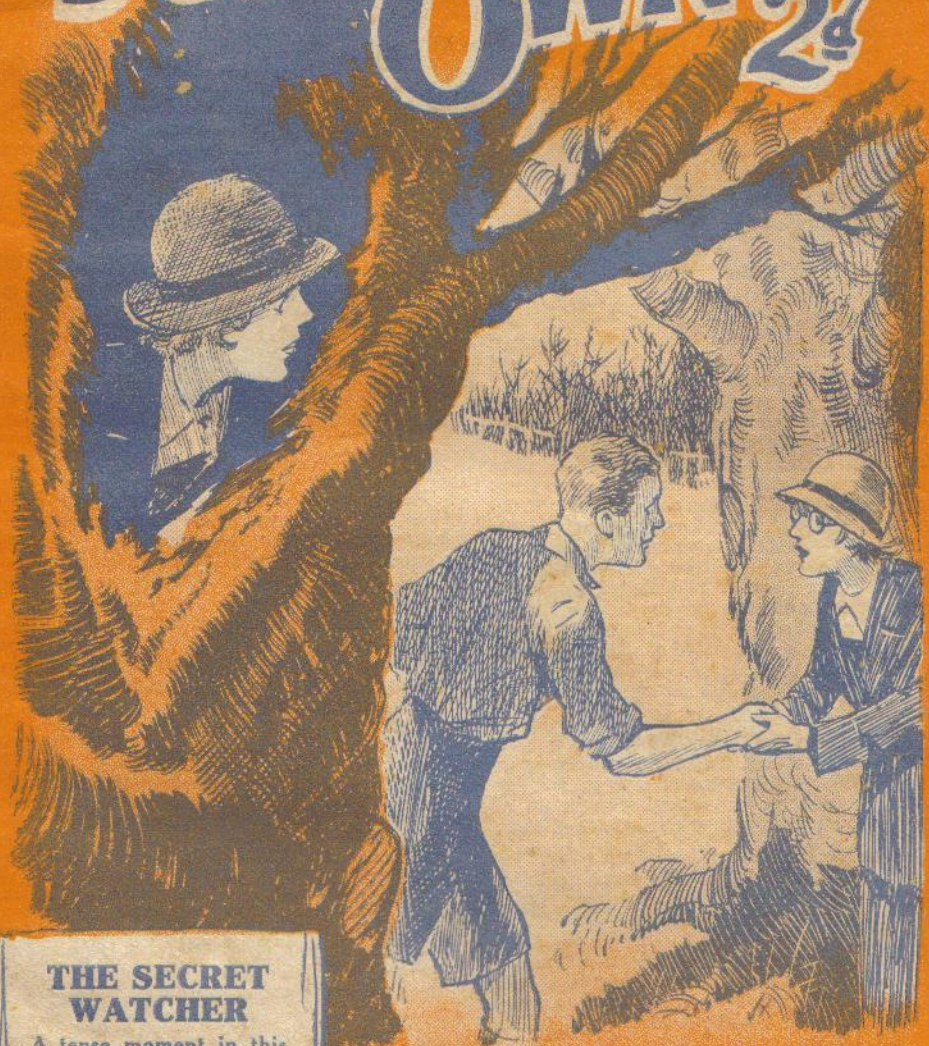


WONDERFUL NEWS OF FREE GIFTS INSIDE

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2d

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Week ending
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EVERY TUESDAY



THE SECRET WATCHER

A tense moment in this
week's dramatic long
complete Morcove story.

FOUR FINE STORIES IN THIS NUMBER

Thrilling Complete Story of Adventure at Morcove

At Morcove- In Disguise



BY MARJORIE STANTON

BACK at Morcove School once more, Pam Willoughby still has to continue her daring masquerade—still has to be Monica Gray to all her chums. But the situation takes a dramatic turn, and Pam is suddenly faced with the fact that at least three people know that she is—Pam!

CHAPTER I.
Back Again

THUMP!

"Open the door, please, somebody!"

"Oh, that's Polly! All right, Polly dear!"

And Betty Barton, one of several girls in Study 12 at Morcove School, darted to whip open the door.

The terrific thump just then must have been caused by madeap Polly Linton's lunging at the closed door with luggage in either hand.

"Whew!" she exaggerated her panting state, as she staggered in. "Well, Betty—back again! Hallo, Paula darling—something for you to mind!"

And one of the madeap's bits of luggage went flop upon the lap of Paula Creel, just for the sake of teasing that long-suffering but adored duffer.

"Owp! Naow, Polly deah, don't stawt—"

"What do you think I've come back for, then, if not to start—another term?" Polly cried blithely, whilst disposing of the rest of her luggage. "Yes, here I am—the Best Girl in the Form, back again, to set the good example! And oh, I do feel like work! I just long for to-morrow—first morning in class!"

"Do you?" came the saucy retort of that

dusky imp, Naomer Nakara. "Bekas, I don't!"

"You wouldn't," the madcap said, with her usual annihilating scorn for the imp. "You'd like life to be all hols and going out to tea, and eating choes in between whiles—we know! What have you got there?"

Polly added this whilst advancing to dip her fingers into what was, manifestly, a handsome box of assorted choes, the top layer considerably depleted.

"Hi, not so queek! Bekas, eef you don't like choes—"

"But I do," said Polly, helping herself liberally.

"And, anyway, it is my duty, as one of the Good Influences of this school, to prevent a kid like you from gorging. You haven't grown any thinner since I last saw you."

"I don't know that you have, either!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see!" Polly said grimly. "Starting the term by being cheeky, are you? I'll attend to you later! Well, Madge—Tess—Judy! Here we are again!"

Smiles and nods implied that that was so, whilst Polly, by a sudden grimace, indicated that the being back for another term was not such an unmixed blessing after all.

"Where did you leave your brother Jack, Polly?" asked Judy casually.

"I left Jack on the platform of the station where he had to change for Grangemoor, looking one big Wow! Unlike me," the madcap said virtuously, "Jack doesn't relish the idea of another term. But, as I say!—what's school for? I pause for a reply!"

"I got in more than an hour ago," Betty blithely remarked. "And girls have been rolling up ever since. Of course you are all glad to be back, really; but you want to be me, to know what it feels like—to be back again, after being away all last term! The old study—"

"And the Old Firm, yes," Polly nodded, popping another of Naomer's peeled chocolates into her mouth. "What about Helen Craig?"

"Oh, she's here; about somewhere—"

"Then we're all complete—except for Pam!"

"Except for Pam, yes," Polly was answered by several fellow members of the Study 12 "chum-mery." "And Pam isn't expected—worse luck!"

"Swee-dle, I call it! I wish I were Pam Willoughby," moaned Naomer, "getting extra weeks of holiday to be with people in ze North, instead of having to come back to work, work, work!"

"We shall miss Pam—"

"We shall!" several of them followed Madge Minden's earnest comment. "We shall hear from her, of course, but that isn't the same."

"I rather wonder that there wasn't a letter from Pam awaiting us," Betty exclaimed. "We don't know her address, and we shan't know it until we do hear from her. Hallo, Helen!"

For now Helen Craig was entering, with a "just arrived" expression. A burst of greetings was quickly followed by Polly's taking Naomer's chocolates and requesting Helen to help herself; which Helen did.

"And now," the madcap said, fending off the imp, "put them by for a day or two! I will take charge of them, child—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hi! Bekas, I want my chocs, and I jolly well mean to—"

"Naomer? Tempers? The idea!" said Polly, in her best mothering tone. "I say, though! What about that new girl?"

"Monica Gray? She isn't here yet," Betty promptly answered. "I've been on the look-out for her. Meantime, have you seen the new Form-mistress? I have!"

"So have I—and I!" cried several.

"Oh, what's she like?" clamoured Polly and Helen.

"Awfully nice!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! Pwomises to be a weal wipper" beamed Paula Creel, busy with pocket-comb and mirror as she reclined in the best armchair. "A Miss Merrick—"

"Young, pretty, and must be clever, for they say she has certificates galore, and even a diploma," Betty supplemented. "So everything looks all right for the new term in that direction, girls."

"Something to be thankful about, no mistake," came from Helen Craig fervently. "I'd like to see Miss Merrick."

"So would I," cried Polly. "And, anyway, I mustn't hang about like this. Naomer, my pet, if you like to take this larger bag of the two up to the dormitory, then you may have one more of your chocs!"

"Not ze bit of eet! Bekas—"

"Paula, then?" Polly invited that languid chum. "You'll be an angel, and help me?"

"Er—wually, Polly deah—"

"Oh, all right! The bag needn't go up for a bit, anyway. And so—"

And so Polly adroitly picked it up and slung it towards elegant Paula, with a careless:

"Coming over!"

"Yowch—ow!"

Polly scampered out of the study, and Betty ran out after her, to go with her up the corridor to the stairs. Half-way along the wide passage, on to which so many study doors opened, Polly jerked a thumb at one closed door.

"Are THEY back, Betty?"

"The Denver sisters? Yes, Fay and Edna are back."

"Um!"

"A pity, of course, but there it is," Betty quietly added. "I don't know how they will be, under a new Form-mistress—"

"Be the same, those two, under any mistress," was Polly's muttered belief. "We've got one of the best headmistresses in the world, in Miss Somerfield—and yet—"

There was no time for more. The huge school-house was in too lively a state for anything like connected talk. Polly had been checked in her remarks about Fay and Edna Denver by a sudden encounter with a batch of Form-mates, and this meant another exchange of greetings and a snatch of talk about how the hols had been spent.

Once again, the hurry-scurry mood of settling in decreed only the briefest exchange of friendly greetings; then Betty and Polly went down a flight of stairs—and met another lot of girls, coming up!

Altogether, it was a very halting descent the Study 12 pair made, to the ground floor, for if other girls were not coming up, then they were careering down, and in either case there had to be a stop for a word or two.

"You know, Polly dear, we are rather a fine lot!"

"Yes, I know that!" the madcap agreed, almost at the foot of the last flight with her best of chums.

"So friendly all round," Betty spoke on in extreme happiness. "Except for Fay and Edna and just one or two others—"

"And they don't count! Oh, but there SHE is!" Polly softly exclaimed, obtaining a first sight of the new Form-mistress. "And I like her, Betty—she looks a ripper!"

"You couldn't help but like her, I'm sure! Here, come and speak to her, Polly!"

Miss Merrick had evidently stationed herself in the front hall, so as to make herself known to last arrivals and establish a happy relationship with them at once.

There were not many girls, already in the school, whom she had missed seeing; but Polly was one. Now, however, Polly had the special honour, so to speak, of being introduced by Betty!

"Miss Merrick! Here is Polly Linton—"

"Oh, are you the Polly Linton I have heard so much about?" came most delightedly, along with an offered hand. "Almost as much as I have heard about Betty here—the Form captain!"

Betty laughed.

"Captain, Miss Merrick, if and when elected!"

But the new mistress shook her head, smiling.

"I know all about it, Betty. The election for captain, this time, will be a pure formality. You are back again, after last term's absence, and that is good enough!"

Polly, a smile inviting her to express an opinion, gave an explosive:

"I should hope so! Even if Pam Willoughby were going to be here, that wouldn't affect the captaincy going to Betty again. Pam was cap."

last term, but she always insisted that she only regarded herself as a stop-gap."

"Ah, yes—Pam Willoughby, and I have heard a lot about her, too," nodded the new Form-mistress. "From all accounts, a charming girl."

"Here's another car," Betty exclaimed, as setting-down sounds came from outside. "How I wish that could be the Swanlake car, with Pam—"

"Oh, Betty—look!" was Polly's interrupting shout. "The new girl!"

"Monica Gray!"

And both Betty and Polly were before Miss Merrick in getting to the front doorway, their voices uniting in the delighted cry:

"Monica! Here you are, then—at Morcove!"

CHAPTER 2.

The "New" Girl

MISS MERRICK'S could scarcely have been a favourable first impression of Monica Gray.

That girl was so very unattractive to look at! It was not simply that she lacked good looks. She was so ungraceful as to appear almost "slummocky." In an age when almost every schoolgirl has poise, Monica Gray was that rare exception—a girl who did not hold herself up, and whose step had no daintiness.

As she wore glasses, short-sightedness could, of course, account for a certain floundering in her movements, although there are now many girls wearing glasses who carry themselves with the nicest grace.

But Betty and Polly, like other members of "chummy," had become acquainted with Monica Gray during the winter holidays, and they were ready to vouch for her being a thorough good sort, anyhow!

"Monica Gray, I understand," said the new Form-mistress, after allowing the two Morcove girls a few moments for first words with this latest arrival. "How do you do, Monica!"

"Fine, thanks! Oh, but isn't this a fine school—grand! Such buildings—they took my breath away!"

"I share your delight, Monica—the special delight of one who is new to Morcove. For I also am new," smiled Miss Merrick. "This is to be my first term, too."

"As—as—"

"Our Form-mistress, yes, Monica! For you are to be in our Form, aren't you?" Betty gaily rattled on. "That was the last thing you said to us, up there in London at the hotel, before we girls parted from you and your aunty."

"Yes, so I understood—"

"Our Form, and the best Form in the whole school," Polly declared. "It always has been, anyway!"

"Then Monica will say, along with me," said Miss Merrick's light rejoinder; "the Form must not be any the worse for our coming upon the scene! Monica, so that you can be helped to feel quite at ease at once, you might keep with these two girls now. There is no immediate hurry about seeing matron."

"Then come along upstairs to the studies, Monica," cried Betty. "Oh, and Miss Merrick! What study is Monica to be in? Have you settled yet about that?"

"Why, no! I am coming round the studies, by-and-by. But perhaps, Betty, you can suggest—"

"I'm just thinking; Pam Willoughby's study!" was Betty's bright idea. "The one, that is, Pam shared with Helen Craig. Monica already knows Helen, who was with us up in Town last week. So, altogether—"

"Quite; it should answer splendidly, girls. You can, then, consider that settled, Monica."

The new girl gave a scholar's bow; but it was far from being a graceful one. "And I do wish," Polly was thinking, going upstairs with Betty and Monica, "she wouldn't screw her face up when she smiles. Does so spoil her!"

"But the new mistress is all right, isn't she?" Monica began to chatter away to her escort on the way up. "You must feel glad! I remember your all being so anxious as to what sort of a new mistress you might get, this term. I had a lovely journey. Did you? Aunty—you remember aunty, of course, at the hotel!—she was surprised



To the accompaniment of loud laughter, Naomer was deposited in the waste-paper basket. "The proper place for rubbish!" said Polly with mock grimness.

that I wasn't feeling nervous. But then, as I said to her, why should I be! I'd already got friends to meet, at the school; you girls!"

"That's the idea," Betty chummily responded. "If we get on as well with you, Monica, here at Morcove, as we did at the hotel in London—we shall be all right!"

"And you're to have Pam's study—only next door to Study 12; nice and handy!" Polly rejoiced.

"Pam? Let me see, that was the girl you told me about, up in Town—the one to whose house you all went for a sort of party, because she was going up North? I remember! Oh, though—"

And Monica Gray made a brief stop now that they were all three at the stairs end of the long corridor; she was so impressed!

"All these rooms along this passage—studies?"

"That's it!"

"Just fancy! It IS a school! And," Monica added with a dropped voice, "such nice girls, I can tell!"

She was seeing many who would be her Form-mates, for the corridor teemed with girls going in and out of studies or standing about in talk.

Nor did Betty and Polly omit to do a good deal of introducing whilst conducting Monica down the corridor. They and the rest of the "chummery" meant to have her as a chum; but that did not mean that they would wish to keep her to themselves.

Betty and Co. hated cliques. They would have scorned to be exclusive, and the more friends Monica obtained, and the sooner she obtained them, the happier they would be.

"Just take a peep in here, Monica," Betty suggested, stopping at the last door but one on the left-hand side of the passage. "How will this suit you?"

"Oh, fine—if Helen Craig will have me!"

"Well ask Helen," Polly chuckled. "She's in Study 12 now. They're all in there—the old crowd—excepting Pam!"

"The only one of us you haven't met before to-day," Betty chimed in. "As for those who are in here," as she now threw open the door of Study 12; "girls, here's Monica Gray!"

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove—"

"Bekas—hooray! And, queek, Monica, have ze choc!" yelled Naomer, mingling with others who were eager to take turns at some handshaking. "You don't look very very humpy, either, Monica, although you're like us—at school now, instead of at ze jolly old Monopole Hotel!"

"I'm sure I don't feel humpy—anything but," Monica Gray breezily declared. "How are you, girls! Been having a nice time since I last saw you?"

"Grand!"

"Yes, wather!"

"And you, Monica?" inquired Madge.

"Oh, I? I've been rather quiet, along with aunty."

"You won't be quiet now," Polly predicted mock-grimly. "By this time to-morrow we shall have got into our stride again. Oh, and by the way—as you are to be next door. If ever you hear a row like hens being chased, that will only mean I'm teaching Naomer to behave."

"I see! So this is Study 12!"

"You see it at a bad time," the madcap rattled on. "We usually have tea in here about this time—"

"And zat is ze time, Monica! Bekas—"

There came a noise like hens being chased up a hedge by a spaniel. In other words, Polly came down like an extinguisher upon Naomer, con-

sidering that "kid" disintitiled to talk so much; and when Polly hustled the dusky one aside, somehow Paula was in the way.

"But to-day everybody goes down to the school tables for tea," Betty blithely supplemented. "A sort of tradition, you know. Grand gather round on re-opening day."

"A nice idea, too!" Monica nodded. "Oh, I do love Morcove—already! If only I can do the work!"

"What ze diggings!" cackled Naomer. "You don't want to zink about that! Bekas, look at me—"

Monica, looking at Naomer, was just in time to see her again hustled aside by the madcap, with the same disastrous results to Paula as before.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Insuffewable!" Paula said with dudgeon, having to put herself to rights once more. "How-cvah, I twust that you, Betty—now that you are back, and are to be captain again—"

"Oh, that reminds me!" Polly shouted. "A Form meeting to-night—you'll have to attend that, Monica! It won't be anything of an agenda; just a formal business. Still, I expect we shall make it go with a bang. We usually do."

"And then Betty will be officially the captain once again," Judy Cardew commented ardently. "You can't hope to understand, Monica, being new, what that is going to mean to us. Last term, we were all upside down. This term, it will be like old times again. Just the same, except that we shan't have Pam amongst us."

"Monica must make up for Pam," said Betty. "You have begun well, Monica—by going into Pam's study!"

"I can see myself being like your Pam," the new girl laughed. "I shouldn't think two girls could be more different. Your Pam is good at music, and I haven't touched a piano for I wouldn't like to say how long! Pam, you've told me, plays for your side at hockey; and there, again, you'll soon find out what a poor player I am. But I shall hope to have some of the friendship that you gave Pam, all the same!"

"You'll have that, all right," several of them were saying in chorus, when they became aware of a parlourmaid at the threshold of the crowded study.

"If you please, is the new girl here?"

"Monica Gray? Yes, that's me!"

"The headmistress would like to see you, miss. If you'll come with me, I'll show you the way."

"Oh, thanks, right-ho! See you later, girls!"

"At tea—yes, Monica!"

All the way downstairs she was looking about her with a new girl's eager interest in strange surroundings. It was that favourite parlourmaid amongst the scholars—comely Ellen—who was Monica's conductress, and she was all good-natured gossip.

Sometimes, Ellen said, when a scholar was sent for it meant a rowing! But, of course, there was nothing for Monica to be afraid of now. It was customary for the headmistress to have a few words with a new girl, on arrival.

So, in the library-like room downstairs, the door of which was marked "PRIVATE," Monica was left to herself. A pleasant hurly-burly came to her from outside the room, due to the inevitable commotion of re-opening day. It did not surprise Monica that she was being kept waiting like this. She could imagine what a busy time it was for the headmistress.

But there was a big surprise for the girl when at last the door opened and—instead of Miss Somerfield—a finely-built, handsome gentleman

entered. It was a surprise, even though she recognised him instantly.

"Oh," she exclaimed, with the smile that screwed up her face, "it's Mr. Somerfield! The head-mistress' brother!"

"Well, young lady," he responded genially, closing the door behind him. "And how is Monica Gray feeling, now that she has got to Morcove?"

"Quite all right! But fancy you being here to-day! I thought you might look over some time, of course, Mr. Somerfield, as you told me you were going to stay at Swanlake—which isn't far from here. But to-day!"

"Things are not so good," he remarked in a very subdued voice; and he seemed to watch her closely, to see if she gave any nervous start.

But she gave no sign of alarm.

After a moment, Mr. Jack Somerfield voiced something that was like a code-word.

"BAJ," he said. "O-one-O."

And he added in an impressive whisper:

"You mustn't go out alone."

CHAPTER 3.

People from the East

A MILE from Morcove School, built close to the very edge of one of the beetling cliffs that towered above the rugged seashore, stood a snug-looking bungalow.

The man who had selected such a lonely, gale-ridden spot for his private residence had soon tired of being so often blown to bits by the winds that shrieked in from off the wide Atlantic. So "Cliff Edge," as the place was called, had declined into a "furnished bungalow—to rent for long or short period."

Sometimes girls were aware of the bungalow being in occupation by people seeking a change of air; at other times they would see it standing empty and neglected.

There were lights behind the low windows this evening—this, the first evening of Morcove's new term. Snug enough the place must have appeared to be, to anyone passing on the lonely road that ran by the bungalow. And snug it needed to be, if the present tenants were not to be always a-shiver.

For, they were people from the East.

In the lamp-lit sitting-room, where a big coal fire blazed upon the hearth, were a man and a woman, engaged in guarded talk.

If they could speak English, they preferred to speak in their own purring language now. And so, although some of their clothing was European, at this moment their Eastern origin was very much in evidence.

Not only were they conversing in their native language; but the man retained his brown turban, and the woman some of that raiment which age-old tradition decrees for a daughter of the East.

At a pause in the talk, the man rose and went to one of the heavily-curtained windows. He peered round the edge of a curtain, then came back to resume the conversation.

"No, I do not like your plan," was the English equivalent of what he said to the woman. "Too risky! If you should be discovered in that building, Azara—what would they not think!"

"But we must do something," the woman flashed. "We know the Ameer—what he is when things do not go well. In London—the last time he spoke with us; how he took you by the throat, Zahridan. Yet was it our fault that we had failed, up there in London?"

"Yea, the Ameer is, as you say, what he is,

Azara. All the more reason, then, why we must not make any mistake, any blunder, again. It is not what he might do to me now, Azara; but some day I would like to go back to my own country—"

"The country which he rules! And those who have displeased him, those who have failed—do we not know how they languish in his prisons?"

The man nodded sombrely.

"Truly, we must succeed, Azara, or we were better dead," he muttered. "But it is not now so easy as it once looked like being. Undoubtedly, the Sahib Willoughby received a warning, up there in London. Undoubtedly, steps were taken to trick us to what they were doing with the sahib's daughter."

It was the woman's turn to nod, as she sat at the lamplit table, her coal-black eyes seeming to hold each a spark of fire.

"Unwarned," she muttered, "that girl would have returned to the school to-day. Warned, they may have indeed sent her to be somewhere else. But have they done that, Zahridan—have they done so, after all? If they have, then we only waste our time down here."

"And so you would go across to the school, this night, and even enter the place, to spy," he rejoined, in an uneasy tone; "and I say it would be too risky, Azara. Should you be discovered—seen for a moment even—and should the girl be there, after all, then indeed they would be warned!"

"Am I, thy wife, a fool?" she exclaimed fiercely, rising to her feet to stamp passionately. "Was there any clumsiness of mine, in London?"

"Peace," he entreated. "Thou and I are no fools, Azara, else would the Ameer never have chosen us. But ye would do a rash thing—"

"How, then? What would ye do?"

"It is true," he murmured, "we shall soon be known to be living here. But there is nothing they can prove against us, concerning the Sahib Willoughby's daughter, at present. This, however, is a lawful country, Azara. If you were discovered in that schoolhouse, then the police—"

"Ah, the police!" she sneered. "There were police in London!"

"Now, harken! Our first task, Azara, is to find out if that girl has returned to the school to-day. If she is there—because they think they have tricked us into believing that she is somewhere else—we shall get her in the end. If she is not there, then we have to find out where she is."

The woman received this with an impatient nod, and took a few turns about the room, like a caked tigress.

"I," she suddenly exclaimed passionately, "could enter that house this night, and none would know! The scholars could be everywhere, and not one would see me! I, who know their language, could listen. Yea," she muttered on, standing still with a rapt expression, "I see myself listening, when they have gone to their bedrooms for the night. And so, Zahridan, if the sahib's daughter is there, I hear her spoken to. If not, then I hear her spoken of as one who is absent. What could be better, since that is the question on which all else turns for us? Is she there, or is she absent? And if she is absent her friends may know where she is."

"This would be better," he answered, coming round the table to resume his seat. "The same purpose achieved, by safer means. Yea, Azara, I see what must be done."

"This night?"

"Yea!" he answered. "This night we shall know—for certain!"

CHAPTER 4.

"Fire!"

IN a Morcove class-room that held more than a score of other girls, all in boisterous mood, madcap Polly Linton sent a hailing cry towards Monica Gray, just then entering.

"Monica—over here!"

She waved a "Coming!" response, and crossed the open floor in front of rows of desks where, in the morning, girls would be bending pretty heads over their work.

At present, those same girls were making all the row they could, in accordance with the tradition that that was how any Form meeting must commence.

Bang—thump! and a noise like somebody going whallop!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bekas—look at her!" yelled Naomer, directing a derisive finger to long suffering Paula, now picking herself up.

"Ooo, I wouldn't have hair looking like yours, Paula!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Insuffeable!" Paula's cry rose above all the hubbub, whilst she clawed disarranging hair out of her eyes. "I hev not retwanned to Morcove for anothah term of— Owch! Ow! Naomer—"

"Zen out of my way!"

"Ah, deah! I hope you wealise, Monica Gway," said the beloved duffer of the Form dolefully, "haow twying it is for any geal with bwains—"

"And more trying without zem, to go by you!" the imp saucily caught up Paula. "Cheer up, any old how; bekas—Betty for cap, hooray!"

"Hurrah, yes! Betty!" dimed a dozen of them joyously.

"Here's a place for you, Monica," Polly cried, now that the new girl had reached that part of the room. "Pam's desk, when she is here. But as she isn't—"

"Thanks!" laughed Monica Gray. "Pam's study upstairs, and now Pam's place in class! Rather funny!"

The fact that Betty and other members of the Study 12 chummery were all near neighbours caused Monica to retain a happy smile. Then she noticed two girls who were coming in, last of all, with very showing-off airs, and she waited to know who they were.

"Fay and Edna Denver," Betty answered. "Sisters. They don't really care a hang for the Form; but if they can make themselves objectionable—they will!"

"They're rather pretty."

"Oh, pretty enough—especially Fay," came from Polly. "But looks aren't everything."

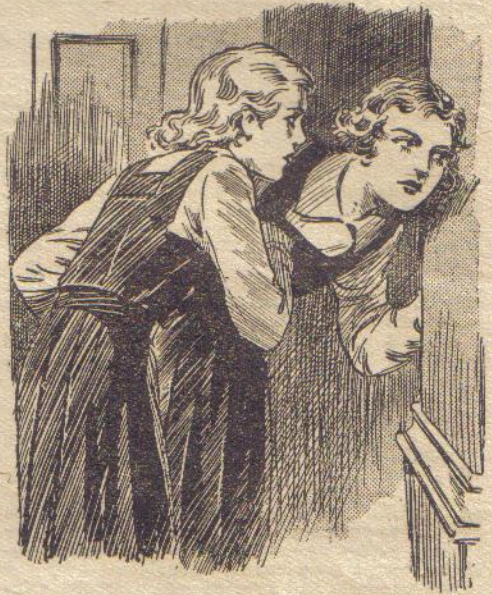
"It's to be hoped not," laughed Monica.

"Those sisters have a boy cousin at Grange-moor—a prefect," Helen Craig imparted. "You know; the school to which those boys go who were in our party in London. They detest Bertie Denver as much as we detest Fay and Edna."

"Nice boys they were," Monica mused aloud. "I liked your brother Jack, Polly, for being so full of fun. And I liked Judy's brother Dave for being so quiet and serious, as she is. Then there was Bobby Bloot—Tubby! I liked him because, although he is so fat and such a gourmandiser, he can think of others things besides eating. And I liked Jimmy Cherrol for being—well, just Jimmy!"

"It's all he lays claim to being," chuckled Betty. "He's so shy, you know."

"Oh, you should see him," Polly gurgled, "when Pam's about! It's a scream. Sort of fol-



Listening intently, Fay and Edna were suddenly electrified by words which the maid had spoken. "Fire, did you say—at Swan-lake?" Pam's home—in flames!

lowing to heel like a spaniel. But he's jolly nice, really—"

The bit of talk was interrupted by a burst of clapping. As it was time for the meeting to begin, a certain girl was now going out from the desks to take her place at a desk in front of the class, where Miss Merrick would sit during lessons.

"That's Etta Hargrove, you know," Madge whispered Monica. "You've spoken with her?"

"Oh, yes. A ripper! And she is in the Chair, is she?"

The clapping was continuing, so Monica joined in. Then Etta held up a hand for silence, and all the applause and chitter-chatter died away.

"No time to waste—first evening of term!" was Etta's brisk beginning. "So here goes."

Loud cheers!

"Oh, wait a bit, then you can cheer as much as you like," Etta laughed. "I have been asked to say just a few words; but I wish Pam Willoughby were here to say them for me. Pam was our cap last term, and I'm sure it would have been a great joy to her, if she had come back to Morcove to-day, to express the delight of us all at having Betty amongst us again."

"Hear, hear-r-r!" and more clapping.

"Bekas—"

"You," Polly growled at the very uppish imp, "sit down!"

"What ze diggings! I am going to spik—"

"You are going to be put out—thrown out," Polly amended the threat, "if you say one word!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Go on, Etta—go on!" came from the desks.

"But Pam has had to stay away from school, and so we're going to miss her speech. All I can



say is," Etta went on simply, "we are jolly glad to see Betty back again—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Safely recovered from the accident which kept her away last term—"

"Hear, hear-r-r! Betty!" shouted the meeting. "Hurrah!"

"And"—Etta raised her voice—"we want Betty as captain again—"

Tremendous cheering!

"Before another minute is out—for I can't see any need for a lot of talk—I hope Betty's re-election will have been carried unan. And that, I think, is all there is for me to say."

There was hardly time for a another burst of applause to start before Polly was on her feet. She could, had she wished, have granted the meeting time to demonstrate its esteem for her; but she vociferated at once:

"I beg to propose the re-election of Betty Barton as captain of the Form!"

"I second that! And I! And I!" Half a dozen girls were up from their seats.

"Bekas," yelled Naomer, starting to climb on to her seat, "everybody in ze room, listen to—"

"Boo! Sit DOWN!"

"What ze diggings, no! Bekas—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For Polly, realising that Naomer in her lofty position could easily be clasped about the legs and carried bodily away, proceeded to execute that drastic manoeuvre.

Amidst peals of laughter and much clapping, the imp, like a refractory infant in arms, was borne, kicking and struggling, towards the door by Polly.

Then Polly changed her mind about expelling her human burden from the room. As a more merciful measure, Polly simply dumped Naomer in the waste-paper basket.

How the meeting cheered then! But it proved that it could do even better than that, in the

way of wild hurraing, when at length Betty's re-election was carried—not unanimously, for Fay and Edna abstained from voting. But if that action of the odious sisters spoiled the unanimity of the decision, it did nothing to mar the enthusiasm.

Out in front stood Betty, after that, to comply with the insistent demand for a speech. Another girl, in a position so flattering to a sense of prestige, would have floundered on and on, to the effect that she was ever so grateful, etc, etc.

But Betty disposed of her thanks and much else personal to herself in a few remarks, and then talked about the Form as a whole, and the term just starting.

"A new term, girls, and let's make it the best ever!" was one concluding cry which roused the meeting to fresh applause. "I was speaking a moment ago about Pam being away, and how we are going to miss her. I don't think I ought to finish without reminding you: there is one girl with us this evening who will, I'm quite sure, do her best to make up for the loss of Pam. I mean—Monica Gray!"

"Oh!" laughed that girl, for now there was a storm of applause for her!

"Speech, Monica—speech!" the meeting gaily clamoured. "Spee-eech!"

"Yes, queek, go on!" yelled Naomer, who was back from the paste-paper basket. "Or shall I stand up and—"

"You do!" Polly glared inimically. "But go on, Monica—say something! You must!"

So Monica heaved to her feet with that ungainliness which had come to be associated with most of her movements. An inclination to giggle caused her to screw up her face, and then the meeting went into convulsions of laughter. Odd girl, this Monica Gray!

At last they were waiting for her to speak, most of them looking ready to go off into fresh screams of merriment.

"What amuses me," she tittered, "is Betty's sort of suggesting that I might turn out to be another Pam! But I'm only in fun—pretending that that was Betty's idea. I think I know what her idea really is. She hopes I may be relied upon to be as loyal to the Form as Pam or any of you. I can only say—I'll try to be."

They liked that. She sat down, receiving applause that was all the heartier because she had been so brief. Naomer rummaged out the chocolate box again, thrusting it at Monica for her to help herself as freely as she pleased.

"Bekas, jolly good, for a new girl! And now, see what I can do in ze way of making a gorjus speech!"

All formal business being at an end, the meeting was now in the mood to indulge the imp. So she mounted the desk again, to become a target instantly for balls of paper, the skin of at least one orange, and a blackboard sponge.

Nicely aimed, the latter—by Polly—but unfortunately, after the sponge had caught Naomer smack on the left ear, it ricocheted into the pretty face of Paula. Whereupon, the meeting started shrieks of merriment that were not to end for another ten minutes.

The Form would have considered it untraditional to disperse without at least ten minutes of fun and frolic. The only girls to walk about, nose-in-air over such sheer larking about, were Fay and Edna Denver.

Ironical cheers attended their stalking to the door; so Fay, the elder sister, pulled that door shut behind her with a vicious slam.

"Idiots," she stigmatised them all. "Oh, and

the fuss that's been made, too, over Betty's return. Pooh!"

"As for that new girl!" Edna shrugged. "Fancy her making a speech, as if she were a Somebody! What they can see in her—with a face like hers!"

"Awful. A come-down for Morcove, I call it, to start taking girls like her! See the way she wears her clothes; the way she walks." And Fay blummocked a few steps, in imitation.

"She's in Pam's study, I understand."

"That doesn't make her a Pam," Fay laughed witheringly. "We've no use for Pam, but there is something to be said for Pam's looks. As for Monica Gray—a face like the back of a bus!"

At that moment the telephone-bell started to ring—very urgently.

It was such an imperative *ring, ring ring!* from the school's main instrument. Fay and Edna became quite startled.

They had been going to drift off upstairs, to the study which they shared; but they stood transfixed in the front hall, wondering what it meant—this urgent: "Quickly, quickly!" which the bell implied.

Scholars were not supposed to answer the telephone; but one or the other of these two girls would have at once run to where the bell was ringing—in the phone-box at the back of the hall—only a parlourmaid now put in an appearance.

Ring, ring, ring! the bell kept it up, whilst the girl in cap-and-apron was getting to the instrument. And so Fay and Edna still stood mute and still, inquisitiveness making them forget that it might be no business of theirs.

"Hallo, hallo? Yes, Morcove School," they heard the parlourmaid responding, at the telephone. "Pardon? Oh, yes, he is here; he is dining with the headmistress. What?"

The watching sisters saw the listener at the telephone start violently.

"Will I tell Mr. Somerfield *what?* Fire, did you say—fire? Where? At Swanlake? I can't hear you very well! Swanlake—on fire? Oh!"

Fay and Edna turned to each other, utterly aghast.

A fire at Swanlake! At Swanlake, the country seat of the Willoughby family; that treasure-house, one of the show places of the West Country; Pam's birthplace!

"Right! I'll run and tell Mr. Somerfield at once. Hold on, will you?"

The maid, in great excitement, was rushing away to make known the appalling news in the right quarter. As the line had not yet been disconnected, Fay took upon herself to run to the instrument and obtain fuller information.

As for Edna, her officiousness found its outlet in a different direction. She flashed back to that classroom where so many girls were still congregated. It was like her to feel a sense of personal triumph in being "first with the news." She so loved being in the limelight.

Her hand sent the classroom door wide-round, and she strode in, shouting to make herself heard above all the laughter and commotion.

"I say! Perhaps some of you would like to know? Whilst you are playing about like this—Swanlake's on fire!"

"Wha-a-at!"

Although the news was so appalling, she almost smiled as she repeated it.

"Swanlake's, I tell you—on fire. Pam Willoughby's home—blazing!"

"Never!" gasped some of the girls, whilst others almost shrieked:

"Oh, how awful!"

"Dreadful, good gwacious!"

"Bekas, what ze diggings—"

"How do you know, Edna?" a dozen of them clamoured. "Who told you?"

"Fay and I have just heard it—over the 'phone! At least— Oh, I can't bother to explain!" Edna broke off, and whipped about to run back to the hall.

"Gosh, girls!" Polly was gasping. "Nice thing, if it's true!"

"Terrible!"

"Swanlake—that wonderful house!" Madge exclaimed emotionally. "Pam's home!"

She turned to Monica Gray, who chanced to be nearby.

"You can't imagine, Monica. You've never seen Swanlake. It's a beautiful place."

Even Madge, although she had said this to Monica, was not noticing that girl's looks. An excited surging away had started, with cries of:

"Come on, all! Let's find out more!"

"If we went upstairs," Tess Trelawney voiced, "we might see the glare from the windows."

"Yes! Swanlake is near enough for that," cried others.

But as soon as they were in the front hall a general standstill took place.

The headmistress and a gentleman had hurried together to the telephone, and the girls saw that he was engaged in talk over the line, whilst Miss Somerfield stood by, pale with anxiety.

"Why," Polly jerked, "it's Mr. Somerfield!"

"Yes!"

All had recognised the headmistress' brother instantly, for he was well known to the scholars and popular with them.

"Didn't even know he was here, this evening," Betty whispered, and then some of the others breathed a "No!"

It was necessary for the excited pack of girls to hush down now, so as not to interfere with the telephone talk. Mr. Somerfield had not shut himself in the sound-proof box, with its glass door, as his sister was such an anxious bystander.

A few moments more and he rang off, at once turning to give the gist of the conversation to Miss Somerfield. She had made no sign to the girls to disperse, and so they also became listeners to what her brother had to say.

"It's in the West Wing, they tell me—all smoke at present, but they fear it may spread to the main building. The engines are coming from Barnecombe and from as far away as Exeter. The staff are doing their best in the meantime, but they've no smoke helmets. I must get away."

Miss Somerfield nodded an eager:

"Yes!"

"How unfortunate, Jack," the girls heard her say, "that you should have been over here this evening, to dine with me. Oh, I do hope, by the time you get there, they'll have got the fire under. Is there much wind to-night?"

Betty and several of her chums darted, then, to open the front door and find out what the night was like.

"Scarcely any wind!" they were able to call back into the hall, in tones of relief. "A dry night—almost calm!"

"That, at any rate, may prove a great mercy," Miss Somerfield exclaimed, advancing through the press of girls to the front doorway. "But come in, there!"

A few of them had run out from the porch. They came back, not wishing to be tiresome at such an anxious time. With the rest of the crowd—rapidly swelling as girls of other Forms flocked upon the scene—they waited to see Mr. Somerfield make his hasty departure.

He had run to get his greatcoat and other outdoor things, and he came back instantly, winding his scarf. Morcove noticed how calm he was.

"But then he would be," murmured Betty.

"Nothing excites him, ever."

"He looks," Monica softly commented, "a fine man."

"He is," the Form captain responded heartily. "Was an airman in the Great War, and since then he has had wonderful adventures, almost everywhere in the world."

"But I wonder why he is staying at Swanlake!" Polly exclaimed. "From what Miss Somerfield says, he appears to have come over from Swanlake, to dine with her, and now he is off back!"

It was no time for any of the girls to seek enlightenment on this point. Jack Somerfield, after a hurried good-bye to his sister, was passing out with no eyes for any of the girls. When some of them, in their goodwill, voiced a hearty:

"Good-night, Mr. Somerfield!" he responded cheerily:

"Oh, good-night, all!"

Then he was gone, running round to get his car from the school garage.

Immediately, girls started a pounding upstairs, to get a look out of this window and that facing inland towards distant Swanlake.

"Come on!" shouted Polly, one of the leaders in this dash upstairs. "We shall see it from our study windows!"

"Yes!"

There were one or two windows on the half-landings which offered just as good a chance, and some of the girls stopped at these. The rest went on, and before another minute had sped, many a study held its batch of girls, crowding to the window.

In Study 12, Betty and Co. purposely kept the light switched off. They knew that the darkened room would help them to see any tell-tale glare in the sky.

Between Morcove and Swanlake lay several miles of open, lonely country, most of it wild moorland. No distant town in that direction gave a glow of light low down upon the horizon at night-time. So, if such a glow came, they would know—

"Yet I don't see anything, do you, girls?" Betty panted, in relief at the black darkness of the night-sky.

"No!"

"Then perhaps—perhaps the fire hasn't spread after all," Polly said hopefully.

"Mr. Somerfield said something about its being all smoke just then."

"Yes, but there's no smoke without fire," Helen Craig asserted anxiously. "Hallo—look! Oh, there's a sort of light—a wavering one!"

"Dwaeaful," wailed Paula. "Ow, I do dwaeaf"

"But is that from a fire—is it?" Tess questioned, peering eagerly. "It might be the headlamps of a car, far away over there."

"We must wait," Madge breathed, "and watch."

"Yes!"

"Where's Monica Gray?" one of them wondered, glancing about to see who was here. "Watching from one of the other windows, I suppose."

MONICA GRAY was standing, all by herself, at the window of the study which had been assigned to her—Pam's study, as it was termed by the Form.

She, like how many other girls, at this moment, was watching for a light along the skyline, peering anxiously over the nightbound moor, of which nothing could be seen, in the direction of distant Swanlake.

Pam Willoughby's home—"My home!" Monica was thinking.

For she and Pam, although her schoolmates had not the faintest suspicion, were one and the same girl.

AND now—look! Surely that was the fitful glow from some terrible conflagration, raging in the night! A light coming and going upon the night clouds hanging low over the horizon, exactly in the direction of Swanlake.

Or could it be only the wavering lights from cars, making for Swanlake? Headlamps, one knew, could cast their light upwards, when a car was set to take a run uphill.

That might be the simple explanation now. But if—if it should mean the other! Swanlake—burning! Swanlake, in the grip of a fire that would defy all the finest efforts of capable brigades—Swanlake, when another day had dawned, gutted!

"And dad gone to India," ran the mind of this girl watching all by herself at the window of her study. "Mother, too, just as it happens, away on that voyage to the West Indies—I'm the only one of the three of us still at home."

At home! What a mockery, that phrase, at such a moment. She was at Morcove School, and not even there as Pam Willoughby, but as Monica Gray, the new girl. As for home, that, the message had said, was on fire.

The sky over yonder was black-dark again. But then, it was the nature of a house on fire to send only a fitful light up to the sky; at one moment a vivid glare, and then darkness again.

"If only I could be there—helping, doing something," she said to herself. "If only I could have gone with Mr. Somerfield in his car—to help save some of the pictures, anyhow. Our lovely home—on fire! And I wonder, is it an accident? Or is it the work of—"

A footfall behind her caused the girl to turn round sharply. She, too, had kept the light off in the study. In the darkness of the room she discerned and recognised—Miss Somerfield.

"Sh!" the headmistress seemed to imply, by a warning gesture. And then, putting herself close to the solitary scholar:

"I was to tell you, Pam," came the deep whisper. "It was his last word to me before he went off in the car. Their doing—"

"He thinks so?" was the deep whisper in return.

"They are in the neighbourhood, as he told you before tea," the headmistress spoke on in a guarded voice. "Their car—BAJ—010—he saw it to-day."

The listener nodded.

"But what has made them do this?" she asked in the same deep whisper. "A fire at Swanlake!"

"He does not believe there is actually a fire. He thinks, a smoke bomb—"

"Ah!"

"They knew he was here at the school this evening. They have created a false alarm, knowing that he would be rung up at the school."

A pause.

"He is certain!" Miss Somerfield resumed her whispering, "it was a ruse, to try and find out if YOU are at the school."

"You mean, they reckoned that the alarm of fire at Swanlake—my own home—would cause me to go off in the car with him?"

"Sh!"

It was the warning gesture once more. Not that the "new girl" had needed to be warned. She, too, had picked up sounds which meant the coming away of a few girls from Study 12 next door. And now there was the chummy cry:

"Monica! Where are you, Monica?"

CHAPTER 5.

Jimmy Knows!

TWO mornings later, Fay Denver came into the study which she shared with her sister Edna.

The latter had arrived upstairs from the classroom a minute or two since, resorting to an easy chair as soon as she had dumped school books. Now it was Fay's turn, after heeling shut the door, to fling down a number of books badly-temperedly.

"Swanlake! Swanlake! Oh, I'm sick and tired, Edna, of hearing the girls still keeping on about—Swanlake!"

"What else have they got to talk about?" sneered the younger sister. "In a hateful place like Morcove! The only other 'excitement'—hockey!"

"But there," Fay grimaced, "the Form always does make such a fuss about anything to do with Pam Willoughby!"

"She's so grand, that's why."

"Grand! If the truth were known, I expect the grandness of Swanlake is greatly exaggerated. Shouldn't wonder if all those wonderful pictures are simply rubbishy copies, really, and the same with a lot else over there. Anyhow, it was only a false alarm—"

"Only a practical joke, too, it appears," grinned Edna. "So I agree with you, Fay, they might get over the great sensation now."

Then, rising, Edna added:

"All the same, Fay, I wouldn't mind a run over to Swanlake, this afternoon."

"Why?" stared Fay.

"Oh, it's a halfer—the first of the term—and I certainly don't fancy games."

"Neither do I, for that matter."

"Get away sharp after dinner, I suppose we can do it easily on our bikes?"

"Then we will," Fay promptly agreed. "Grangemoor is Swanlake way. We might see something of Cousin Bertie."

"I shouldn't wonder if we see lots of Grangemoor fellows," Edna remarked with studied casualness. "I expect the 'great fire'—he, he, he!—will have made them want to get a look at Swanlake."

"Say, Edna! Since the opinion seems to be that it was a practical joke—I suppose it couldn't have been some of those schoolboys?"

"Oh, hardly, Fay! The firemen said it must have been a proper smoke bomb. No; I reckon that it was somebody with a grudge against the Willoughbys—some man, perhaps, who had been sent to prison for poaching."

It was like Edna to say this as if the Willoughbys were a hard-hearted lot. Had Betty or other members of the Form been present, they would have known how much disgust to feel. In all the West Country, there was no family held in greater respect and affection by all classes than was the Willoughby family.

But Fay and Edna were, as usual, talking behind a closed door. Knowing themselves to be generally disliked, it suited them to affect an air of aloofness. In other words, they would not "condescend" to mix with schoolmates who, as

a fact, were glad to be without their company!

There was the same false exclusiveness in the sisters' cycling away together, directly the school was up from dinner. Games, at Morcove, were not compulsory, simply because scholars as a whole were much too keen on games to want to give them a miss. Almost every "halfer," however, Fay and Edna were off out together, taking good care to let other girls see them go.

They gloried in creating an impression that they were doing things, on their own, which would give the headmistress a fit, if she knew!

Miss Somerfield was to know, at any rate, that the sisters had not remained in bounds for this afternoon's "halfer." For it so happened that she was doing a run in her car to Swanlake, and the car overtook Fay and Edna on the road across the moor, half an hour after they had started.

No signal came to the Morcove chauffeur to pull up. The headmistress, allowing the car to speed upon its way as fast as ever, merely commented to two fellow passengers:

"The Denver girls, I think?"

"Yes, Miss Somerfield."

"They are together, so they can't come by any harm. It is a nice afternoon, too, for a cycle ride. Already, Miss Merrick, the days seem to be brightening; the winter sunshine—so much stronger."

"For the time of the year—grand weather, no mistake," nodded the Form's new mistress.

That young lady and Monica Gray were Miss Somerfield's fellow passengers. They had been invited to share the jaunt to Swanlake and back, as they had never yet seen the famous home of the Willoughby family.

At least, this, the Form understood, was the reason for its new mistress and Monica Gray having gone off in the car. Very likely Miss Somerfield knew of a different reason—and so did Monica Gray!

Conversation in the car was only desultory. After a while the headmistress dropped out of the talk altogether, leaving Miss Merrick and Monica to chat away together. These two mostly talked about the school, and the pleasant ride was proving an opportunity for the new mistress to hint that there was complete satisfaction with Monica's work.

As the great scare about the so-called Swanlake fire of two nights ago, that was hardly mentioned until the car was nearing the end of the run. Then a signpost: "Swanlake—1." caused Miss Merrick to exclaim:

"Nearly there, Monica! And so we shall soon be seeing this wonderful house—none the worse, after all, for that disgraceful business with the smoke bomb. It is a mystery why anyone should have perpetrated such a wicked deed—Pardon?"

"Lovely country, just here," Monica was repeating, when the car gave a sudden wild swerve. It skidded along erratically for another dozen yards, and then—with all three passengers flung together—it went crash! into a grassy bank and lodged there, half turned over.

Miss Somerfield, who had screamed mildly, gasped confusedly:

"Oh! What's happened? You others—hurt?"

"No!" cried Miss Merrick; and, "No; quite all right!" came Monica's equally prompt assurance.

But they were still, all three of them, in an awful mix-up in the lopsided car. Monica's glasses had fallen off, and her frantic attempt to recover them had to be made whilst the two ladies struggled along with her for extrication.

Suddenly the uppermost door of the car was opened by somebody outside on the bank. They all three had a confused idea that it was the chauffeur; but in a moment a boyish voice cried: "Catch hold of my hand, one of you, and I'll pull! She won't go over any more." He meant the car, in its half-capsized state. "Hope there's no one hurt?"

"N-n-no, only badly shaken, all of us," quavered Miss Somerfield. "Miss Merrick—Pam—I mean, Monica! What am I saying! Oh, both of you go first. Let this boy help you to— But I declare," came with the next gasp for breath, "it's one of the Grangemoor scholars."

"Yes," the boy spoke into the car. "I'm Jimmy. It's hare and hounds this afternoon, and I'm—"

He broke off as abruptly as that. The sight of one of the victims of the skidding seemed to be having the effect upon him that seeing a ghost might have done.

"After you, Miss Merrick," said Monica Gray breathlessly. She had found her glasses and was putting them on. "Hallo, Jimmy Cherrol! You remember me, in London last week, don't you? At the Monopole Hotel—Monica Gray!"

"Oh—er—yes, of course!" stammered Jimmy. "Yes—Monica Gray!"

Nice thing, this! Somebody, who should have remained one of those who knew absolutely nothing about it all, had found out!

But the somebody was Jimmy—only Jimmy—and he could be trusted to act up to what must have been to him the surprise of his life.

Even in these moments of dire confusion for herself, after the accident, Pam could vividly imagine his bewildered state of mind.

He had found out that she, Pam Willoughby, had been Monica Gray up there at the hotel in London, and she was still being Monica Gray, down here—at Morcove!

Of course, he would have to be given an explanation; but it was not the time for doing anything except get him to understand; he must not let anybody know that he knew!

Miss Somerfield was in a shaken state, and so was Miss Merrick. As for the chauffeur, at first they thought he must be a case for an ambulance. He had nearly gone through the windscreen, and had "seen stars" for a few moments. But he was not cut about the head, only badly bumped, and the outcome of a parley at the roadside was that they and he decided to walk on to Swanlake, leaving the car to be fetched later.

"Jimmy Cherrol might stand by for a bit?" was Monica's bland suggestion. At the same time, she gave him a look which meant: "If you will, I'll try to slip back presently for a word between ourselves."

"Would you, Jimmy?" asked Miss Somerfield, to whom he was quite well-known as a friend of Jack and Dave. "I'll be ever so grateful. I am sure my chauffeur is unfit, after such a shock—"

"Yes, I'll stay around," Jimmy eagerly assented. "The car will have to be towed, I reckon; just look at the front wheels."



"I must tell you, Pam," Miss Somerfield whispered; "the fire at Swanlake was the work of your enemies—a ruse to find out if you are at the school!" And, thought Pam, it was a ruse that had failed!

"Just a skid, and yet it might have been the death of some of us," the headmistress shuddered. "But, there, don't let us think about that. I am so thankful that no one was to blame and no one has been seriously involved. Very well, then, we four will go along up to Swanlake, leaving you to stand by, Jimmy!"

"That's it!"

"Er—will some of your chums be coming along?" Monica casually inquired, on the point of walking away.

"They may, but I should hardly think they'd hang about," was his answer.

He seemed to have sensed her anxiety lest she should come back later, only to find a whole crowd of his schoolmates round the car.

"It's hare and hounds, you see, and the scent hasn't been laid this way really. I thought it might have been; that's all."

"Oh, I see!"

But Monica, as she responded so unconcernedly, managed to convey a "Thank goodness!" look. Then she hastened away, to put herself with those who had started upon the walk to the house.

For as long as she remained in sight, Jimmy's eyes followed her. Monica Gray—Pam Willoughby; one and the same girl!

If he himself had been in the car when it came to grief, he could scarcely have experienced a more chaotic state of mind than was his now.

He felt as if he were trying to make sense out of a wild dream—a nightmare.

Pam—their Pam—had masqueraded as Monica Gray in London, and was still doing so down here, now that Morcove had begun another term.

To add to the mystery—Miss Somerfield and that new Form-mistress seemed only to know Pam as Monica now!

But perhaps Miss Somerfield was in the secret? Perhaps the Form-mistress was, as well? But, if so, then this was certain; they had not wanted him to know that Monica Gray was Pam. They had addressed her as Monica, in front of him just now.

What an extraordinary business! What a mystery! The one thing about it at all clear to him, at present—he was not to show, by word or sign, that he knew Pam through her disguise.

Her eyes, just then, had implored him to go on treating her as if she were simply Monica Gray, the mere hotel acquaintance of the holidays.

But why? And here was another amazing feature of the case: Betty and the rest of the girls had been duped! There they'd been, up in London, getting to know a girl named Monica Gray—who was really an intimate friend of theirs at Morcove. A member of the "Co."!

No wonder it became a great dread in Jimmy's bewildered mind lest some of his chums of Grangemoor should come along. He was going to be in mental torment until he had obtained a word in private with Pam. She was going to try to get back to him, on some pretext or other; but if other fellows were, on hand when she turned up, then she'd not be able to explain.

To his intense relief, nobody came by, and after a while he concluded that none of his chums, out on the paper-chase, would be putting in an appearance now.

As a matter of fact, he would not have strayed this way, as one of the hounds, only Swanlake always drew him. He could never come this way without taking a look over the fence into the lovely old deer-park where Pam, when she was at home, galloped her favourite pony.

Suddenly he heard a faint tr-r-ring! of cycle bells, and he switched his eyes from the lopsided car to watch that bend in the road round which some cyclists were coming.

Then they appeared, and instantly he recognised them as being a couple of girls in Morcove clothes.

This seemed, for the moment, as unlucky as the unwelcome appearance of any Grangemoorians would have been.

Nor could Jimmy feel that it was any the less unlucky when he identified the girl cyclists, as they came riding up.

Fay and Edna Denver!

CHAPTER 6.

Someone is Listening

"HALLO! What on earth!" This cry from Fay Denver, in allusion to the derelict car at the roadside, was followed by an equally astonished comment from Edna:

"Oh, and it's you, Jimmy Cherrol!"

"Er—yes," he nodded cheerfully. "That's right."

"But—but, goodness!" gasped on Fay, now that she and her sister were dismounting at the spot, "this is Miss Somerfield's car! There's been a smash, then, and—and she—"

"No, a bad skid—one that her chauffeur couldn't help. They weren't hurt, only badly

shaken. So they've gone the rest of the way on foot."

"Oh, where to?"

"Why—Swanlake house, I suppose," Jimmy grudgingly answered. "They'll phone to the nearest garage there, I expect, for a breakdown lorry to come out and tow it in."

"And you?" Edna?" asked sweetly.

She liked Jimmy. It was an extra reason for that dislike which she had always borne Pam Willoughby.

"Oh, I—I happened to be close by, when this happened. So they got me to stand by for a bit."

"What a waste of time for you—a halfer, too!" Edna sympathised. "No one to talk to either."

"Oh, I don't mind. Prefer to be alone, in fact."

"Oh, do you?" And Edna, who had been going to lay her machine aside, changed her mind.

"Yes, well!—as Pam Willoughby would say! By the way, Jimmy, have you heard from Pam?"

"No; why should I?" he said curtly.

"Only that she's not back at school this term, and, of course, you and she are great chums."

"She wouldn't think of writing to me," he declared huffily. "She has heaps of chums she'd be more likely to write to—the girls at Morcove—"

"Yes," Fay interposed, with a nod, "and they haven't had a line from her either! We've heard them saying so. Has Miss Somerfield come over to Swanlake, this afternoon, about that so-called fire there was, the other night?"

"I don't know! What's the use of asking me!" Jimmy protested stolidly.

"What are they saying about that fire, Jimmy, at your school?"

"Oh, I don't know—except that it was some silly-fool business."

Edna received this with a frown and a petulant biting of the lip. She was more sensitive to Jimmy's brusqueness than was Fay.

"All right, Jimmy, I can tell," she suddenly emitted. "Even if you did know, you wouldn't tell us. Just because we are not on good terms with Betty Barton and Co.—including your wonderful Pam, of course! Fay, tell you what; let's go on up to Swanlake house ourselves, shall we?"

"Splendid!" was the elder sister's cry. "To ask if Miss Somerfield or any of the others suffered any harm."

"But I tell you they didn't!" Jimmy blurted.

"Thank you so much for telling us!" Edna said tartly, as she and her sister remounted to ride on. "All the same, we will ride on up to the house. Good excuse for calling there—ch, Fay darling?"

That girl laughed merrily.

"Bye, Jimmy. And remember us to Pam, won't you?"

Now, he asked himself, as they both rode away, what had that Edna meant by saying that? Had those two girls some notion that Pam was not as far away from Morcove as she was supposed to be? Had they some suspicion in regard to Monica Gray?

For a few moments he felt a sickening anxiety on Pam's account. Those Denver girls! One could be mighty sure they were the very last girls with whom any secret of that sort would be safe. If Pam, as Monica Gray, had concealed her true identity from Betty and others, then how much greater must her reason have been for concealing it from the rest of the girls.

He decided that there had been nothing in Edna's remark, perhaps, beyond a desire to twit him. All the same, he wanted to warn Pam, at

the house—got there before those two girls turned up. Then he realised that that was impossible. They were on bicycles, and even now they were riding in at the entrance to the avenue approach to the house.

So he could only hope that Pam would be as much Monica Gray as ever she had been, when those two girls did butt in up there at the house.

Five minutes after this, he felt wild with himself at having been so uneasy lest Pam should be taken by surprise. He saw her hurrying across the wintry park to rejoin him on the road, and he saw that she was still being Monica Gray "to the life."

Where Pam Willoughby would have been as fleet and as graceful as a gazelle, in that running across the grass, Monica Gray was displaying the usual ungainliness. As a piece of acting, it was marvellous!

She ended her run at the fence, over the top of which she spoke to him breathlessly.

"I say, you needn't wait any longer, thanks! They've phoned to the nearest garage about the car."

"Oh, I see—Monica."

They wore Monica's spectacles, but the eyes were the eyes of Pam that looked into his. And suddenly it was the voice of Pam which whispered:

"Jimmy, you were splendid—not to give any sign that you had found me out. It's all right," as she glanced about to make quite sure that they were alone. "So I can tell you—"

"Yes, do!" he implored, under his breath. "What's it mean, Pam? I won't breathe a word to anyone—"

"You mustn't, Jimmy—not even to your best chums. Just realise, I have not been allowed to confide in Betty and the rest even. But—"

"I couldn't help recognising you, Pam, without the glasses, just now," he pleaded ruefully. "I'm sorry. I expect you were furious—"

"Jimmy, how could I be—why should I?" she answered him ever so softly. "No, Jimmy. It was an accident—part of the accident to the car, and how could that be foreseen? Listen, Jimmy, for I mustn't stop. I'm not supposed to be out alone, being in danger."

"What!"

"But I rather chanced it, to run down to you like this. Jimmy, here is the reason for my being Monica Gray. Towards the end of the hols, up in London, dad got to know that certain people intended to kidnap me. They are people from India—quite a little gang of them really."

"But—"

"Sh! Don't interrupt. Let me say it quite quickly, Jimmy, and then I must go back. It's like this," she spoke on over the top of the fence: "Dad was urgently needed out in India to advise an old friend of his, a native prince. Enemies of the prince wanted to keep dad to home in England, but they knew they couldn't do it, except by creating some frightful trouble for him—some awful anxiety that would chain him to this country. And so they planned to kidnap me. It didn't come off though—at least, they did get me, but they only got me as Monica Gray, not as Pam, and afterwards I was rescued by Mr. Somerfield."

"And they never found you out?"

"That, Jimmy, was the scream," she chuckled. "And really it did more than anything else to induce dad to go to India after all. He felt quite, quite sure that my disguise had made it perfectly safe for me to be left—to come to Morecove as a new girl, which is what I did, as you know."

"Has your father gone, then, Pam?"

She nodded a little solemnly.

"Yes, Jimmy. And, oh, if you only knew what it may mean—his going to India after all. The difference between peace and war on the North-West frontier, perhaps! Only, the Ameer and his lot—our enemies—they haven't given up hope, it seems. As a matter of fact, some of the gang are at that bungalow, near Morecove."

She saw how Jimmy, in mingled excitement and concern for her safety, was clenching and unclenching his hands.

"The smoke-bomb business, Jimmy—that was their doing. Again, it didn't come off! Now, to-day, Miss Somerfield has run me over to Swanlake—as Monica Gray—so that I can go into certain things with her brother, Jack Somerfield. The meeting had to be at Swanlake. He's living at Swanlake, you know, at dad's request. They are to keep in touch really—"

"Yes, but, at that rate— Oh, look here, I'll walk with you up to the house now, Pam," he whispered earnestly. "I'll get over the fence, and—"

"No, Jimmy—"

"Pam, I must," he insisted, already climbing over. "You said you oughtn't to be out alone, and this park's a biggish place. I'll see you to the door. And, I say," he continued, having got down on her side of the fence, "did you see the Denver sisters just now?"

"Fay and Edna? No—why?"

"They're about. They came riding by on bikes, and now they've gone up to the house."

"It's like their cheek," Pam muttered fiercely.

"Quizzy! Of course, they want to go back to Morecove with something to tell the other girls about the fire. Any rate, they haven't the faintest notion, Jimmy, that Monica Gray is really—someone else!"

"It's to be hoped they haven't!" he muttered. "Of course, I quite see, Pam; so long as you are only known as Monica Gray, at Morecove, it doesn't matter how many Indians are about. But if ever they should find out that Monica Gray is—someone else—"

"Yes; well, they won't! Not if you keep silent, Jimmy, as I know you will. Not a word, mind, to anyone. And now—do turn back!"

"No, I shall do as I said. Going this way," he added, as they bestrode the grass together, at some distance from the avenue, "we shan't meet the Denver girls. They'll keep to the drive, over there."

A silence fell between them; such a silence as can be so eloquent of the very best type of friendship.

Not even the strangeness and the vague horror and the present situation could cheat either Pam or Jimmy out of a tranquil happiness in their being together for these few minutes.

He joggled along beside her, with that devotion which Morecove so often joked about whilst really admiring it. In his acute anxiety for her safety, it relieved him a good deal to see how carefully she preserved all the attributes of her part as clumsy Monica.

Tall Pam with her graceful step and delicate loveliness was completely lost in this rather clumsy Monica.

The great old mansion came into sight between some leafless trees of the park, and she found him willing, then, to turn back, leaving her to hurry on alone to the porch.

"We haven't seen those two girls," he remarked gladly.

"No. Shouldn't wonder if they were told to beat it, by Miss Somerfield. And so they were

riding down the avenue as we came straight across the park. It doesn't matter, and don't you fidget about them, Jimmy. They haven't the faintest, and neither has anyone else who belongs to Morcove. Miss Somerfield is the only person there who is in the secret. Even Miss Merrick doesn't know about it. As for your having got to know, like this—"

She paused, smiling.

"If needed that accident for you to find me out, you know! You remember me at the hotel, last week—an evening when you took pity on Monica Gray in the ball-room, because she was such a rotten dancer—and is!"

"Pam, I—"

"Sh!" she gurgled. "You mustn't call me Pam!"

But the reproof was only a playful one. He and she could glance around, where they were standing to say good-bye, and except for two or three mighty old oaks that gave shelter to the cattle in the height of summer, there was only the grass of the park.

"Good-bye, then, Jimmy."

"Good-bye, then—Monica. I wish Grangemoor were nearer Morcove, so that I could— Oh, I don't know; sort of look after you a bit."

"The will for the deed, Jimmy! 'Bye!"

And so they parted.

For a few moments he watched her going towards the house with the flat-footed gait of Monica Gray. Then he turned to wander back to the road and the derelict car. The message had been that he need not stand by any longer, but he felt he must stay around.

There had been more than time for Pam to get indoors, and for him to get back to the car, outside the boundary fence, when— What was this that took place, just where he and she had said their strange good-bye?

An odd scuffling sound, very faint, marred the stillness of all nature out here in the park. It was a tell-tale sound originating in one of the huge old trees enjoying its winter sleep.

A few moments more, and a girlish figure might have been seen, wriggling and writhing to extricate itself from the hollow stem.

She warily scrambled into view, some six feet or so from the base of the tree-trunk, huddling herself for a second or two where the mighty branches forked.

Then she dropped to ground on the side away from the house, and ran off.

And the girl was—Edna Denver!

CHAPTER 7.

The Secret Betrayed

"HERE, tell you what, Fay; let's make for Barncombe now, and talk it over in the teashop."

"Right-ho! But I just can't believe what you have been saying! It's—"

"It's true, I tell you! Though what it all means simply beats me! Turn to the left, when we get out on to the road, Fay. I fancy Jimmy is the other way, minding the car again—"

"Well, then, why not tackle him about it all?"

"No! Oh, the last thing we want to do," was Edna's very emphatic opinion, whilst she free-wheeled with her sister down the avenue. "When you've happened upon a secret, you never want to be in hurry to let others know that you know. Spoils the usefulness of your knowledge!"

"Oh, all right! But I don't see what use it is going to be to us. Far better to be first with the news, at Morcove, I think."

"Well, I don't! If you ask me, there must be something tremendous behind all this. Monica Gray—Pam Willoughby! That awful 'new' girl, with her glasses and her slouchy ways—Pam, in disguise!"

"But why, Edna—why?"

"Isn't that what I'm saying? Why?"

"Oh, Edna, you must have been mistaken!"

"I tell you I wasn't! And if you don't believe me—well, I shan't say any more, that's all!"

Edna, however, was far too excited to be able to adhere to that petulant resolve.

As soon as she and her sister had emerged upon the road, turning to the left to avoid Jimmy, she jibbered a repetition of what there had been to tell Fay, a few minutes since.

All the way to Barncombe—and that was a ride of several miles—the sisters' tongues were never still. Over and over again, Edna described the manner of her finding out the true identity of Monica Gray. And still it remained the one thing to be talked about by the pair, when at last they were seated in the spacious tea-room at the Barncombe Creamery.

The rush hour for teas had not yet started, and of the few other customers, none belonged to Morcove. If other girls had been in evidence, Fay and Edna would have taken care to select a table at a safe distance from any of them.

"Tea for two, miss," Fay ordered brusquely; and then, as the waitress moved away, the sisters thumped elbows upon the table and leant across to each other, for more excitable converse.

"Are you still not believing me, Fay?"

"Oh, I don't know! But it's so amazing! Are you positive—only overhearing them, as you did, whilst hiding in the hollow tree?"

Edna interrupted with a fuming sigh.

"How many more times, Fay! Why should I have fancied that I heard him call her Pam! I wasn't expecting him to—just as if! You know why I climbed into the tree; because I had seen them coming, and I thought I'd spy on them for fun. She was only Monica Gray to me, then, of course she was! I was only hoping to hear something about the so-called fire, perhaps, that she might be telling him, or he telling her. But I heard her say something about 'the secret,' and a few moments after that I heard him call her Pam."

"Did he call her Pam because he was thinking all the time about Pam? You know what Jimmy is!"

"Oh—no-o-o! The way she answered him knocks out any idea of that sort. She IS Pam! That, don't you see, is the secret!"

"One that has been kept from Betty and the rest, even! Up there in London, in the hole—she was taking them in even then!"

"Of course she was! I heard her reminding Jimmy of how he danced with her one evening, at the hotel, never dreaming that she was Pam. She was Monica Gray—a rotten dancer!"

"Then only Miss Somerfield is in the secret?"

"At the school, yes. I don't know about outsiders. It's queer, you know, but now I'm wondering why Miss Somerfield's brother is staying at Swanlake!"

The waitress arrived with the laden tray. Whilst the things were being set down, Fay sat back, sweeping a hand across her face to banish, as it were, some of her excitable flutter. She was still far from being able to calm down.

The waitress' momentary intervention caused both girls to glance about.

They still had no Morcovians as near neighbours. At the table nearest to the sisters sat a

silent, mournful-looking couple; a man and a woman of such strange looks and dress, Fay and Edna might have been quite startled.

But, like the rest of Morocco, the sisters had got to know that Cliff Edge Bungalow was being rented furnished, at present, by some people from the East—Hindus, they were presumed to be. Obviously, here were two of them, getting some tea during an afternoon in the quaint old town.

Edna's wrought-up state still betrayed itself. She received her cup of tea from Fay with a shaking hand, and then made a face at the tempting array of eatables.

"I don't know that I want any of this, Fay. Simply can't get over this afternoon's business. Why the girl should be doing it—with her parents' approval, must be! Otherwise, Miss Somerfield wouldn't be in the secret."

"Pam must have explained to Jimmy. Pity you weren't within hearing then!"

"Oh, well, I reckon I didn't do so badly, considering!"

"Then what are we to do about it—I mean, back at the school? It would be a scream, Edna, to go straight up to Monica and say: 'How do, Pam!'"

"Yes, but we may be able to get more fun out of it than that, by holding our tongues for a bit. Think of the game we can have with Pam!"

"You mean, still treating her as Monica Gray?"

"That's it."

They did not notice the mournful-looking Eastern pair exchanging glances.

That the man and woman could be paying heed to all that passed never entered the heads of Fay and Edna. They would have been surprised to know that two such people from the East were even capable of following a conversation in English.

But, presently, the dark-skinned man and his sallow-faced companion passed out of the teashop, and in the street they exchanged more than meaning looks.

In a language of which Fay and Edna could never have understood a word, these two spoke in exultant tones.

"You heard, Azara?"

"Yea!"

"Lo, what a thing life is!" the man muttered, buttoning his brown coat to what seemed to him a cold wind. "We go to great risks, and reap no reward. We take our ease and drink a cup of tea—and in a moment we learn a thing like that!"

The woman nodded, her gliding step taking her along the pavement with her husband.

"The name—let us not forget it," she whispered anxiously. "The false name—"

"Mo-nic-a Gr-r-ray," he pronounced it, in a purring voice. "We will write it down, Azara. Mo-nic-a Gr-r-ray."

"And so, we shall yet earn our reward from the

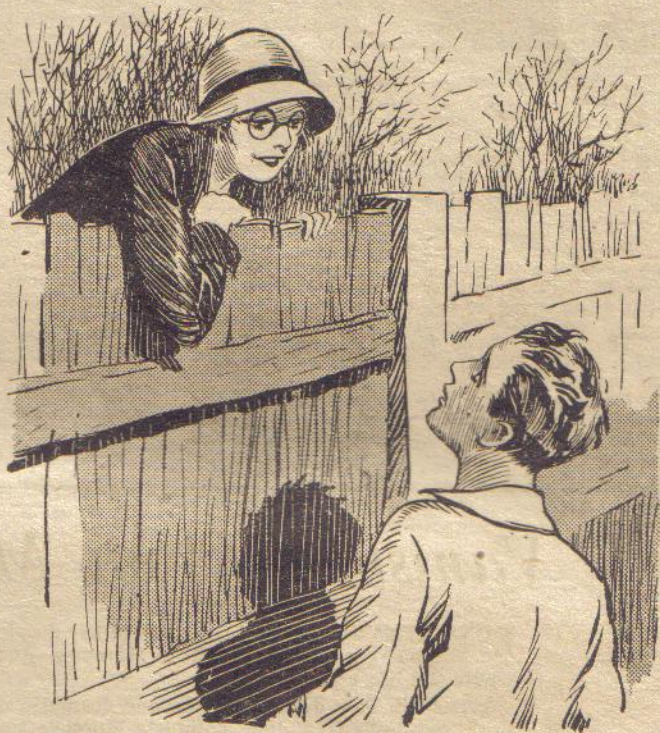
Ameer, Hazarin? The daughter of the Sahib Willoughby IS at the school; but she is known as Mo-nic-a Gray."

The man laughed evilly.

"Mo-nic-a Gray does not fear for her safety—why should she? Truly, it was a clever plan of theirs. We have been deceived, yea! But now—"

"Now all is known to us," the woman took him up softly. "And so we shall take her, after all."

"As the hawk takes the pigeon from the flock, so shall we take this girl from all those at the school—yea! Mo-nic-a Gray," he repeated in a



They were Monica's spectacles; but the eyes were the eyes of Pam and suddenly it was the voice of Pam which whispered: "Jimmy, you were splendid—not to give any sign that you had found me out!"

chuckling undertone, "the Sahib Willoughby's daughter, ours for the taking—now!"

CHAPTER 8.

Unwarned!

THERE were loud cheers for Monica Gray when she turned up in the Form corridor round about six o'clock that evening.

"Bekas, what ze diggings, we heard that you had been turned upside down in ze car, with Miss Somerfield on top of you, and Miss Merriek on top of you both!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not quite as bad as that," Monica grinned, screwing up her face. "Luckily, it happened close to Swanlake, so we soon got another car to bring us home, and all that."

"And what did you think of Swanlake, Monica?" cried Polly eagerly. "Isn't it a wonderful house?"

"Pam must love it, I'm sure! Oh, by the way, girls; you remember Jimmy Cherrol—"

"As if we could ever forget Jimmy!" some of the Study 12 girls laughed. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"He turned up just after the crash, and was quite useful."

Monica had more to say about it all, and she continued in talk whilst going on to Study 12 with many of her schoolmates.

Then Fay Denver, who had been a listener to those first remarks, turned into the study which she shared with her sister.

"You should have heard her, Edna, just then," grinned the elder of the two, after shutting the door behind her. "Still keeping up the pretence; still hoodwinking even her best chums!"

Edna got up from a chair, her face assuming a hard look.

"Yes, and I'd like to know why!" she muttered fiercely. "Here, Fay, do you know what I am going to do? I'm going to ring up Jimmy Cherrol on the 'phone, pretending I am Monica Gray!"

"What! Edna, don't be so silly—"

"Pooh, why shouldn't I? There's no such person as Monica Gray, really, so anybody can pretend to be that girl, can't she? Anyhow, it's what I am going to do, and it won't be me if I don't get some information out of him."

"You can't 'phone from the school, Edna! Think of the risk of it's being found out, later on, that you—"

"I wasn't thinking of 'phoning from the school, so see! I'm going to slip out and use the 'phone at the railway station. They'll let me, if I pitch the right tale."

"But—"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Edna, who was irritable with the strain of wanting to find out more. "It's a dry evening, and I shall do as I've done before—slip down by the iron stairway, outside the schoolhouse. And you, of course, can be ready for when I return. I shan't be long."

And so, less than an hour later, a Morcove girl was at the tiny wayside railway station, confident that no one had seen her slip away from the schoolhouse upon the secret errand.

But someone there was who, lurking near the schoolhouse with spying for the motive, had seen the girl sneak out.

Someone feeling interested, had followed Edna Denver to the station. And, when the use of the telephone was granted on the plea of urgency, someone contrived to overhear Edna's side of the ensuing talk over the line.

Disastrous thing that all this was to mean to Edna—and she herself unwarned!

She gave the name of Monica Gray over the telephone; bawled the name into the receiver, when at last Jimmy Cherrol was at the other end of the line.

Thus, fatefully, someone within hearing was led to believe that Monica Gray—THE Monica Gray—was out of bounds to-night and would soon be stealing back to the schoolhouse!

In due course, Edna started back for the school; but this was to be a return journey which she would never complete.

Suddenly she was seized, and from that moment she was a helpless captive—powerless even to cry out for help.

Edna Denver, with only herself to blame, had been quietly kidnapped instead of—Pam Willoby!

[END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]

Vanished From Morcove

EDNA DENVER has paid the price of her despicable behaviour. She has been kidnapped from Morcove—and nobody knows where she has been taken!

What will Pam do, in this new and dramatic situation? Read next Tuesday's vivid long complete Morcove story and you will learn how she dares discovery in order that Edna Denver may be saved.

Packed with excitement, next Tuesday's powerful story will hold you enthralled from first to last. It appears under the title of:

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WHEN PAM DARED DISCOVERY