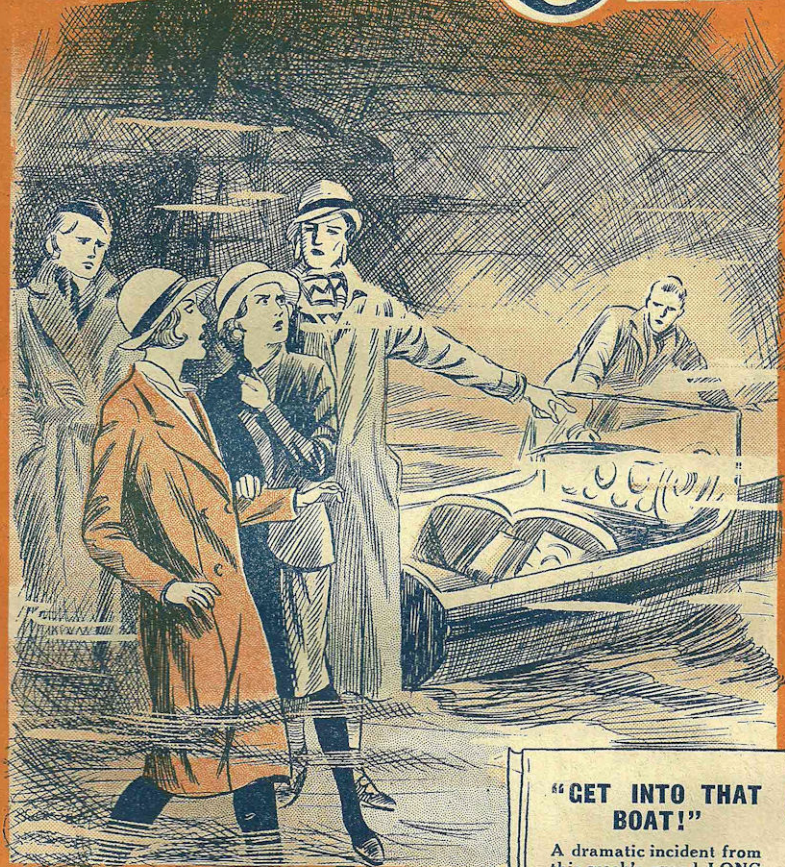


"An Outcast—On Mystery's Trail" By Joan Inglesant
Commences Inside

The SCHOOLGIRLS' 2^D OWN



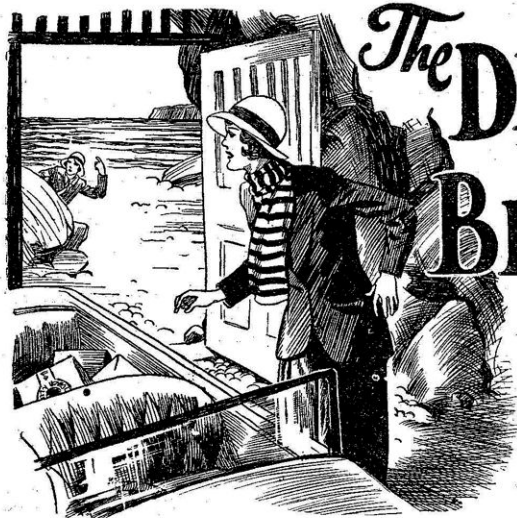
**"GET INTO THAT
BOAT!"**

A dramatic incident from
this week's grand **LONG**
complete Morcove story.

No. 767. Vol. 30.
Week ending
October 19th, 1935.
EVERY TUESDAY.

"MAUREN'S RUSE AT THE FAIR"—Complete Story Within

The Denver Sisters Make a False Move With Results Which Startle Morcove School



The DENVERS' BAD BLUNDER

A Magnificent Long
COMPLETE Story of
Betty Barton & Co.

By MARJORIE STANTON

The Ex-captain's Ordeal!

*The Captain's Study,
Wednesday morning.*

DEAR Betty,
About this afternoon's away match at Barncombe House, I think it will be best for all concerned if you drop out.

I am very sorry, as I know it means losing one of our best players, but it would affect the Form's chances still more if the team went out to the field after some upset or other.

It is to be hoped that the dislike you have incurred will not go on much longer. Meantime, there doesn't appear to be anything I can do. The girls are so obviously entitled to share my own disappointment in you this term.

Yours regretfully,
EITTA HARGROVE.

BETTY BARTON, alone in Study 12 at Morcove School, let the note from her captain fall to the table.

After a moment she picked up the note and tore it into the tiniest pieces, letting them fall into the wastepaper-basket. Best not to let Polly and other good chums see that note—particularly Polly! It was exactly the sort of note a captain should have written, in the circumstances. But Polly might not think so—nor might the rest.

And now madcap Polly made one of her usual boisterous entries, reaching the table with a final bounding step, to start collecting books for morning school.

"What's it going to be, Betty?"

"Oh—arith and French and—let's see—Wednesday—"

"Goop! I mean the weather! This afternoon—"

"Oh, the weather!" Betty was even then taking a look out of the window. "Dry, anyhow. I should think."

"Pity it can't come out bright this morning," Polly sighed. "That field of theirs at Barncombe will be so dashed sticky. How are we going, by the way, Betty? With the others in the school bus, or by bike?"

"Oh, you ought to go in the bus with the rest, Polly. More companionable—"

"I, Betty? What do you mean by that, then? What about you yourself?"

"I'm not going—"

"Wha-a-at!"

"I am best off the scene, Polly. You know how things are. It might easily lose the Form the game, if—"

Betty had got as far as this, still looking out of the window, when a hand fell upon her shoulder, turning her round to face Polly.

"Now, Betty, look here! Is it becoming just about more than even you can stand—the way the Form is baiting you?"

"Not a bit, Polly! I can stand it—"

"It's a shame you should have to put up with it," Polly gritted. "When, if the Form only knew, you haven't deserved anything of the sort! I don't know how you have stuck it so calmly, except that you are—you! If it had been me I'd have knocked some heads together by now."

"But please don't start doing that on my account," Betty smilingly entreated. "If it served any purpose I could do as much of that sort of thing as anyone, I hope—"

"Course you could; and you should!"

"No, Polly. I have more to worry about than that."

"Anyhow, if the girls can't sink their feelings for this afternoon, so as to have you amongst

them without any upset—then they can't be putting the Form first! We have a captain; I shall go to her right now and—"

"Polly, stop—wait!" Betty advised. "It's not a bit of use your going to Etta Hargrove. She herself thinks it best for me to stay away—best for all concerned."

Polly came back a step or two, looking fiercer. "Does that mean, Betty, the new captain even suggested it herself?"

"Well, yes. I had a note—"

"I can see it?"

"Afraid you can't. I tore it up."

Polly's angry eyes took note of the tiny scraps of paper in the basket.

"A nasty note, or you wouldn't have—"

"No, it was not, Polly! It was perfectly fair. Hang it all, I have been a captain myself, and I know!"

"Anyway, if you can't play for the Form, Betty, then I am not going to, either!"

"And then, Polly, you'll be putting your own feelings before everything else—just what you're condemning in others!"

"Oh, bother you, Betty! Why will you always pull me up so? I suppose you're right, there—of course you are!" Polly grimaced. "So I must go with the team, after all, and so must Pam and Madge and—ugh! What do YOU want?" Polly suddenly rounded upon inoffensive Paula Creel as she floated in. "Get out!"

"Weally, Polly dear—"

"Yes, what ze diggings!" shrilled Naomer Nakara as she now appeared upon the scene. "Bekas—"

"Gurr-r-r!"

Nor was hot-headed Polly at all appeased by hearing a ding-ling of the bell downstairs, calling girls to their respective class-rooms.

"Why do you fume like this, Polly?" laughed Betty, coming to the table to collect books.

"Because it's so unfair!"

"But they don't know how unfair they are being. Come along down—"

"No, wait a bit," Polly grimly demurred. "Better let girls who are out there go down first; although it's pretty awful that you, Betty—once their captain—"

"Oh, I am not going to do any hanging back," Betty calmly announced. "Come on!"

She was, even then, making her exit from the study, books under her arm. Going to demonstrate again, were they, some of the girls? "Let them!—That note from the new captain, just now, had hurt—no denying that. For her, Betty, who used to lead the team on to the field, not to be allowed to play to-day—that was a humiliation if you liked! But as for mere booing, twitting remarks—"

Hallo, though! More than booing had been decreed for her this morning.

She had gone only a few paces along the corridor, and yet already a crowd of girls, instead of staying to bait her as she went by, were in flight, screaming their laughter.

And there, where they had been standing a moment since, Betty saw an almost life-size effigy—a ridiculous dummy of a schoolgirl supposed to be herself, in outdoor clothes, armed with stick and lantern!

Face to Face

GUY FAWKES' DAY was near enough for the teasers to have been able to secure a sixpenny mask of a particularly fatuous type.

The lantern and stick might have suggested Gunpowder Plot intentions on the part of the guy, but Betty was bound to realise that the whole thing was in allusion to certain supposed activities of hers, just lately.

There stood the guy, very weak on its legs, facing Betty as she advanced along the passage. But it was also showing its insipid face and its paralytic figure to Polly and other chums of Betty's, who had come out into the corridor.

To Polly, the effigy was like a red rag to a bull. It was she who, with a furious rush that put her instantly in front of the ex-captain, took a flying kick at the guy.

Over it went, the lantern bang-clattering to the floor. At that upper end of the corridor the makers of the guy were bunched together, giving peals of laughter. Polly snatched up the wretched thing, and bore it on with her, but the ribald crowd of girls, taking to their heels again, deemed themselves quite safe from retaliation.

And the crowd was mistaken! Whilst most of those girls were rushing down a lower flight of stairs, Polly got to the flight above and hurled the dummy over the banisters.

Softly, yet heavily, it fell upon the top of more than one luckless head.

"I wouldn't have troubled!" was Betty's light remark, a few seconds later, to which the hot-head answered:

"You wouldn't have, but I—did!"

Better, perhaps, if she hadn't! For it resulted in the guy being retained by its manufacturers for future use.

At the last moment before school, when all the class-rooms had filled up, the effigy, in its hastily-made state, and with a face that had been trodden upon, was rushed to the school museum by a couple of the mockers.

Fay and Edna Denver were the pair who did this.

"Just the place!" tittered Fay as she and her sister stood the dummy where it would be visible from the doorway. "For it was down here in the museum that Betty was caught, last evening, sneaking out of bounds!"

"Thanks to me!" Edna claimed, smiling exultantly.

Heartless girls that these sisters were, it was like meat and drink to them—the present contempt in which Betty was being held by the Form as a whole.

They themselves had been directly responsible for her downfall, but that only made it all the more of a "scream" to them. So now they blew kisses to the stupid-looking effigy before scampering to get their places in class.

Miss Merrick, the Form-mistress, had not yet come in, and it was Fay's and Edna's increased delight to find Betty being baited as mercilessly as the Form felt she deserved to be.

That the Form was so deluded was, again, part of the richness of the "joke" to the sisters—a joke at the expense of Betty, whom they had always hated, possibly because they vaguely dreaded her.

Nor was that vague fear of Betty at an end now, even though their underhand work had lost her the captaincy. She might be no longer the captain, with a captain's authority and prestige, but she was still—Betty Barton!

To a certain extent, indeed, the Denver sisters were already being paid out for the injury they had done Betty. There they were, when the Form came out for "break," laughing as loud as any over the discovery of that "exhibit" in the museum. But a couple of minutes later they

were a rather exasperated pair behind the closed door of their study upstairs.

"They say Etta Hargrove has dropped her out of the team for this afternoon, Fay!"

"I know! I hope that doesn't mean that Betty will be following us about," the elder sister frowned. "She'll be at a loose end. And this isn't a time when we want to be sort of shadowed."

Then came the reluctant admission:

"Almost makes you wish, Edna, that we hadn't got Betty into such a row, after all, that first evening of term."

"Oh, well, how were we to know that this other business was going to crop up and be so—so fascinating?" Edna peevishly exclaimed. "We knew nothing about the Vanderloos then, and what they are up to at Cliff-Edge Bungalow."

Fay, sighing a little uneasily, walked to the window. The autumn day was not brightening as it advanced. Mist hung about still.

"I think, Edna, we had better leave it until after dinner to get those papers from where we hid them on the moor. Leave it until then, and we can take them along to Barncombe and get them off to-day from there—much safer."

"Or had we better bike to some more distant place, where we can post them and they won't go to the Barncombe sorting-office?"

Fay turned round.

"That's a good idea, Edna! The Vanderloos have missed the papers by now. It will soon be twenty-four hours since—since you got hold of them—at the bungalow garage. There's been no complaint yet—no accusation against us; I can't make that out! But, anyway—"

"We can't be too careful," Edna nodded. "And I suppose that people who consider they have been robbed have a right to ask the Post Office to watch for a letter posted by the parties suspected? Anyway—and delight in craftiness made her give her wide grin—"Barncombe sorting-office isn't going to handle our letter to dad to-day!"

"We'll make it Droverton," Fay muttered. "That's a different postal district altogether."

So, as soon as the school had finished dinner, these two girls were amongst the very first to be making their way out.

But Fay and Edna were not forgetting Betty as they took their machines from the cycleshed. A certain haste and furtiveness about the riding away were due to a guilty-mindedness where the ex-captain was concerned.

It was as a girl with a silly craze for playing at private detective that Betty was being so mercilessly baited and decided by the Form. Fay and Edna alone knew, outside the Study 12 circle, how impossible it had been for Betty, as a girl of spirit, to refrain recently from certain activities.

And those activities—they were bound to involve the keeping of a close watch upon the sisters. How could it be otherwise, when Betty's desperate purpose was to bring home to them the guilt which had been attributed to her—by their very headmistress!

"Any sign of Betty now, Edna?" asked Fay, just after they had ridden out by the main gateway.

"No; and so we should be all right," the younger one remarked. "It won't be a couple of minutes before we turn off this main road."

They were going to strike aside on to a little-used by-road which wound across the rolling Moorove moors in the direction of Stormwood and Swanlake. The many undulations and the autumnal rankness of roadside growth promised to be doubly in their favour.

They could easily give Betty the slip if she should be seen riding to keep them in sight. Also, the moorland road would be rich in places where they could hide their machines—whilst going into the heather to recover the stolen papers.

At the turn-off on to the narrow by-road both girls looked this way and that and to their relief, neither Betty nor anyone else was in sight. The very early start had enabled them to finish with the main road to the town before lots of scholars set off for the afternoon.

Very soon they were aware of a car coming on behind them over the moorland road, but they



Edna's attempt to cycle away was instantly foiled. She was pulled roughly from her cycle, to join Fay. The sisters were prisoners of the unscrupulous Vanderloos, who, they knew, would stop at nothing to regain possession of the vital papers. And the Denvers were the only ones who knew where the papers were hidden!

could not imagine its having anything to do with them or the school.

No sooner had it overtaken them, however, than a strange thing happened.

The car was abruptly stopped, and out jumped—Elsa Vanderloo and her brother Osbert.

Fay and Edna wobbled on their machines with the shock.

The young man and his sister made commanding signs to the sisters to dismount, and when Edna, for her part, attempted a right-about-turn with her bicycle, with some rash idea of bolting back to safety, Elsa Vanderloo rushed at her and simply dragged her from the saddle.

As for Fay, never so strong-nerved as her sister, she had meekly dismounted.

All this happened in a brace of seconds. Then the two schoolgirls were being sternly addressed by Osbert Vanderloo.

"We have been on the look-out for you," he said, frowning. "You are, perhaps, going to post a letter to your father?"

"Nothing to Fear!"

"NOTHING of the sort!" Edna audaciously protested, but the Vanderloos noticed that the answer had come from her, the younger sister.

Osbert fixed his eyes very fiercely upon Fay. "You are silent! Give me then the letter which you were going to post to your father!"

"But, I—I—oh!"

"Come now!" he insisted sharply. "I want the letter you have written him, enclosing the papers you stole yesterday afternoon from my workshop at the bungalow!"

"Stole—papers?" Fay attempted to bluster.

"Your sister took them from the garage," Elsa put in icily, "whilst I was engaged in attending to my brother, who had just been overcome by some fumes. You helped me to carry him round to the bungalow veranda for more air; but this sister of yours stayed at the garage—stole the papers then—"

"I did not!" Edna desperately lied. "How dare you say such a thing! We will go back to the school, and—and complain to the head-mistress!"

"No, you will not go back," Osbert Vanderloo dissented, smiling grimly. "You will not move another step until that letter to your father is in my hands."

"My brother has a right to demand it," Elsa pointed out. "So then—produce it, please, one of you!"

"But I—we—you are mistaken!" Fay quavered. She was in a state of terror now. "I've no letter that I can hand over to you!"

"Perhaps then there is a letter my sister can find by searching you?" Osbert grimly submitted. "Whilst I stand by—with this!"

He took out a tiny modern revolver, all bluish steel, for them to see, then returned it to his pocket.

"Sorry," he shrugged, "but the matter happens to be serious. Those papers may be worth a million pounds to your father. Well, we do not allow ourselves to be robbed of a million pounds by a couple of schoolgirls."

"Even though you have stolen them to benefit your father," was Elsa's sharp rejoinder.

She stepped first to Fay and thrust a hand into one of that girl's jacket pockets. When the hand was withdrawn, it held a letter, ready for the post, except that it remained to be gummed up.

But although the envelope was addressed to Mr. Denver, the Vanderloos instantly realised that it was not bulky enough to have the stolen papers inside it. Elsa handed it to her brother, who, unhesitatingly took out the letter—its sole contents—and read it.

Fay and Edna, kept waiting, exchanged glances of utter confusion and dismay.

"This is only the letter," he suddenly commented. "It would appear that you were going to put the stolen papers inside it, presently, and then send the whole thing off by registered post. Well, then—where are the papers?"

"We shan't tell you!"

Again it was Edna who had mustered up sufficient nerve to answer defiantly.

"Where," he repeated, with increased sternness, "are those papers?"

"Find out!"

And Edna laughed. As she did so she turned to her sister, with a look inviting her to show similar defiance.

Nor was Fay, although so scared, inclined to let her sister down. It was now flashing upon Fay's mind that, with the papers admittedly worth a million to her father, a desperate refusal to give them up was at least worth trying.

Like her more brazen sister, Fay was realising that the Vanderloos never could find the papers, unless they were taken to the exact spot.

At this moment they were lying buried beneath a stone on the moor—only a few hundred yards from where this "hold-up" had taken place. But for the Vanderloos to try searching the moor for the buried papers—even if the man and sister guessed them to be there—would be like searching for a needle in the proverbial bundle of hay.

"There is no time to waste," Elsa Vanderloo remarked, looking very cold blooded. "You will have to tell us sooner or later—"

"We shan't; we are just not going to, so see!" Fay declared, having worked herself up to a sufficient state of bravado. "You can't touch us!"

"Can't we?" the young woman answered. "Do not be so sure about that."

"You refused at present, do you?" her brother curtly questioned. "Very well, then!" And he took out the revolver again. "Now, if you please—both of you, get into the car."

"What!"

"Do as my brother says," Elsa Vanderloo advised. "You had better! This discussion about the stolen papers must be resumed at the bungalow, that is all!"

"Oh, is that the idea!" Edna impudently laughed. "Right-ho! Who cares! Come on, Fay!"

"No, Edna—"

"But," Osbert Vanderloo exclaimed at the elder sister, "you must! You have no choice—unless you will conduct us to those papers."

Fay shook her head. Once again, with Edna minded to hold out, the elder girl felt that she must do so, too. And, after all, why give in now? At the bungalow the Vanderloos might threaten and bully, but they would never dare to detain two Morcove girls—was it likely? Far more likely that they would take them to Miss Somerfield at the school, for her to deal with the matter. In which case—

Well, both Miss Somerfield! Threats from her—pooh! Expulsion—what did that matter! Would dad be angry, when any disgrace of that sort would have been simply due to a refusal to give up the papers—and all for his sake!

Such were some of the imprudent thoughts which induced Fay to decide with Edna to go in the car to the bungalow. Bit of a thrill, this. Really, though, they could afford to laugh, for the great fact was that they only knew where the papers were hidden, and no threats could be used, either at the bungalow or at the school, which they would need to mind.

Edna grinned widely to encourage her sister in the reckless procedure as they flopped down into the back seat of the saloon car.

"I'm not worrying!" Edna chuckled. "What does it matter, so long as dad gets those papers in the end!"

But now they noticed that Elsa Vanderloo was taking one of the bicycles, to wheel it away into the heather.

The woman finally left it lying flat and concealed, came back for the other machine, and served that the same way. Osbert Vanderloo, meanwhile, had remained close to the car, keeping a close watch upon the seated girls.

To them the disposal of the bicycles was something that had an ugly significance. Judging by that, it now looked as if the Vanderloos were intending to detain them at the bungalow.

"Oh, well!" Edna laughed.

"We shall know when we must give in, that's all!"

"Ye-yes," Fay nodded, her nerve rather failing her again. "There's that about it—we have only to decide to speak out, and we can save ourselves."

Elsa Vanderloo now came to get into the car.

"Do you wish to say anything, after all?" she asked, on the point of entering. "Have you changed your minds?"

"No!"

Her pale blue eyes flashed, but she did not answer that defiant refusal with any ugly threat. Next moment she was sitting with Fay and Edna at the back of the car. The door came round with a slam; Osbert Vanderloo took his seat at the wheel, and they moved off.

In a mere minute or two, the motor was drawing out on to the Morecove-Barncombe road. Fay and Edna were feeling uneasy enough to be hopeful of being seen by schoolmates making for the town on bicycles. But there was none on the road just then.

The journey to the bungalow was soon accomplished. Getting out of the car, Osbert Vanderloo took a cautious look in all directions. Then he nodded to Elsa.

"Now," she said, "please get out."

And Fay and Edna, still bolstering up their courage with the belief that, anyway, they could save themselves whenever they liked, passed from the car into the bungalow.

Elsa followed them in, and then the door which



"Does Detective Betty Barton live here?" demanded the noisy crowd of girls at the door of Study 12. Polly, furious at the sneering taunts directed against the ex-Form captain, leaped from her chair to confront them, eyes blazing with anger.

had admitted them was closed and locked against the outer world.

The Watch at the Cave

"HALLO, Tess—not gone with the others, then?"

"No, Betty. I was not down to play, and I felt I could do something better than simply go to look on."

Betty, having come away from the head-mistress' private room only a few seconds ago, smiled fondly but accusingly at this chum of hers, who was dressed for going out.

"You've been waiting about for me, Tess!"

"Well, I thought you might be inclined to come with me. Bit of sketching," added the youthful artist of Study 12, patting a satchel which held her usual materials.

"Depends where you think of going sketching," was the ex-captain's cryptic response. "And I warn you, I'm feeling pretty-annoyed."

"I guess you are, after the way all the girls have been—"

"Oh, rabbits to that! It was Miss Somersfield's sending for me at such a time—and then she kept me waiting quite ten minutes. It means," Betty frowned, "I have missed a chance of shadowing the Denver pair this afternoon—as I so badly needed to do."

"I was thinking of going down to the seashore

"You were? Oh, then, I'll come with you, right enough! For I can't do better than go that

way now," Betty supplemented with a relieved expression. "I feel that by giving an eye to the bungalow people, I may see something of Fay and Edna, after all. Cliff-Edge has been a great magnet to them lately—I know that, anyhow! Just a sec, Tess."

The ex-captain darted to the cloak-room for her outdoor things, and then the two girls set off together. Tess was a valued chum of Betty's, temperamental enough to be a bit trying at times, and never one to take life with the joyous levity of Polly or Bunny, but a girl with plenty of sound sense!

"Yes," Betty muttered after they had trudged on together in silence for a full minute, "I was deprived of the captaincy because of something that Fay and Edna did, the first evening of term. After all this time there will be little use my proving that they, not I, broke bounds that evening, unless I can also prove why they broke bounds. But if—if my theory is right, and if I am able in the end to prove why they broke bounds on that particular evening—"

"Then all I hope is, you do, Betty! I hate to see you going on like this," her chum frowned. "Will it suit you to go down the path near Cliff-Edge Bungalow, to get to the shore?"

"It's really our only way now, and it will suit me—perfectly! Ever since the fall of cliff at our zigzag, the other evening, the cliff path near the bungalow is the only one we can use."

"I rather think of sketching the fallen cliff," said Tess, "to send home."

Betty knew that presently she and Tess would be going past that cave on the seashore which formed a private boathouse in connection with the bungalow on the cliff-top.

Meantime, they began to draw near the bungalow itself. When they were level with its drive-in from the main road Betty used very observant eyes.

It would not have surprised her to find that Fay and Edna were at the bungalow, either as spies or callers.

She had reason to believe that they were playing fast and loose with the Vanderloos—ingratiating themselves by means of artful ruses, and yet doing a lot of spying upon them, too.

But, to her disappointment, she could see no sign of them. A young man came out of the bungalow, to take the car round to the shed where it was kept, and that was all.

"You saw him, just then?" Betty murmured to her chum as they crossed the grass of the cliff-top to get to the zigzag. "He's the fellow who is experimenting with chemicals, that I told you and the others about. When I saw him before he was down below at the cave, and there was a young woman with a motor-boat."

Soon they were at the foot of the cliff-path, and were taking noisy steps along the shingly strand. The cave's lattice gates were closed and padlocked. Peering in, Betty and Tess could see the small motor-boat in its snug berth.

"He brought something out of this cave for her to take away in the boat," Betty further recollected. "I have so wondered what it was—and where she took it! They are a real mystery to me, these Vanderloos, but I'm dead sure that Fay and Edna have a notion as to what is going on. They have been trying their hardest to find out more about them."

"No sign of the Denver girls down here, either, Betty!"

"No. I thought there might be." And Betty could not help sighing over the fresh disappointment. "Whilst you're sketching, Tess, I shall

stroll back this way. But I'll come and see you make a start."

Very dreary were their surroundings as they roamed on, keeping close to the base of beetling cliffs. Under a lowering sky the sea was grey-green and sullen. There was none of that heavy plunging of yeasty waves along the shore which can make the tide seem hearty. Gulls that winged by voiced mournful cries.

Suddenly the two Study 12 girls rounded a shoulder of rock and came in sight of the fallen cliff.

All the thousands of tons of rock which had come down, a few evenings ago, lay heaped upon the beach, and there was a grandeur about these rugged mounds which Tess was not the one to miss.

But, although she made her start, not minding the chilly breeze sweeping in from over the sea, she soon had to give up. It had been her hope that a ray of pale sunshine might provide some of those lovely effects of light and shade which artists love. Instead, a nasty sea mist came in, so that the whole scene became a featureless blur.

Tess packed up, then, and went to find Betty, who had gone back very warily in the direction of the cave. Just as warily Tess picked her way along the misty shore, and it was a good job that she did so.

For suddenly she discerned the ex-captain, crouching behind some sea-worn boulders. Betty appeared to be hiding there so as to keep watch upon the cave. Presently she looked round, made out Tess—who had promptly found her own place of concealment—and signed to her not to move.

For at least ten minutes Tess was kept hiding there in a state of wonderment. She could not see the cave-mouth, and from first to last it was impossible for her to tell what was going on.

Then Betty came nipping back to her.

"It was Mrs. Vanderloo, loading something into the motor-boat that she had brought down from the bungalow. She didn't see me, and I'm so glad you kept out of sight, Tess. Now she has gone away, up to the bungalow—perhaps for another load."

Betty added, tensely:

"Tess, I want to know what has been put in the motor-boat!—I did—so wonder, that other time! And where—where do they take it? So let's creep back, and if the coast is clear—"

"Dodge into the cave and take a peep at the cargo?"

"That's the idea!"

As they traversed the three hundred yards back to the cave, keeping so close to the foot of the cliffs that their shoulders almost brushed the wall of rock, Betty whispered:

"I'm so glad I've got you with me, Tess. If you'll keep watch outside whilst I slip in?"

And where was the girl with sharper eyes than Tess' for keeping a look-out? Her love of outdoor sketching had made the young artist most acute at observing objects, near and far.

She took her stand outside the gated cave, whilst Betty darted inside. Mrs. Vanderloo had left the gates unlocked—from which fact the ex-captain had inferred that the woman would be returning very soon.

There was just time for Betty to get to the berthed boat and be taken with great surprise at what she could see had been put aboard it, then came a warning "St!" from her chum, whom she could just see outside.

Quick-wittedly, Betty crawled out of the cave on hands and knees. Tess had vanished, but announced her sheltering-place by another faint

hiss. In a few moments Betty was with her behind one of the numerous masses of rock which studded the shore.

"She's coming back," Tess breathed. "What did you see, Betty?"

"It's very strange," was the whispered response. "Food! Tins of biscuits, and some loaves of bread, and tinned meat! As if the motor-boat were to make quite a voyage!"

"It can't be going to do that," Tess muttered. "It's no better than a cockle-shell—fast, of course, but no good in the open sea at this time of year."

There was no chance for more talk, however guarded. Mrs. Vanderloo's step could be heard as she came along the beach.

This time the two girls wisely decided not to risk a single peep. They were sure that it would be far better to wait and listen for the woman's departure.

Nor were they kept waiting long.

Soon they heard the jingle of the chain which, with a padlock, secured the lattice gates. Then there was the step of Mrs. Vanderloo, the sound dying away as she made her way back to the zig-zag.

For caution's sake the excited girls waited five minutes after that. Then they crept out and went to the now closed and padlocked gates.

Betty, as she and her chum peered in, was able to see that Mrs. Vanderloo had brought another load down to the boat. On board, now, was a bundled-up motor-rug or two, and some apparel of a greatcoat description.

"Let's beat it now!" Betty quickly suggested. "We can do no more here, Tess. The boat is equipped for—well, more than a day's outing! So when is it going to start? Who is going in it?"

"And where—where, in a boat as small as

that?" was Tess' frowned question. "You in a hurry to get back to the school, Betty?"

"I! What I mean to do is to wait about—but not down here—to see if the boat leaves."

"It's worth it, certainly."

But, although both girls put in the rest of the afternoon in watching from a most commanding position on the cliff-top, the patient vigil went quite unrewarded.

From where they kept watch at the very edge of the cliffs, Betty and Tess could see the bungalow and all the grassland lying between it and the zigzag.

If Mrs. Vanderloo or anyone else had come away from the bungalow to go down to the shore the watchers must have seen.

Also, they could peer over and obtain a bird's-eye view of the shore below—that section of it which took in the cave.

Nothing happened, whilst the autumn day grew steadily drearier. The sea mist thickened, so that at last even Tess' sharp eyes were baffled.

Yet still she and Betty stuck to their watch-point.

Tea-time went by, and they quite cheerfully faced the prospect of missing tea. Their huddled positions caused cramping pains, and they endured the discomfort with cheerful smiles.

But at long last both girls reached the same regrettable conclusion. Owing to the thick mist the boat was not to leave! The wretched afternoon was going to change to an untimely night-fall. Already shipping far out at sea was resorting to use of the siren.

"No, Betty, they'll never take the boat out in this," Tess agreed with her chum's opinion. "They wouldn't be so mad!"

"Especially as it looks as if they were prepared for a long trip. So now, I suppose, we must simply get back to the school. Haven't seen a sign of Fay and Edna, either! Wonder how they have been spending the halfer?"

How, indeed!

The Absentees

IT had become a very foggy twilight by the time Betty and Tess were going up the drive to a schoolhouse showing many lighted windows.

They heard a familiar tr-r-rump, trump! of a motor-horn, and looked round to see the school's bus bringing its load of hockey-players home from the "away" match. The headlamps were masked with fog-discs, and slowly the vehicle churned its way up the drive.

Betty and Tess stood by to watch it pass, and mistily they saw some of the passengers' faces, whilst some cheering came which sounded like a cheering to keep up depressed spirits.

When the two girls got to the porch, most of the set-down players had darted into the warmth and brightness of the front hall. But Betty and Tess found Polly and other good chums waiting for them on the gravel.

"We saw you on the drive," Polly remarked, with a significant glumness. "What have you been doing with yourselves, you two?"

"Oh—nothing worth talking about," Betty smiled. "How did the game go?"

"We lost," Polly grimaced. "A rotten afternoon, altogether."

"Bekas—you could hardly see ze ball, sweendle!"

"Most trying, yes wather! Uttahly disagreeable, bai Jove!"

"I'm sorry for Etta," said Pam. "It's the first time she has taken the team out, as captain."



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"So am I," Betty genuinely responded. "A licking is always a licking, but this—"

"If you must know," Bunny sighed, "it was a foul thrashing for our side. Oh, how we were whacked!"

"What was wrong?"

"Everything, Betty! And the less said about it the better."

"And zen, to make it all ze rottener, we had to hurry over tea bekas of ze fog—sweendle! Ah, bah!" Naomer disgustedly shrieked. "I am going up to Study 12, queek, to get something to eat—for a change!"

Later, upstairs, Betty made a point of seeking the new captain, where the latter was changing. There was a simple "I'm sorry, Etta, about the match," which that girl received in the spirit in which it was tendered.

The schoolhouse hummed again with life now, for there had been an early return of girls on account of the disagreeable conditions out of doors. But were they all back yet? Fay and Edna—were they?

Betty, with good reason for doing so, went to the trouble of finding out. The sisters had not come in. But this time she was not going to do any lying in wait to see how they might manage to slip in late.

No longer the captain, it was no longer her irksome duty to "tackle" girls about escapades likely to get themselves and the Form into disgrace. Now that she had satisfied herself that Fay and Edna were overdue, she was not concerned as to how they might slip in late; it had become her only concern to know what had kept them out.

Something to do with the Vanderloos? But no hanging about for the errant pair could result in an answer to that question.

So Betty went back to Study 12, and became quite the cheerfulest member of the old coterie. Polly, this evening, was like a bear with a sore head, and all the fizz had gone out of the usually sparkling Bunny.

Suddenly—rat, tat, TAT! It was an important-sounding knock at the door which made Naomer, for one, give a jump.

The door opened. A girl named Eva Merrick, who was to the fore in a crowd of some half-dozen "Betty baiters," inquired in a falsely sweet voice:

"Excuse me! But does Detective Betty Barton live here?"

"Oh, get out!" shouted Polly, bounding up from her chair. "We've had enough of your—"

"But, pray!" pleaded Eva, whilst those behind her nudged one another and tittered. "This is so serious! Can we have the assistance of the renowned Betty?"

Dodging a dictionary hurled by Bunny, Eva drew back, but kept a foot protruded to prevent Polly from closing the door.

"Come on, Betty!" all the mockers now began to chorus. "Just the sort of case you like! Two girls—missing!"

Then Betty got up from her seat to go across to the door. She signed to Polly to give up trying to close it in the faces of the ribald crew, and was next moment confronting them.

"Fay and Edna are not back yet, then?"

"Oh, how did you know we meant Fay and Edna?" grinned Eva. "Girls, isn't she wonderful! Knows everything!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Perhaps she knows where Fay and Edna are!" scoffed one of the others. "Do you, Betty?"

There was no time for the ex-captain to make the calm retort she intended. Etta Hargrove was out of her nearby study, inquiring anxiously as she reached the noisy group:

"What's that about Fay and Edna? Not in?"

"No, Etta; but don't you worry—leave it to Betty! She's the one for mysteries!"

"There was," Eva began to recite:

"There was a young girl named Betty,

Distinctly more clever than pretty!

She would creep out of bounds,

Or hide in the grounds—"

Even if the rest had not been lost in shrieks of laughter, Eva's bantering voice would have been overridden by the new captain's sharp:

"Hold your silly row!"

Then, abashing the unruly ones by the business-like way in which she strode up the corridor, Etta looked in at the Denver sisters' study. She came back at once, and her serious air served to intimidate the unruly crowd still more. It melted away.

"Betty," Etta said, appearing in the Study 12 doorway, "do you know anything about Fay and Edna—why they are not in?"

"Only that it is nothing new for them to be out after hours. The fog is thicker; they may, of course, have been delayed by it—got lost."

"I shall report it," Etta said, and was turning away to go to seek the Form-mistress, when she found that young lady approaching in the corridor.

"I take it, Etta, that all girls are in by now?"

"No, Miss Merrick; Fay and Edna Denver—"

"What!"

"I was just coming to tell you. Betty, here, suggests that they may have got lost in the fog—"

"Yes, obviously," Miss Merrick said, without meaning it as a reflection upon the ex-captain. But Betty, having been subjected to more derision by Form-mates, felt that this from her own Form-mistress was the limit. She fired up.

"I could suggest other reasons to account for their being out, but I won't. What thanks would I get, if I did? No, I am done with—"

"Betty! That tone to me!" exclaimed the mistress, in pained surprise. "Now, you must come with me to the headmistress—you, also, Etta—about this business of Fay and Edna. I am sure, Betty, if you can suggest any—"

"But I'd rather not! I like to be sure before I speak!"

And that was still Betty's disgruntled mood when, with Etta and Miss Merrick, she was in the presence of Miss Somerfield.

It seemed to her—Betty—that anything she might say would only be regarded as a lot of trumped-up nonsense—put forward, too, for personal reasons. Without any proofs to offer, she was trying to insinuate that Fay and Edna had been instrumental in her downfall. That was what the headmistress would think.

She had not a bit of proof to submit!

But Betty's embittered state had to give way as she realised the anxiety Miss Merrick and the headmistress were in. Much against her inclination at last she blurted out:

"If you must know, then, I think Fay and Edna may be absent on account of something to do with the people at the bungalow."

Miss Somerfield gave a violent start.

"The Vanderloos? Why do you say that, Betty?"

"Only because I can see how worried you are. I can't prove anything I do say, but—"

"It was Mrs. Vanderloo who caught you trespassing in the bungalow grounds the other evening," the headmistress agitatedly recollected. "Are you meaning that Fay and Edna may now be hanging around Cliff-Edge?"

"I have seen them with Mrs. Vanderloo, as if they had become acquainted with her. I had better not say any more—without proof. It will only be thought that it is all my silly imagination!"

"I will ring up the bungalow."

Miss Somerfield went to her extension telephone, and the call was soon put through. Those who stood by gathered that it was Mrs. Vanderloo herself at the other end of the line.

Apologetic, half-ashamed, the headmistress explained the anxiety about the overdue sisters, and

"Is it any use asking you again—will you conduct my niece Elsa to where you hid those stolen papers?" she asked, turning to them.

The sisters exchanged consulting glances, and decided to answer:

"No, thanks!"

"Very well. You must get your hats and coats on and come with me."

Both girls turned to take up their outdoor things in a rather jaunty way. They had jumped to the conclusion that Mrs. Vanderloo was going to take the pair of them back to their school and there accuse them in front of the headmistress. Well, let her do that!

Of course, Miss Somerfield would believe that there must be something in the accusation, but that didn't matter a scrap in the long run. They might have to leave Morcove School, covered with disgrace. Trifling price to have paid for



The Denver sisters knew from the 'phone talk just concluded that Mrs. Vanderloo had been speaking to Miss Somerfield. Had their whereabouts been discovered? they wondered hopefully. But when they saw their captor's expression, their spirits sank still lower.

gently led up to the question—were they at the bungalow?

"They are not, you say? And you have seen nothing of them? Thank you! Why I rang you up, I have been given to understand that the two girls are not exactly strangers to you? Pardon?"

As Miss Somerfield listened to what was being said over the telephone, she began to give understanding nods.

"Oh, I see! So sorry to have troubled you, then!"

And she ended the conversation.

Their Relentless Captors

IN that same moment, at the bungalow, Mrs. Vanderloo set down her telephone receiver.

Fay and Edna were with her in the lamp-lit sitting-room. They could tell by her answers that she had been talking to Miss Somerfield, and their hopes had risen, only to be instantly dashed again.

papers worth a million pounds to their own father!

"Er—what about our bikes?" Edna saucily asked, when she and Fay were ready to go out of doors with Mrs. Vanderloo.

"Oh, the bicycles—they have been attended to," was the cold reply.

The bungalow, when they had set off, would be deserted. Fay and Edna had known that they were alone with Mrs. Vanderloo. She left the lamp burning in the sitting-room, and conducted them to the front door.

"What a vile night!" gasped Fay. "This fog! Good job we know the way!"

"Haven't you a torch, Mrs. Vanderloo?" Edna inquired with studied composure.

"I have a torch. I shall know when to use it."

Again that passionless, cold voice!

Mrs. Vanderloo pulled the front door shut with a slam, and then, putting herself between the two girls, took each by an arm firmly.

"Oh, we can manage without being led," Fay objected. "And, Mrs. Vanderloo—this is not the way!"

The woman was steering both girls off the drive which led down to the road.

"This," she said, "is the way. Don't give any trouble—"

"But—"

The protesting exclamation died at Fay's lips. Suddenly Elsa Vanderloo had loomed out of the fog—ready to assist her aunt, that was only too obvious, in subduing both girls should they attempt to struggle.

"Edna!" the elder sister next moment quavered, finding herself being strongly held and hurried along by Mrs. Vanderloo's niece. "Edna, what is this? Here, we—we don't want to—"

"Oh, wait a bit!" snapped the younger girl. "I don't care—no, I just don't! In for a penny, in for a pound—ha, ha, ha!"

She, like Fay, realised that they were being conducted over the fogbound cliff-top towards the zigzag. So they were not to be taken to the school, after all? Where, then, were they being taken? Down to that private cave of which any tenant of the bungalow had the sole use? It was a lock-up place. Perhaps the intention was to keep them there—"until we come to our senses and give in!"

Edna let her sister hear her laugh again.

"Rather a lark, Edna, spending a night in the cave!"

"Oh, is—is that what they mean to do with us?"

"And what does it matter if they do?"

Mrs. Vanderloo brought her pocket-torch into use during the descent of the zigzag. The strong ray helped them to see the irregular rock steps, although it seemed, at the same time, to intensify the denseness of the fog.

Then, when they had all four reached the beach, where the smooth sea was only dully plashing upon the cold shingle, the woman switched off the torch.

The foggy darkness was utterly baffling to Fay and Edna as they were marched along with no light.

Except that they knew themselves to be going in the direction of the cave, they were at a complete loss. It seemed to both girls that the dark base of the cliff should have been dimly discernible upon their right.

Had they been alone, needing to make this journey, they would have kept literally in touch with the wall of rock, every step of the way. They could only suppose that they were nearer to it than they imagined.

And then, suddenly, they found themselves at the very water's edge.

They had fancied that the gentle plash of small waves had been growing louder in their ears. Now the thin line of surf, which was all the quiet tide made, was directly upon their left, and there was a boat, half in the water, with Osbert Vanderloo in charge of it.

A tiny electric light was burning in the pilot's pit, illuminating controls and dials. By that light, feeble as it was in the fog, Fay and Edna saw the young man as he straightened up. What with the fog and his heavy overalls and high sea-boots, he looked a giant.

Fay writhed round in the firm grasp of Elsa Vanderloo, emitting a little whimpering cry of fright.

"Well, then," Elsa said coldly, "say where the papers are—promise to take me to them now—"

"No, Fay, don't you!" Edna cried wildly.

"Fay, don't be silly and give in! They daren't harm us, really—that's all I care!"

"Your sister has a nerve," Mrs. Vanderloo voiced in the darkness. "Have you, perhaps, more sense than—"

Edna answered fiercely:

"I'm not afraid, if you are, Fay. You know very well," she said to Mrs. Vanderloo brazenly, "if anything happens to me and Edna then there will be nobody to tell you where the papers are to be found! So see!"

"Get into the boat," Mrs. Vanderloo calmly commanded. "My niece goes with you."

"Goes where?" clamoured Fay. "Where?"

"You will find out when you get there."

"Come on, then, Fay!" laughed Edna, and she got into the motor-boat with a display of bravado which rallied her sister's failing nerve.

Osbert would have helped Edna to get aboard, but she showed off her recklessness by declining his assistance.

Another minute, and the boat was afloat in the shallows, Fay and Edna sharing one seat, with Elsa facing them as she occupied another seat all to herself. The young man was wading about, manœuvring the boat stern first into deep water.

The moment came when he could agilely clamber in over the side, to make his deft dive for the pilot's seat. He was no sooner there than the engine quietly throbbled to life, and the propeller's motion began to tell.

Then Mrs. Vanderloo, who had remained at the water's edge, spoke towards Fay and Edna.

"What one of you said just now," that cold voice came to the sisters in the rocking boat, "if anything happens to you two girls, there will be nobody to tell us where the papers are to be found—"

"Neither will there!" Edna retorted.

"Perfectly true, my girl. But you appear to have forgotten this: there will be nobody to tell Mr. Denver, either, where the papers are to be found, so we shall be as well off as if we had them. That is all—good-night!"

The engine took on a quicker beat and the boat backed out so rapidly that Mrs. Vanderloo was instantly lost sight of in the fog. And now Edna was no longer inclined to laugh. Those last remarks of Mrs. Vanderloo's!

"Oh, Edna, Edna!" wailed Fay, whose teeth were chattering. "It's no use! I'm going to give in!"

"All right, then," her sister muttered savagely. "Tell them then! I—I suppose we simply can't—go on!"

"Those papers you want," Fay blurted out to Elsa Vanderloo; "get your brother to turn back, and we will take you to them on the moor, where they are hidden! We promise—"

"In this fog, do you think you could find the exact spot now?" Elsa responded. "No; you have left it too late, and so—we shall go on. You can tell me where to find the papers to-morrow, and when I have found them—you will be set free. Until then—you remain in our hands."

"But where—where?" both sisters frantically clamoured. "Oh, see how foggy it is out here on the sea!" Fay moaned. "I wonder you and your brother are not afraid!"

Elsa Vanderloo let an icy smile answer that remark.

The boat stopped backing, then the engine went into forward speed, and with one swift and wide sweep the powerful little craft came right round and headed out to sea.

All in a Fog

THE dismal autumn night had passed. Another day had come to Morcove School—and Fay and Edna Denver were still missing!

Still missing—their whereabouts not even to be guessed at. Not a clue yet, although scholars knew that the headmistress and colleagues of Fay had been up almost all night, keeping in touch with active police.

What did it mean?

In the Form Fay and Edna had long been recognised as being a rash, fly-away pair, always casting about for some fresh, stolen pleasure—some new "thrill," only to be obtained by a total flouting of discipline. What then had they done this time?

Whatever they had done, their latest escape had evidently failed to go off "according to plan"! It looked as if the widespread fog, setting in late yesterday afternoon, had proved an unexpected difficulty with which they had been unable to cope.

Only the continuance of the fog saved all Morcove from harbouring the most alarming ideas about the missing girls.

Mistresses and scholars alike were able to take comfort in the thought that the errant pair were simply fogbound somewhere. They had gone out for yesterday's "halfer," on their bicycles, and so it could be imagined that a lengthy jaunt

had been the daring intention, and then, on the return journey, they had simply got lost on the moor.

But anxiety was great enough, in spite of this belief that the fog was to blame. The police were being greatly hampered by the thick weather. A thorough scouring of all the miles of desolate moorland was impossible. As for telephonic inquiries at outlying villages, at railway stations and bus depots—they had been made overnight, without the slightest success.

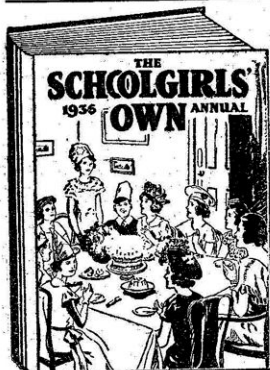
Morcove's own telephone, at this anxious time, was very busy. In class, this morning, Miss Merrick's girls had frequently heard an urgent summons for Miss Somerfield. The Form, like the rest of the school, was doing its best to carry on as usual. But Miss Merrick could not say anything when an excited pause in the work followed each distant ring of the bell.

News at last?

It never was so. Time after time the scholars hoped to see the class-room door open to admit someone—perhaps the headmistress herself—with the news, "It's all right!" But no such longed-for announcement ended the suspense.

Once, also, the girls heard a call being put through on the 'phone for the missing sisters' parents, in London. After the midday dismissal it was learned that Mr. and Mrs. Denver were

(Continued on the next page.)



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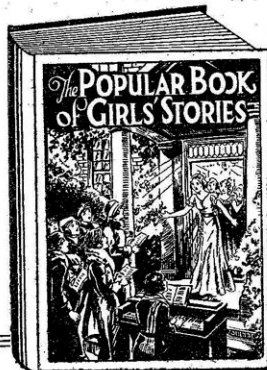
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abroad—in Paris, he having important business there.

"Still, I should think they would put off any business on account of all this, and come home at once," Madge Minden remarked, in Study 12.

The chums had come straight from class-room to study at twelve o'clock. Even if conditions out of doors had been right for games, Betty & Co. would have been disinclined for hockey-practice or any other pastime. It was all very well to go into school as usual, but games—no!

"They may be here before the day is out," Judy spoke gravely. "If they fly over from Paris."

"No," Tess said tersely. "This fog!"

"Oh, dash this fog!" Polly fumed, drifting to the window only to turn away from it instantly.

Slipping away from her chums presently, Betty was treated to more samples of the Form's opinion of her as she made her way downstairs. She was advised to hurry up, or the police would get all the glory!

By such teasing remarks it was implied that the Fay-and-Edna mystery was a nut for "Detective Betty" to crack—if she could! At any rate, it couldn't be supposed that Betty was content to leave it to others.

Nor was she. Let them deride her as much as they liked, Betty felt bound to pursue her own line of investigation on the quiet. When next the school chimes rang out, sounding half-past twelve, she was alone on the foggy road running between Morcove and the town, meaning to get a look at the bungalow.

The school had not been gated, and Betty felt sure of being back in good time for the dinner-gong. As for the usefulness of this stroll as far as the bungalow, she reckoned that it would mean much to her and her theory if she were able to tell how the Vanderloos were going on, to-day.

Her reasoning was that if, as she suspected, they were implicated in the mystery of Fay and Edna, life at the bungalow might show signs of having been thrown out of gear.

What a thrill it meant for her then, when suddenly there loomed before her, out of the fog, a figure instantly recognisable as that of Elsa Vanderloo—walking hastily.

The young woman appeared to have come away from the bungalow, which was still hidden to Betty in the fog. She, Elsa, was quickly crossing from one side of the road to the other when the ex-captain discerned her, and this it was that set Betty's heart beating fast.

Not to be keeping to the road, with all this fog about; going away on to the open moor instead—surely, that was strange, to say the least!

But Elsa Vanderloo had noticed Betty, and it was just possible that the young woman had left the road so as to avoid an encounter, which would have meant stopping for conversation. Any exchange of remarks could scarcely have been of a cordial nature.

Was it so, and was the young woman only making a detour on the fog-ridden fringe of the moor? To try to settle that point, Betty turned back, so that if Elsa should work back to the road she would find herself being met at speaking distance after all.

But Elsa did not come off the mist-drenched grass, for Betty to see her. There was such complete stillness, and Betty, knowing that even the faintest sounds carry far in fog, became convinced that Miss Vanderloo had stayed on the moor, otherwise her step, however light, would have been audible on the tarmac.

Then Betty hastened back to where she had seen the young woman for that moment or two. A rush of ideas had come to the ex-captain—oh, only possibilities, theories, and how she would be laughed at for entertaining them, if the Form knew! But—"the last laugh may yet be with me!" she said to herself, fiercely.

Here was the spot, and only a few yards farther on—yes, to her intense relief she could see just where Elsa Vanderloo had taken to the grass on the moorland side of the road. Every step had meant a clear footprint, caused by the squeezing of mist-drops from blades of grass.

And now—now Betty felt that it should be possible to follow the woman—trail her in her movements on the fogbound moor. There was a trail, thanks to grass and heather and dead bracken being all so drenched. The sharp eyes of Morcove's derided "detective" could see wherever Elsa Vanderloo had passed she had brushed drops of water from the heather and pressed moisture out of the grass.

"And in this fog, she has had to come out here on to the moor," Betty's excited mind ran on. "At a time when Fay and Edna are missing! Elsa Vanderloo—and the Vanderloos have had something to do with it all, let others say what they like!"

Keeping Fay and Edna prisoners, were they, somewhere on the moor? This young woman—was she finding her way to the sisters at this very moment?

"At any rate!" Betty nodded to herself determinedly.

And, with the white fog all about her, she still went on—alone, and without a fear.

The trail—it was holding out, and whilst it lasted she would follow it. She, the laughing-stock of the Form at present, as she knew herself to be, and perhaps even now destined for another fall, and again—perhaps not!

One o'clock at Morcove School, and Polly raging about the schoolhouse—looking for Betty.

All the ex-captain's chums were anxiously seeking her, now that it was time to go in to dinner. She was not to be found, and there were other girls already making jokes about her absence.

But another half-hour, with Betty's place at table vacant and her absence, needless to say, known to authority, made all the difference.

It had become no joke by that time, but only a fresh sensation.

For now, definitely, Betty Barton, like Fay and Edna, was missing and, in all Morcove School who was there to say why?

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

WHERE IS BETTY BARTON?

Her friends know she is on the trail of that family of mystery—the Vanderloos. Is she safe, or is she in their hands—a prisoner like the Denver sisters? Next week read the startling happenings that turn Gull Island near Morcove into—

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