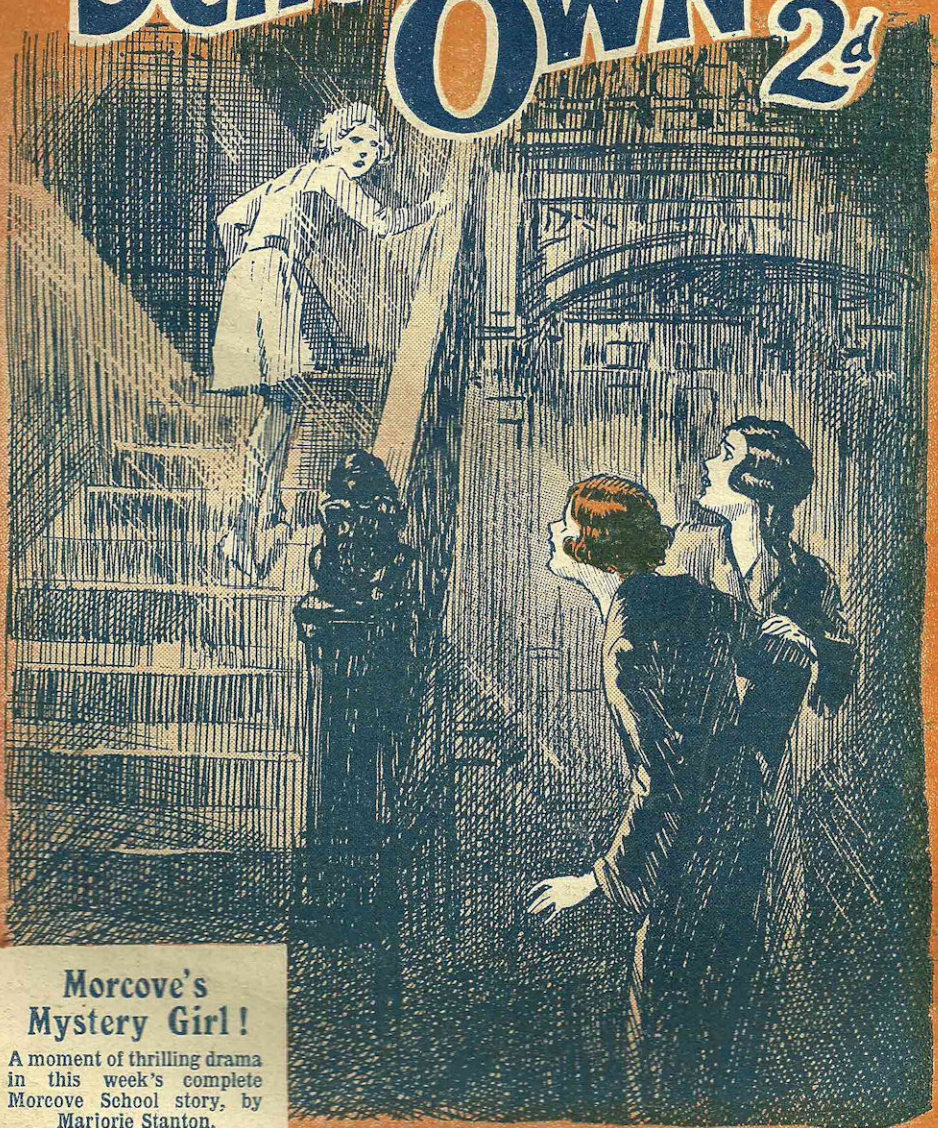


"The Phantom Schoolgirl" **DRAMATIC COMPLETE MORCOVE**  
**SCHOOL STORY WITHIN**

# The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2<sup>d</sup>



## Morcover's Mystery Girl!

A moment of thrilling drama  
in this week's complete  
Morcover School story, by  
Marjorie Stanton.

# The Phantom Schoolgirl



*Beginning a Splendid New-Term Series of Morcove Tales,  
Featuring the Chums of Study 12*

**B**ETTY BARTON and Co. are "back" for the new Term at Morcove, and once again studies echo with happy laughter and playing fields are thronged with high-spirited girls. For Betty and the famous "Co." the new Term promises every excitement. Right at the very outset they are confronted with the baffling mystery of the Phantom Schoolgirl.

## Ada's All There

"ER—Study 12, please?"

"At the end of the passage!"

"Oh, thanks! That's the Form captain's study, I think?"

"Yes; but I don't fancy she has turned up yet."

"I see! Oh, well, perhaps I shall find somebody else there."

"Just a moment. A new girl, aren't you? Is there anything I can do?"

"Er—no, thanks most awfully! But my name is Ada Sharrow, if you'd like to tell me yours?"

"Hargrove—Etta Hargrove. You'll probably find the captain's best chum, Polly Linton, in Study 12. She has got here by now, I know."

"I see!" smirked Ada Sharrow once again, and she passed down the long corridor of Fourth-Form studies, skirmishing past many bits of luggage that seemed to have been left there by sundry girls for others to fall over.

Morcove School, to-day, was starting a new term!

Back from all parts of the kingdom; back from abroad, and back from ocean cruises, were the

hundreds of girls who loved Morcove as they loved home itself.

Famous Morcove, on its own breezy headland, fronting the wide Atlantic; Morcove, for hard work—and plenty of play!—it had filled up again.

The old turmoil, above and below; familiar cries and counter-cries up and down the stairs—discipline being relaxed for this, the re-opening, day! Classes to-morrow—groans! But to-day—make as much row as you can, in accordance with tradition.

Madcap Polly Linton was certainly making as much noise as she could, in Study 12, by holding wordy warfare with that dusky imp, Naomer Nakara, over a certain hamper which would not go into the corner cupboard, being too big, and which, accordingly, Naomer, its joyous owner, wished to unpack.

"And I say you won't, kid!"

"Won't I? What ze diggings, when I have as much right to zis study as you have, any old how!"

By MARJORIE STANTON

"I know what it will be. Starting in to sample the eatables, and we can clear up all the shavings, and paper, and litter! This hamper," said Polly, taking hold of it, "needs to go outside!"

"Hi, be careful! Bekas—" "This hamper never should have been allowed in," said Polly virtuously. "What do you want a hamper for? Come back to school to work, haven't you? Like Paula, there! Isn't that right, Paula?"

"Pawdon?" drawled amiable Paula Creel, from the depths of the best armchair.

"I say," dinned Polly, playfully assuming deafness on the part of the languid one, "you're bursting to get to work, aren't you?"

"Not pawticulawly, Polly deah. No, I weally can't say that I—"

"Shame!" said the madcap. "And this the captain's study! And you two girls, favoured with my friendship—mime! Hallo, what's all this red ink, spreading over the carpet?"

"Eet not red ink!" shrilled Morcove's royal scholar and owner of the hamper. "Ah, bah, zat is my bottle of cherry corjeel—leaking!"

"All the more reason," said Polly, "for putting the whole thing outside. Oh, sorry!" she gaily apologised to somebody in the doorway. "You want to come in."

"My name is Sharrow. Er—a new girl, Ada Sharrow."

Polly's cordial smile faded. Hadn't she heard the name of Sharrow before, in connection with something unpleasant? Sharrow! Certainly not a common name.

But she dragged the hamper aside and signed to Naomer that all warfare in connection with it was in suspense for the time being. Any new girl had to be accorded a friendly welcome to this, the captain's, study.

"It's the captain I was wanting to see, of course," smirked Ada Sharrow. "Are you—Polly Linton? I was told I'd find a girl of that name here."

Polly nodded.

"And this is Paula Creel, and this, Naomer," she introduced those two quite briefly. "Betty Barton should be here by now, but—"

"Oh, then I'll wait." And the new girl invited herself to a seat. "Of course, a good many of you have had to come a long way from home to-day. I only had to come from across the way, so to speak."

"Er—"

"From the new hotel that opened yesterday. My mother is staying there; she was one of the first guests to register!" said Ada Sharrow proudly. "I spent last night there."

"Ooo, did you?" burst out Naomer. "Bekas, is eet very gorjus? Zey say he is simply marvellous!"

"It's—quite nice."

That, very definitely, jarred upon Polly and Paula. It hinted that Ada Sharrow was used to the life luxurious—and that she liked to make known the fact. Swanker! But in any case—Sharrow?

"I believe," Polly was thinking rapidly, "Paula is trying to recollect, too!"

At this instant two girls turned up at the wide-lung doorway, at sight of whom the madcap cried:

"Hallo, Pam dear. Hallo, Madge!"

"Bai Jove, geals, haow are you?" beamed Paula, getting up.

"Pipooray!" shrilled Naomer. "Bekas, we are filling up again, like old times!"

"I must introduce a new girl," said Polly to

tall Pam Willoughby and staid Madge Minden. "Ada Sharrow!"

"How d'you do?" Pam said serenely, along with Madge; and then:

"Sharrow? You haven't a brother at Grangemoor School, have you?"

"But I have!" laughed Ada, with a little clap of the hands. "I was enjoying the joke, when you two came in, of seeing Polly trying to remember! Of course, I've heard about all you Study 12 girls through my brother Harold, who is in the same house at Grangemoor as Polly's brother Jack. Only, my brother"—proudly—"is a pre!"

Polly closed her upper teeth over her underlip. Only Pam Willoughby's supreme composure at all awkward moments prevented a very painful silence.

"Yes; well," said Pam, "I hope you'll like Morcove."

"Oh, I adore it already!"

"What study are you in?" asked Polly.

"Er—I'm sharing with a girl named Eva Merrick."

"A nice girl, Eva."

"You think so? I don't know that I shall have much in common with her," the new girl had the bad taste to remark. "She doesn't seem to like me, anyhow! Still, there are plenty of others to pick from, aren't there? All of you!"

"Hallo, Tess! Come on in!"

For now it was Tess Trelawney who had appeared, with that slightly tense expression in her clever-looking face which came of an artistic temperament.

"Betty not here yet?" Tess inferred crisply, and then acknowledged the introduction to her of Ada Sharrow by a rather perfunctory nod. "Where's Helen Craig?"

"Oh, she's about!" said Polly.

"But surely," cried Ada Sharrow, "you don't all crowd into this one study? I mean to say—how awful!"

"Just as if!" Polly snorted. Then, with some forbearance: "Only, there's a certain batch of us that hangs together always. And now, here is Judy Cardew!"

"Cardew!" oohed the new girl, staring at Judy as she sauntered in. "Oh, then you're the sister of Dave Cardew, at Grangemoor?"

"That's right," smiled Judy Cardew. "Why?"

"This is Ada Sharrow, Judy," Polly again did the introduction, which was becoming quite tiresome. "Her brother is the Harold Sharrow who is a pre at Grangemoor, you know."

"Oh!"

Judy's subsequent attitude implied that it was no great recommendation to have Harold Sharrow for a brother—as Polly and some of the others had already been thinking.

"Yes; well," said Pam, serenely filling in another awkward pause, "tea down at the school tables this afternoon, of course? We might give Betty another five minutes."

"Oh! Don't you have tea in the studies?" cried Ada disappointedly.

"Not on re-opening day," Polly explained. "It's reckoned, for one thing, that's there's too much getting to rights; and besides, first day back it's more sociable all round!"

"Oh—I see! Then it's no use my waiting?"

"To have tea here, in Study 12?" Polly smiled grimly. "Afraid not!" Cheek of the girl!

Two of the Study 12 chums, standing in the doorway, made room for Ada Sharrow to pass out. She took the hint, but suddenly stopped and faced round.

"I say! I suppose you wouldn't like to come across to the hotel with me, to have tea there?"

"Ooo, gorjus! Bekas—"

"Sh'rrp, kid!" Polly silenced the dusky one. "Oh, I don't think so, thanks all the same, Ada—not our first day back at Morcove."

"It's as important as all that, is it?" smirked the new girl. "Sort of tradition?" What a sneering smile she had! "Oh, I don't believe in that sort of thing. Stupid, I call it!"

And she went out.

### The Captain Comes

"UM!" said Polly Linton. "Ooom!"

"Yes, bai Jove! Wather a twying geal, I imagine."

"I can't say I took to her," Pam Willoughby deplored.

But it was Polly who seemed most concerned. She turned to Judy Cardew.

"Judy! Harold Sharrow's sister—and that's a nice thing, ugh! When we know that Jack and Dave and—oh, and a whole heap of them at Grangemoor—they can't stick the fellow!"

"It's a pity," Judy frowned, "that a sister of his has turned up at Morcove. It makes things rather—difficult. But—"

"A girl like that!" gasped Polly. "Oh, and she was reckoning to have tea with us, first go off! Never mind that we're all special friends! She must take her place amongst us—ugh!"

Pam suddenly laughed.

"Well, Pam?"

"I'm wondering how the boys will look—Jack and Dave—when they know about this!"

"Bai Jove, they will hardly be pweepawed to congwatulate us, what?"

"All ze same, she did ask us to go across to ze new hotel for tea!" piped in Naomer. "And I call that—"

"You!" Polly rounded on the ever-hungry one witheringly. "You'd go anywhere, with anybody, for the sake of a feed!"

"Not ze bit of eet! But eet showed she wants to be friendly. Bekas, that is how you make friends, isn't eet? You say, 'come along and I will stand treat'!"

"Where," exclaimed Polly with a casting about look, "is that ebony ruler I had last term? I shall need it, I can see! The one that keeps you in order!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Boo, grumpy!"

"I'm not grumpy!" the madcap protested warmly. "I came back to Morcove to-day as sweet as an angel! But when I find a girl like that Ada Sharrow bursting in with such a 'Here I am!' look—"

"Hark! Here's Betty!"

"Ooo, pipooray!"

In spite of all the going to-and-fro in the corridor and the clamour, several of these

girls had picked up the familiar voice of the Form captain. Inevitably, she was being stopped at every other step, for a word with this girl and that.

It was "Hallo, Betty!" and "Hallo, So-and-So!" and "How did you enjoy the hols?"—over and over again.

In Study 12, Polly and the rest were content to wait. They would have felt it to be unfair not to do so. After all, Betty had been with them during the holidays. Those other girls hadn't!

At last she came in, and then—the cheering! It was as if they had last parted with Betty Barton on breaking-up day, instead of as late as yesterday morning, after landing from a cross-Channel steamer.

"Late!" cried Polly.

"I know!" laughed Betty. "But I missed my first connection this morning, and that put me out all the rest of the way. Had to taxi it from Barncombe."

Her happy smile as she gazed around implied: "The dear old study—again!"

"Everything the same, girls!" she took it for granted blithely.

"Why, not quite!" grimaced Polly. "We've got one new girl."

"That's good!"

"It should be," Polly acknowledged. "But this new girl—"

And between them they told Betty about Ada Sharrow.

"Oh, dear!" was the Form captain's very deploring comment at the finish. "But are we going to let it trouble us to-day?"



"I thought you were at Morcove," Harold Sharrow said. "So I am," smiled his sister. "But I decided I'd just slip across to see mother."

"They were not!

"In fact," said Polly, "I don't see why we need let it trouble us ever! It's annoying, of course. But if we don't like her—if we simply can't stand her at any price—leave her alone, that's all!"

"St!" cautioned Tess, turning back from the doorway.

Next moment there was the new girl again, sailing in, despite the crowded state of the study, to make herself known to the captain.

"Betty Barton? I expect you know who I am by now?" she smirked. "Ada Sharrow; and as I'm going to be in the Fourth—although at my other school I was in the lower Fifth—"

"What school was that?" asked Betty civilly.

"Oh, one I was at!"

"I'll see you after tea?" Betty suggested. "I've only just got here, and I would like a moment."

"Oh, but I can wait! Then we can all go down to tea together."

Dash the girl for her self-assertiveness! One had no need to be a hot-headed Polly Linton to think in that strain. This new girl was going the right way about getting herself heartily disliked—putting herself forward!

Morcove always prided itself on being very ready to help a new girl to feel at home and amongst friends. But Ada Sharrow, it appeared, was not the sort to wait to be asked.

Betty laughed away her vexation.

"We'd better go down now, girls. I'm afraid you have been waiting about for me. When did you get here, Ada Sharrow?"

"Oh, directly after lunch. So I'm feeling pretty much at home already," she said, with an air that certainly bore out the words. "And I've spoken to heaps of girls. But I knew that you Study 12 girls were the ones to make for."

Paula, falling behind with Pam and others during the exodus from that crowded study, breathed:

"Howwows! The geal will hev to be told; she gives herself away at every word, bai Jove!"

"I wish Morcove could give her away," muttered Polly grimly, "to some other school. But then, I doubt if they would keep her."

Ada Sharrow was going up the corridor at Betty's side as if they had been the greatest of chums for terms and terms! In vain Betty looked round, in obvious desire to have intimates like Polly or Madge or any of the others at her elbow. The Form captain was as one taken into custody—by the new girl.

And whenever Betty encountered a schoolmate who, just then emerged from some study or other, wished for a word or two, Ada Sharrow struck into the talk. "The captain and I!" was her attitude—most amusing to behold, if it had not been so offensive.

Downstairs, Betty did manage to shake off the new girl, but only for a minute or two. There was such a boisterous thronging in to the school tea-tables, one could lose the girl for that brief space. Then she hobbled up again, as it were.

Betty & Co. always sat together at table—a chummy arrangement that did not mean any exclusiveness as a "set." Helen Craig, coming in a bit late to what should have been a vacant seat between Tess and Judy, found Ada Sharrow occupying it.

"Oh, have I got your chair?" But she did not rise to vacate it.

"I warned you, didn't I?" Judy said gently.

As for Helen, after waiting a few moments, she turned away—not without a glance that

should have wilted Ada. But did it wilt her? Not it!

She remained as pert as ever, and all round the table there was a crystallising of disappointment into positive dislike. The Fourth Form at Morcove could tell! Oh, and what a pity it was! What a silly the girl must be not to realise that she was making herself unpopular by her conduct!

Miss Everard presided, chummy Miss Everard, who knew just where each of her juniors had been for the "hols," and was eager to hear all so much more about how those same holidays had been spent.

Tongues rattled away—about the past holidays and nothing else for the first few minutes. Then, by twos and threes, girls fell to talking about this term, until at last the whole table was at it.

Talk about schoolwork, about games for the winter season, and amateur theatricals, and a host of other interests. Miss Everard caught snatches of it all, and the old loving pride in her charges, for their keenness over work and play, throbbled in her young heart.

At the same time, she was bound to heed the strident voice of Ada Sharrow, butting in when as a new girl she would have done much better to use her ears, keeping the tongue for by-and-by.

And, being a good mistress, with a desire to help every girl in the best possible way, at the getting up from table Miss Everard dropped a word in Ada's ear.

"Remain a minute, Ada Sharrow."

"What! Oh, right! I say," she called after Betty & Co., "shall I find you in Study 12?"

"We don't know where we'll be," Betty responded lightly. "Unpacking to do. And first of all we want to have a look round."

"Yes, wather, bai Jove!"

They trooped away, and Ada Sharrow, after watching them go, turned to Miss Everard, with a disgusted look.

"Not very friendly, I must say!"

"Oh, but I can't allow you to think such a thing, Ada," the Form-mistress remonstrated gently. "Betty and her chums are most friendly. The whole Form is friendly. But much depends upon your own behaviour."

"Why, what's wrong with me?"—incredulously.

"It is not the thing for a new girl, Ada, to be at all forward or loud. Like when you go to an hotel, or join a ship when the voyage is half over, a little shyness, a readiness to wait to be asked, best pleases those who were there before you."

"Shyness is silly, I think. Anyhow, I can't be expected to be shy, I'm afraid. I've been about—with mother."

"For your own good I'm telling you, Ada. The girls will like you all the better if you wait for them to make the advances. Never fear, they won't allow you to feel lonely or friendless if only you don't try to begin where they are leaving off. You understand?"

"There's one thing," the new girl pouted. "I don't care whether I find friends amongst them or not!"

But she did care. At heart, as she very rudely strode away from the kindly mistress, she was raging.

Unpopular at that other school from which a doting mother had removed her at the end of last term, she had come to Morcove to-day with a conceited idea that she would soon be "in" with all the girls best worth knowing. And chief

amongst those girls were Betty Barton and her chums of Study 12!

Ada had had that from her brother, who claimed to know all that was worth knowing about Morcove, he being a "pre" in that house at Grangemoor which had the brothers of two Morcove girls on its roll.

"You get pally with the captain and her lot, Ada. Best thing you can do. They're in everything!"

Ada Sharrow had not said, in return for this advice: "And supposing they won't have me?"

If she had expressed any such misgiving, Harold would soon have answered: "You let me know if they won't!"

For he had no intention of seeing his sister take a back seat at Morcove—and he a "pre" at his school! That would never do!

The two schools were not far distant from each other, and for his own vanity's sake he wanted to be able to brag about "my sister at Morcove." Besides, he knew that she wanted to be well in the swim. It ran in the family—push as regards money-making on the father's side, and social position on the mother's.

Now Ada Sharrow went upstairs, wearing a haughty air. It was a switch in the other direction, such as pushing people so often indulge in when rebuffed.

"Don't think I want your friendship, for I don't!" Her eyes said it as she brushed past girls coming downstairs. Her tilted nose conveyed the same piece of humbug as she flaunted past other girls in the Fourth Form corridor.

Her study-mate, Eva Merrick, was in the study, unpacking a few things.

"You ask me about anything you want to know, Ada," said Eva kindly. "And presently we might go round the school together. I mean more the outdoors part. We're free until assembly this evening."

But Ada Sharrow, without answering, marched to the study window. It offered her a view of the magnificent new Headland Hotel, less than a mile from the school, in the direction of Barncombe town.

"I think I shall stroll across to the hotel," Ada found pride in announcing at last grandly. "It's too slow for anything here!"

Eva noticed the sulkiness, and thought: "Well, it's not my fault."

The new girl returned downstairs. Coat-rooms teemed with girls, mostly there to fetch things away that had been dumped in haste on arrival this afternoon. Ada Sharrow refused to acknowledge any friendly smiles. If girls could only give her a smile—well, bother them!

Then, in the open air, she encountered some of the Study 12 chums again, including Betty. They were on the games-field as she went close by, passing down the centre-drive to the main gateway.

"Oh, Ada, if you would like to join us," Betty called out lightly, "we are going to—"

"No, thanks!"

And she strode on, head in air. Way to let them see! They should have been nicer to her at the start! All that rot which the Form-mistress had talked! What, then—was a new girl to consider herself in quarantine, as it were, for a week, or a month, or how long?

Turning to the left, outside the gates, she had to go only a little way along the main road and she was at the entrance to the new hotel.

Lovely gardens had been laid out, and lawns prepared on three sides of the magnificent building. To people who had known Morcove before

the hotel went up such an enormous edifice as it was made a great change.

But it was a change that had done not the slightest harm to the amenities of the district.

Visitors to the Headland Hotel were to find the last word in comfort and attractions inside the building.

Outside, Morcove was still its own little world of breezy moorlands and breezes off a wide ocean that lapped the base of giant cliffs.

Revolving glass doors admitted Ada Sharrow to the reception-hall, beyond which were the various spacious lounges and sun-parlours.

The life of the place rushed at her now that she had passed its threshold. Page-boys were flitting about at the bidding of hall porters; lady clerks were busy at their desks in the reception-office. Somewhere a fine string band was playing.

This was the hour for tea, and people were sitting about in great numbers. Ada could tell that there had been a good many more arrivals during the afternoon.

She wandered through one lounge to another, roving eyes seeking her mother, who could be expected to be at tea.

Failing to come upon her here, Ada went to the palm-court, and then she saw—not her mother, but her brother Harold!

### Not a Nice Pair

HE was lounging in an easy-chair, with tea for himself only, set down on a small table within reach. There was a high light upon his plastered hair.

Flicking over the pages of a weekly illustrated, he did not know anything of his sister's coming until she was close enough to say:

"Hallo, Harold!"

"Ada!" Flinging aside the journal, he sat up. "I thought you were at the school!"

"I am," she smiled grandly. "But I thought I'd look across to see mother."

He still stared, sensing her put-out state.

"The mater's gone into Barncombe, so the hall porter said. Bit rotten, for I managed to buzz over on the motor-bike, thinking to have tea with her. Anyhow, I've ordered tea," he grinned. "Told them to stick it on her bill. Can I order some for you, Ada?"

"Oh, no, thanks!"

"Had yours already at the school?"

"If you could call it tea!" She subsided into an armchair. "We all had it in the dining-room, being first day."

"Something's upset you, Ada," he remarked, smoothing his hair. "What is it? I should have thought you'd have been palling up with a whole crowd of the girls by this time."

"They're a stand-offish lot," she very grossly misrepresented them.

He frowned, tapping a cigarette before lighting up.

"What, not good enough for them? Is that it, Ada?"

"I suppose so. What do you think of this place, Harold?"

"Not so bad. They look like doing well. 'Course, it's in good hands, and the public knows that Lord Lundy has consented to be chairman. Nice people," said smooth-haired Harold, fitting the cigarette between his lips. "The mater will like it here."

"She's talking of staying until Christmas, if the place keeps going all right."

"It'll do that. They're well booked up. Going to have quite a season between now and Christmas. Match?" he said, with a testiness that was part of his self-importance.

The match-stand, on his little round table, was empty. He flourished, to attract the attention of a waiter, who sped across.

"Here, waiter—no matches!"

"Pardon, sir. Sorry! Every match-stand was filled again after lunch."

"There ought to be someone to watch these things," growled Grangemoor's odious prefect. "The place will never pay if that's the way you're going on."

He lighted his cigarette from a match that had been forthcoming from the waiter's own personal box, and did not say a "thank you."

"How about Study 12, Ada?"

"They're the ones!"

Again he stared; then he drank some tea and sat back.

"Oh, they are, are they? You mean Polly Linton—Jack Linton's sister—and Judy Cardew, sister to another of my chaps? And there's a Pam Willoughby, isn't there?"

"Yes. She, of course, is very grand."

"Oh, is she!" he answered the unfair sneer. "I have heard of her quite a lot. It's her people, of course, who live at Swanlake, close by Grangemoor. And you mean to say she isn't going to be friendly either?"

Ada Sharrow shrugged.

"As if I care!"

"But that's not good enough!" he scowled.

"Hang it all, what's the matter with us Sharrows that we're to be flouted?"

He hitched his chair closer to his sister's.

"Look here, Ada, I'd better weigh in over this. Must let a few of them feel my weight, that's all! And I shan't at all mind doing so, either. Jack Linton could do with a knock or two. Then there's Dave Cardew. Quiet chap, but he's always shoulder to shoulder with Jack. They both want their heads banged against a wall!"

"You mean—"

"There they are—those three at your school—Polly Linton, Judy Cardew, and Pam Willoughby. And at my school—in my house—Jack Linton and Dave Cardew. So now then, Ada, if those girls can't be chummy with you, then the thing is for somebody to put those chaps through it! Hit back through them, see? And I'm the one to do the hitting back!" exulted the Grangemoor prefect. "I shall just enjoy doing it!"

After a reflective moment, Ada muttered:

"It sounds all right."

"And come to that, Ada, why shouldn't we let them know at once that that's how it's to be? Here, I know what!" he rushed on, bounding up from his chair. "I've had all the tea I want. You don't really need to hang about for the matter? Then let me walk back with you to Morcove straight away."

"But why, Harold? What can you do there?"

"You'll soon see what I can do there," he boasted darkly. "I suppose I can get a word with those girls. Oh, and their captain as well!"

"Betty Barton and others were on the games-field when I came away. They may be there still, Harold."

They were, and so all this brother and sister had to do on arrival at the Morcove gateway together was to stroll across to the batch of chums.

Betty & Co. had never intended to handle hockey-sticks at such a time as this—with unpack-

ing to be done, and matron to be seen, and post-cards for home to be dashed off. But once out on the grand old games-field the turf had looked too inviting.

So a bit of "praece" was going forward gaily when suddenly the girls found their new school-mate upon the scene, with a smooth-haired youth at her side, wearing the Grangemoor tie. Obviously that prefect brother of hers!

"Huh," smiled Harold patronisingly, whilst he fingered that tie of his significantly. "Going to make it a hockey term, is that it? You the captain?"

He could infer it from Betty's air of rather wanting to know his business.

"You'll be playing my sister, of course?"

"Delighted," said Betty, with a cordial smile for Ada, "if she tries out all right."

"Oh, Ada doesn't need any trying out. When's your first match?"

"Our first real fixture is Saturday week," Betty answered. "But we're hoping to arrange a match for this coming Saturday."

"Look here, I tell you what!" exclaimed Harold Sharrow. "Make it a fixture now that you girls play a team from my house at Grangemoor next Saturday—eh? On your ground, and I'll come over with the team myself! I'd like to see Ada in her first match for your Form."

Betty had more than one reason for looking as hesitant as she did.

"Well?" he asked sharply.

"It would be jolly to play a match with a Grangemoor team. But doesn't it need considering? At your end, I mean."

"Never your mind about the Grangemoor end," he said, scouring still more. "Hang it all, I'm a pre."

"Yes, but that doesn't give you the control of games, does it?" Betty demurred. "Wouldn't it be for me, as captain at this end, to fix things up with the team captain at—"

"No!" he overruled her roughly. "It can be left to me."

"Oh, very well. We'd like to get the game with a team from your House next Saturday. Polly Linton's brother will be in the team, of course, and Dave Cardew."

"And Ada will be playing for your side?" he caught Betty up. "That's understood?"

"Why, as to that, I don't know that I ought to promise. If I can, I certainly will—with pleasure. But it must depend upon whether I consider your sister good enough to go into our team at the very start of the season. You see—"

"I don't want any shilly-shally," he snapped, so that girls standing with Betty began to eye him disgustedly. "Either my sister plays for your side or the whole thing is off! Which is it to be?"

"Off then—I'm afraid so," Betty answered regretfully. "Ada, it isn't that you won't get a chance to be in the team if you're up to the standard, but we must see how you shape first. A lost match goes down against us, you know."

"But I'm telling you," cried Harold Sharrow, whilst his sister merely sulked in silence, "Ada's a first-rate player!"

"I hope she is, and so why not leave it like this?" Betty suggested appeasingly. "Ada can be tried out to-morrow, and if she is all that you say—into the team she goes for next Saturday! Still time to fix up the match, after she has shown us—"

"Hang it, no! That's doubting my word," he scowled. "That's treating Ada—unfairly, I call

it. No room for new-comers! All right, call the whole thing off. Ada, I must get back now."

And, heeling away from Betty and her friends, he walked his sister with him for as far as the gateway.

"You see how they are!" she complained. "I'm glad it went the way it did." He smiled evilly. "War to the knife now, Ada! Don't worry. All it means, I've got to put the screw on those two chaps at Grangemoor. And I will, by glory! I'll have them so squealing, their precious sisters and girl chums will hear them over here at Morcove. And then see what happens!"

He nodded his good-bye to her and stalked away, returning to the hotel to reclaim his motor-cycle. Back at the Headland, he thought he might as well go inside and see if his mother had come in. He found her in one of the lounges, partaking of a belated tea.

Mrs. Sharrow was alone, but it should not be her if she did not scrape acquaintance very soon with other guests. Meantime she let some of those other visitors see how adoringly she welcomed this surprise visit of her only son.

"Such a dear boy!" she would be saying to new acquaintances ere long. "He's at Grangemoor, you know—a prefect—and they do think such a lot of him!"

But handsome Mrs. Sharrow, fond as she was of hotel life because of the sport it afforded her in the way of hunting after people socially her superiors, liked it for another reason, too.

At hotels Mrs. Sharrow could grumble and fault-find as she never dared to do in her own house up in town.

About an hour after her son had ridden away on his motor-cycle, this very dressy lady went upstairs to get changed for the evening. She rattled her key into the lock of her door, entered the very sumptuous room, and flooded it with light by clicking on a couple of switches.

No sooner had Mrs. Sharrow done this than she stabbed a finger hard against a bell-press. Mrs. Sharrow had a fault to find—with one of the new Headland's new chambermaids.

"Girl," bridled Mrs. Sharrow, when a very young and pretty maid in cap and apron had appeared, "all these parcels!"

"They were sent up, ma'am, to be put in your room. Things delivered from shops in Barncombe, ma'am."

"I don't need to be told what they are, girl! I am asking you, is that the place to put them—on the writing-table! Don't you know any better than that, girl?"

"I—I'm sorry, ma'am. I'm rather new at—this job."

"I should think you must be! And where's the maid I had this morning?"

"They've changed her, ma'am, to another floor."

"Thinking I'd put up with you, when other guests insisted upon having someone better."

"Please, ma'am. I don't think so. I only came in at midday. The housekeeper has made several changes."

"Oh, go away, then! But mind, I'm accustomed to being attended to properly. Wait a bit; let me look at you."

Then the very youthful chambermaid turned



It was as much as Miss Everard could do to repress a laugh. "Take off that absurd thing at once, Polly," she ordered.

round, slowly to meet Mrs. Sharrow's searching eyes.

"You're not a local girl?"

"No, ma'am."

"I could tell not, by your looks. Londoner?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Huh! I never like a girl who has to go into a strange district to get a situation."

With that, as a final snuffy dismissal, the girl was allowed to pass out. It may have been only because she was so young and unused to the life, but she was very agitated.

Shakily her hand drew the bed-room door shut behind her. Shakily she passed down the softly lighted corridor, looking back over a shoulder once; back to Mrs. Sharrow's door, as if in dread of its flying open to let that woman come rushing out after her.

But what was this whisper that fell from the girl's lips, telling of something far graver than the mere fear of being grumbled at? Surely



that whisper dealt with a secret connected with her young life, for the words were:

"If she had guessed who I am!"

### Someone on the Stairs

**DING-LING!** Ding-ling!

The bell for assembly and prayers, pealing its summons from one end to another of Morcove's great schoolhouse!

First time that bell had rung this term. And now, at the end of the school's re-opening day, its hundreds of scholars must troop into Big Hall—the first bit of routine duty to be demanded of them—at the start of another term.

"Hooray!" cheered some of the juniors facetiously, as they went careering downstairs. Others gave loud groans, in playful pretence of being martyrs to discipline once again.

Only their fun! Morcove, to-night, was in great good spirits. Already holiday thrills were so many fading memories, whilst young minds had eager thoughts about the weeks to come.

"New term—make it a good one!"

That was the gist of all the chatter, chatter that had gone on in the studies since darkness fell. Now there was a boisterousness about the going to one's place in Big Hall.

Miss Everard was soon asking the Fourth Form, did they think they were standing in line? "Eyes right, all! Oh, do straighten out a bit, girls!"

So, with playful elbowing and much furtive pushing about, and ever so much shuffling of feet, the Form complied. A faint squeal, and then Miss Everard's inquiry:

"Who was that?"

Who else could have squealed quite so pathetically but that oft-teased duffer, Paula Creel? Miss Everard might have known; perhaps she did know! And perhaps that was why she looked reprovingly—not at Paula, but at Naomer, standing on one side of Paula.

"Now, Naomer, remember where you are, please!"

"Wiz ze greatest of ze pleasure, Miss Everard! Bekas—hooray!—school—to-morrow!"

"Sh! How dare you!"

"All right, zen; I will grumble and grouse, and see how you like that!"

Naomer followed this by making a very long face, so that her eyes looked ready to drop down her chocolate-coloured cheeks. Managing to let various Form-mates see this mock-suffering look, she created a good deal of tittering.

Miss Everard tried to frown, but ended by laughing. Her girls—what a happy lot they were! Oh, and after all, they could be as orderly as any other Form—without needing any of the dragging that Miss Massingham, for instance, adopted towards the Fifth.

The crowded hall hushed down at last.

"All present!" the seniors. "All present!" the Fifth Form.

"And you, Miss Everard?"

"All present!"

The old, familiar cry associated with this nightly assembly came thus from one and another who was in charge. Morcove's adored headmistress, Miss Somerfield, now that she had come along from her room, reaching the dais by a private doorway at the upper end of Big Hall, received the formal report with her customary smile.

"All present!"

At this instant Bidy Loveland of the Fourth Form signed to Miss Everard, only a few paces

away, that she had a request to make. The Formmistress stepped close, so that any conversation might be in whispers.

"Well, Bidy?"

"I've come down without my glasses."

"Oh!" was Miss Everard's bothered murmur.

"Can't you manage without them?"

"I suppose I could, Miss Everard, so long as I haven't lost them!"

"Slip away and get them. But be quick!"

Bidy, departing quickly and furtively, was amused by a whisper from Naomer, in passing:

"Hey, where are you off to, zen? Bekas don't you get looking at my hamper! He is for presenterly, in ze dorm!"

Bidy had no intention of bothering about that hamper, of which much had been heard during the evening. Her one concern was for the "horn-rimmed" that had resulted from a necessary visit to the oculist during the hols.

Now that Bidy had had to take to glasses, she was finding them more and more necessary. It seemed to Bidy that the very taking to glasses had made her eyesight rapidly worse.

At the same time, the newness of the "horn-rimmed" was causing her to leave them off and then forget where she had left them.

Unless they were in the study, at this moment, she wouldn't know where she had last left them, and that meant a nice state of things in class in the morning!

But it was all right. Upstairs in her study Bidy swooped upon the glasses. They were on the floor and might have got trodden upon. But they hadn't been, so that was that!

Bidy put them on there and then.

Coming away from the study again, she felt impressed by the solitude and silence of this upper floor—when only a few minutes since there had been such a first-night riot, including a game of hockey with a rolled-up stocking in this very passage!

Faintly from the ground floor came one voice; that of the headmistress addressing the whole school in Big Hall. Bidy hurried.

She did not want to miss more than was necessary of Miss Somerfield's first-night speech. It would be brief, and it would be full of things to send the school to bed happier than ever—that was certain.

Then, suddenly, Bidy Loveland got a shock—a kind of nasty turn.

She had sped down one flight of stairs and was rounding the half-landing to descend the next flight, when she saw some other girl—a scholar, by her dress—halfway up that lower flight.

There would have been nothing at all startling in this if that other girl had simply come up the stairs, passing Bidy at the half-landing. But the girl herself seemed to be greatly startled by Bidy's sudden appearance.

There was a guilty flashing about, as if to escape being recognised; and then—thrurr! went light feet in a swift descent of the stairs, and that girl was GONE!

Bidy gasped. Uneasy sensations held her spellbound; wonderment, coupled with a vague feeling of sadness. Not nice, for one girl to have to dodge out of sight of another like that! Who could it have been! Why—why the dodging away?

That was what Bidy could not understand. Of course, another girl might have been given permission to leave the ranks in Big Hall to come upstairs.

"But why she should have taken fright at sight of me—no, that I just can't understand!"

The disquieting thing was that if she—Biddy—had not heard the "All present!" being given in Big Hall, she would have had to suppose that some girl or other had been out after hours. But there had been that "All present!" and so that girl, a few minutes since, MUST have been in Big Hall.

Biddy ended by taking off her glasses and looking at them dubiously. Could they have played a trick upon her vision, and had there been no other girl on the staircase just then?

"Oh, but that's too absurd!"

She returned to her place in the Fourth-Form line, and as well as she could she looked to see if some other girl had been excused from the muster and had not returned.

The Fourth-Form line was certainly all complete now that she herself was back. Nor could Biddy make out any slight gap in one of the other lines, due to a girl having fallen out.

The headmistress was seasoning her little speech with humour, and laughter went up again, and again. To conclude, there was one of those quiet, earnest appeals that always went down well with the school.

"Every girl do her best to help her Form do its best, so that all Morcove could—do its best!"

Loud cheers!

Prayers and a hymn followed, and then:

"Dismiss!"

"The Fourth Form, right turn!" came from Miss Everard, in due course, and Naomer, behind Paula now, dug a fist into the long-suffering one's back.

"Bekas, pick zem up, you in front!" whispered the imp. "Now for zo grand hamper, don't forget! All free to everybody, after lights out—gorjus!"

It was left, right; left, right! until the main staircase had been reached. And then the Fourth Form stormed aloft to its own spacious dormitory.

"Betty, not too much noise to-night," requested Miss Everard, "even though it is first night!"

"Right-ho" was the bland response from Form-captain Betty, who was next moment going last into the dormitory, to find an uproar to quell—if she could.

Betty's own private belief was that she couldn't, even if she tried. And she was not disposed to try VERY hard. Another private belief was that she really wasn't expected to!

Naomer, to obtain a hearing, stood upon a bed. That it was Paula's bed may be taken for granted.

"Bekas—everybody, hi, listen! Be queek and get to bed, bekas, ze sooner we—"

"Heah, that's my bed!" protested Paula.

"Haow dare you—Owp! Who threw that?"

"Who threw what?" inquired Polly innocently.

"I weally don't know what it was," said Paula.

"But it caught me on the wight ear, yes, wather!"

The same missile then came back, catching Paula on the left ear, and it proved to be a wet sponge.

"Insuffeable!" cried the oft-teased one.

"Geals, I will not; I teall you, I will NOT be tweated—"

"Be quiet, and I treat you presently to a slice of ze veal and ze ham pie! Ze first person, everybody," Naomer proclaimed proudly from her make-shift rostrum, "to introjuce veal and ham pie to—"

Whizz! A pillow came at Naomer, without, however, bowling her over. She caught it and dropped it—on Paula's head.

"Owp, ow! Theah you go again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hush, girls!" said Polly in an old-fashioned way. "Oh, silence, pray! Do other Forms behave like this? Naomer, come down!"

"No, bekas—"

But Polly, by the simple process of pulling at the bed-clothes upon which Naomer was standing, soon brought the dusky one flump! to the floor.

"All right, Polly, now you shan't have any of my hamper!"

"Is there to be a hamper?" the madcap teasingly doubted. "What does Betty say?"

"I say not so much noise, all!" laughed Betty.

She noticed the new girl, and made a point of addressing a cordial remark to her.

"You all right, Ada?"

"Yes, thanks!"—distantly.

"By the way," the captain continued, "we were saying in Study 12, this evening, we think we'll try to bring off that match against a Grangemoor team next Saturday."

"Oh, will you?"

"And about yourself, Ada—hockey praccer after morning school to-morrow? Then I'll see what I can do for you."

"I don't know that I shall want to play hockey then," was the sulky answer to the cordial offer. "I may care to go across to the hotel—and have lunch with my mother there."

Betty received this with a tactful nod. She could, if she wished, order Ada to be on the games field after morning class; but Betty never showed off authority. And in regard to Ada, it seemed only kind to allow for her being new to the school. She might find it a relief to escape back to her mother for an hour or so to-morrow.

Only, it was rather trying, Betty thought; to find that ordinary goodwill, such as the Form always extended to any new girl, did not seem to satisfy Ada Sharrow.

No! The Form must be either "all over her" or else—she sulked!

### First Night of Term

"ER—Betty—"

"Hallo, Biddy! Lost the glasses again?"

Biddy Loveland, who had come to the captain's side for a quiet word amidst the babel, laughed.

"I've put them under my pillow, so they're all right for the morning, Betty! What I wanted to ask you—er— At the assembly just now, was any other girl given permission to go out?"

"No, Biddy. Why?"

"Oh—I just wondered! And I think I'm right; they reported 'All present' in the different Forms?"

"They did, Biddy," said Betty. "Why, is anything the matter? Can I help?"

"Oh—no, it's nothing, thanks all the same, Betty. Anyhow, this isn't the time to bother you."

It certainly was not, if the captain was really supposed to bring about an orderly silence. For this was the hilarious moment when Paula Creel, in the act of going to bed, found that same bed collapsing.

An old joke! But how the Form shrieked its laughter!

Then there was the supplementary joke of Polly's sudden appearance amongst the crowd, wearing an imitation policeman's helmet.

Polly, anticipating riots in the dormitory to-night, had routed out the helmet from a cupboard where much amateur theatrical stuff was stored.

As Polly, before donning the helmet, had already got into blue silk pyjamas, the effect was considered to be realistic enough to deserve a cheer.

"What's all this?" Polly demanded of Paula, when the cheering had been given. "What are you doing there, my girl?"

"Bai Jove, can't you see? I am twyving to extwicate myself—Owp! Healp!"

"Take her into custody, Polly!" urged some of the girls gaily. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Paula Croel, you are my prisoner—"

"I pwotest!"

"You are charged with trying to sleep without visible means! Come quietly!"

"Insuffeable! Betty deah, speak to Polly!"

But Betty was too doubled up with laughter to be able to intervene. Polly, with a delicious pomposity, marched the oft-teased one towards the door, as if intending to thrust her forth, pyjama-clad, into the cold, hard world.

At which instant Miss Everard came in!

"Paula!"

"Ef—yes, wather! I mean—"

"Polly!"

It was all very well for the Fourth Form madcap to appear blandly innocent; but she was still wearing that helmet!

"Take off that absurd thing at once, Polly! The whole Form, to bed at once! Betty, who is the girl who has not come up with the rest of you all!"

"But, Miss Everard, we're all here!"

"You are sure?"

Incredulously the Form-mistress gazed around and satisfied herself that it was really so.

"Strange!" she muttered. "I had to go along the Fourth-Form corridor a minute since, and I am sure I glimpsed a girl—coming away from one of the studies, so, naturally, I presumed she belonged to the Fourth."

"It couldn't have been," declared Betty, and many of her schoolmates added their murmurs in support. "We are all here, and have been!"

"I did not have a chance to recognise the girl; she was there and then gone again, in a flash," the Form-mistress remarked. "I suppose she was some girl belonging to another Form, playing a trick upon some of you."

"Or was it one of the maids?" suggested Polly. "Oh, no! She was in school dress right enough. Anyhow, it doesn't matter now. Girls, to bed now, please! I want to turn the lights out without having to come up again."

"Yes, queek, everybody!" shrilled Naomer. "Bekas—"

Very nearly she said: "Hamper!" Checking herself in time, she rounded off the exclamation with:

"You never know! Perhaps Mcess Everard has seen a ghost!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Biddy Loveland was thinking to herself: "Well, I don't know! It does seem a bit uncanny. The girl I saw, on the stairs, might have been a ghost—she came and went so quickly! And now Miss Everard has been saying that!"

The lights went out, otherwise Biddy might have added to herself:

"But ghosts—of course, there are no such things!"

Darkness in the dormitory, although much subdued merriment still went on, rendered Biddy less inclined to deride belief in the supernatural. The staircase had been in semi-darkness when she encountered that Unknown, and, no mistake, it had

seemed a spectral figure, although in ordinary school attire.

"A phantom schoolgirl, as you might say!" But Biddy only said it to herself, whilst laying her pretty head upon the pillow.

HALF AN HOUR later:

"Now zen, everybody! Who is going to help me fetch that hamper upstairs? Don't all spik at once!"

Far from doing that, most of Naomer's roommates gave only some loud snores.

"Ah, bah, come on, some of you!" whispered the dusky one, slipping out of bed. "Bekas, ze sooner we make a start, ze longer we can keep going. Polly, what about you?"

"Have you obtained permission from the captain?" was Polly's mock-solemn inquiry. "As the girl who is going to get first prize for good conduct this term, I must be assured!"

"Ze captain is asleep—aren't you, Betty?" Naomer said joyously.

"More or less," mumbled the captain.

"Zere you are, Polly, you heard what she said! So come on, queek!"

"Away, temptress! Avaunt thee!" But the madcap was getting out of bed. "Alas," she recited stageily, "why was I born to be thus beguiled! 'Tis Naomer; 'tis she who leads me into the path of Horror! When I would be good—the pride of the school—if only they would let me!"

"Go on, Polly!" tittered listeners.

"Yes, queek; come on!" Naomer clamoured, already tiptoeing away to the door. "And leave resertations until after ze grand banquut! Ze grandest bang—"

Bump!

"What was that?"

"Ah, bah, zat was my head, hitting ze door," came the whispered explanation in the dark. "Good job, bekas, I get eggscused from school in ze morning, perhaps! Where are you, Polly?"

"Child, I am here," whispered the madcap, to the further delight of that large audience now sitting up in bed down both sides of the room. "Fear not! E'en though a cruel fate has sent thee superless to bed, ye shall not starve!"

"I don't mean to!" said Naomer stoutly. "Veal and ham pie for me, as soon as we have got him upstairs, and clove corjool! 'St, Polly!" in a deep whisper, now that they were outside the dormitory. "Don't forget, we shall want ze tin-opener! Bekas, tinned pineapple, Polly!"

"You had better let me go first, kid."

Polly's pride in being the one to lead the way nearly resulted in the proverbial fall. At the very head of the stairs she only just saved herself from stumbling headlong down.

After such an escape from disaster, she and Naomer were all the more careful. There must not be a sound! Morcoove's great schoolhouse was in complete silence now.

First-night frivolities had ceased everywhere half an hour ago, and authority would descend heavily upon any miscreants who made a disturbance as late as this.

So, with a step-by-step caution worthy of a better cause, perhaps, imp and madcap crept down to the floor below.

On that landing they paused to listen, were reassured, and stole on again—down the unlighted Fourth-Form corridor to Study 12.

There was moonlight in the study, as there had been on the staircase. Easily and briskly the two juniors laid hold of the hamper, and if it was a bit heavy even for the pair of them—so much the better!

The rash purchase, made by Naomer whilst coming through London en route for Morocco, had cost her a guinea and a half. So the contents promised to be enough to go round.

This hamper had the fatal drawback of all hampers: that it creaked, unless you were mighty careful, during the handling of it. To Polly and Naomer they seemed the most alarming creaks, and even squeaks, that came from the basket-work now and then.

"What ze diggings!" fumed Naomer softly. "Anybody could hear him a mile away!"

And then:

"Hi, Polly," in a deep whisper, "did you bring ze tin-opener?"

No. Polly had forgotten it, after all. She slipped back to the study for it, leaving Naomer half-way up the corridor with the hamper.

Returning, the madcap found her confederate in a rather panicky state.

"Bekas, Polly, I zought I heard a sound like somebody creeping about!"

"Oh, piffle!" snorted Polly. "Your guilty conscience!"

"What about yours?"

"I haven't got one. Come on! If it was somebody, it was only a girl up to larks same as we are. Morocco mistresses don't creep about—I will say that for them."

"So long as zere is not a whole gang of zem lying in wait to bag ze hamper from us," was Naomer's sudden misgiving. "Bekas some of those Fifth-Formers are awfully greedy!"

"Where did you hear somebody?"

"I don't know, Polly."

"Then what's the use of talking? Come on, windy!"

Lugging the hamper between them, on they went again, slipped feet padding noiselessly. By now they had acquired the knack of portering the basket without causing it to creak. They emerged silently upon the landing, and then—

*Creak!*

Polly and Naomer gaped at each other in the moonlight flooding through a staircase window.

"What was that?" their eyes said.

For it had not been a creak from the hamper that time. More like a stairboard creaking as it came under the weight of somebody stepping slowly.

Next second both juniors set down the hamper hastily, to save themselves from letting it drop from nerveless hands.

A shock had come upon them; an initial throb of mystification, changing to a creeping horror.

They stood spellbound, as if confronted with a spectre.

For spectral indeed was the figure, that had suddenly appeared to them on the stairs.

The figure of a girl, a schoolgirl, yet a ghostlier-looking figure Polly and Naomer had never seen before.

Their hearts pounded, sending the blood to sing in their ears. With eyes dilated, they stared at the figure as it now became motionless on the stairs, with the moonlight behind and above.

As the two juniors stared at it, so it stared at them—for how long who could say? Perhaps only a moment or two, but it seemed a great while to Polly and Naomer.

Then they realised that it was slowly receding from them, up the stairs by which they wished to go to regain the dormitory.

The figure seemed to float away up that flight of stairs to the moonlit landing. Not the faintest sound came.



"I wish you'd come to tea in Study 12 to-day," Betty invited cordially. "Thanks," was Ada's chilly reply, "but I have something better to do!"

There it went, like a very phantom, looking back at them all the while; and for as long as the spellbound pair knew themselves to be, as it were, watched by this awful apparition they were tongue-tied.

Awful, in that it looked so like the mere ghost of a schoolgirl!

Nor was this the only suggestion of the supernatural.

When at last the ghostly figure had glided up to that moonlit landing it made a turning movement that showed the face, for an instant, in the full light of the moon. And that face was silver-white.

It had a colourlessness that the beholders, on the landing below, could not assign to living flesh. The eyes were like black holes in a white mask.

Suddenly Polly felt Naomer toppling against her.

She, Polly, had to shake off her own fear instantly, and give her chum a supporting hand, or Naomer would have dropped.

"Bekas——" Naomer quavered. "Ooo, Polly, what was it?"

"I—I don't know! And now," Polly huskily whispered as she looked again up to the landing above, "it's gone! Naomer, it's gone!"

### They've Seen a Ghost

"HARK! Here they come!"  
"High time, too! I was nearly asleep just then!"

"Bai Jove, I would much pfer to be allowed to go to sleep. Yes, wather! Wdiculous, all this wousing up for the sake of——"

Paula Creel's lament, whilst she punched a pillow, was cut short by some whispered "cheering."

Back into the moonlit dormitory had whisked

Polly and Naomer, so the Form in general presumed that all was well.

Then it was realised such nimbleness meant that the rascally pair were minus that hamper, after all.

In various beds there was a sitting up straighter by surprised invitees to the promised banquet.

"Well, where's the hamper, you two?"

"Don't ask me!" panted Polly.

"What!"

"Nor me," said Naomer, and her teeth seemed to be chattering. "Bekas—bed for me."

And, diving back into it, she created a greater sensation than ever by drawing the coverings over her head.

"What's happened, then, Polly?" inquired amused Betty. "Seen a ghost, you two?"

There was some tittering at this.

"As a matter of fact so we have, girls!"

"Wha-a-t! Oh, Polly!"

"All right, then, don't believe me! You girls wait until you see it! As large as life!"

"But see what, Polly?"

"The ghost of a schoolgirl! I can't call it anything else," Polly jerked out. "On the stairs! Ugh, talk about the creeps!"

"Bekas," Naomer put forth her head again to whisper agitatedly, "what ze diggings would anything but a ghost have made us leave ze hamper behind? But I tell you 'eet was enough to scare you stiff!"

"Bai Jove—er—ow, I wish you wouldn't start this sort of talk!" wailed Paula, snuggling down.

But other girls, magnetised by Polly's words, to say nothing of Naomer's confirmatory remarks, were now getting out of bed. Ensued an excitable crowding round Polly, and a subdued clamour for details.

"Oh, you don't believe me, so what's the use of talking?"

"I'll believe you," somebody said.

Biddy Loveland! And now all eyes were upon her.

"As a matter of fact," she faltered uneasily, "I had a— a queer experience this evening. When I was allowed to leave assembly to run upstairs for my glasses I saw—or thought I saw—a girl for an instant, and then she was gone in a flash, like a ghost!"

"You did?" gasped impressed hearers.

"Yes. What mystified me was the fact that I had heard 'All present' reported in Big Hall. So how could it have been a girl, when Betty has since told me that no other girl apart from myself was given permission to leave Assembly?"

The Fourth Form dormitory experienced a few moments of intense silence. It was the stillness that comes of awe.

"A ghost!" Betty emitted at last. "Oh, but how could it be? There has never, never been such a thing anywhere!"

"There was one just now on the stairs," Polly insisted grimly. "It's no use telling me to be sensible! Am I easily scared? Am I a Paula, to believe anything? But the figure I saw—"

"And what about me?" Naomer piped in, having got out of bed again to take part in the agitated whispering. "Is it like me to run away from a hamper zat cost me all that money, leaving him on ze landing downstairs? Only, when it comes to ghosts I'm off—queek!"

"The hamper is down there—on a lower landing?" Betty remarked, with returning composure. "Better go and get it, some of us. I'll go, if somebody else will lend a hand!"

"Let me! I'm not afraid of anything!"

The new girl said it. The desire to show off had got the better of her sulking. As Betty instantly realised, the offer contained an oblique suggestion that the Form as a whole was afraid, so Ada Sharrow was still not doing herself any good. Pity!

"All right, then, Ada. You come with me."

Betty would have preferred one of her chums, who were all ready enough to accompany her, but she did not care to refuse the new girl's offer. It would only be considered more unfairness.

A few moments more, and captain and new girl were gone from the dormitory on tiptoe. Plenty of other juniors would have liked to go creeping away to the stairs, but they denied themselves the thrill of investigating.

There was the general belief that Betty and just her one companion would be more likely to see something if no one else took part.

"It's a most extraordinary business!" commented Madge Minden during the wait.

"Uncanny!" said Helen Craig.

"My word—"

"Why, what, Polly?" clamoured several.

"Miss Everard's telling us, at lights-out, about a girl she had seen in our corridor downstairs! We'd forgotten that!"

"Bai Jove! Ow, goals, theah weally must be—"

"It does make it seem more certain than ever," was one murmur.

"Or" broke out Tess Trelawney after another general silence, "does it simply mean that a girl—some girl belonging to another Form—is up to a game of her own for a certain reason?"

"She couldn't have been in Big Hall with the rest of the Form and yet seen by me upstairs at one and the same time," Biddy Loveland argued. "It's the 'all present' at that time that beats me!"

"Unless she wasn't really present, but got some other girl to answer for her," Judy Cardew suggested. "I can't believe myself that there is anything in that. It would mean a lot of—what do you call it? Collusion!"

Pam Willoughby suddenly put a question.

"Was the girl that you two saw just now big enough to be in some higher Form?"

"Why, yes!" Polly nodded. "She could have been a senior, come to that, by her size. But—but you would need to see her as we saw her to understand. She's like a ghost!"

"Bekas her face was as eef eet were made of silver paper, all shiny white, and ze eyes look at you as eef zey weren't eyes at all, but large round holes!"

"Howwows!" shuddered Paula. "Ow, dwop it! I—I—my nerves won't stand it, you know!"

"St!"

Some of them had heard Betty and the new girl returning.

They came in, carrying the hamper between them, and set it down.

"Well, what?"

"Nothing!"

"No sign of anything?"

"Nothing!"

Very audibly then a good many girls breathed freely again.

"Good job!" rejoiced Naomer suddenly. "Bekas now for ze jolly old hamper, pipooray. Come on, everybody, for ze grand gather-round! And don't let ze ghost business spoil your appetites!"

"It hasn't spoilt yours?" Polly inferred bleakly.

"Not ze bit of eet! As ze matter of fact," said

Naomer, creaking open the lid of the hamper, "I feel as eef seeing that ghost has made me hungrier zan ever!"

It was like Tess Trelawney, the artist of the Form, to stray to a window during the unloading of the hamper, to gaze out with an eye for effects of moonlight and shadow.

She came away from that window when at last the hand-round was being made, to the accompaniment of much tittering.

"Winter term," muttered Tess. "The night looks cold, and there's a heavy ground mist. Time of the year, in fact, when it doesn't take much to make you believe in ghosts."

"But the ghost of a schoolgirl!" Ada Sharrow exclaimed in a low tone that was charged with derision. "I call that too absurd!"

"You didn't see it," Polly retorted curtly, "or you wouldn't smile like that!"

One School—and Another

JUST before dinner-time next day Betty Barton came up to Study 12 to shoot a hockey-stick into its usual corner, there to companion other sports "gear."

Polly Linton, dashing off a letter, looked up inquiringly.

"Any good, Betty?"

"Not a bit of good! I want to be fair, Polly, but I shouldn't have thought a girl could be such a duffer at the game—after the way her brother spoke about her, too!"

"Then for next Saturday—"

"Oh, impossible! I told her so. Put it as nicely as I could, of course, but I'm afraid it's left her sulking."

"Let her sulk, Betty. I would! There it is! If she liked she could soon be chums with all of us in the Form. The fact that she's a dud at hockey wouldn't affect others' friendliness towards her. Does it ever?"

"No." And Betty sat down. "So long as a girl is likeable. But I've come to the conclusion, Polly, that I shall never like Ada Sharrow. Her brother—there, again! I want to be fair and to forget that she has such a brother. But she reminds you of him!"

"Now I'm writing to Jack," said Polly, resuming her pen. "I was an awful time getting him on the 'phone, and when I did get him I didn't have half enough time for all I wanted to say. But he got the hang of it—"

"And said it would be all right, did he?"

"Oh, yeah!" said the madeap, shaking a blob from her pen-point. "He will come over with a team on Saturday. What I didn't have time to say to him was about—you know! The hotel!"

"It will be jolly, Polly, if we can!"

"No 'if' about it. Miss Everard has O.K.ed it, and as for Jack and his lot, they'll be keen, you may be sure. The time now, Betty?"

"Ten to one."

"Oh, then I can just catch the one o'clock collection from the school box, which means that Jack will get it this evening."

And now we will travel with that letter to Grangemoor School.

Another autumn evening has closed in, making it a rather misty yard for Jack Linton and Dave Cardew to cross on their way from the gym. to their own schoolhouse.

They have been having a go with the gloves, and the old-fashioned lamp over the schoolhouse porch, shedding a yellowish light upon fog-bedamped pavement and ancient stonework, sheds

that same light also upon a couple of tousled heads.

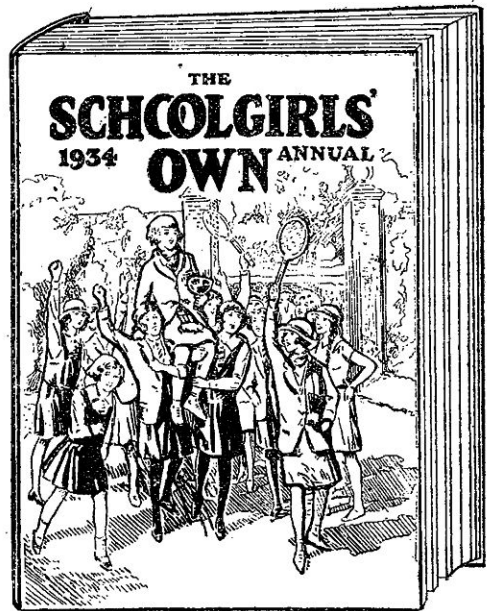
But Jack and Dave, although they have been fighting each other all round the ring, so to speak, are arm-in-arm now. Jack whistles, and Dave looks pleasantly thoughtful.

The post has come in, and there is a letter for Jack in the rack.

Dave leaves him roading it, and goes to get a wash and combing, and is still sluicing himself when his chum rejoins him, turning on the taps of a neighbouring basin.

(Continued on next page.)

NOW ON SALE



THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN ANNUAL is the premier book for Morcove "fans." It contains, among other delightful features, a splendid long complete story featuring Betty Barton and Co., a play, a thrilling short tale introducing the Grangemoor chums, and a host of varied articles about Morcove School. All your favourite authors have contributed stories, and the book has a wealth of illustrations, including 4 Lovely Coloured Plates.

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"Gee, Dave," says Jack, whilst he applies a thumb to make the water squirt into a whirlpool. "Great idea over there at Study 12! Tea at the new hotel, after the match on Saturday. What about it, old son?"

"Topping!" says Dave, with his face in a roller-towel. "Anything else?"

But Jack by now is bubbling into the whirlpool. It will be better to let him resume when he and Dave have got upstairs to that study which they share with another Fourth-Former, a quiet fellow named Robin Merton.

"Well, son," says Jack, dropping down into a lop-sided wicker-chair. "Pouf! I really don't know that I can look at prep this evening! Too tired!"

"Good!"

Robin Merton, ready to be sociable, closes his books.

"Sharrow looked in just now."

"Oh? Old Nosey! What did he want?"

"Bit quizzical about Saturday, I thought. Fancy he is sharpening a knife for our backs."

"Shan't show him my back," says Jack. "That's a chap you want to face all the time. And we're the ones to do it!"

Next instant "Hallo!" Jack lets out slowly as the door flashes open.

Harold Sharrow strides in. He crosses to Jack in the chair, and in an instant has dived a searching hand into one of Jack's pockets.

Up jumps Jack, striking at the impudent hand to stop it at its work; but Sharrow has had time enough, having made it a surprise action. He steps away, flourishing a packet of cigarettes.

"Thought so! I knew you chaps had got gaspers!"

"That's a lie!" says Jack flatly.

"Here, mind how you speak to me!"

"I'll dashed well finish speaking, and start in to do something else!" Jack fairly roars.

"You've served me a dirty trick, Sharrow!"

"We hadn't a gasper amongst us," says Robin hotly.

"That's so," Dave also bears witness, with deadly calmness.

"There's been smoking in the gym, and I'm prepared to swear it was you, Jack Linton, and Dave Cardew just now."

"All right. But if you don't get out of here now—sharp," Jack further explodes, putting himself almost chest to chest with the prefect, "we'll put you out! So there!"

"Here, steady, you!" Sharrow says, looking down his nose at the threatener. "Any more of it, and you'll be gated for next halfer!"

"And that's the game you're at, of course!" Jack rejoins thickly. "You rotter, Sharrow!"

"And you—you're a fine one to talk about rotting, aren't you?" the prefect sneers. "Just because I have had to report you once or twice—getting your sister and girl chums over there at Morcove to have a down on my sister! I know!"

"What!"

"Pah! As if it isn't as plain as a pikestaff!"

"It's another lie!" says Jack fiercely.

"I know what I'm saying," the prefect insists. "As a new girl at Morcove, my sister Ada isn't being given a chance, and it's all Study 12's doing! The captain—and who are some of the captain's best chums over there? Polly Linton—Judy Cardew! Oh, and I mustn't forget Pam Willoughby," he adds.

"Will you go?" Dave entreats calmly. "You had better, Sharrow—before the three of us set about you!"

"As we will!" says Robin darkly.

"Will you! Better think twice before doing that," laughs Sharrow. "This study didn't end up with a good name last term."

"Thanks to you! And this term—you're at it again, are you, only more so?" Jack says passionately. "I say it's a lie about our getting Polly and others to have a down on your sister! Here's our challenge: you be over there next Saturday, and we'll have the matter out! We shall be at Morcove—"

"You won't be at Morcove!"

"Won't we! Who says so?"

"I say so—not after the way you've cheeked me, a prefect!" scowls Sharrow. "And after finding these in your pocket, too!"

"Boys," shouts Jack, licking his finger-tips, "come on! Out the brute!"

Then it is like the end of the world in this study at Grangemoor School. Dust—chaos!

Sharrow is a big fellow. He takes some tackling. But our trio tackle him right enough in the end. Out goes Harold Sharrow, even though he is a prefect, headlong. And the door goes bang upon his sprawling figure in the corridor!

"Feel better after that!" says Jack, adjusting his collar. "Whew! That ink on the carpet, boys! Never mind! It's not the first spilling—and it won't be the last!"

"You can see his game," Dave says grimly—"to get us stopped from going over to Morcove next Saturday!"

"He'll get us gated right enough now," frowns Robin, "only—"

"Just so!" nods Jack, getting his tie to rights again. "Only, boys, gated or not gated, we go to Morcove next Saturday, and that's all there is to it. I have spoken! So now, what about a spot of prep, boys, and Sharrow can be hanged!"

### The Phantom Walks Again

**H**ALF-PAST ONE on the following Friday afternoon found Form-captain Betty Barton was affixing a team-list to the green-baize board downstairs.

"And I don't know, Polly, but I think with a team like that we ought to put up a good fight against our Grangemoor visitors, anyhow!"

The madcap, at Betty's elbow during the drawing-pinning of the notice, nodded.

"And won't I be glad when to-morrow afternoon is here, Betty! This has seemed a long week—in class!"

"Not got into our stride yet," Betty smiled the explanation. "The first week is always the worst. You know, Polly"—as they both turned away from the board to seek the open air—"I still feel awfully sorry that Ada Sharrow simply couldn't be played. If coaching would have helped—"

"She wouldn't let you, Betty. The trouble with Ada Sharrow is that she sulks unless she has everything her own way."

"Still, dear, I must ask her to tea in Study 12 this afternoon. As a new girl, she is entitled to the courtesy invitation."

"Yep, I suppose you must. Oh, and I'll try to keep from flaring up," the headstrong one promised. "Although she and I are—well, oil and vinegar aren't in it!"

"She has got herself so disliked by the Form in general," Betty murmured regretfully, "it makes you feel that you must make all the more effort to—oh, you know! Bring her round a bit."



Ada made no attempt to hide her fury when the Study 12 girls appeared. "So you've come after me, have you?" she panted. "I thought so!"

And there she is, so I think I'll ask her now, Polly."

"I would!"

Ada Sharrow, giving herself airs, made an avoiding movement as she saw Betty crossing the grass to speak to her. All the week the new girl's attitude had been: "None of your ordinary civility for me, thank you. I reckon myself to be a cut above that!"

But Betty, being captain, did not feel as free as other members of the Form to say: "All right—be blowed!" Betty could be as forbearing and patient as any mistress over a "difficult" girl. So now she had a blind eye for Ada's studied insolence.

"I say, Ada Sharrow!"

"Well?"

"I wish you would come to tea in Study 12 after school to-day. It may help you to—"

"Oh, thanks!" coldly. "But I have something better to do!"

"Just a moment, though." Nothing could have been gentler than Betty's tone. "I feel, Ada, that—"

"Your feelings are nothing to me! You haven't studied mine!"

"Oh, Ada! If only you'll let me, I think it would be a good thing if—"

"I don't care what you think either!" snapped the new girl, stalking away.

Then she heeled round and came back a step or two.

"I've been here nearly a week, and what I think now is that you're a horrid lot of girls, all of you! You're all in your nasty little sets—"

"Ada, we're not! You'd have to go a long way to find a Form where there is so much pulling together. I won't have you run down the Fourth," Betty protested spiritedly. "The fault, since you drive me into saying so, lies with yourself."

"Oh, that's the excuse!"

"It's the truth, Ada. I hate having to say so, but—"

But it was no use Betty's saying more. The new girl, shrugging, had walked away again. At the march-in to afternoon class, she was more nose-in-air than ever. At the dismiss, she was seen to put on her hat and go out of bounds.

Subsequently, from the window of Study 12, Betty was able to tell that it was Ada Sharrow turning in at the entrance to the new Headland Hotel.

Betty sighed as she came away from the window.

"I'm afraid, girls, Ada has gone across to the hotel again for tea. She might just as well be a day girl, for all—"

"Oh, don't bother about Ada!" exploded Polly. "For my part, I prefer her room to her company. You asked her nicely, I'm sure, before school. If she didn't choose to come, that's her own fault."

"I eggspect she reckoned she would get a better tea at ze hotel," said Naomer, helping with the tea-table. "As ze matter of fact, we are a bit short in ze way of anyzingk to eat! No jam sandwich—"

"None!" cried Polly. "There was a good half of one!"

"I know, but he was going stale, and so—"

"To-morrow," said Polly, "Naomer does not come with us to tea at the hotel! Greediness must be punished!"

"Not ze bit of cot! Bekas, ef I am down to play in ze match, zen I claim ze right to go with ze rest! I shall not play, zat is all!"

"Then we shall win the match! Hooray!" Polly rejoiced. "One short, and yet we'll beat the boys all the easier!"

"Praceer after tea," Betty proposed. "Nothing like it. Right up till dusk, girls!"



And it was on a twilit games-field that evening that Miss Everard found the entire team for to-morrow's great match, ending a practice game.

"Is Ada Sharrow there, girls?"

"No, Miss Everard."

"Not? Then do you know where she is, any of you? I have been inquiring for her, wishing to see her about her work."

"She may be at the hotel, with her mother," Betty responded. "Ada went across at tea-time, we know."

"And you haven't seen her since?" the Form-mistress remarked. "Betty, you and two or three others had better go across to the hotel now, and say I wish her to come back with you. Don't let yourselves be kept."

So, in the misty twilight, four juniors were soon hastening the short distance to the "Head-land."

Even as they got to the revolving-doors, Ada Sharrow came flaunting forth, and with her was her brother.

He stood halted, to light a cigarette, whilst she came on. Then, flourishing out the match, he rejoined her, just as she was exclaiming at her four Form-mates:

"Come after me, have you? I thought so!"

"Eh, what?" interposed her brother crustily. "These girls—"

"As a matter of fact, Miss Everard sent us across," Betty explained, with admirable good-humour. "She quite understands that your mother's being a guest here entitles you to look across pretty often, but she wishes you to return now with us."

"Well, Ada's not going to return with you, see?" Harold Sharrow again shouldered in. "You're not going to have that chance of making her feel small! Here, Ada, my motor-bike's at the gateway. You come on with me, and I'll pillion you back to Morecove. I've got time."

He treated Betty to a what-do-you-say-to-that look, but Betty had nothing to say. So long as Ada went back to school straight away, well and good.

"And another thing!" This from Harold Sharrow, with a surly flashing-round, after he had walked off with Ada. "If you girls think you're going to get a match with a Grangemoor team to-morrow, you're mistaken!"

"Are we?" smiled Betty.

"Yes, you are. Jack Linton's gated, anyhow. So is Dave Cardew!"

He stamped on again with his sister as he guffawed, leaving all four Morcovians like figures turned to stone.

*Gated!*

His brutal utterance of the word had shattered pleasant images in the mind of each girl as a hurled brick might shatter the imagery of a stained-glass window.

*Gated!*

"Oh, but I can't believe it!" Polly stamped at last.

"I'm afraid I can," grimaced Betty. "Isn't he just the sort of fellow?"

"But there's been nothing from any of the boys!" Judy exclaimed. "No telegram, no ring-up on the phone! Surely, if that wretch of a prefect has managed to queer the whole thing, they would have let us know by now."

"Yes. Well, perhaps there's a letter in the post," Pam said softly, "and so we shall hear in the morning."

They walked down the lamp-lit carriage-way, and emerged upon the night-bound country road, to hear a motor-cycle roaring away in the direction of Morecove. It was the prefect's "outfit," with his sister riding pillion.

But Betty and her three chums had only a short distance to go after that before turning in at the Morecove gateway, where there were the school-house lights, although dimmed by the autumn mist, to banish dreariness.

Suddenly they checked in surprise.

All four had discerned a girlish figure in the misty darkness, lurking near the schoolhouse. Their immediate conjecture was that it must be Ada Sharrow, who had hung about outside after her brother rode away.

Paying closer heed, however, the Study 12 girls decided that it could not be the new girl, after all.

"Too tall!" Polly murmured. "So I wonder—"

"Yes, I wonder," murmured Betty uneasily. "For it's after hours now, and she's alone, who-over she is. Some senior, it must be. Yet even a senior— Oh, did you see that?" came the change to a greatly startled tone. "How she vanished!"

"She must have seen us," muttered Pam. "But why did she need to fit away like that?"

"Here, come on, girls!" Polly burst out softly.

"For—I don't know if you noticed, but I did!"

"Noticed what, Polly?"

She did not answer—seemed too excited for speech. The others found themselves quite lagging behind the impetuous one, at such a swift, silent rush did she make for the shadowy spot where that tall schoolgirl had been lurking just then.

They got to that spot and peered around in vain.

"But look!" Polly suddenly panted, with a directing gesture. "There, girls! Oh, and now she has gone again! But did you see? Did you?"

"Yes! Her face," Judy whispered tensely—"not one we know! Oh, it was a strange face—uncanny!"

"Silvery-white," breathed Betty. "I say"—blankly—"what does it mean? I don't like—this!"

"If you ask me," Polly said hoarsely, "it means that we've seen the Phantom Schoolgirl again!"

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

## HIDDEN FROM MORCOVE



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