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The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2^d

No. 884, Vol. 27
Week ending
MARCH 17th, 1934

EVERY
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A SCARE FOR THE MADCAP

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"VANISHED FROM MORCOVE": Thrilling Complete Story Inside

VANISHED *from* MORCOVE



The Chums of Study 12 in a Thrilling Complete School and Adventure Story

EVENTS in connection with the mystery of the Morcove monster have taken a dramatic turn, bringing popular Ethel Courtway into the limelight. And because Ethel is now their temporary Form Mistress, Betty Barton and Co. feel it their bounden duty to probe the mystery on her behalf—little dreaming that by so doing they are plunging themselves into a great adventure.

Naomer Writes to the Papers

"SHE wouldn't tell me anything, Polly."

"She wouldn't?"

"No!"

"Um!"

And these two girls who were alone together in Study 12 at Morcove School looked at each other glumly.

One was Betty Barton, captain of the Fourth Form, the other her best of chums, madcap Polly Linton.

"Of course, Polly, I couldn't be too eager for an explanation."

"Course you couldn't, Betty! It's so horrid to be thought inquisitive. Besides, it was not as if you were dealing with one of the girls."

"No. We're apt to treat Ethel Courtway as if she were still one of us, calling her 'Ethel' now and then, when it should be 'Miss Courtway.' But the fact remains, she is our acting Form-mistress—"

"And a jolly good one at that! I hope to goodness, Betty, she gets the job for good, before long!"

"The whole form must be hoping so, if it has

got any sense—and I'm sure it has! But there it is, Polly dear; the fonder we are of Ethel, the more anxious about her we're bound to feel. She's worried—something's hanging over her at present; some cloud—"

"I looked up from work in class, this morning, and noticed her on the quiet," Polly murmured. "Ethel was sitting there in front of all the desks, forgetting all about us, you might say."

"I know! And I've got an idea that her worry must have something to do with that uncle and aunt of hers who've come to live at Cliff Edge bungalow."

After a nod in agreement, Polly side-glanced the captain.

"The other girls haven't noticed anything, Betty?"

"I don't think so. We'd better not make any remarks outside this study. There's another thing,

By Marjorie Stanton

Polly; have you said anything about what you and I saw last Saturday night?"

"Only to Pam and the rest, in this study. I begged them not to spread it around, Betty. We'd only be laughed at!"

"That's just what I'm thinking!" the captain smiled. "There was enough joking about the so-called Morcove monster at the end of last week. You and I know we did see a mysterious object on Saturday evening, when the moon was on the sea. But the Form would only call it—"

"Moonshine, yep! Oh, no," Polly said flatly, "I hold my tongue now about that, except to one or two. It's annoying to be scoffed at, when you're so certain about a thing!"

"Well, dear, this is too good a day to be indoors," Betty closed the rather grave debate, whilst glancing away to the sunny window. "The others are out on the field, I expect. Shall we go down?"

"Pronto!" Polly hailed the suggestion. "I felt I must wait for you to come away from Ethel's room, hoping she would have told you something. It's another sickening thing, Betty!"

"What is?"

"The nicest girls are always the ones to want to bear their own troubles! Yet they're the very girls you most want to help, if you can!"

"Nice isn't the word for her," Betty was exclaiming, when in scampered that dusky junior, Naomer Nakara, shrilling the inquiry:

"Are you talking about me being so nice? Bekas—"

"You!" the madcap said, with a degree of scorn that was like water on a duck's back to Naomer. "We are going to get shot of you, kid!"

"Oh, are you? I like zat, bekas—why?"

"It was all your fault that we were laughed at by the Form, over the Morcove monster! You did so exaggerate."

"Not ze bit of eet! What ze diggings, I know what I saw, don't I?"

"Do you?" retorted Polly grimly. "Well, I'm bothered if I know what I saw—nor does Betty know what she saw, either!"

"Too true!" laughed the captain ruefully. "It is the vagueness of the thing—"

"Ah, bah, zat proves, I am ze only one to have really seen him!" Morcove's royal and impish scholar claimed proudly. "And so I have written to ze Ejjitor of ze 'Barncombe Herald'—"

"What!"

"And all I want is an envelope, queek! Bekas, I went to ze library to write zis letter, as he is important! Hi!" Naomer protested, as the flourished letter was suddenly impounded by the madcap: "You can read him when he is published!"

Polly, fending off the imp, whilst still retaining the letter, glared, but Betty knew enough to be able to chuckle. Nine times out of ten, Polly's fury towards the dusky one was only make-believe.

"You think," the madcap seethed, "that you are going to be allowed to send a letter—this letter—"

"Yes—"

"About what you saw in the sea last week? Kid, you must be potty," Polly laughed hollowly. "Why shouldn't I?" demanded Naomer stoutly. "Bekas, he is in my best writing—no blots! And you can have a cream bun next time we are in Barncombe, for every wrong spelling that you find, so there!"

"Done!" said Polly, in acceptance of the offer. And she spread the letter upon the study table, to read it. "Take a squint, Betty!"

Apparently, the recent literary effort had left Naomer in need of refreshment. For she resorted to the study's corner cupboard, mostly devoted to crockery and cakes, whilst Betty and Polly read as follows:

"To the Ejjitor of the 'Barncombe Herald,'

"Dere Sir,

"I rite to tell you about a rimarkibubble eggspereience that I have had, Bekas! last Friday after tea I saw a pekulier objiek in the sea? He was enormouse, about as big as a wail if he had been floating properly!

"But there was not much of him to be seen only his back wiz 2 funny littel humps like a kamel, only they were not little. No, they were enormous, and now I shall tell you!!! I feel shore he is a new kind of monster, probabubly prehisstorick, bekas I hav bin looking him up in the libe, wear it says? Somethingak about a policesawyouass—"

The grinning readers abandoned the screed at this point.

"Naomer, my advice," counselled Betty, straightening her face; "don't send it to the Herald. Keep it for the Morcove Mag!"

"You zink eet is too good for ze rotten Barncombe rag? All right zen, I will!" Naomer proudly decided. "Yes, I will make an articaekle of eet, and do my own illustrations!"

"I thought rations would come into it," commented Polly, the dusky one having a slice of cake in her hand even then. "Ugh, talk about a half-wit! Leave her, Betty!"

But Polly, after going out with the captain, turned back.

"And don't forget, kid; you owe me eighty-five cream buns roughly—"

"Do I! Zen I hope you will get zem! Boo, jealous!" shouted Naomer, as Polly went after Betty, up the corridor. "Just bekas I saw ze monster properly, and you didn't! Boo!"

The dusky one, however, was not so contentious that she wanted no more to do with her study-mates for the present. In a moment she was rushing out, shrilling:

"Hi, wait for me!"

So they went downstairs as a high-spirited trio, finding their way out to the sunlit field, where this midday hour was being devoted to games by scores of girls.

"I can see our lot, just over there," Polly blithely remarked.

"And here," the captain rejoined softly, "is Ethel Courtway."

That well-grown girl—until only a few weeks ago, Morcove's head scholar—was quitting one batch of juniors to find another, amongst whom perhaps there would be a girl who could benefit by a chummy word or two of instruction.

Her virile stride brought her within speaking distance of Betty, Polly and Naomer. True to her inborn amiability, the temporary mistress could not let these three go by without finding something pleasant to say.

"I've been thinking, girls; no reason why we shouldn't arrange another match with Grange-moor? It makes a change from the usual fixtures—if you, Betty, feel you would like to arrange a day?"

"Next Wednesday?" the captain suggested eagerly. "Why not? But we'd have to see about it at once."

"You may use the 'phone, just to find out."

"Oh, thanks!"

From this, it was a plunge into talk about the

sports side of Form life. An animated discussion was still in progress when a parlourmaid came running out of the schoolhouse, bearing a brown-paper parcel. As soon as her roving eyes had singled out Ethel Courtway, she came hurrying across to her.

"From Robson's in the town, miss—"

"Oh, thanks, Ellen!"

"And I paid the bill, miss—eight-and-six. You were to pay for it on delivery."

"Oh, yes, that's quite right," the acting mistress nodded; at the same time, she became strangely embarrassed. "One mustn't leave things to be owed for. But—I'm sorry," with a forced laugh, "I can't repay you now, Ellen. I—"

"Oh, it doesn't matter, miss! Any time will do!"

"We've got the money amongst us, Ethel," the captain impulsively interposed. "So do let's pay Ellen for you, then you can repay us? Please!"

"Oh, no—at least—very well then!" Ethel

flusteredly assented, her cheeks changing colour.

"It's good of you girls to come to my rescue!"

"Not ze bit of eet!" sparkled Naomer, who had promptly produced her own contribution. "Bekas, you have often stood treat to us at ze Creamery, don't forget! Half ze dollar—"

"And I've half-a-crown," Polly announced.

"Here we are!"

Betty, with some small silver, soon made up the balance, and so Ellen was sent away, settled with.

The trifling transaction—for so it was in the eyes of the three juniors—seemed still to render Ethel Courtway very uncomfortable.

They had thought she would send the parcel indoors by Ellen, and so be free to stay out with them all on the games field.

Instead, Ethel blushing

thanked them once again, and then, remarking that she must take the parcel indoors, abruptly left them.

"How she looked!" was Polly's subdued comment.

"As if it were anything terrible, to be caught without the money!"

The captain nodded.

"One would think she not only had no money upon her, but didn't know where in the world she was going to get some!"

"Which is absurd!" laughed the madcap.

In a Fix

ETHEL COURTWAY heeled shut the door of her own private room and then slung the brown-paper parcel on to the table.

She was not going to open it, knowing the contents—something ordered last week, from Robson's, the best outfitters in Barncombe.

It had brought no flush to her cheek, at the time she gave the order, to leave it to be paid for on delivery. Any flush, then, would have

had to be due to doubt as to whether her credit was good enough. She always had dealt with the shops in that care-free style. But now—

Ugh! she squirmed. Not nice; beastly uncomfortable, to be quite out of ready money, and not to know when one would be in funds again.

If only she had anticipated the awkward hitch that had occurred! There would have been no casual ordering of that eight-and-sixpenny article, last week.

But she had been taken completely by surprise, in the last day or two. A bolt from the blue! Her parents, now abroad, had given her to understand distinctly that Uncle Peter and Aunt Janet would be her "bankers," as it were. She had only to draw upon them!

But there was something wrong; some muddle, somewhere. The extraordinary thing was, that the being put about like this was not due to Uncle Peter and Aunt Janet living at a distance. No delay in the post accounted for the difficulty one was in.

Uncle Peter was even residing now at Cliff Edge Bungalow—as close as that to Morcove School; barely a mile from the school gates! And Aunt Janet, although for reasons that were most puzzling, she was not living under the same roof with her husband, was just as close to Morcove—staying at the Headland Hotel.

"I begin to wonder too—as I'm sure she must be wondering—how she will manage for money, if Uncle Peter goes on in the way he has been going! So crusty and grumpy; so evasive—"



"I'm sorry"—Ethel tried to laugh off her embarrassment—
"I'm afraid I can't repay you now." But Betty chimed in: "Do let's pay Ellen for you—please, Ethel!"

Ethel was feeling keyed up enough, at this moment, to speak her thoughts aloud, as she paced about in the privacy of her room on the first floor of the schoolhouse.

An irritable V came between her close-knit brows.

"Bother! But it's too absurd, to be without money like this! I'm not going to ask auntie. It would only upset her all the more. I must simply get hold of Uncle Peter himself, and—

and—

Then she stamped.

"The silly man won't give you a chance for a word with him—that's the annoying thing!" she fumed on. "Only once have I been inside the bungalow, since he took it over. Last Saturday, and again yesterday, when I went across—kept on the doorstep! No getting a word with anyone but Dawker. Hang Dawker!"

How her former vague dislike of that manservant of uncle's had come to a head, in the last few days! During the years that he had been in Uncle Peter's service, Dawker had always excited in her feelings of mistrust. Shifty, that's what he was—shifty! And how Uncle Peter could retain any confidence in the man was amazing.

Suddenly she turned to the table to pull open a drawer and take out a strange-looking object. Originally it had been a good-quality pocket-book, and only its present state rendered it so curious.

The good leather-binding was discoloured and crinkled; most of the leaves of the book were stuck together—all the result of prolonged immersion in water.

It was, in fact, a pocket-book belonging to her uncle—as his name written inside the cover evidenced—that had been washed up on the Morcove beach, last Saturday. The Study 12 girls had found it, and it had come into her, Ethel's, hands, only a few minutes afterwards.

"Uncle could have had it back by now, if I would have got a word with him," she pondered on. "I was not going to leave the thing in Dawker's keeping; somehow, I didn't see why I should!"

She had not tried to unstick any of the thin leaves, to see what any notes made in the book might be about. That was no concern of hers. Uncle was a scientist, and the pocket-book, presumably, contained jottings dealing with highly specialised subjects that he was interested in.

Obviously, he must be feeling the loss of the pocket-book; but by late on Saturday night he must have known that she had it. Yet Sunday had passed without his claiming it! Why couldn't he have strolled across to the school—with Aunt Janet? Impossible to make him out at present!

"It's all nonsense though; he has money of mine that I am entitled to draw upon, and I want some at once! I know what I'll do," she suddenly resolved, smiling fiercely. "Ultimatum! When he lets me have some pocket-money, he can have his precious notebook—and not before!"

A note to that effect? Why not? Make it a dignified note—firm!

She seated herself at the table, took pen and paper, and began to write. Only a few lines had she penned, however, when a peculiar hubbub, floating in at the open window from the school grounds, caused her to break off.

Wondering what the sudden excitement was about, she jumped up and strode to the window. Then she saw—scores of scholars, all flocking swiftly to the gateway.

Games had been abruptly abandoned; hockey sticks had been cast down to the grass.

It was as if more than half the school had suddenly stamped out of bounds.

What did it mean? An accident on the road? A travelling circus coming by? She could hear no bam-bam! of a circus band.

Besides, the scholars were not mustering on the road. They were surging out by the main gateway, to go careering on again. Hallo! Now she could see some of the foremost runners streaking towards the grassy verge of the cliffs.

Ethel knew what to think then. Something happening out at sea that could be best observed from the cliffs! Some girl must have come rushing in with news so sensational that instantly this scurry to see had resulted.

A wreck? But the weather was perfect! She was crossing to the door, intending to hasten downstairs, when a thought came—a possible explanation—that gave her a bad turn.

Something to do with Uncle Peter!
He had gone in for a very powerful motor-boat down here at Morcove, keeping it in the private boat-cave that went with the Cliff Edge property. He seemed to be out in it a good deal; she presumed that it was during a trip that he had lost the pocket-book in the sea.

Had he been out again in the boat this morning? Had something happened to it and him—disaster, in sight of land?

She whipped open her door and flashed along to the stairs. As she whirled down to the ground floor, there was a sense of the schoolhouse being practically deserted. Everybody, it seemed, had rushed away.

Then, in her own excitable haste, she was checked by a sudden encounter with the school's headmistress.

"Did you ever know anything so absurd, Ethel?" A relieved smile was on Miss Somerfield's face as she came in by the main doorway. "Somebody has been saying there's a mysterious object to be seen out at sea."

"What!"
"Two miles out, so I understand, and all the girls have rushed to look! I don't mind," laughed the headmistress, "so long as there is no lateness for table. Perhaps you will go after them, Ethel?"

"Certainly! But what sort of an object—a boat?"

"Oh, no! It is said to be an animal—a monster, if you ever heard of such nonsense!"

Ethel did not remain to answer. In any case, she could tell that the headmistress was entirely sceptical. But, running out into the sunshine, the Fourth-Form's acting mistress was in a state of undiminished excitement.

Her agitating fear for Uncle Peter's safety had been dispelled. Nothing to do with him and his boat, after all, thank goodness! But this was not the first time, in the last few days, that something in the sea had caused a great sensation.

Something which, for lack of a better term, had been described as the MORCOVE MONSTER!

They Can't Make It Out

ALL the scores of girls were flocking back from the cliffs, by the time Ethel reached the gateway.

Some had been the very first to reach the viewpoint, and had yet seen nothing! Others had been too late, they were being told, to get a glimpse of it—as if there had been something after all! But had there been anything?

Disappointment had not improved tempers, and the reaction from eager expectancy was taking the form of bitter pooh-poohing.

"Another girl taken with the Study 12 mania!" was being said freely. "Booh!"

"Yes—stupid! Getting us all to leave games"

"He's coming after you, Biddy—look out! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For it was Biddy Loveland, of the Fourth Form, who had started the scare, this time. Biddy it was who had come pelting back, from a solitary ramble on the cliffs, to say what she had seen. Oh, yes, Biddy had seen it—of course she had, when she was alone! Laugh at her!

Unfortunately, Biddy was a girl who could not stand being laughed at. She was rather emotional. A word of censure in class; her work not so good, according to the mistress, and poor Biddy would be showing glistening eyelashes. They glistened now.

"Never mind, Biddy dear," said Ethel, finding the half-terrorful junior already receiving the soothing company of Betty and others. "I don't suppose you meant it!"

Polly was there, looking furious.

"Easy to make fun," she broadcast to the scoffing crowd, "when you haven't seen anything yourselves!"



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"Bekas, I have seen him, don't forget! I was ze very first—"

"You were not!" Polly now rounded upon the imp. "I saw it at the same time that you did, last week!"

"Well, zen, I have seen him twice!"

"So have I! The second time, on Saturday night, with Betty!"

"Oho!" the scoffers resumed on all sides. "So the cap has seen it, too! Well, well!"

"Enough," laughed Ethel, with waving-on gestures. "You'll all be late for dinner. Now tell me, Biddy," she said, walking with that emotional young person, "what was it like that you saw?"

"Oh, I—I can hardly describe it," was the tremulous answer, whilst a handkerchief disposed of the last tears. It was comforting to Biddy to have the youthful mistress putting a serious question to her. "And I have never said it was a monster!"

"No, dear—"

"I only know that I saw something out at sea—and the water is so calm to-day, so I got a good view. It was like—like—"

"Like an enormous monster, I know, bekas—"

"Naomer, I am asking Biddy! Go on, dear."

"Like some animal floating with just its back out of the water—"

"And two enormous humps, like a camel, yes! Bekas—"

"Naomer, how many more times!"

"But, what ze diggings, zere were humps, weren't there, Biddy? You say, queek!"

"I did see—yes, two big bumps—"

"Zere you are!" the irrepressible one yelled triumphantly. "Now say I didn't see him! Ooo, queek, get dinner over and zen I must write my articack!"

"Cackle's right—ha, ha, ha!" one of the derisive girls chuckled as Naomer sprinted ahead.

Betty and some of her best chums exchanged glances. Polly was bottling up a good deal of anger—that was evident. Ugh, rotten, being a laughing-stock! Even Ethel Courtway was smiling now.

But it seemed to Study 12 that her smile, at present, must be due to the same scepticism that was rife in the Form. You had to see the monster yourself before you could believe in the thing, and that was all there was in it!

What was Betty's surprise, then, when, after dinner, she had the acting mistress beckoning her aside, to speak in quite serious fashion about a matter that was a standing joke.

"You saw something last Saturday night, Betty, I understand?"

"Yes, Ethel; in the moonlight, when Polly and I were waiting for you whilst you called first at the bungalow and then at the hotel—"

"I remember; I took you with me then—"

"We saw—just what has been described," Betty spoke on earnestly. "I hadn't believed in any idea of a—sort of sea monster until then. But seeing is believing. Mind you, we only saw it for a moment or two; then it went under water."

"You don't exaggerate, Betty, and you speak convincingly. I think you might come with me, after tea, across to the bungalow. I am inclined to ask Uncle Peter about it all—I want to see him about another matter. From that bungalow on the edge of the cliffs, he may have seen the—monster!"

"Splendid! And could Polly come, please?"

"Oh, bring any of your chums who care to join us."

"Thanks!"

"Oh, and Betty!"

"Yes?"

"I'm sorry; I can't pay you that money I owe you! It's very—annoying—"

"Don't be silly!"

Not until she was hurrying upstairs to Study 12 did Betty see a reason for Ethel Courtway's great embarrassment over the temporary loan. Then it flashed upon her that Ethel, as acting mistress, might feel that the loan had put her in a false position. "But what rot!" Betty laughed to herself. "It isn't as if she were going to keep on owing the money."

From Study 12 came a clack-clack-clack! that proclaimed someone's industry with that old typewriter which girls were allowed to borrow. Whisking in, Betty beheld Naomer, thumping away at the keys.

As Paula was the only other occupant of the room, at present, and she was lying back in the best armchair, with closed eyes, conditions had evidently seemed to Naomer favourable to literary work.

"What's the idea, kid?"

But the dusky one could not be got to speak. She was trying to find a certain letter of the alphabet on the keyboard, with a hovering finger that promised to deal the elusive character a sounding thump! when she did find it.

"It's pwetty awful, Betty deah! The silly cweature has been enaking the most awful wovv with that machine," Paula complained, shaking up a cushion.

"Got him!" Naomer at last exclaimed to herself; and she hit the wanted key—thump! Then:

"What ze diggings, all wrong again! Eet says K on ze keyboard, and eet comes out a question mark!"

"You must use the shift key, Naomer. My goodness," said Betty, taking the liberty of glancing at the bit of typescript that was between the rollers. "What on earth, kid, are you—"

"My articackle, zat is what I am doing; so don't spik, plis! Hi," she addressed the refractory machine, "get ze jerk on!"

Thereupon, the carriage went back, with a kind of protesting groan at Naomer's violent handling, to start another line.

"I want to see Polly and— Oh, there you are, girls!" was Betty's glad cry, as the madcap now whirled in, followed by Pam and others. "I say—"

Clack, clack, batter, clack!

"I say, girls," Betty raised her voice above the din of the machine, "Ethel Courtway would like us to—"

"Can't hear what you are saying!" shouted Polly. "All this row! Kid, if you want to—"

"I am going to feenish my articackle before I go down to class!" Naomer announced. "Hooray, first sheet done—gorjus!"

But there was to be no starting a second sheet. Naomer gave such a tug at that first sheet, to withdraw it from between the rollers, she almost lifted the typewriter off the table.

The carriage came right up into the air, was suspended thus for a moment, and then fell back in a lopsided fashion.

"And now," Polly commented grimly, "she's bust the thing!"

"No, bekas, it was busted already! Look at ze mis-prints!" the authoress shriled, in proof of her contention. "Call zat a typewriter, when he can't spell for toffee! Ah, bah, I am disgrusted!"

"But let's look," requested Betty, taking Page One before Naomer, in her chagrin, could crumple it up. "All your own composition—splendid!"

"But ze spelling isn't mine—no! Hi, Paula, I don't want this machine any more, so you can take him back," said Naomer, lifting up the weighty old typewriter, to dump it in Paula's lap.

"Owch, ow! Na—ow!—mer!"

Crash!

"Zere you go! Now he really is busted up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laughter of Betty and others was not due, however, to any tragic state of final ruin that the typewriter appeared to be in, lying upside down on the floor. These girls had begun their perusal of page one, as follows:

MY AVENCHERS WIHH THE THE

MMorcoVe ?MOOMORNSTER !!!

By N@OM3R N@?ARA.

)Speshly ritten 4 YHE MORCOVE MAGIZZIN).

Chipter 4.

Hit was luffy aftynoon. And%, as I studied at my studdy wwindow, no, as I stooed at my studdy wwindow? I saw alof a sussedden a pick, youlier, object? .Wot cood it B? That wast the mystery!!!!

Anso I staired and starred, £, an%, suddinkly 8 saw hit MOVE?!!! An then I !knew!!! It was the MMORCOVE MMONSTER in ther flesh, in ther sea?!!

Anso I rushed I floo donstaires X an I floo a cross to ther klifits not abit a frayed? Bekas, I am not a kowherd, not ther bite of it%..!

An now, b4 I go enny 4ther—

"It's as far as you'll go, so don't worry," said Polly, at her grimest.

And, folding the sheet of MS. into a paper dart, she whizzed it at Naomer's head. Alas, with the erratic flight common to paper darts, this one gyrated straight for Paula and took her on the nose—"Wow!"

"Ha, ha, he!"

"To be serious," said Betty presently, "Ethel Courtway would like us to go with her over to the bungalow by-and-bye. She is going to ask her Uncle Peter what he thinks about this monster business. He, being out and about in that motor-boat of his, may have seen something."

The captain's chums received this with pleased nods.

"Besides," Pam remarked, "he is a sort of scientist johnny, isn't he? So he might be able to throw light on the mystery."

"Right!" said Polly. "Study 12 will be there. And now— I've rung up Jack at Grangemoor, Betty, as you left it to me to do."

Betty had done that, for the simple reason that Polly had a brother at Grangemoor, through whom any arrangements as to a match between the two schools could be best made.

"Jack O.K.'d it straight away," Polly rattled on. "He and his lot will be over on Wednesday afternoon, early. I fancy it's a sore point at Grangemoor that they have never really whacked us at hockey, only tied."

"Day after to-morrow," Betty pondered aloud. "Good! We shall have caught the monster by then!"

"Oh, yeah!" grimaced the madcap. "And had a cut from the middle tail cooked for Wednesday's tea. A treat for the boys—especially Bobby Bloot. Gosh, is that the bell for school—already!"

It was, and the usual stampede set in, to be

followed by a sighing, drooping processional to the classroom, the afternoon being so sunny.

But there was Ethel's genial way of conducting lessons to reconcile the Form to what Paula termed a "dreadful inawcewation." The time seemed to go quickly. At dismissal, it was an added joy to the Study 12 girls to have Ethel confirming the appointment for after-tea.

"If you'll be ready in an hour's time," she spoke to them softly, during the march-out, "I will, too."

She was as good as her word, and by half-past four she and the chums were faring away.

"We are rather a crowd," Pam considerably remarked, when they got to the bungalow's gateway. "Had we better all come in, Ethel?"

"Why, if you don't mind, I think it might be just Betty and Polly," was the gentle response. "I want them, in case I get Uncle Peter interested in this monster business. But," Ethel added, with a queer smile, "I don't know for certain that I'm going to see him, mind."

Nor did she.

Five minutes, and she was back from the bungalow, with Betty and Polly, and those who had waited at the gateway noticed how put-out Ethel looked.

"Dawker again! It's always Dawker and never Uncle Peter!" she complained fiercely.

"And your Aunt Janet was not at home, either," Betty remarked. "Pity!"

Ethel Courtway turned very red, in the face at that. Bad moment for the Form-captain! She had meant well, but the sympathetic comment seemed to have been a dropped brick.

"I'm sorry I have brought you out all for nothing," the acting mistress said, after a frowning silence. "I think I had better see if I can—find my aunt."

She turned away instantly, and they saw her trending towards the fine hotel that was only five minutes' walk from the bungalow.

For a few moments the Study 12 chums watched her in silence—wonderingly.

"Is that where she expects to find her aunt, then? At the hotel!" Betty exclaimed. "Queer! Ethel went there on Saturday night."

"Can't make it out," muttered Polly. "Isn't Ethel's aunt living at the bungalow, then?"

"I don't like to see Ethel looking so worried," came Madge Minden's murmur. "It seems to me that she is having a lot to bear, at present."

"It's her uncle—I am sure it is," grimaced the madcap. "The aunt's all right; we know that. But as for the uncle—well, I'm glad he's no uncle of mine, that's all!"

"Yet, the strange thing is," said Betty, "Ethel talked of him, last week, as if he were one of the best in all the world."

"Whoever you are," Ethel challenged indignantly, "you are not my Uncle Peter!"



The Cave

THE revolving entrance doors to the Headland had no sooner admitted Ethel Courtway to the grand interior, when a smart hall-porter advanced to meet her.

"Can I assist you, miss?"

"I am wanting to find Mrs. Courtway—an aunt of mine—"

"Mrs. Courtway, miss? Mrs. Courtway left for London an hour ago. But just a moment—Page!"

A boy in buttons came up.

"There was a note to go across to the school—for this young lady; has it gone yet?"

"No, sir."

"I'll get it, miss; but you should have had it by now. Sorry," said the porter, hurrying across to his own bureau.

Ethel followed in feverish eagerness. Aunt Janet gone to London! Why? Oh, how puzzling, how distressing it all was—this apparent estrangement between husband and wife.

The note came into Ethel's hands, and she hastily ripped open the envelope and tore out the contents.

"I cannot stand it any longer," she read, "and this is to let you know that I am going up to London to see the family lawyer.

"I hope to be back by Wednesday at the latest.

"Oh, Ethel darling, how sorry I am that all this upset is happening so close to your school that you are bound to be involved in it.

"But do not think too hardily of your Uncle

Peter. I feel that he must be ill, the way he has treated us both.

"All my love to you, my dear."

There was a postscript:

"P.S.—I am afraid you are in a fix for money. I have only my fare to London at this moment. It is humiliating. Fancy this happening, just at a time when your own dear parents are abroad and you are relying upon us for your allowance."

Looking extremely grave, Ethel folded up the note after the swift perusal of it. She conferred a courteous look upon the hall-porter, and then walked away—out into the early evening sunshine.

Now she knew why Aunt Janet had gone to London, and the action seemed to be entirely commendable. They could not go on like this. Perhaps the lawyer would return with her.

But why—why was Uncle Peter behaving so strangely?

Something there was that had made him an altogether different man just lately.

"No, I can't go back to the school yet awhile!"

She said it aloud to herself, as soon as she was clear of the hotel grounds, and was next moment tacking towards the bungalow.

The impulse had seized her to call there again and have a thorough good talk with Dawker. That manservant had been getting too brusque, too evasive, merely answering her on the doorstep, when, of course, she should have been asked inside.

And it was evident that Aunt Janet, even, had come in for no better treatment than that—confound the man!

Then came a different impulse, superseding the first. Have nothing more to say to Dawker, but wait about for uncle! Why, it might even be possible to find him, now, down on the shore, at the boat-cave.

Anyway, she would go down to the shore to see if he were there, and, if not, whether he was away on a trip in the boat.

She had started out, carrying the brown-papered pocket-book which she intended to return to her uncle if and when he let her have some pocket-money! But now it occurred to her she would have done better to leave the book behind in the school.

If, during a hard-won interview with him, he saw that she had the notebook in her hands, he might, in one of his strange tempers, snatch the thing from her. Not good enough!

Nothing was easier, however, than for her to dispose of the pocket-book before going down to the beach. Lots of girls were going by now, on the road, and any one of them would cheerfully receive the little package in trust from her, to be placed in her private room at the school.

Half a minute later she was hailing a couple of her own juniors, out cycling together.

"Biddy—Etta—" And when they had dismounted: "A little thing you can do for me! Just take this package for me and put it in my table-drawer when you get back, will you?"

"Right-ho!"

To see them riding on again, one of them with the package safely tied to her handlebars, left Ethel smiling in a mettlesome way. That was that! Quite a good idea, for one had got to handle Uncle Peter—firmly. No pocket-money, no pocket-book. That resolve of hers must be adhered to.

As she skirmished past the bungalow grounds, making for the top of the cliff-path that would take her down to the beach, she saw Dawker watching her from a side window. Now, why?

"Seems to me, he is all for trying to keep me and Aunt J from getting in direct touch with Uncle Peter, but I would like to know why! Dawker himself should be regarding Uncle Peter's conduct as being very freakish, not to say unkind. He should be on our side, not uncle's! But he isn't. Oh," Ethel said to herself as she started the descent of the rock steps out in the face of the cliff, "I don't like Dawker—definitely I detest him, now—"

She had a wide view of the sea whilst hastening down the zig-zag, and one thing was evident. The motor-boat was neither going out nor coming in. But this was rather encouraging, for it meant that she might catch Uncle Peter, at the boat-cave, just back from a trip, or just about to have the boat launched.

The last boulder-like step let her down on to dry silver-sand, and then she floundered along, close in under the towering cliffs, having only a couple of hundred yards to go to reach the boat-cave.

Lattice gates, erected at the entrance to the cave to give privacy when wanted, were standing open, and that further encouraged her hope of a meeting. Even supposing the boatman whom Uncle Peter employed was merely working at the boat, hauled up in the cave, quite likely Uncle Peter himself would be there, superintending.

But, having got to within a mere pace or two of the cave-mouth, with its open lattice gates, Ethel was thrown into a sudden state of extreme caution. As if warned by instinct, she held still—listening.

Voices in the cavern—two voices, and neither of them Uncle Peter's. And yet—this was strange!—there was in one of the voices something familiar; as it might be, Uncle Peter's voice, greatly changed.

Suddenly a violent tremor shook her. The other voice was nothing to feel concerned about—merely the gruff voice of a hireling. But the voice that might be uncle's, and yet she was sure it wasn't—that had brought an idea into her head, crash!

It was as if she had got on to some wavelength that had brought a voice hurling upon her hearing. And the voice was shouting:

"It isn't your uncle; it never has been, down here! Your uncle's pocket-book in the sea—"

Yes, that too! His pocket-book, washed ashore and found by the Study 12 girls, after its prolonged immersion in the sea! And if uncle's pocket-book had been washed up like that, then supposing— Oh, supposing—

Still hovering close by the cave-entrance, Ethel suddenly cast a fearful glance out to sea.

Was that the tragic reason why the pocketbook had been washed up? All the evasions of herself and of Aunt Janet; the altered looks that one had attributed to illness, so that he had seemed—a different man!

Spirited girl that she was, in a few moments she was done with this excitable pondering. She walked round by one of the open gates and went straight into the cave.

"Uncle Peter?" she called into the gloom.

The boat was confronting her, drawn up on greased planks, but the two men were further in, not to be discerned by her in the gloom.

But, now that she had voiced the challenging cry, there was the chink of dropped implements, coupled with muttered words of alarm.

Ethel went farther in, going past the boat, and then she was face to face with both men.

The one who was only a hired man simply stood erect, where he had straightened up from some job over which he had been bending. The other, his employer, came on a step or two, to look closer at Ethel.

"What do you want, girl!"

"I had intended to say, I want some pocket-money—"

"Oh, I can't bother about that! Besides, where's my pocket-book, that Dawker tells me some of the girls picked up, on the shore?"

"That's at the school," Ethel stated calmly. "You can have it, when I have some pocket-money. But, more than I want pocket-money now, I want—an explanation."

"Explanation? What on earth do you mean, girl! There, be off with you! I'm busy! If I can't stand my wife round me, just at present, is it likely that I can be bothered by you, a mere girl!"

"I am not going——"

"What!"

"Until I have had a talk with you, out in the open. It is not good enough," she said spiritedly, "to see you only for a moment, and then only in semi-darkness."

"How do you mean!" he stamped.

"We are in deep gloom in this cave now. When I called at the bungalow, your first evening there—the room was half-dark. I have never seen you in broad daylight, down here at Morcove—and neither has auntie! And why?"

"Pah," he gestured, "I can't listen to such drivel! I'm busy!"

"You won't answer, so I will give the reason, myself. Whoever you are," Ethel said indignantly, "you are not my Uncle Peter!"

There would have been a terrible silence after that, but she fancied she heard the boatman draw a hissing breath, then mutter:

"That's done it!"

Ethel, however, did not allow her gaze to be drawn to that man. Better for her, if she had! She kept her eyes steadfastly upon "Uncle Peter," reading guilt in his terrible looks.

"Eh?" he blustered thickly. "What are you talking about!"

He cast a sideglance at the boatman that seemed to Ethel only nervousness. But it meant a sneer hint to the man, who was not slow to act upon it.

Unnoticed by Ethel, the rough fellow slouched away to the mouth of the cave. Even if she had marked the movement, she would only have conjectured that he was putting himself at a distance, the conversation being what it was.

"And Dawker must be in league with you," she continued her calm accusation. "After all these years with Uncle Peter, Dawker has turned traitor; that's what it means! Well, I never did like the man."

"If this isn't the craziest talk I was ever asked to listen to!"

"Again, that's mere bluster. You can't deny it; in any case, there's guilt in your eyes! You have been personating my uncle. It explains everything—even the pocket-book, washed up on the seashore. Something awful has been done to Uncle Peter——"

"That's a lie!"

"Very well; stick to that, and I will stick to what I have said, when I get back to the school and have got Miss Somerfield to 'phone for the police. I——"

Crash! the closing of the gates at the cave-entrance startled her. She looked round—and

instantly the man who had posed as Uncle Peter took a big stride and seized her by the wrists.

"What's this," she panted, refraining from a struggle that would have been useless. "Just let me go, please!"

"It's likely," he said harshly. "No, my girl. You know too much. That's right, Jake, stay where you are for a moment. No one about, is there?"

"No, sir."

"Let me go," Ethel demanded again furiously.

"You wretch!"

He laughed evilly.

"Don't worry; you'll soon be out of here. A trip to sea, that's the thing for you. Here's the boat, as handy as could be. Come on, Jake, if the coast's clear. No help for it now; we've got to do with this young mix—what we have already done with her uncle!"

The Man at the Window

TWILIGHT and evening bell!

It was not, to the joy of Betty and her chums, the bell for the last assembly of the day. That would not be ringing for another hour yet. Only the deep-toned hour bell, following the four quarters on Morcove's own chimers, was now sounding in the dusk.

But another day in the life of Morcove School was as good as ended. The end of a perfect day!

Up to the last possible moment there had been sunshine everywhere, and the chums of Study 12 were only a tithe of those who had played on until it was almost too dark to see the ball any more.

A practice game of hockey had been Betty & Co.'s fancy, when they got back to school after parting from Ethel Courtway away yonder on the cliffs.

They had picked up a game with other juniors, and play had been quite wonderful.

"Makes you wish we had been playing a real match—against visitors, for pre!" sparkled Polly, sauntering off the dewy field with Betty and the rest of the coterie.

"Must be the weather," Betty smiled; "such a lot of girls in tip-top form. Well, let's hope they stay like it——"

"For Wednesday!"

"That's it!"

"Oh, we'll whack the boys this time," Polly predicted, twirling her hockey stick. "Just about beat 'em to a frazzle. You know, I haven't looked at prop, this evening!"

"Who has?" chuckled Betty. "Oh, let it rip; these fine mornings, we're all up in time to slam in some work before brekker. But—no taking advantage!"

They knew what was meant and nodded hearty agreement. Just because they had someone as nice as Ethel Courtway acting as Form-mistress, they must not abuse her good nature.

Judy Cardew looked round, when they were almost at the schoolhouse.

"We didn't see Ethel come in, whilst we were on the field."

"No! I should have thought," said Betty, "she would have come across to us. She often does, when there's a game on."

"But she must have come in by now?" Pam submitted. "She wouldn't wait until after dark before leaving either the bungalow or the hotel."

"Oh, she is indoors, right enough," Polly said confidently. "What it means, she is bothered about something to do with that grumpy uncle of hers, and didn't feel in the mood for us!"

Pleasantly tired, they mounted to the Fourth

Form quarters, dawdling down a corridor that had a good many other girls standing about in chatting groups. Although Betty and Co. were such inseparables, they were by no means an exclusive "set." With one exception, they all stopped for a word here and a word there.

The single exception was Naomer, both hungry and thirsty after an evening of violent exercise. Ultimately, her chums sauntered over the Study 12 scene, to find her sitting in the best armchair, partaking of cake and lemonade.

"Monday gone," Polly commented rejoicingly. "Always glad when Monday is over!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove!" sighed Paula, casting covetous eyes upon the armchair that Naomer occupied. "And haow I would like to sit down!"

"Zere is plenty of room," said Naomer, indicating the floor. "As for me—" And she was sitting back, more comfortable than ever, when Polly made a rush and tilted the armchair, crying:

"As for you—"

"Hi, look out! I shall be on ze floor—"

"Why not?" asked Polly sweetly, at the same time capsizing the dusky one out of the chair. "Plenty of room!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tess, never tired of studying the effects of earth, sea, and sky, from an artistic point of view, drifted to the window.

"Quite misty over the sea to-night. That's because it's been such a fine day."

"And the jolly old monster is gambolling about somewhere out at sea, and we can't spot him," Helen playfully lamented. "I say, girls, joking apart, I wonder—"

Now, however, Polly held up a hand solemnly. "That subject, Helen, in this study—barred! I don't want to hear another word about the Morcove monster."

"Bekas—boo, cowardly! Afraid you will dream about it—boo!"

"Kid!" And the madcap brandished the ebony ruler. "Do you see this?"

"That's wight, Polly deah; keep her in order, yes, wather," Paula languidly applauded as she subsided into the armchair. "The geal is getting far too—Yeowp, ow! Healp!"

"Bekas, you be careful, Paula, what you say about me," Naomer was shrilling, in explanation of a sudden onslaught, when Pam gave the startling warning:

"Sh, look out all—here's Miss Somerfield!"

"What!"

"Howwows—"

"Bekas—"

"Sh!"

And there was silence! In a flash, Study 12 was on its best behaviour. The unruly imp, a moment since, and the little innocent that she was now! Madcap Polly—so demure, angelic even!

Overdone, all of it? Perhaps it was, and perhaps that was why Miss Somerfield had such a smile for them all as she appeared in the doorway. But it was only a fleeting smile; then she gravely inquired:

"You girls—were you out with Ethel Courtway this evening? I have been told that you went off with her, after tea."

"Yes, Miss Somerfield, we did go with her then," Betty answered. "Across to the bungalow. But we didn't stay with her."

The headmistress nodded.

"Then you do not know anything about her having to go to London at a moment's notice?"

"To—London?" gasped the girls. "Gone to London?"

"I have just received a message from Cliff Edge bungalow—the manservant came across with it. It appears that Ethel Courtway's aunt returned to Town late this afternoon on urgent business, and now Ethel herself has had to go off to London."

"Good gracious!"

"The man Dawker brought Mr. Courtway's apologies for any inconvenience I may be caused, and, of course, it is going to be awkward—very. But I am not concerned about that, at present. I do wonder," Miss Somerfield continued distressfully, "what it all means! She could have had no idea, earlier in the day, that there would be anything like this."

"I'm sure she was not expecting it, even when we last spoke with her," Betty rejoined.

"I have rung up the hotel," the headmistress added. "No one there knows why Mrs. Courtway has suddenly gone to London. But she did leave word that she expected to be back by Wednesday at the latest. I can think of reasons why she might have to go up to Town unexpectedly, and why her niece should be sent to join her there. But I wish I knew precisely!"

"She didn't come back for any things to take with her," Pam commented softly.

"There would be no time, if she were to catch the train, I presume. Besides, her home is in London, so she would be all right in that respect."

Miss Somerfield's purpose, in looking in at Study 12, had now been satisfied. She knew that the girls could not enlighten her. So she turned to go—then paused.

"The man Dawker also had some message about a pocket-book belonging to his master. Ethel Courtway appears to have had it in her possession—"

"Oh, yes, Miss Somerfield; we found the book, washed up on the shore, and we gave it to her."

"I see. Well, I looked for it in her room, but I could not find it. Dawker seemed to think it might be there; but he had to go away without it."

It was the last thing Miss Somerfield had to say. Next moment she was gone, and in the study there reigned an astounded silence.

"Just fancy!" Polly broke out at last. "Ethel gone off to London like that!"

"Yes, bai Jove; wemawkable!"

"Something to do with what we have been noticing, I expect," muttered Betty. "There's an upset."

"I say," exclaimed Helen, "do you think her uncle and aunt have quarrelled, and that's why the aunt suddenly went off to London?"

"And Ethel has gone after her, to try and make peace?" Madge carried on the theory, feelingly. "It may be so."

"But Ethel's aunt has talked of being back by Wednesday! Oh, it's no good our making guesses," Betty sighed. "Now I wish that we had knocked off prep this evening. We shan't have Ethel to-morrow. It will be Miss Massingham, of the Fifth—and we know what she is!"

"Dweadful!" groaned Paula. "Ah, deah, anothah catastwophe, just when Form prospects were so wosy!"

But the Form, next day, did not come off so badly, after all, as the result of the absence of Ethel Courtway.

Although vinegary, Miss Massingham, as had been expected, took charge, she gave but slight attention to the Fourth Form.

She made only fugitive visits to the Fourth

Form class-room, now to start the girls on some lesson that would keep them quietly occupied, and now, again, to see that the lesson had been properly done.

Betty, as captain, was left to keep order, with strict injunctions to note down the names of girls who were unruly. Behaviour, Miss Massingham must have been compelled to think, was wonderful. For not a name had been reported by the end of the day!

On the contrary, there was Naomer's gleeful comment, in Study 12, at tea-time, what a "gorjus" time they had all had in class!

"Bekas, just see what I had time to do!" One of Naomer's exercise books, brought away from afternoon class, came open, and out came a folded sheet of drawing-paper.

The chums, gathering to look, beheld one of those works of art which Naomer occasionally

"Betty?"

It was Etta Hargrove.

"Hallo, Etta! Come in—stay to tea, won't you?"

"Oh, I can't, thanks all the same. I say," Etta went to the point quickly, "any news as to whether Ethel will be back to-day?"

"None that we've heard!"

"Early last evening, girls, Ethel stopped me and Biddy when we were going into Barncombe. She asked one of us to take this package"—displaying it—"and put it in her table drawer when we got back to school. I took charge of it, but when I got back I found Ethel's room locked up and the key taken away."

"That would be Miss Somerfield, I dare say," Betty shrewdly interjected. "She did go to Ethel's room to look for something, we know. She may have considered it wise to lock the door and



Miss Somerfield's anxiety was very evident. "I believe you girls were out with Ethel Courtway this afternoon? Do you know anything about her having to go to London, at a moment's notice?"

perpetrated, by way of a change from literary activities.

"Howwows!"

"You goop, Naomer—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, what is zere to laugh it!" protested the proud artist, holding up her pencil drawing at arm's length. "I call zat a good picture of ze Morcove morinster—gorjus!"

"Lifelike!" chuckled Helen.

"I like the rough sea," Tess said tersely. "Oh, tear it up, kid!"

"Not ze bit of eet! Bekas, I mean to pin him up on ze study wall!"

"In that case—ruler!" said Polly, catching up the ever-handly chastener. "Do you see this, kid? And haven't I said—not another reference to the monster in this study!"

At this crisis, threatening a fresh breach of the peace, someone turned up at the doorway, with an inquiring:

take the key, after routing about in there herself."

"Oh, was that it! Well, I have had the package in my study ever since," Etta stated. "I don't know what's in it; she didn't say. Nothing valuable, I imagine. But in case she is not back to-night—will you take charge of it, Betty?"

"I will, Etta—but why?"

"Oh, you're captain! And you might be seeing her about other matters, as soon as she does come in. So I wouldn't have to bother her."

Betty took the brown-paper package.

"Right-ho, Etta!" And next second it was being put away in Betty's table-drawer.

"It's quite true, I shall want to see her as soon as she gets back. But I fancy it will be Wednesday now, for her return—with her aunt."

"It's odd, though, that nobody's heard from Ethel. You would have thought she would have wired."

"She'll wire, when she knows the train she is

coming by, to-morrow," Pam predicted. "Do stay for tea, Etta!"

"Yes, bekas, speshul consignerment of dough-nuts!"

"Very tempting," laughed Etta. "But I simply can't!"

"To-morrow, Wednesday—the day for the great match," Polly gaily reminded them all, whilst the tea things were rushed out. "And if Ethel isn't back in time for that—well!"

"Sweendle!"

"It will be a shame," one of the others agreed. "But most likely she will come down on the morning train. That gets you to Morcove by a little after three."

"Just in time to see us win!"

"Yes, wather! Bai Jove," chortled Paula, "we'll make those Gwangemoor fellows twemble in their shoes!"

"If you ask me," said the captain; "we may as well put in some more pracer, this evening!"

"Hear-r-r, hear-r-r-r!" cried Polly. "For if they should happen to beat us, then I know someone who will not be fit to speak to for the rest of term!"

Whereat more light laughter mingled with all the jingling of spoons into saucers, as the chums prepared their tea.

Another sunshiny evening favoured activities on the games-field. But the practice-teams very wisely did not stay out until nightfall. For one thing, they knew the risk of over-training. Also, "prep," this evening, had to be tackled properly.

So, soon after sunset, studies began to fill up. A hazy nightfall was taken to mean another fine day to-morrow. When ever you could see Gull Island clearly, in the evening, from the school-house windows, it was reckoned to be a bad sign!

"And there's no seeing the island to-night!" Betty rejoicingly remarked, after going to the window to let down the blind. It was lighting up time.

"Ner yet the monster——"

"Helen!" stormed Polly, "will you kindly go away to your own study now, and do some work!"

"You can come back later, all of you," laughed Betty, to those who did not rightly belong to study 12. "And talk about the monster then as much as you like!"

"Can they!" the madcap said grimly. "Not in my presence!"

"We haven't seen him to-day, have we?" Helen lingered to remark, in pretended amazement.

"Gosh!" Polly exploded. "Ru-ler!"

This inimitical cry sufficed, and the drifting away of mirthful chums enabled the rightful tenants of the Study to sit down to "prep."

For half an hour there was silence, except for the scratching of pens and the usual weary sighings over brain-racking bits of work. Then Polly came out with a cool request:

"Kid, just go down to the class-room for me, and fetch my French Without Tears, will you?"

"What ze diggings! Afraid, are you, to go down to ze class-room bekas eet will be dark-boo!"

"I don't want any impudence!" said Polly, toying with the ruler. "Go!"

"All right zen, I will go; just to show you I am not afraid, eef you are!"

The mock tyrannical command having been complied with in this spirit, it was like Polly, as soon as Naomer had scampered away, to decide to go downstairs herself, after all.

Nor was it to be doubted that Polly would be first to reach the class-room below. She used the secondary staircase, supposed to be reserved for

the staff, whilst Naomer went down by the main stairs.

The madcap's idea was, in fact, to hide in the class-room, in time to treat Naomer to a searing "Wow!" when that self-styled fearless one turned up.

But now fate mingled drama with the comedy of school life.

From the foot of the side stairs Polly nipped quickly and quietly to the class-room. She was only a few moments ahead of Naomer, who could be heard scurrying down the bottom flight of the main staircase.

So the madcap hastily turned the knob of the class-room door, to dart inside—and then she stood stock still, agape with surprise, her heart leaping.

A man—getting in at one of the windows!

That was what she saw, and she would have cried out in alarm, but the shock of the surprise had left her dumbstruck.

The half-crouching figure, mounted upon a sill, was blackly silhouetted against early moonlight. The room being in darkness, Polly saw him at least a second or so before he, peering in, beheld her, over by the doorway.

There was even time for Naomer to come running up and to be taken with the first surprise of finding Polly here; then the dusky one had a second surprise—she also saw the man, just as he jumped away from the window-sill.

"What ze diggings!" Naomer fairly shrieked. "Ooo, a burgilliar!"

"A man," Polly gasped. "And now he's gone! Quick, come and see!"

And, both girls flashed across the dark class-room, to peer out into the moonlit night.

A Great Day Comes

"HE'S gone!"

Some lights came on, in the class-room, and Polly and Naomer faced round.

"Anything the matter, you two girls?"

"Oh, is—is it you, Miss Somerfield!"

After devoting their eyes to the night-enshrouded scene outside, Polly and Naomer were feeling rather dazzled. But they at least recognised the headmistress' voice.

"There was a man, getting in at the window, Miss Somerfield!"

"What!"

"Yes, bekas, I saw him, too; a big man—enormous!"

"Climbing in at that window?" the headmistress said astoundedly. "What sort of man?"

"Oh, I could never describe him, worse luck," Polly said ruefully. "It was all over in a moment. He took fright when he saw me——"

"No, bekas, eet was when he saw me!" Naomer corrected.

"He has made off, at any rate?" Miss Somerfield resumed. "Some tramp or other, I suppose. I can hardly believe a professional burglar would be entering the schoolhouse at such a time as this. And yet—I will send word to the gardeners, to have the grounds searched."

"Ooo, yes, I would," Naomer approved this decision, her eyes still bulging after the recent alarm. "Bekas, you never know!"

"What were you two girls doing here in the dark, anyhow?"

"Only came down for a French primer, Miss Somerfield."

"Get it, Polly, and then both of you—return upstairs."

They did so, the madcap making great capital out of Naomer's agitated state.

"Who's the cowardy now, kid?"

"You are! Bekas, you were so frightened you couldn't spik!"

"Rabbits! You yelled like anything!"

"Ooo, I didn't!"

"Who is speaking the truth, you or I?"

"Neither of us!"

Somehow, even this compromising answer failed to satisfy Polly. She "went" for Naomer, half-way up a flight, and the result was a little affair of a wrestling match, resulting in their both rolling together down to the landing below.

"And now I shan't be able to play hockey to-morrow!" the madcap grimly declared, starting to hobble after she had picked herself up.

But that was only more of her make-believe. The consequences of the scrimmage were as insignificant as were the results of the search for the Man at the Window.

Before an hour was out, Morcove School, that had been able to get over wild scares about sea monsters in the offing, found it very easy to get over a scare connected with a mere tramp.

Official reassurance had been given; it could only have been a tramp. As for the Fourth Form, it soon included a number of girls who were inclined to ask: Had there been a man of any kind, at all? Or had Polly and Naomer imagined him, just as they had been the two girls to imagine—the Morcove monster?

So, in the dormitory that night, the teasing and twitting went on with a persistence that drove Polly frantic.

With great gravity she was finally asked—did she think it could have been, not a man trying to get in at the window, but the monster itself!

It became a thing to keep Polly awake after lights out; that she would have to put up with more teasing to-morrow—when the boys would be over from Grangemoor. She had visions of her brother Jack, that prince of fun-lovers, "stunting" the whole thing as soon as he heard about it.

Quite likely, some of the girls would get hold of him in advance and prime him with information about her weakness for "seeing things."

They did! There were roguish spirits who even supplied Jack with a mammoth reporter's notebook, on his arrival with the rest of the team, at half-past two on the Wednesday afternoon.

He took the cue, subsequently introducing himself to his own sister Polly as "a representative of the 'Morcove Times and Grangemoor Independent.'"

"And now, Miss Linton, if you could just give me—"

"I shall give you," Polly said, "a thick ear, if there is any more of it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" pealed the surrounding crowd.

"At least," Jack pleaded pathetically, "you will check me in the details I have managed to glean for my enterprising Editor—how I hate him! Is it your theory, Miss Linton, that the so-called pleiosaurus, floating about in the sea, is really only a stray Channel swimmer, left over from last summer? Having come out of the water at last, he naturally ran to Morcove School, as being the nearest place for telephoning—Wow!"

Jack, after dodging the box on the ears that Polly had pretended to have for him, straightened up to find Naomer before him. Then he excitedly held the reporter's notebook ready for writing.

"Ah, your name, please!"

"Her Majesty ze Queen Naomer of Nakara!"

"I'm sorry; we are rather short of type at the

printing works. Would you mind if I boil it down to plain Naomer?"

"What ze diggings, you are going to print it 'Plain Naomer'!"

"Nunno! Far be it from me," said Jack offensively, "to convey such a misleading impression of one so—so chic, so petite!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now, your Majesty, to take the monster first—"

Half the crowd staggered about, in convulsions of laughter.

"When did you last see the monster?" Jack gravely asked, notebook in hand.

"I didn't see him last," shrilled Naomer. "I saw him first! Zat is what I have always said—before anybody else!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, come along; come along!" Betty now interposed, as soon as she could stop laughing, "and get this match played! Ethel Courtway has not got back from London, but surely she's on the next train?"

There had been no telegram, and it was understood that the headmistress felt a little bit annoyed with the Form's acting mistress.

Considering that Ethel Courtway had gone off without sending any message herself, leaving her uncle to make all explanations—and even he had only sent a verbal message to the school, by Dawker—there should have been a few lines from London.

But it was generally taken for granted that this afternoon would see Ethel back at the school.

Play started, and from the very first moment of the bully-off it was seen that this was going to be the match of the season.

Betty's team, in fine fettle, had opponents who, however chivalrous their mode of waging war might be, were yet determined to win!

It could not have been otherwise, for although Grangemoor had respect for its opponents, as being girls, at the same time, what a humiliation defeat at the hands of those girls would mean.

Betty herself had done all she could to ensure victory for her side. Never had she taken greater pains about the planning of her field. Whether to play Polly in goal or as one of the forwards had been a thorny question. But Polly had taken charge of the home goal, and Etta Hargrove was inside-right this afternoon.

A bustling, clean game, with never a cry of "sticks!" Ethel Courtway should have been here to see. So the many onlookers were soon remarking. It would have been a game to delight her eyes. Penalties were few.

Nor did the repeated saving of both goals from brilliant assaults rob the match of interest. The fact that neither side had scored, at half-time, only made the issue all the more exciting to players and onlookers alike.

Just after the start of the second half, with a bully-off that was exhibition stuff, the Morcove goal was in great danger. Jack Linton was in the striking circle, and the crowd thought, "Now!" and there were involuntary yells of suspense.

But Polly was all there. She "saved" in grand fashion, and the crowd breathed freely again. "Not yet!"

Then, far from tiring or weakening, both sides seemed to call up reserve stores of energy and dash. No mistake, one side or the other had got to win this afternoon. No more ties! Grangemoor, like Morcove, was out for a decider!

And then, suddenly, when the spirited game was at its liveliest, with still not a goal to either

side's credit, there came a dramatic interruption—a sensational one.

It was realised that Miss Somerfield was suddenly on the field of play, crying:

"Stop—stop!"

Why? Such a thing had never been known before.

Then the astounded players, heaving for breath as they came to a standstill, saw that the headmistress had a lady with her who had no official connection with the school.

"Why, it's Ethel's aunt!" Polly was the first to gasp, although many of her chums were just as quick to recognise the headmistress's companion.

"Then where is Ethel?" panted Betty. "Hasn't she come down from London with her aunt?"

"I am awfully sorry to interrupt the game like this," Miss Somerfield pleaded agitatedly as the players of both sides swarmed towards her and Mrs. Courtway. "But a very terrible discovery has come about."

Oh? What was coming now, then?

"Ethel Courtway did not go to London the other evening!"

"What!"

"Here is Ethel's aunt," the headmistress spoke on distressfully. "She will tell you; she has not seen anything of Ethel in London, and she is sure that Ethel has not been up to town!"

"Goodness!"

"Bekas—"

"There is something wrong; some terrible happening behind all this," Ethel Courtway's aunt now said, with an agitation that out-did Miss Somerfield's. "If Ethel had followed me to London, she would have joined me there. My house in town is her home whilst her people are abroad. Besides, she would never have left either me or Miss Somerfield in ignorance of her movements."

"I have relied on the message I had from her own uncle," Miss Somerfield quickly remarked. "I had no idea that he—he has been acting strangely, as Mrs. Courtway now tells me has been the case. I had not the slightest reason to suppose that unreliable information—"

"Oh, no, Miss Somerfield; not the slightest blame attaches to you," Aunt Janet cried. "I say it to my sorrow; it is all due to my husband's strange state of mind at present. I must now go to the bungalow and—insist upon knowing where my niece is! I came straight from the train to the school, wanting to see Ethel first. Naturally, I expected to find her here. And I am told that she has been gone from Morcove since the evening before last!"

"Yes! Betty," said Miss Somerfield, "you and some of your chums were with Ethel Courtway when she went across to the bungalow that evening. I think it highly necessary that you should accompany Mrs. Courtway now. No time must be lost, and you can answer any questions on the way."

"Right—ho!"

"Take with you, Betty, any friends whom you think ought to go with you. The rest must please stay in bounds," the headmistress addressed the great crowd. "I make that an order, understand. We don't know what has happened to Ethel Courtway, and it is all very disquieting."

"Such a shame," Aunt Janet exclaimed grievously, "to have the match stopped like this. But really—"

"It's quite all right," Betty said, promptly

handing her hockey stick to a girl who would not be coming with her. "We couldn't have gone on, knowing this! We'll get away."

"Do anything, girls, to help Mrs. Courtway in her terrible anxiety," the headmistress added earnestly. "It is an anxiety that we share to the full. And some of these boys might go, too—Jack Linton, and you Dave Cardew, as your sisters are going."

"Thanks!"

But, in the excitement of the moment, a couple more of the Grangemoor boys easily got themselves enlisted in the party. Jimmy Cherrol and Bobby Blot reckoned themselves entitled to go, anyhow—for were they not inseparable from Jack and Dave? Not to mention that Pam Willoughby, anyhow, seemed to think that Jimmy should come, whilst Naomer had eagerly whispered young Blot:

"Queek, Bobby; you, too!"

To Aunt Janet, of course, the personnel of the escort was a matter of small concern. During the hasty walk to the bungalow she talked with Betty and those others who had been out with Ethel that fateful evening; the rest were simply so many boys and girls whose presence was at least heartening.

At the finish of the short and hasty walk, they all went up to the front door of the cliff-top dwelling. There was no need to ring; Dawker had seen them coming, and he opened the porch door as soon as they got to it.

"Good afternoon, ma'am!" he bowed very obsequiously to Aunt Janet, and this time he seemed quite ready to admit her. "The master is not in—"

"He isn't? Then I don't know that I want to come in," Aunt Janet said tensely. "Dawker, what do you know about my niece?"

"Miss Ethel, ma'am? Only that she has been to London," he answered blandly. "It would be the evening before last that I—"

"My niece did not go to London, Dawker! I am certain of that, much as I may be in doubt about all else! Now, Dawker, I must have no more nonsense. You owe as much loyalty to me as to your master."

"But, madam—"

"Can you say to your certain knowledge that my niece DID go to London that evening?"

"Oh, no, ma'am! I was only told, by the master, to convey that message to the headmistress at the school."

"You have seen nothing of Miss Ethel since then?"

"Seen her, ma'am? Oh, no, ma'am, or I would have been puzzled. But I see you are very upset. Will you come in, and—"

"No; there are too many of us, and besides, I have to do something—at once! My niece is missing!"

"Good heavens!" he said, with an appearance of shocked surprise that deceived them all. "You don't say so!"

"Dawker, you must be perfectly aware, of late your master has been behaving most strangely. You have never seen us on any terms but those of affection, until the last week or so—since your master came down to Morcove and I followed, to join him here. His conduct these last few days has been both a grief and an anxiety to me."

"It is so, ma'am," Dawker sadly assented. "It has not been my place to say so, but I have thought the master's behaviour most—most strange, inexplicable! I could only—er—assume that it was due to research work of a most secret kind. I can assure you, ma'am, that he has

seemed—er—very strange to that man who helps him with the motor-boat."

"Where is your master at this moment, Dawker?"

"I—I was supposed not to tell anyone, ma'am, not even you," was the hesitant answer. "But this about Miss Ethel decides me; I must give you all the help I can."

"Well, then?"

"The master, I understand, is on Gull Island."

"Gull Island!" echoed Aunt Janet blankly. "Why What's he doing there?"

"I do not know," Dawker declared regretfully. "I have wondered whether the master has become interested in this talk of a sea monster that is supposed to have been seen off this shore; but he spoke of going to Gull Island this morning, and of not returning until tomorrow."

"And has he, Dawker, said nothing about his niece?"

"Nothing, ma'am—not one word! Good gracious!" Dawker cried out, as if a sensational idea had flashed upon him. "I wonder! I wonder if that's where Miss Ethel is?"

"You mean—on Gull Island? But why—why?"

Aunt Janet's bewildered cry left Dawker, as the boys and girls noticed, very embarrassed. He coughed apologetically.

"The master having been so strange in his ways, ma'am; that's all I can say. Except that he did have the boat out, alone, the other evening—"

"The evening his niece was supposed to be on her way to London?"

"Yes, ma'am! But pray keep calm, ma'am! I believe I can put you in the way to finding out at once. The motor-boat is hauled up in the cave, down on the shore. The man Jake is there. Get him to run you to Gull Island, straight away!" Dawker urged. "At any rate, I am sure the master is there. Jake will tell you, he took him across in the boat, this morning, landed him, and then returned. Jake's a good chap—"

"Take me to him, Dawker, at once! We will go down, all of us," Aunt Janet said to the juniors, "at once!"

"And you'll let us go in the boat with you?" Betty asked eagerly.

"If there is room—yes."

"Oh, there will be room," Dawker said, starting out, bareheaded, to accompany them down to the shore. "Plenty!"

Then the chums nudged one another excitedly. Eyes were sparkling. A run in that wonderful



With exaggerated importance Jack flourished a pencil. "When, Miss—er—Naomer, did you last see the monster?"

motor-boat, out to Gull Island! What an unexpected adventure; what a thrill!

But as to why they were off to Gull Island in hope of finding missing Ethel Courtway—that was the very latest phase in an altogether baffling mystery.

Moreover, Beware!

AT the foot of the rugged path leading down to the seashore, Dawker remarked:

"The gates to the cave are open, so Jake is there. If you will allow me, I will hurry on and explain why we need his help."

"Do, please!"

There would have been scant chance of Dawker's getting to the cave in advance of the juniors, but Aunt Janet signed to them that she wished to say something when he was not present, and this deterred them in their eager haste.

"I had begun to have my doubts about Dawker—I don't know why, for he has been in my husband's service many years. But now I am quite satisfied; he has been placed in a very awkward position."

They were only half-way to the cave when they saw Dawker go in. At most, he had only a half minute with the boatman, before the juniors and Mrs. Courtway reached the cave-mouth; but in that little while much must have been said in

few words. Burly Jake, busy about the hauled-up motor-boat, gave them all a look that seemed to be full of rugged sympathy.

Confirming this impression, there was his gruff remark, after he and Dawker had spoken together softly for another minute.

"Sorry it's like this, mum! Anything I can do, I will. About your niece I knows nothing; but Mr. Courtway's on the island right enough. I left him there, afore noon. So you want me to run you to Gull Island?"

"Please!"

"I say, we chaps can lend a hand to run the boat down to the water?" Jack suggested cheerily.

"Many hands—eh, Jake?"

"Why, thankee; 't would be a help."

The girls helped as well. Even when the big boat had come off the greased planks and was grinding in the shingly slope, the boys and girls kept her going so easily that Jake was left free to stand talking with Dawker.

Then, the boat being at the water's edge, both men came down to it. Dawker stood clear of wet and sand, voicing last respectful remarks to Aunt Janet. He would go back to the bungalow, as soon as they were off, and prepare everything against the master's return; and he did so hope that the whole trouble would be over in an hour or two.

As for Jake, with a bluff capability, he said that if Mrs. Courtway and the "young ladies" would get aboard, he'd do the rest, but perhaps the "young gen'l'men" wouldn't mind not climbing aboard until she was just upon afloat?

Another minute and it was all done, without a hitch. The boys also were on board, and Jake, in his great sea boots, had waded knee-deep whilst giving a final thrust that left the boat rocking in the shallows. Now he swung himself aboard, huddled down in the tiny cockpit, and started up the engine.

The propeller raced in the rippling shallows

and instantly the roomy craft responded to the urge. She shot away from the shore.

Dawker, his black-garbed, respectable figure creating an odd effect in such romantic surroundings, waved a last polite "Good-bye!" and Aunt Janet called out to him gratefully:

"Thank you, Dawker! And if you can manage to let them know at the school—will you do that?"

"I will, ma'am, certainly!"

As if to lose no time about it, he at once turned away and ran for the zig-zag, to make a hurried ascent. But Dawker, the respectable and respectful, was grinning craftily to himself now.

Breathless though he was after his scrambling rush up the rock steps, he ran to the bungalow, closing the outer door quickly after entering.

Then he panted words of a reassuring and inviting nature that caused another man to come stumbling up some cellar steps and so out into the kitchen passage.

This was the man who had posed as Ethel's Uncle Peter. He was obviously in a state of nerves, and remained so in spite of Dawker's reassuring grin.

"Wasn't that the thing to do?" Dawker exulted in his cunning. "Ship them all away to Gull Island!"

"But the game's up—"

"It isn't, man. Jake will make off in the boat and return to us, leaving them stranded on the island. That's all arranged. And remember, we only want until to-morrow!"

"Do we? That's talking as if it were certain we could get hold of the pocket-book to-night," frowned Dawker's confederate. "And it's somewhere in the schoolhouse; that huge building—"

"What a croaker; what a whiner you are," Dawker snarled scornfully. "Pity you ever had to come into the scheme, I say. We only took you on as you were a man whose looks resembled Courtway's—and even there you haven't been a success. But pull yourself together, anyhow."

"I've done all I could," protested the impersonator, with a lift and fall of his shoulders. "The truth is, Dawker—and you're bound to admit it—we've been beaten, by bringing the whole thing off so close to that school."

"Beaten! We're not beaten, I tell you! Here I've just contrived, by getting the woman and those kids out of the way, to gain the rest of to-day and the coming night. And that's all we want."

"We want that pocket-book, Dawker. With-out it we are done."

"We shall get the pocket-book," was the smiled prediction. "Or, rather, I shall get it—to-night!"

THE sun went off the water and a little chilly breeze came at the boat as it purred towards the island.

Judy Cardew, sitting close to her brother Dave on one of the packed seats, glanced up to the sky. "Clouding over," she said. "Is it going to matter to us?"

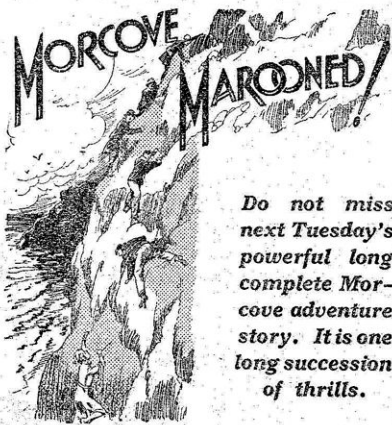
He shook his head.

"How can it? Wet day to-morrow perhaps; but we ought to be back in a couple of hours."

"Strange," Betty murmured, "about Ethel Courtway!"

"I can tell you of another strange thing," Polly broke out. "Only a few days ago I was wishing we could all get a trip to Gull Island. And now we're on the way, and I'm just wondering what we shall all discover—when we land!"

[THE END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]



Do not miss next Tuesday's powerful long complete Morcove adventure story. It is one long succession of thrills.

BY MARJORIE STANTON