindu, you know."

"My dear Watson," said Morecove's Sherlock Holmes, "unless I am mistaken, the Eastmans are the danger."

"Yes, well, Miss Somerfield says not," remarked Pam.

"Miss Somerfield, what does she know about it! Miss Somerfield," snorted Polly, "is only a headmistress!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

So that was the amicable arrangement. Polly was to go with Pam, and the only grumbler would be Naomer.

The dusky one was ripe for making a grievance about anything when she came out of "deten." On being told about the latest Swanlake development she promptly declared herself to be "disgusted."

"Bekas what ze diggings, Polly is always going over to Swanlake with Pam!"

"You should stand better with your Form-mistress," said Polly sweetly. "Then perhaps you might be allowed to go with us on these important visits. Instead of getting kept in and given lines to do, and—"

A sudden howl from Paula.

"Womp, ow! Theah you go!" as Naomer dashed at Polly, missed her, and collided with the elegant one. "A weck, a wuin! Naow look at me, geals."

"Bekas eef you will get in ze way. As for you, Polly, I not spik to you again, ever!"

"Well, that's one comfort."

"Not eef I live to be ze thousand years. Not eef I live to be a hundred meellion years, so there!"

And away stamped the dusky one, to put this terrible hit-back into immediate operation.

Polly, it was noticed, did not look broken-hearted. She was not even penitent.

At the close of afternoon school Pam made a point of seeking out Muriel Floddon instead of getting a game with schoolmates.

Morecove's novice in cap and apron was off duty for her own half-hour's teatime. As soon as that half-hour was up she would relieve one of the other maids. Meanwhile, in addition to getting her tea, she appeared to be doing a bit more self-tuition.

Pam found the woodman's daughter sitting apart in the servants' hall poring over a book with tea and bread-and-butter and cake a matter of secondary importance.

"So there you are, Muriel. And what is it this time?"

Up jumped Muriel as that laughing cry made her aware of Pam's appearance upon the scene. "Only some more grammar, miss."

"Grammar without groans, you little marvel!" said Pam in genuine admiration. "Well, I can stay for a few minutes, if that will help, although I've got to be off to Swanlake very soon now."

"Swanlake, miss?"

"Yes, Muriel; I wanted to let you know I shan't be here this evening to spare you an odd half-hour. But I shall be back at school again in the morning. I may see your parents, anyhow, and I shall give them your love."

"Thank you, miss, and say that I'm awfully happy."

And studying grammar at mealtimes. You little caution," laughed Pam, dropping a hand very caressingly upon Muriel's shoulders. "A whisper, Muriel. Housekeeper told me, when she was speaking about you to me, knowing that you come from Swanlake. They are going to give you a rise."

And Pam, leaving the novice in a state of pleased surprise too great for words, flitted away to get her own tea upstairs in the "chummary," and then be off with Polly.

And Now—What?

"I WONDER, Polly, what will happen!"

"If anything does, Pam."

"Yes, well, somehow I feel that something will."

Those were the last remarks the two Morecovians were to exchange during the ride to Swanlake. The car was even now pulling up opposite the porch of the great country house, and there was Mrs. Eastman, ready to offer a gushing greeting.

"Between the showers, girls!" she laughed, as they jumped out on to rain-soddened gravel. "I'm so glad you haven't to go back to the school before the morning. It is going to be a steady downpour after dark, I'm sure. And I'm all alone, too."

"Alone?" both juniors echoed in surprise.

"Yes. My husband has had to go off in the car on business and won't be back to-night. So I am not sorry that Zelig's strange request has fetched you over here, Pam, with this friend of yours, although I think it very silly of Zelig."

"Ah, mademoiselle!"

And there was Zelig herself, rushing forward, to relieve Pam of her small bit of luggage. Polly, it seemed, did not need to be waited upon.

"Your room, petite, it is all ready."

"And Polly's, too, I hope," said Pam drier.

"Oui!" panted the French maid, already turning back to a grand staircase down which she had whirled only a few moments since.

She was all excitable chatter whilst following the two scholars up to their rooms, but it was chatter of no account. Ah, what happiness, that la petite was home again for another night!

"But, Zelig," said Pam, as soon as she had the French girl to herself in the bedroom, "you had something important to tell me? It's why I'm here, you know."

"Ah, mademoiselle, not now."

"But why not, Zelig?"

"It is that I do not wish to spoil mademoiselle's enjoyment. No, no," Zelig raved on, shaking her head. "In the morning, ah, oui!"

"That won't do, Zelig," said Pam, feeling all

the old irritability towards this tiresome girl. "I can't enjoy my evening here by being kept in suspense. Either you tell me at once, or else—"

She darted to the window and peered out.

"The car has not yet started back for Morcove, Zelig. Either you will tell me this instant or I shall call down to Miss Somerfield's chauffeur to wait for Polly and I are going back with him."

"Mademoiselle. Mais non!"

"But yes. I mean it."

"Ah," Zelig sighed and shrugged, "how I am sorry that la petite is so impatient. But your wish is always my duty, mademoiselle—toujours, toujours!"

"I don't know so much. But do meet my wish this time, anyhow."

"Mademoiselle, I will," was the vehement response in a sinking voice. "It is this, then. Last evening I go for a walk between the lights. I am sad, thinking of you, petite. I think of the strange things that have happened, of the danger you are in."

"Danger, Zelig? I am not aware of being in any danger."

"Ah, mademoiselle, was it not your study at the school which was entered that night? It happened at Morcove School, oui. But it had to do with Swanlake. Mais non, I should say that it happened first at Swanlake, and then at the school. The attempt, mademoiselle, to steal something, oui?"

"I didn't come over, Zelig, to be asked questions," Pam astutely evaded the interrogation. "It is for you to tell me. Go on then; last evening, what?"

"This!" whispered Zelig, bending nearer. "I am walking about out there in the dark and the light is failing. Suddenly, mademoiselle, suddenly I see that monster again."

"Who?"

"But mademoiselle must remember. The Hindu!"

"Where, Zelig? I mean, exactly where—"

"Mademoiselle, I am crossing the grass; he is on the edge of the wood where all is gloom. For a moment I see him, then he is gone. Ah, but how I am terrified," shuddered Zelig. "Who is that man? Why it is that he must haunt the place. He would have broken into Swanlake that night, we know. It is that he broke into the school to search your study. Vra! He is a danger, that man!"

"And you didn't run to the house and tell the Eastmans?"

"Mademoiselle, no. What use? Did I not tell them once before, and they would not send for the police? So I make up my mind to send for you, that I will only tell you."

"Yes, well—"

"Oh, mademoiselle, now that I have told you this, will you not take me back with you to Morcove School?" Zelig implored almost frantically. "It is that I am afraid to be here. I go in terror."

"Of what, Zelig?"

"Of that monster."

"But there is no danger to you, Zelig, even if he means any danger at all," Pam was bound to urge soothingly. "And are you sure you did not imagine it all?"

"Mais non! As I see you now, petite, so I saw him last evening. I swear it!"

The uncalled-for vehemence of that last cry, coupled with something in the French girl's eyes, suddenly strengthened a suspicion that Pam had

been trying to reject. It was that Zelig had made up the whole thing, as a ruse to be taken back to Morcove.

On the other hand, Pam could not forget that Zelig's "monster" really did exist. There really was a Hindu in the case.

Muriel's own father, the woodman on the estate, had seen the dark-skinned, turbaned man at midnight in the woods. And Pam and Polly, that other time they were staying the night at Swanlake, had seen his face at a window.

"You have nothing else to tell me, Zelig?"

"Mademoiselle, no."

"Right-ho! I must think about it. Now I want to find my chum."

Polly was waiting in an adjoining bed-room, and there Pam told her of the talk that had just taken place.

"What to think, Polly, I'm sure I don't know," Pam wound up perplexedly. "We know, of course, that there is a Hindu. We even know that his name is Hunda Khan. But whether Zelig did see him again last evening, I have my doubts."

"In any case, Pam, I wouldn't let her make it an excuse for being taken away from here to Morcove."

"I certainly shall not," Pam answered calmly. "She can't be trusted to leave Muriel alone at Morcove. It makes that girl's life a misery. Besides, Zelig has plenty of company here. There are all the other servants."

"Another thing, the Hindu is just as likely to start haunting Morcove," Polly reasoned, "if he is after those Temple of the Moon papers. He may get to know, as the Eastmans do, that the papers are at the school."

Pam nodded. She was never one to go on talking about a matter when her mind was made up.

Stepping to the window she eyed the sky.

"Pretty black, Polly. But it's not raining now, and dinner is not until half-past seven. Feel like coming with me to the Floddons' cottage?"

"Should love to, Pam."

"I told Muriel I would try to look in on her parents. Let's be off then whilst there's a chance."

Conditions out of doors were dismal, the showers having become heavier and more frequent during the day. The only cheerful note was the singing of birds in the dripping trees. Pam and Polly had to go by a narrow and winding woodland path, and last year's withered leaves made a sodden carpet for them to tread.

But such outdoor conditions only made the woodman's cottage seem more inviting, all so tidy and cosy it was, with a friendly spaniel lifting his lovely head to be stroked by the girls, after they had been welcomed by the honest woodman and his good wife.

For half an hour the two Morcovians sat with that homely couple, giving good accounts of Muriel at Morcove.

"Aren't they dears?" was Polly's delighted comment, when at last she and Pam were picking their way back to the mansion. "I could have stayed the whole evening."

"That's been the happiest half-hour we are likely to get this trip," smiled Pam. "Now to spend the rest of the evening with Mrs. Eastman. I just can't get over my mistrust of her, Polly."

"Neither can I. Yet Miss Somerfield must have had good grounds for thinking her to be quite all right after all."

"Or we wouldn't be here," rejoined Pam. At that instant they heard the patter of another shower upon the fresh green foliage of over-arching trees, so they made a run of it to the house.

Mrs. Eastman was coming downstairs, dressed lavishly for the evening, as the two girls got indoors. She conferred her stoney smile but did not detain them in talk, and in ten minutes they were down again from their rooms, after changing into suitable frocks.

By that time heavy rain could be heard drumming down, and it went on all through dinner. At every pause in the talk they could hear the rain and the rising wind, and it was fairly evident that the coming night was to be a souising one.

"I wonder how long the weather will keep like this,"

Mrs. Eastman sighed dejectedly, when she had the two girls with her in the drawing-room after dinner. "I shall want to be off, I'm afraid, unless it improves soon. It's as bad as the rainy season in India."

Pam and Polly glanced at each other. India. It could easily have been a perfectly natural comment for anyone to make; but was it in this case an attempt to turn the talk upon India?

So far the two schoolgirls had detected nothing in this woman—still their suspect as she was, and never mind what Miss Somerfield's conclusions might be—to deepen the mistrust. Mrs. Eastman had been just the charming, vivacious hostess, adapting herself to juvenile company. But perhaps she was on her guard.

After all, the greater her guilty intentions the more careful she was likely to be. Had Miss Somerfield thought of that? They wondered.

Never had the time between dinner and bed seemed so long to Pam in this her own ancestral home. It was one of Mrs. Eastman's touches of purely ordinary conduct that she asked Pam to play, and Pam did so. But the music never seemed to rise above the noise of the elements.

As for the talk, it was very desultory, could not have been balder. When at last the two girls went upstairs for the night they were half inclined to feel ashamed of having retained suspicions that their own headmistress had already discarded.

"And yet, Pam," whispered Polly, as they were standing to say good-night to each other at one of the bed-room doors.

"I know," was the nodded response. "The very fact that nothing has happened, not a word, not a look, may mean just that. She was extra careful to be on guard."

"As she may have been with Miss Somerfield at the school that evening."

"Yes, well, good-night, Polly, and I hope you sleep well."

"Good-night, Pam dear."

Polly was stepping closer to exchange a good-night kiss when she held herself very still, peering past Pam towards the stairs.

Pam did not look round, but waited until her chum had stopped staring along the corridor and was meeting her eyes again. Then Pam's look asked:

"What was the matter, Polly?"

"Mrs. Eastman, I am sure," whispered Moreove's madcap in Pam's ear. "Listening round the corner at the stairs."



"See," Pam breathed tensely. "Someone has been trying to cut skeleton keys to fit some lock or other. Could it be—Mr. Eastman?"

Pam nodded.

"Yes, well, good-night again, Polly darling."

"Good-night, Pam."

And next moment the one girl like the other was closing her bed-room door, hearing the howling of the wind and the hiss, hiss of the rain, the only lullaby that Swanlake could offer them on such a night as this.

Hush!

"POLLY! 'Sh! Wake up, Polly."

"I am awake. But why?"

The madcap's eyes, lifted clear of bed-clothes, saw Pam at the bedside finger at lip.

Perhaps Polly was right in thinking that she had been awake when the rousing whisper came.

But in that case she must have been pretty drowsy not to have been aware when her chum came stealing in.

"I think I shall go down, Polly. It seemed right to let you know."

"But what's up then?"

Polly was answered in a deep whisper, whilst she threw aside her coverings and slipped from the warm bed. If Pam were going downstairs, then so was Polly.

"I haven't slept yet, Polly. And just now, lying awake, I had a sudden idea. Supposing that Hindu is about, and knows that Mr. Eastman is away from the house to-night?"

"Goodness!"

"And soon after that I got up to close my window a bit more, for the rain was driving in. Polly," the other girl whispered on, "I believe I saw a man outside in the grounds."

"The Hindu?"

"Couldn't say, Polly. Much too dark to distinguish him. I don't see how it can have been a keeper. They don't come as close to the house as this on their beats, and I should doubt if any of them are out on a night as wet as this."

"One sec., Pam."

Already Polly was getting into dressing-gown and slippers. Pam was similarly attired, with an electric-torch in hand, but it was not switched on.

"To go downstairs is the thing certainly," Polly heartily approved her chum's intention. "He may mean to break in. Not that he can get hold of what he is after even if he does," she smiled. "Still!"

There was a nod from Pam, and then the pair of them crept away.

Until they were at the foot of the stairs the two girls heard only the sighing of the wind around the house and the slashing at rain-whipped windows.

Then a grandfather clock started to strike the hour. Pam and Polly held still, counting the strokes.

Twelve!

Silence came again except for the hurly-burly of the elements.

"Fearful night," breathed Polly. "Fancy being out in this."

"We'll go to that room," Pam whispered, "where the Temple of the Moon papers were locked away in a desk until I took them to Morcove. There are French windows to that room, and you remember, Polly—"

"Gee, yes. He came to those windows that night we were hunting for the papers."

Pam gave her chum a "This way!" nudge, and they turned into a passage off the large hall.

Tip-toeing, in a few moments they would have reached the room they had in mind; but just short of its doorway they heard, or thought they heard, another door closer at hand gave a faint creak.

That stopped them, heart in mouth. They met each other's eyes in the darkness. Swanlake was all raging draughts to-night, and any door left ajar could have been set creaking at its hinges. But what if it meant that the mystery man from the East had already broken in.

Already in this other room, the doorway of which was but a pace or so from them?

Pam put her lips to an ear of Polly's.

"Gun-room. Shall I switch on and take a look?"

"Switch on afterwards, Pam; I would. Take a peep first in the dark and see what you can."

One of Pam's calm assenting nods, and then she stepped nearer and gently sent the door wide open by a thrust of the foot.

Nothing happened. Both girls contrived to make their ears cut out the noises of the stormy night and listen only for sounds within the room. And the silence there was complete.

Pam and Polly nudged each other. Together they stepped boldly to the gun-room's threshold and peered in.

At any rate, they made out nothing in the darkness that was scaring.

Pam switched on the torch, flashed it all round the room quickly. Nobody!

The light wavered upon the racks of sporting guns and upon some weapons of ancient make that hung there as being in keeping with the place.

Polly felt a little awed, but Pam was familiar with the room. She was going to withdraw, switching off the torch, and then instead she crossed to a bench near the window, looked in surprise at certain objects lying there, and beckoned Polly to her side.

"This is queer, Polly."

"What is?"

"It looks as if somebody has been trying to cut skeleton keys or make keys to fit some lock or other. See?" Pam whispered, shining the torch over the bench.

"Gee!" gasped Polly then. "It's a kind of work-bench really for cleaning guns and so on, I take it? But you're right, Pam; these odd keys, these files."

"Polly, look at this, too!" Seldom did Pam become as excited as she was now.

"What, a cake of soap!" jerked out Polly, fixing her gaze upon this strange find. "With impressions of keys—several. Phew, that's what the person had to copy, filing any old keys to match."

"Yes, and this cake of soap, Polly—it's school soap!"

"Morcove? So it is! But perhaps you have this sort at Swanlake, too?"

"We don't, Polly; but, of course, it's not special to Morcove. It only happens to be the brand supplied at school."

Pam was speaking very tensely now.

"And I'm just thinking, Polly; that visit of Mrs. Eastman the other evening. Did she bring away this cake of soap?"

"You mean— Oh, I say, Pam," the other gasped afresh, "these are impressions of Morcove keys perhaps? She couldn't steal the keys, but she would manage to—"

"And her husband has been making keys to match the impressions," Pam spoke on under her breath.

A pause was ended by Polly's muttering:

"Mr. Eastman is away from Swanlake to-night. Pam, what if he is over at Morcove now, with home-made keys that will open Miss Somerfield's safe."

"I know, and it's awful," Pam nodded. "We can't phone. There's no all-night service. So how can we warn Morcove?"

They were looking at each other aghast. The Hindu was forgotten now. The all-important thing had become to get in touch with Morcove School—at once. Yet how indeed could that be done?

"There's a chauffeur, but no car," Pam reflected in a hollow voice. "And we haven't our bikes, worse luck!"

"Ugh!" Polly fumed softly. "When there's not a moment to lose. Mr. Eastman with his home-made keys may do the trick. We may hear in the morning that Miss Somerfield's safe has been opened, and—"

"Polly, I know what. I'll get away on horse-back!" came Pam's relieved whisper. "You must stay here, for I shall want to ride as I have never ridden before."

"But, Pam, all those miles—a night like this!"
"Yes, well, I shall make it mother's mare, not my own old pony. Mother's mount is a stayer. Come away now," entreated Swanlake's daughter; "upstairs, to get dressed."

Polly was not for raising any objections; she could only deplore the dire necessity of the case and also her uselessness. She would be no good as someone to keep Pam company. That girl, in and out of a saddle ever since she was a mere toddler in the Swanlake nursery, would want to ride like fury.

All that Polly had to say in the next minute or two was this:

"When we are round at the stables, Pam—for I'm coming with you to see you off—what about the Hindu Johnny? We chance him?"

"Chance him, yes."

"How I feel about it, too," was Polly's simple comment.

AND now they were round at the stables, darkness and the wind and rain doing the very worst for them.

Pam had saddled her mother's mare in the stable, and this was the critical moment for the spirited animal to be led out on to the cobbles.

"Steady, Ruby, there's a beauty!"

So with little noise the schoolgirl equestrienne kept the restive mare from prancing, and suddenly Pam herself was up to the saddle.

In waterproofs that already glistened with rain instantly she was at ease upon her fiery mount. She reached down a hand to Polly for a parting shake.

"Wish me luck, Polly."

"I do—I do!" was the fervent answer. "What a night for you to have to do this, but I know you must, Pam. It's the only way."

In that last moment together they peered this way and that. Then they met each other's eyes again.

"No, he hasn't turned up," Polly whispered, knowing that Pam also had been thinking of the phantom Hindu.

"Just as well," said Pam serenely. "Ta-ta, then, for I'm off."

There had to be the faintest patter of hoofs across the yard, then Pam had Ruby on soft gravel. But even this was not good enough for the wary girl, with her fear of the riding away being perhaps heard indoors.

She turned her mount on to a smooth grass verge and then Ruby could be given her head.

Darkness and wind and rain, and Pam galloping her mount beside the long drive leading down to Swanlake's main gateway.

Darkness, and the wind roaring in the trees of the avenue and the rain lashing horse and rider alike—pitilessly.

But they were off, and neither black night nor the raging tempest must put any check upon this desperate race against time.

On, Ruby—faster, faster! For even one moment, lost or gained, may make all the difference between defeat and victory.

Sound the Alarm!

FOR the first mile and more the hard ring of Ruby's hoofs upon a metalled road, the furious "three-ha-pence-and-tuppence" that a horse's iron shoes always seem to say when it is a real gallop.

Then Pam put a check upon her mount for a moment. Signpost! And now to strike aside on to the moorland road, a fearful way that it was going to be for them both a night like this.

"Steady, my beauty!" very caressingly. And then sharply: "Go on, then! Now!"

And away they cantered again, now into a fresh gallop in darkness as deep as ever and dead against the wind-driven rain.

Pam became as a jockey riding to win, her lissom figure crouched and yielding, her hands doing as wonderful work with the reins as her knees were doing where they dextrously held the mare's sleek sides.

On and on through the wild night, plashing through the great puddles, getting splashed all over, Ruby, with her neck stretched to the urgent task, her hoofs throwing up many a clod as well as spraying water this way and that. On and on.

If the night was bad, the way itself could scarce have been worse for such an exploit as Pam had set herself to do.

Nothing better than a road like this was to be before her and Ruby now.

Over the moorland wilderness it wound its way, a seldom-tended by-road, running for mile after mile through the wastes of low-growing gorse and stunted trees.

A shelterless, desolate tract of country this, and the wind blowing as hard as it had blown across the open sea, the wide Atlantic, on to which Morcove's big schoolhouse looked. But Morcove and the sea were miles from here—"and I have all those miles to go."

Not a light to be seen. No car coming by that she might have been able to stop, imploring a life because of the desperate urgency of this race against time. Ruby must bear her on like this mile after mile.

Would she be in time then? Would she?

Or would she get there at long last, only to find that the schoolhouse had been entered whilst all its inmates slept and the safe opened, the bundle of papers stolen?

It did not do to think about the possible failure to give warning in time. Such thoughts were liable to take her mind off the urgent task of riding Ruby safely through the night over this sodden, terrible road.

There came a dip that was all loose stones and purring watercourses. She walked Ruby down it—"Gently, Ruby; steady!"

Splash, clatter, and splash again! And all the time the pitiless rain still lashed down, filling the darkness with a hissing accompaniment to the roar of the gale.

Moments there were when Pam felt quite blinded by the rain. Her waterproofs were streaming. She did not mind a rap about this for herself, but it meant an added weight for Ruby.

Tireless, spirited Ruby, forging on so well. "Oh, you beauty!" Pam cried aloud to her splendid mount. "You're the one, Ruby!"

And Ruby, by her very pounding on even a wee bit faster after that applauding cry, seemed to be answering:

"If I can, I will!"

Suddenly: "Whoa, Ruby!"

A blown-down tree, right across the road.

Pam could ride her mount round that obstacle quite easily, working back to the road and then going on again, fast as ever.

But a few minutes later in one of the very wildest parts, where the ground to right and left had been quarried, there was another uprooted tree. It was an almost branchless pine lying right across the road.

Pam, with Ruby reined up and almost screaming for breath, took a good calculating look at this fresh obstacle.

Then she turned the mare back, to set her going for the fallen tree, to clear it at a leap—if Ruby could!

If not—well, down they would go the pair of them, broken, done for!

Pam reached forwards and patted Ruby's steaming neck, then urged her on to the risky jump. Over!

Over!
"Oh, Ruby!" the girl rider's thankful cry sounded loudly, fervently amidst the roar of the wind. "On then, beauty—on again!"

And once more the hootbeats answered, recovering from an uncertain plashing and stamping to assume a monotonous pounding that told Pam over and over again:

"We shall do it—we shall do it!"

But there was the lateness of the hour in her mind, and a thought of all the miles still to go, and she could not help but ask herself:

"I wonder—I wonder if we shall!"

DARKNESS and wind and rain, and a man stealing away from a car parked on some waste ground near Morcove School, with all the lights switched off.

Ding-dong, the chimes rang out—ding-dong!

Half-past one. Well, this should be late enough for what he had to do.

So Lawrence Eastman was saying to himself as he scrambled through a privet hedge forming part of the Morcove boundary.

Five minutes more and he was using a diamond cutter upon a pane of glass at the schoolhouse.

A faint clink, and he had the round of glass neatly fetched away. In went his right arm, the hand groping for the fastening.

OUT of one overcoat pocket came an electric torch, to be placed ready to hand. Then from another pocket a bunch of keys.

Not a glimmer of light was in the room or it would have revealed Lawrence Eastman, smiling to himself exultantly as he stood in front of the safe selecting a key.

He flattered himself that the whole thing was as good as done.

At this rate he would soon be off and away in the car with the Temple of the Moon papers.

A likely key for the safe had not been such a difficult one to fashion from the impressions so cunningly taken by means of the cake of soap.

At any rate, he had made a good half-dozen keys, so that if one did not quite fit, another would. How about this one, for a start? A Swanlake key, filed into suitable shape.

No, confound it, that key wouldn't turn in the lock. Try another then.

He muttered under his breath. This second key seem to want to work the hasps, but was just failing to do so. To blazes with it! But perhaps

number three would do the trick. In with it and see.

Hark, though! What was that sound!

He stood turned about, breathing fast as he listened.

Not a car out there in the wild night and not the sound of running feet. The galloping of a horse!

Someone on horseback coming up the school drive.

The police. How could it be? Then who—who was this midnight rider?

He was in a sudden "dither" as he tip-toed to the window by which he had entered.

Holding aside one of the curtains he peered out, but the inky darkness baffled him.

Nothing was to be seen of any horse and rider; there was only the mad clatter of hoofs on the hard approach road to the schoolhouse, warning him to be gone whilst there was yet time.

"**W**HOA then, Ruby—whoa!"

Pam was reining in the panting, smoking steed.

A last clip-clop, and she dropped the reins and came swinging down from the saddle.

She reeled in the first few moments that she was upon her feet again. Her body seemed still to want to swing to the movement of the horse.

There was as little breath in her lungs as there was in Ruby's. Oh, that last mile or two! But she was here—she was here.

Unsteadily the dauntless girl started to lurch to the porch to give a ring—ring at the bell that would rouse the whole school. But she was not yet under cover when she heard a sound that stopped her dead.

She peered hard, saw what it meant, and gasped.

Why, there he was, making off in the darkness, the very man whose villainy she had raced through the night to frustrate.

That was Lawrence Eastman—must be, dashing away; the vaguest figure in the darkness, but it was a man.

Tr-r-ring, ring! She set the porch bell going by stabbing a finger to the button. Tr-r-ring, ring, ring!

Then as forgetful as ever of all risk to herself, Pam rushed along by the schoolhouse wall, looking in any window that might be broken or wide open.

She came to one from which a round of glass had been cut and which was wide open to the tempestuous night. She knew it to be a window of Miss Somerfield's private room.

What then was the next discovery to be? That the safe had been opened, that the papers were gone? Or had she got here after all just in time?

Two moments more and she was inside the room.

The electric-light switches were over by the door and she could not go first to them. She exhaustedly lurched to the safe and put feeling hands to the door of it in the darkness.

Closed!

As soon as she knew that it was so she went over to the switches and clicked on some lights. The sudden blaze showed her a dropped bunch of keys lying upon the carpet in front of the unlocked safe.

Pam crossed over again and picked up the keys. She saw instantly what they were like, and knew whose amateurish hand had fashioned them.

And she laughed queerly, sinking down into

the first chair that came to hand, with the keys held in her lap.

Only just in time after all, but still, in time.

Morcove Wakes Up

"WHAT ze diggings! Bekas—"

"How wows! Geals, geals, a tewwible wow going on!"

There was, and other girls in the Fourth Form dormitory were waking up to that startling fact; a tremendous hullabaloo below stairs.

"Ooo, queek!" yelled Naomer, whisking out of bed. "Bekas eef eet is a burgillar—gorjus!"

"Bur-burglar? Ow, I—"

"Goodness, it must be a burglar!"

"For goodness' sake not so much noise!" protested Form-captain Betty, now that a good many juniors were all on the gable.

"But, Betty—"

A light came on, and then some of the girls cheered. For Naomer was by no means the only girl skittish enough to regard the midnight alarm as great fun.

There is safety in numbers. And each girl, as she grabbed a dressing-gown and clapped on slippers, could see at least twenty other girls doing the same.

"I say, though!" one of them called out, changing from flippancy to dismay.

"What, Helen, what?"

"Yes, Helen, you say—queek!"

"Supposing it's that Hindu!"

"Ooo! We never thought of that!" from a dozen of them. "The Swanlake business."

"Ow!" wailed Paula. "I do wish they'd leave us in peace. I can't find my stockings! I—Owp, ow!"

"Out of my way zen, duffer! Bekas—"

"Naomer, I'll go first!" insisted Betty.

"Wiz ze greatest of ze pleasure," conceded the dusky one. Her curiosity as to what was happening downstairs was not so great that she wanted to take the absolute lead. "You first, Betty, of course."

"Thank you," smiled the captain, as she streaked for the door. "Now don't crowd, girls." For there was an eager flocking after her. "Steady!"

"Hooray, bekas no school in ze morningk, not after this!" Naomer's rejoicing cry rose above the babel. "Come on, Paula, you keep with me."

"Er—thinks, thinks! But I—er—I would much wather—Owp! My toes! I say, I would much wather—Oop, gah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sh! Quiet!" Betty was entreating, with scant hope of controlling the noisy mob, when Miss Everard came round a corner from the stairs.



There was a brief handclasp between Pam and Polly. Then: "Good-bye, Pam," the Madcap whispered. "Good-bye—and good luck!"

"Girls, what's this?"

Manifestly this was the Fourth Form in the throes of a midnight alarm, so perhaps that was why neither Betty nor any others troubled to explain.

"Go back, girls," the Form-mistress gently bade them. "There is enough of a to-do downstairs without your aid."

"But, Miss Everard!" the clamour started. "What's it all about?"

"Bekas, eef zere is a jolly old burgillar, I want to get a look at him."

Some more laughter greeted this exuberant remark from Naomer. The entire crowd of juniors was ready to become very flippant and tittery, feeling sure that there had been only a false alarm. And then at the first word of explanation from Miss Everard, gravest amazement seized every listener.

Pam Willoughby had turned up just in time to frustrate an attempt upon the headmistress' safe. Pam, her Form-mates were astounded at being told, had ridden over from Morcove all alone—on horseback!

"On horseback, Miss Everard?" was the incredulous chorus. "In the middle of the night; a night like this, too."

"Yes, girls; it was her only way. You'll hear all about it in the morning. She's none the worse for it, I'm thankful to say, and her midnight ride has certainly achieved its purpose.

But when I think of her undertaking such a desperate ride—alone—

Miss Everard broke off as if checked by a shiver, and there came Betty's awed voice first, echoing that last word:

"Alone! Then what about Polly?"

"Polly is still at Swanlake, safe from all harm, we hope," was the prompt reply. "But a car is going over to Swanlake at once. Apart from anxiety about Polly, girls, Miss Somerfield has to go to Swanlake as quickly as possible. And now no more of this standing about, there's good girls."

In silence then, feeling more or less stupefied by the sensational news, they all drifted back into the dormitory. Miss Everard followed them in and saw them back into bed, remaining for a few minutes to enforce a "No talking!" injunction.

But no sooner was the Form-mistress gone than every girl was out of bed again.

This time there was a nipping to the windows, for they overlooked the grounds in front of the schoolhouse, and so Miss Somerfield's car could be watched for.

"There it comes, round from the garage!" the excited chorus went up at last. "Let's wait to see it go."

"Yes wuw-wather!" said Paula, although her teeth were chattering. "Dweadful night, even for a car-wide. And Pam wode all those miles on horseback, just wealise!"

"Ah, bah, eet is Polly I am zinking about now," shrilled Naomer. "Bekas, you never know. As for Pam, what ze diggings, why doesn't she come up to bed."

"I expect because she is seeing to her horse after the ride," said Betty admiringly. "It would be just like Pam to do that. But look. There goes the car. If only—oh, if only I were in it!"

"Hooray, stuff to give zem!" capered Naomer, now that the car could be seen speeding away, its headlamps making fans of light upon the road. "H!" was her perfectly futile yell at the window. "And give my love to Polly, eef she is still there!"

"They'll find her still there, I'm sure," Betty cheerfully predicted. "But if Miss Somerfield

has gone after the Eastmans at the same time—well, I would say she is in for a disappointment."

AND so it proved. Miss Somerfield and others who turned up in the car at Swanlake, whilst the night was still as dark and wild as ever, found Polly instantly, quite safe and sound.

Morcove's madcap was with Zele and many another scared-looking servant in the front hall of the great country house. But when the Eastmans were inquired for—

"They're gone!" was Polly's cry. "We couldn't stop them. Mr. Eastman turned up in his car, simply to get his wife and a few things. Then they were off together, half an hour ago."

Half an hour. In this isolated place, and at this time of night, it was a good enough start even for fugitives from the law.

All the same, Miss Somerfield, after a hopeless glance at the telephone, exclaimed determinedly:

"We must get in touch with the police. Whom can we send?"

It was Polly who answered.

"Oh, a messenger is already on the way. I have seen to that."

And she added with one of the roguish smiles that Morcove knew so well:

"It was the very least that I could do, Miss Somerfield, when Pam was doing so much."

The headmistress did not answer. But in her eyes there was a look of pride and admiration.

"Not that the arrest of the Eastmans would end the business," Polly suddenly added.

"It wouldn't?" Miss Somerfield returned. "Why not?"

"There would still be the Hindu, I suppose." Morcove's madcap said it with another smile as if only in fun.

Many a true word can be spoken in jest, however, as the headmistress now remembered. She gave a slight start, whispering:

"You may be right about that, Polly. We must never forget the Hindu."

That phantom-like figure with which Morcove was to be concerned so strangely and so dramatically, as the future would show.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

ONE CLUE TO GUIDE THEM

NEXT
TUESDAY



BY
MARJORIE
STANTON

Next Tuesday's Dramatic, Long Complete Story, Continuing the Thrilling Narrative of the Adventures of Betty & Co. in Their Efforts to Solve the Secret of Swanlake.