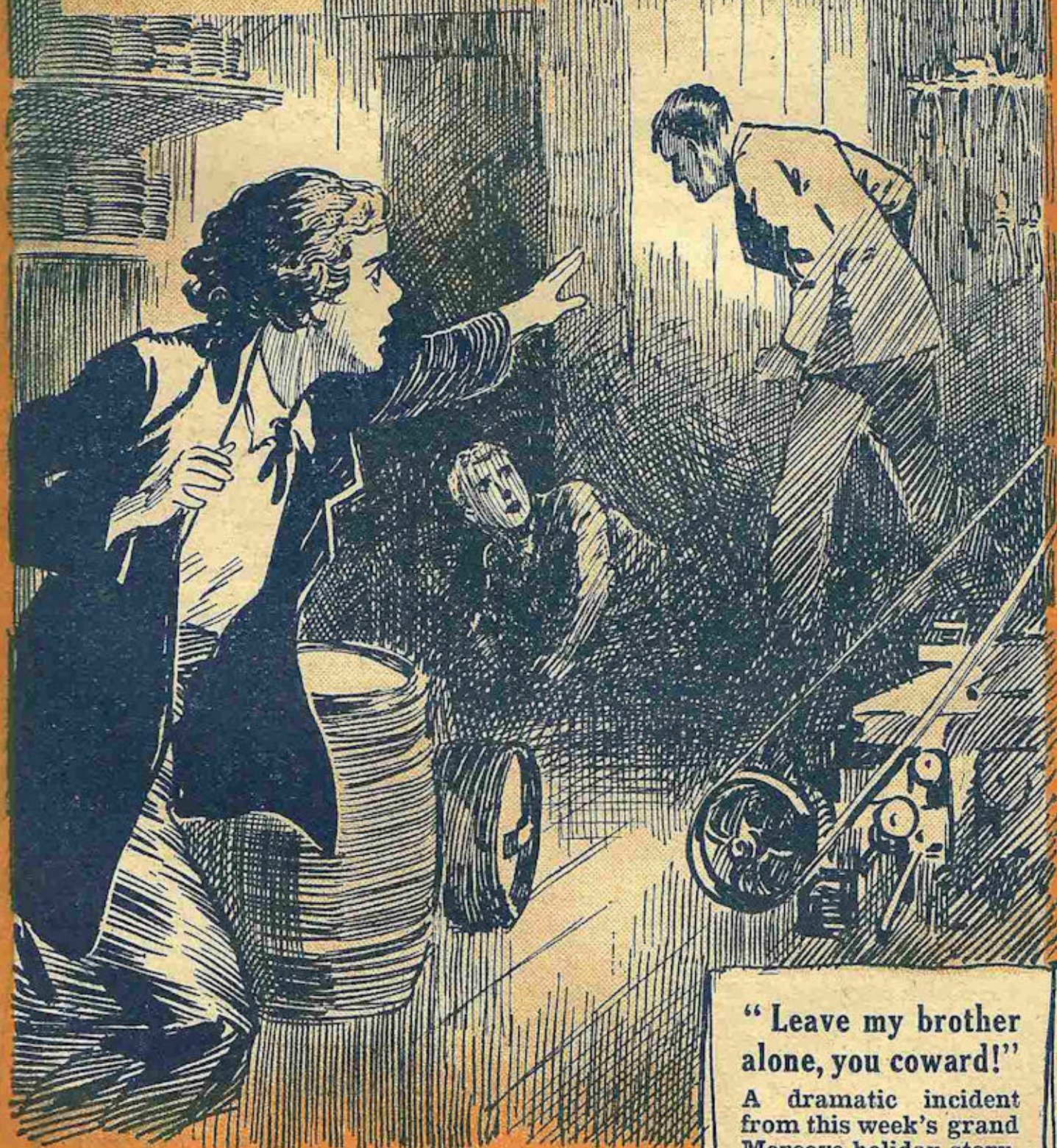


**"Morcove's Strange Seaside Task"** GRANG LONG  
MORCOVE  
STORY INSIDE

# The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2d

No. 793. Vol. 31.  
Week ending  
April 18th, 1936.  
EVERY TUESDAY.



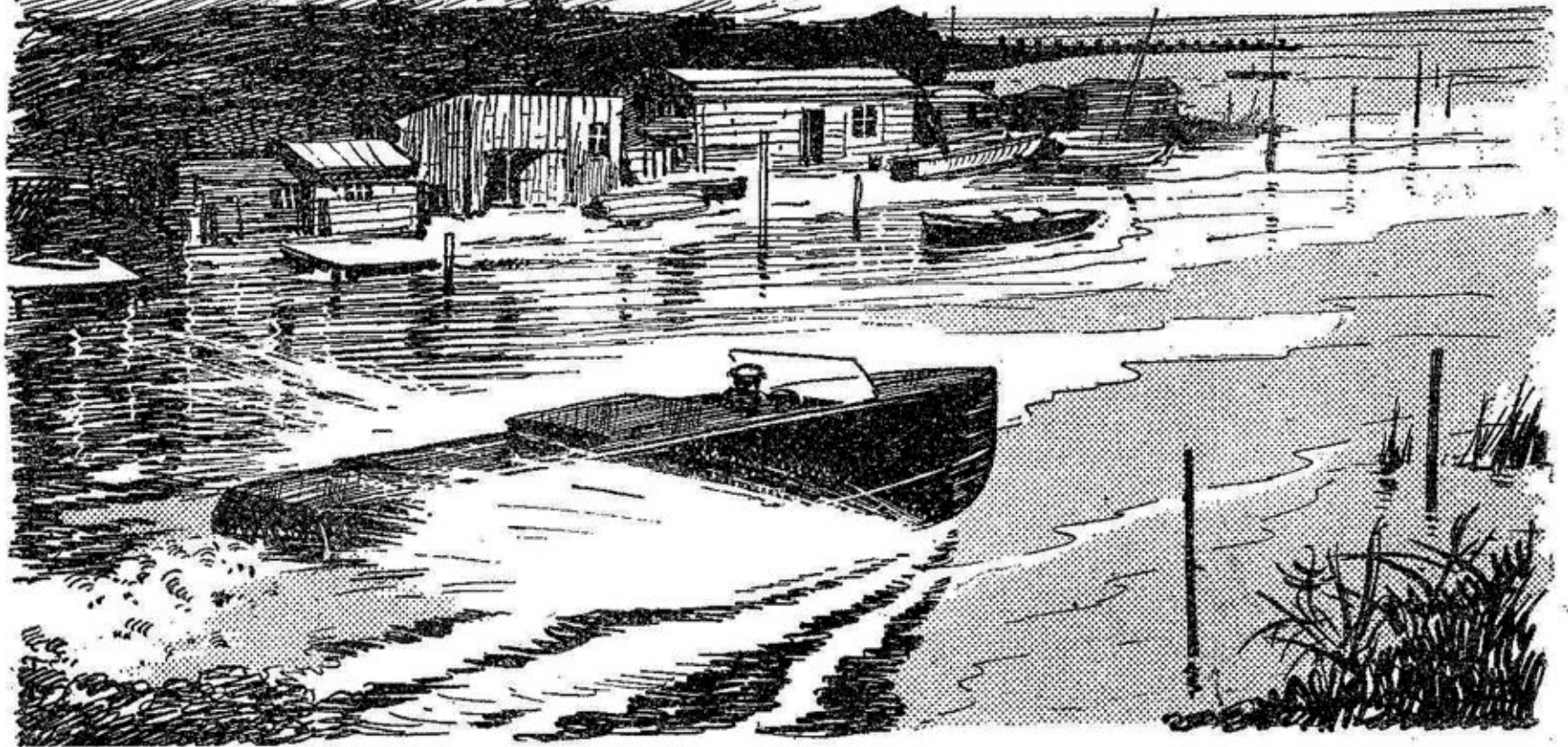
**"Leave my brother  
alone, you coward!"**

A dramatic incident  
from this week's grand  
Morcove holiday story

**"THE CRIMSON SHADOWS"** EXCITING COMPLETE 'SECRET  
SOCIETY' SERIES WITHIN

Magnificent Long Story of the Chums of Morcove and—

# MORCOVES' STRANGE SEASIDE



## The Danger!

**T**WO schoolgirls came running out of the Grand Hotel, Southville-on-Sea, in a great hurry.

Darting across to the esplanade, they continued at the same urgent pace, going in a westerly direction.

Southville, during the last few days, had been filling up for Easter; but very few visitors were about at this time.

There had been a good many before-breakfast strollers along the front, up to a few minutes since. Then some boarding-house gongs had been heard, or, if not, wrist-watches had been glanced at. Hungry air, Southville! And so, of a sudden, the breezy parade had become almost deserted.

But the two schoolgirls, as they tore along, did pass a sprinkling of dawdlers who all stared in great astonishment—and no wonder!

Only to glimpse the face of either girl was to realise that this was no mere early morning scamper, result of bounding holiday spirits. The pair were racing along together for some reason that must be as grave as it was urgent.

Along the entire length of the promenade, west of the pier, the two girls raced until they reached the end of the smooth asphalt. Their way now was along the top of a shingle bank which had the sloping beach on one side of it and low-lying marshy ground on the other side.

"Nobody to stare at us now, Tess!"

"No, Bunny. You feeling ready to drop? I am."

"Just about! But we must keep on—both these bushes! If it weren't for them we might be able to see ahead—do the trick by making signals just in time!"

**Convinced that there is a plot to prevent Mr. Creel succeeding in the speedboat contest, Betty Barton and her chums are determined, as always, to see fair play.**

"I know—beastly stuff, tamarisk. Can't think why they plant it!"

Perhaps the dull green vegetation was all the less attractive to Tess Trelawney because she happened to have such a keen eye for what was really beautiful. Tess was that member of the Study No. 12 chummery, at Morcove School, who was so fond of drawing and painting.

"But it isn't far now, Bunny," she panted as they still slogged along. "From the end of the parade it is only a half-mile, I should think, to where the sea flows into the creek."

"And that's just where we reckon the danger may be! Oh, Tess, how I do hope nothing has happened! If only we can be in time! But you know what Alice Creel said about her father and his speedboat—"

"That he has usually started out just after daybreak, for any trial in open water? Well, if he has done that this morning—and if a trap really was laid last night, then—"

"Oh, Tess—look, look!" came Bunny Trevor's interrupting gasp. "There is the speedboat! See it, over there—on the inner water—"

"But heading for the way out to sea—my goodness!"

Tess had caught up her chum's agitated outcry in a tone which evidenced acute dismay.

But, as both girls instantly realised, at least they could now make frantic signals, with the hope of their being seen and taken to mean:

"Stop! Danger! Stop!"

A gap in the line of rank-growing tamarisk had enabled the hurrying girls to see across the marshy land upon their right, and so scan the few acres of shallow water formed by a narrow inlet from the sea.

Even on a morning a

## —Grangemoor on Holiday

## TASK



BY MARJORIE STANTON  
ILLUSTRATED BY L. SHIELDS

bright as this, a dreary scene it was; marshy wastes in the foreground, then that dull-looking sheet of water comprising the creek, with some low, wooden buildings, most derelict and forlorn-looking, lined along the water's edge. And there were a few small boats that seemed to have been brought to the creek, there to lie lopsided until they went to pieces in the mud.

But the very lifelessness of the scene, as a whole, only rendered one object which it included all the more noticeable, as a thing of marvellous beauty and potential animation.

The speedboat, a tiny craft all as bright as silver!

At this moment it was merely gliding slowly away from that side of the creek where those ramshackle buildings showed not a sign of life. But something torpedo-like in the shape of the thing was suggestive of terrific speed, capable of being developed in a few seconds.

Tess and Bunny, in the best position they could find on the shingle-bank, stood side by side and made the most expressive signs by waving their arms.

"Stop! Go back!"

Seen by anyone in control of the speedboat; those signals must have been understood to mean only that. But were they being seen—were they?

That was the agonising doubt which both girls suffered, as they watched and waved.

For the boat was still going on—only creeping, it was true, but at any instant her engines might be set to high speed, the way out to sea being reckoned to be perfectly safe. The narrow

channel between sea and creek was what sailors call a "fairway."

Yet it was that very fairway which these two girls feared might be, this morning, sown with deadly danger!

"Hi! Ahoy there—hi!" they now found breath enough for shouting. "Hi—stop! STOP!"

But no. Perhaps the engines were making sufficient noise to prevent anyone on board from hearing the warning cries. As for the frantic signals which Tess and Bunny were making—there could be a simple reason why they were going unnoticed.

Most likely those aboard the Silver Swift had eyes, only for the course being steered—straight for that narrow channel by which she had so often passed to the open sea.

"Oh, dash!" Bunny fumed, raging to and fro whilst she still waved. "What more can we do! Who is on board, Tess? Only Mr. Creel? If so, I can understand. But what about Jack and Dave?"

"He may not have asked them to go with him. If they are in the boat, then they are huddled down somewhere. You can't see a sign of anyone. It's such a hooded-over contraption. The boys may even be watching the engines, or—"

"Oh, Tess, Tess! Now she has put on speed!" Bunny fairly screamed. "This is awful. Hi! Ahoy! Morcove—hi!"

And yet the boat gained speed, heading straight for that narrow channel which was, as it were, to let it out of harbour.

"Mor-cove!" Tess joined in shouting their school's name. "Hi, stop there—stop!"

Both girls had their handkerchiefs out and were fluttering them wildly. From desperate yelling Bunny changed to a groaned:

"No use! If the danger is there, then they're for it!"

It was almost a wonder she said "if," for she and Tess had been governed during the last few minutes by a terrible sense of certainty. There had been villainy in the night, and it had taken THAT form—danger in the fairway! An underwater obstruction, into which the speedboat was now fated to blunder.

"Oh, do stop—do!" was wrung from both girls now. "Stop—stop!"

And then—in a single moment, as if powerful engines had been reversed—the speedboat stopped.

## Barbed Wire!

TESS and Bunny almost dropped with relief. The sudden joy of seeing the boat stopped was almost unbearable.

Next moment, a couple of boyish heads bobbed up from what was probably a half-cowled engine-pit in the after-part of the boat. Puzzled shouts came across the water and the bit of marshland, asking the two girls:

"What—do—you—wa-a-a-ant!"

It was like Bunny Trevor, now that she and Tess were enjoying unspeakable relief, to become hysterically mirthful.

"You goops!" she yelled back, in a laughing way. "How many more times—stop where you are! Hold that! Oh, Tess," she turned to plead to her chum, "you try to get them to understand."

She added, whilst Tess drew breath.

"I didn't think Jack and Dave could be so dense! Dave, too—just fancy!" But Bunny was all joyful smiles as she said it.

"Keep back from the channel there!" Tess shouted, still seeing only Jack Linton and Dave Cardew in the boat. "Danger! Something to do—with—last night!"

"Ah, now they get us!" was Bunny's delighted comment.

The two boys bobbed down and were out of sight for a few moments. Then they bobbed up again.

One of them—it was Jack—gave directional signs that he at least was going to be put ashore. It would be done by bringing the speedboat carefully to the nearest bit of the creek's mud-banks.

Then Tess and Bunny started to run once more, meaning to get to where Jack's likely landing-place had been indicated.

They had to go a couple of hundred yards farther along the bank, but then, to their joy, it was possible for them to strike aside on to the reedy marshland and so "cut off a corner."

No sooner were they off the bank, picking their way over ground that was almost below sea-level, than they lost sight of the speedboat. But a couple of minutes later, with only a short distance to run to be at the creekside, they saw both Jack and Dave striding to meet them.

"What's up?" was Jack's typically mock-crusty question, followed by a jovial: "'Morning, girls! Just you two?"

"That's all," Bunny breathlessly responded as she and Tess came to a standstill in front of the staring boys. "A few more would have been better, certainly. Then you might have heard us, sooner!"

"But what?" clamoured Dave anxiously. "Something about danger—where? How do you mean? Mr. Creel was in charge of the boat, of course. We were only being taken out for a treat."

"And the treat's been spoiled," Jack grimaced. "He has gone back now—taken her back to her moorings. You just about put the wind-up Mr. Creel with your shoutings!"

"Sorry," Tess said with a gravity which Dave, at any rate, could appreciate. Jack and Bunny were fast reacting to their usual flippancy. "And we may, of course, have been getting scared about nothing, in which case—sorrier still. But Bunny and I—we share the same bed-room at the hotel—"

"Sorry," Jack mimicked Tess' apology; "but I don't quite see what that has to do with—well, this?"

"Oh, but it has," Bunny sparkled. "Tess means, that is why she and I are the only ones to be here. We were getting dressed together—up before any of the rest, we think, and it's no wonder if they were all over-sleeping!—and then suddenly it flashed upon Tess—whilst she and I were talking about things—supposing that the man who has hanging about round here, last night—as we know there was a man— Oh, Tess, you go on!" the still breathless speaker pleaded.

"You two fellows know, of course, that a man was seen out this way, as late as eleven o'clock last night?" Tess took up the talk. "It is why you both decided to stay with Mr. Creel—to keep guard—"

"Which we did, until after daylight; two hours on and two hours off," Jack nodded; "turn and turn about. And nothing happened. Not a sound in the night; not a sign of anybody wanting to do mischief."

"Perhaps," Tess quietly rejoined, "because the mischief had been done! Any rate, as Bunny has

said, I suddenly had an awful thought, whilst dressing. Supposing that man had done something before he was seen; something that would mean disaster later on for Mr. Creel's speedboat?"

"Yes, go on," Dave urged.

"Somehow, I saw in a flash one way in which harm could be done. By sinking something in the narrow channel through which the Silver Swift has to be steered every time she goes out to sea or comes in again—"

"By heck!" was Jack's interrupting shout. "Dave, man, think of Tess here thinking of that! Hasn't Mr. Creel told us what a narrow passage that is, and none too deep, either!"

"It could be done—easily—what Tess says," Dave said, looking unexcited but extremely serious. "And if—if it were done, early in the night, before we started our sentry-go—then it would have been all up with the speedboat just now—"

"Only these two girls warned us in time! Good old Morcove!" Jack cried. "Say, though, it really was a miracle, a thumping bit of luck for Mr. Creel, your warning us! That is, if there really is anything at this moment in the fairway."

"We can soon find out," Dave muttered; and he did a half-turn, intending to walk sharply away. "Not five minutes from here."

"Come on, then, boys!"

Jack meant the girls, who were eager enough to put themselves in step with him and Dave.

The first few strides took them off the low-lying ground on to a raised roadway skirting this side of the creek. As they all four hastened on, their backs were to the old wooden buildings. The creek was upon their right, and they were bearing towards the seashore.

That tamarisk-grown bank above the beach along which Tess and Bunny had run so hard just now, had a breach in it, and just there was the bottle-neck outlet into the open sea.

This bit of road they were now traversing was in a dreadful state. It had been all mire in the winter and was still not dried out. But the girls and boys made good speed, jumping here and running there. Out of breath again, Bunny and Tess presently arrived with Jack and Dave at the channel's left bank.

The water just there had a wind-ruffled surface, making it impossible for them to see anything that might be submerged. To all appearances, that strip of water—no wider than twenty feet—was as safe a passage-way, this morning, for a boat of shallow draught, as it had always been known to be.

"But—we'll soon find out!"

That was Jack, with a grim smile such as his sister Polly, of Morcove, so often gave when ready for action. Off came his shoes and socks; quickly he turned up his trousers, furling them to the knees: then he stepped down into the water.

Wading out very slowly and warily—for he knew that he must very soon be within a few inches of quite deep water—he stooped to peer below the surface. But the ruffled surface still baffled him, even though he was now looking almost straight down into the water.

So, next moment, he took off his jacket and threw it back to Dave to hold, and then bared a muscular right arm.

No sooner was the shirt-sleeve rolled and pushed back almost to the shoulder than Jack stooped again and reached into the water.

"Hal-lo!" was his significant cry, after very little groping about below the surface.

"Got something?"

"Haven't I just!" he excitably answered the watchers on the bank. "How about this?"

He gave a tug with the hand that was far under water. He pulled and pulled, withdrawing his bare arm only slowly, until at last the hand came clear, grasping twisted barbed wire.

A horrified "Oh!" broke from Bunny and Tess. As for Dave, his was a state of mute indignation and disgust. There was his very stern, scornful frown as he waded in—without troubling to take off shoes and socks—to help Jack grapple with the loathsome find.

For a loathsome find it was. Barbed wire, coming away in a great tangle of loose coils from the bed of the fairway as the two boys tugged and pulled.

"Yes," Jack puffed, when at last he and Dave were out of the water, with the tangled mass high and dry in the sunshine. "Run into that with the Silver Swift, and—well!"

"Wicked thing to have done," Tess said fiercely. "It could have ruined the Silver Swift's chances in next week's speedboat trials?"

"Absolutely," Dave said quietly. "I can't imagine anything worse, unless it was a mine. The Silver Swift would have damaged her hull; but that would not have been all."

"No, by heck!" gasped Jack, whilst he dried his arm with a handkerchief. "Propellers, Dave!"

"That's what I mean. If the barbed wire had got wound round the propellers—"

"Oh," Bunny exclaimed again, "it won't bear thinking about! As for poor Mr. Creel—when we tell him—"

"But that's just what we mustn't do," Jack said. "Yet we must, or you girls will never get the credit for the big thing you have done this morning."

"Oh, as if that matters!" Bunny cried. "As if we want a fuss to be made!"

"We shall have to tell Mr. Creel," came Dave's firm ruling. "It isn't right for us to act too much on our own. We must give him the chance of going to the police and getting their protection."

Bunny made a face.

"Oh, the police!"

"Dave's right, though," Jack declared. "Mr. Creel's whole life's work is in this speedboat of his. He has spent almost his last penny upon it. And it will be a cruel shame if he can't show what the Silver Swift can do when the speedboat contests come off, next week."

"It is so easy to do her harm," Dave supplemented. "She's as delicate as a watch. Jack and I saw him working for two hours over just one tiny little gadget."

"That was at three o'clock this morning," Jack nodded. "He found us two chaps on guard!"

"Wasn't he amazed?" Tess inferred.

"And cross—at first. But afterwards he let us see how grateful he felt. He asked us to go out with him in the boat—great favour! So," Jack grinned, "we've had our reward, and now you girls—"

"Oh, shut up!" laughed Bunny. "Anyway, best for all of us to go along to the bungalow now?"

"That's it."

The dangerous tangle of barbed wire was dragged away by Jack and Dave and dumped upon the marsh. Then they and the two girls hurried, by way of the creekside road, towards the range of sheds and the adjacent bungalow.

But before they could get to the sheds a half-amusing difficulty had to be surmounted. The road to the waterside buildings had, at one time, been taken across a breach in the bank by a wooden bridge. This latter had now fallen down.

Only by a good deal of awkward scrambling over bits of the collapsed timbering did the girls and boys get across.

"But we're better off than Polly and Judy, last night," Bunny gurgled. "When they were going home from the Creel bungalow to the Grand Hotel they took the short cut across the marsh with Tom. And every ditch they came to—the plank bridge had been pulled away."

"It had?" jerked Jack. "By jingo! Who did that?"

"We have a pretty good idea," Tess frowned. "Cora Grandways, staying with her parents at the Grand. You know how she glories in doing



A horrified "Oh!" broke from Bunny and Tess as they saw what Jack and Dave were dragging from the bed of the creek. Barbed wire! And someone had placed it there to foul Mr. Creel's speedboat.

us an ill turn. She was away from the hotel for a time last night. And Jimmy and Tubby—they saw her coming off the marsh—doing her best not to be seen."

"What's more," Bunny chatted on, now that they were able to walk on again together, "there's an idea that Mr. Grandways has a hand in some low-down game connected with the Silver Swift. We've reason for thinking that he may not want her to do any good in the races."

Jack gave Dave a consulting glance. It was like Dave to say nothing, whilst giving an impressed nod. But Jack was as bad as his sister Polly for saying what he thought.

"Shouldn't wonder," he muttered. "Grandways never minds how he makes a bit more money, so long as he makes it. Gosh, we all came down to Southville for the Easter holidays, just to have a jolly time, and we come in for all this!"

"Yesterday afternoon," Dave remarked, "there was that artist chap on the marsh, sketching. We rather wondered if he was only sketching, as an excuse for spying."

"Yes," Tess exclaimed. "And that artist—he also is staying at the Grand."

"He is!" stared Jack.

"What's more, he and Mr. Grandways are friends!"

"My hat! Then that does look like dirty work at the crossroads, boys! Say, though, here we are, close to the sheds, and Mr. Creel, for a cert, is in the one that houses the Silver Swift. You and I, Dave—go and find him?"

"And Bunny and Tess can find Alice Creel, at the bungalow. She'll be so glad to see you," Dave added.

"At this time in the morning?" laughed Bunny. "When we know she does all the work of the place! But come on, then, Tess, and we may be able to lend her a hand!"

So, parting from the boys, who ran across to the speedboat's shed, both girls made their way past all the buildings and were next minute at the bungalow.

### "Here He Is!"

**D**ESPITE the serious news, it was a jolly breakfast that Alice Creel and the Morcove girls shared. Alice was glad to see her friends again—and happy to know she was to spend yet another day in their company. The inventor's motherless daughter had never before known such delights—such warm companionship.

It was after breakfast that Bunny, going outside for something, called to the others:

"Alice dear! Here is Mr. Grandways!"

"Coming here?" Tess exclaimed, rushing out, followed by Alice.

"Yes! Nosing around," Bunny voiced the immediate suspicion. "Hoping to pump Mr. Creel, I shouldn't wonder!"

"He has noticed us," Tess muttered. "Would like us to go along so that he can speak to us."

"We're not going," Bunny stated, adding roguishly: "It'll put him to the trouble of scrambling across where that bridge is down."

Mr. Grandways, in his expensive lounge suit and shiny shoes, certainly found it most annoying to have to perform acrobatics over the fallen bridge.

He had grown stouter as he grew richer. The exertions to which he was put resulted in his coming up to the waiting girls at last in a very heated, puffed-out state.

"Uh—'morning!" he panted, removing a costly felt hat to mop a perspiring brow. "Uh—Mr. Creel lives somewhere around here?"

"This bungalow is where Mr. Creel lives, sir, and I'm his daughter," Alice answered, with a coldness that Mr. Grandways promptly tried to charm away.

"Oh, his daughter, eh, my dear! Well, young lady, is your father about? I'd like to see him, if he is. I have been hearing about his wonder boat—the Silver Swift. And I feel quite interested!"

"Dad is away with the boat now, sir, giving her one of her trials. I would say, call again, but —"

"But what?" snapped Mr. Grandways. The persistent coldness of Alice annoyed him.

"Dad does not care to have visitors, sir. He has not a moment to spare these days."

"But I am—Mr. Grandways! Josiah Grandways, the financier! I'm no ordinary—uh—visitor! Understand me, girl; your father should feel complimented by my showing interest in his invention. I am really only down here for a holiday, and I might be getting some golf now!"

"All the same, sir, daddy is not likely to be pleased——"

"In other words, girl, you bear out what I've already been told in the town. Your father's just a crank, a peculiar, stupid fellow——"

"My father is nothing of the sort, sir!" Alice fired up, to the great admiration of Bunny and Tess. "Father is a brilliant inventor—with every right to privacy."

"Privacy—bah! Oh, well," shrugged the vulgar and rich man, "if people will cut off their noses to spite their faces—they must do so! I might have helped him, financed him; but I can't deal with lunatics! Good-day!"

And he turned to stride back by the way he had come, leaving the three girls in varying states of amusement.

Although Alice smiled, her pretty face was very white at the insulting remarks which had been made. Tess soon left off grinning and became tight-lipped. But Bunny went on shaking with laughter, masking an open mouth with a hand.

"And let's hope," Bunny gurgled, "that he falls in, this time!"

She meant, of course, that strip of stagnant water which the wooden bridge at one time spanned. Mr. Grandways had got to repeat his acrobatic performance, and so the girls stood watching.

Even if he scrambled across unscathed, he would feel discomfited by having been watched—at his age!

But Mr. Grandways, having lost his temper just now, was soon seen to be in danger of losing his hold of one or another of those few upstanding piles which had helped him greatly the first time.

Less than half-way across he became so hesitant and flustered that Bunny feverishly voiced a "Watch!"—lest her two chums should, by removing their gaze for a moment, miss a treat.

Stork-like on one leg, the foot of which rested upon a short length of timber lying aslant at water-level, Mr. Grandways reached his other foot towards another stepping-place, then drew it back. His nerve, evidently, had gone. He had an infirm upright post to clutch—and he clutched it as for dear life.

Again he attempted progress, his awkward movements so hoisting his beautifully creased trousers that some very bright and smart socks were exposed.

"If only he would!" Bunny was heard to murmur.

And next instant Mr. Grandways did!

He missed his footing and he lost his hold, all in the same unlucky moment. His inarticulate shoutings might have been heard half a mile away, as he swayed about, toppled, and fell helplessly.

SPLOSH! went his heavy figure into the stagnant water, all amongst the broken timbering.

A thick, green scum was broken for the first time for months, and much of it was seen to be adorning the clothing, the hands and the face itself of Josiah Grandways, as he wildly began to scramble out.

"Sprr-yah — ooch!" he gasped and spluttered. "Confound! Gurr-rahhh! Ouch — yah!"

Nor was the deserved discomfiture of Mr. Grandways lessened when he suddenly realised that those three girls were not the only ones to be doubled up with laughter.

A short distance away, on the marsh, were some other girls and one or two boys, at a standstill — taking in the whole scene with huge delight.

"Oh, it's Betty and some of the rest!" was Bunny's joyful cry. "They have come to find if you and I are here, Tess."

"That's it," Tess nodded. "And what a lot there'll be to say!"

"Clever" Cora

A LITTLE after twelve o'clock that morning Cora Grandways took a seat at one of the refreshment tables on the sunny veranda of the Grand Hotel.

She liked to come in early from her walk on the promenade, to sit showing herself off to all the holiday-makers whose saunterings took them past the Grand.

She had good looks, and she knew it. No girl could have been more conceited about her attractive appearance than was Cora. And such vanity, needless to say, took the form of wanting to be considered older than she was.

She was a girl of school age still; and she would have been at school, only Morcove had expelled her, since when pampering parents had "not bothered."

A waiter brought her the drink she had ordered, and from time to time she sipped it through two straws.

Suddenly a pageboy came out to call:

"Miss Grandways, please! Miss Grandways!" Cora jumped up, mighty pleased at the importance the occasion gave her.

"Mr. Grandways, miss, asked me to see if I could find you," said the smart boy-in-buttons.

No amiable "Thanks!" not even a smiling nod rewarded the page. Like her over-rich and vulgar parents, Cora did not believe in politeness to servants. Airily she made her way into the hotel and was taken up in the lift to the first floor.

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No. 532

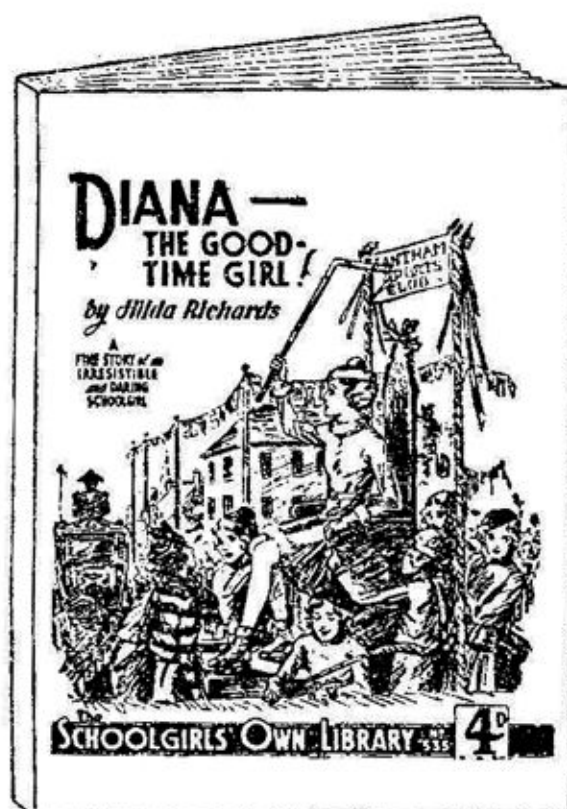


No. 533

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No. 534



No. 535

Her father and mother had rented a most expensive suite—all front rooms, with windows opening on to balconies. She whisked into the sitting-room to find her father awaiting her, alone. He was in a golfing suit now.

"You went to golf after all, then, dad?"

"Uh—no!"—with a scowl. "But I had to change when I got back, a while ago. I—I got my other clothes rather mucked up going out to West Dykes."

"Oh, have you been—er—getting a talk with Mr. Creel? What's he like, dad, to speak to?"

"He was away, giving that crack-brained contraption of his what his daughter called a trial. But look here, Cora, my girl——"

Pausing, Mr. Grandways nipped off the end of a cigar, lit it, and then walked about the room.

"I don't want you to ask a lot of questions, Cora. What I do want you to do is to help me—as you can, I reckon. Southville's full of Morcove girls, isn't it, and I don't know how many boys belong to the same party—and parents," scowled Josiah Grandways.

"It is a crowd, no mistake," Cora nodded. "A lot of them are staying here at the Grand, and then the Willoughbys have rented Beach Place, along the East Parade. I'm always seeing batches of them——"

"I saw a couple of the Morcove girls at West Dykes this morning, and then some others turned up just as I was leaving. Seems to be some great attraction for them at West Dykes!"

"It's because that inventor man, Mr. Creel, is related to Paula Creel—and as he has a daughter——"

"An impudent minx, that daughter! But the whole crowd is far too cheeky, I think!"

"Betty and Co. always did need someone to take them down a peg or two—as I used to do often enough, goodness knows," Cora boasted, with her wide grin, "when I was at Morcove."

"Can't you take them down a peg now, my girl? And very likely help your old dad, who'll not forget to make it up to you." This was said with a sly wink and smile. "Listen here, anyhow, Cora. Play a little trick on some of them, couldn't you?"

"How, dad? I'd just love to, especially if it can help you over your—your business——"

"What business? You hold your tongue, Cora, about any idea you may have got that I am—well, sort of interested in the Creel speedboat. It has to prove its worth before I take any interest! And from what I can gather, it's just a joke in the town at present. Only——"

Again he paused, walking about and puffing at the cigar held right to one side of his mouth.

"Only what, dad?"

"Difficult to say, my girl. But I am thinking—I have been along once to the Creel place, all for nothing. I don't want the trouble of going there again and finding him away. Best time to get him, I suppose, late in the evening? So I'm inclined to go—to-night. But I don't want to get there to find the place crowded out with girls and boys!"

Cora, cunning daughter of a cunning father, was guessing that he was only giving a humbugging excuse for asking her to do—what?

"As to those Morcove girls and their brothers, and so on, dad, I shouldn't wonder if some are at the Creel place all to-day. In fact, it's my belief they have sort of arranged it amongst themselves to have someone always there."

"You mean, they've an idea that Mr. Creel and his daughter need company, as it is more than he

and she can do, to be always on watch for—well, unwelcome visitors, eh?"

"Something like that, dad! But isn't it silly?" Cora craftily submitted. "There were two of the boys on guard all last night, as I happen to know! To-night, I suppose, others will take their turn. Very likely a couple of the girls will also be there, as company for Alice. Oh, I would love to play a trick on them all—to-night!"

Mr. Grandways laughed, giving an encouraging nod to his daughter—so "clever," she was!

"Go on, my dear. When you say a trick——"

"The thing would be," she grinned excitably, "for me to dress up like one of those Morcove girls. That would be ever so easy, of course! And then I would go out quite late and have a fine old game with them! What I would do, dad, I would go just close enough to the bungalow to be able to attract their attention in the dark. I might have to call out to them, or perhaps beckoning would do it. Anyway, I'd have them all chasing across to me, thinking me to be one of their crowd—and then I'd give them the slip!"

"Lead 'em a dance, eh? Will-o'-the-wisp idea," laughed Josiah Grandways. "Cora, you're a rogue! But there, get your bit of fun at their expense, on those lines, if you like to! I don't mind. You can't come to harm, anyway, for if I am not out that way myself about that time—someone else will be, I dare say!"

"You mean," she grinned, "Mr. Franklin?"

"Eh? What do you know about Mr. Franklin?"

"Only that he is an artist, isn't he, staying here at the Grand. And he goes out to West Dykes, sketching!"

Mr. Grandways, by turning aside to pick up the morning's paper, implied an end to the conversation.

"You run along now, my girl. Say! You can have this, Cora, to spend."

"But can't you make it two, dad?" she wheedled, as he offered a single pound-note. "I may have things to buy—for to-night!"

"You'll be the ruin of me," he jested, whisking another note out of his well-filled wallet. "Do you have anything to say to the Morcove girls?"

"I just cheek them all I can, that's all!"

"Well, don't go saying anything about—Mr. Franklin, that's all!"

And, with that pointed hint, Mr. Grandways gave himself up to the enjoyment of his half-crown cigar and his newspaper, whilst his "clever" daughter flaunted away, smiling excitably.

### All Aboard!

"**N**OW for the Skylark! Any more for the Skylark?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"One shilling, the afternoon trip to sea! All aboard for the Skylark, now starting!"

Polly Linton's fun-loving brother, Jack, was shouting to this effect, as he stood at the water's edge on Southville's stony beach, where a roomy little yacht was ready to put off.

The boat was the one that "went" with the tenancy of Beach Place, which fine marine residence Mr. and Mrs. Willoughby—parents of Morcove's popular Pam—had rented for the Easter holidays.

This was the first time Morcove and Co. were being given a sail in the pleasure-boat; but they had all fallen in love with her when first they descended upon the seaside town for the "hols."

Her name, as gilt-lettering proclaimed, was



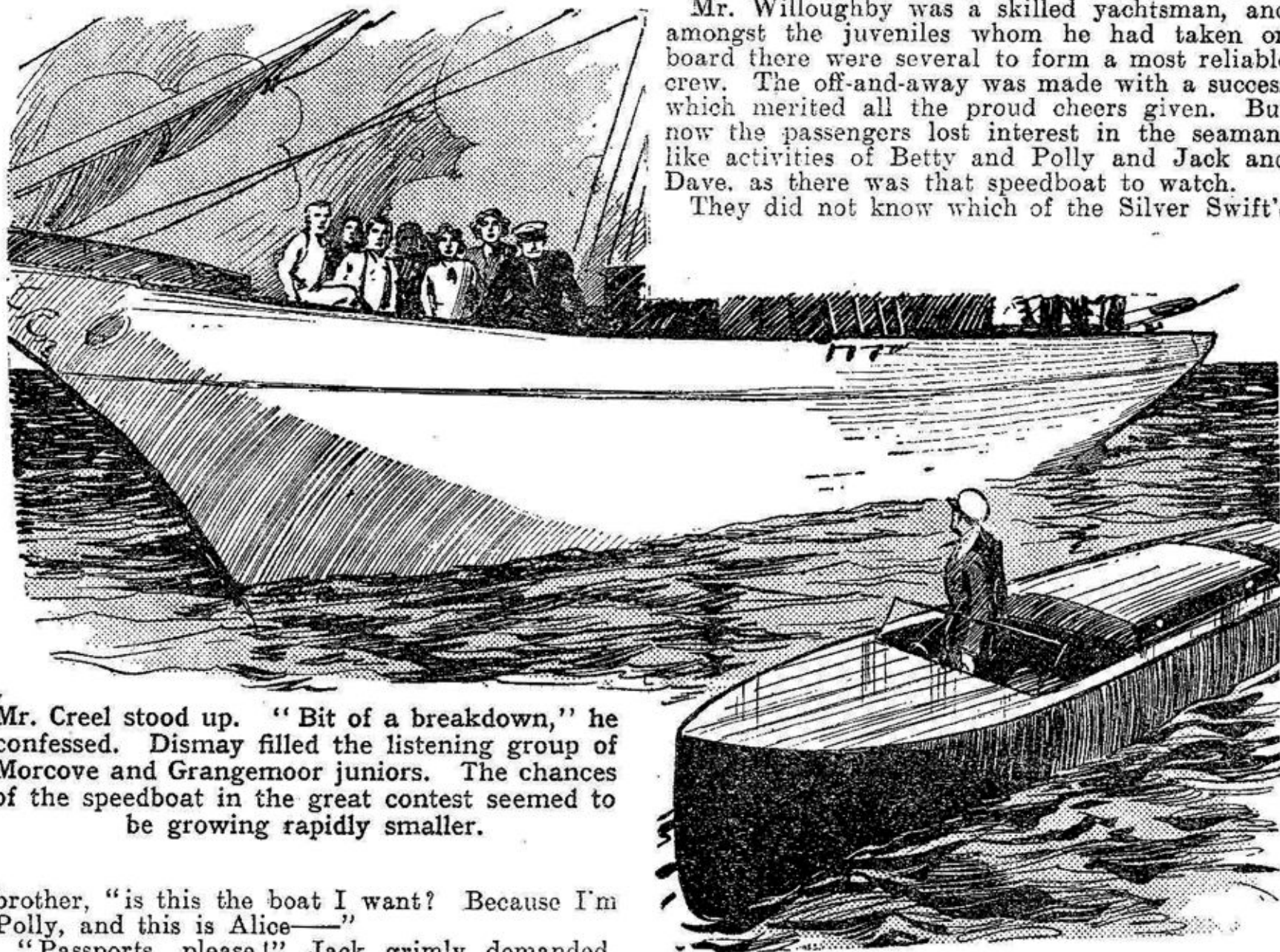
"Circe," and that was the one thing about her some of the boys had not liked. They said it reminded them too much of classics at school.

And, anyway, for the purpose of imitating a jerseyed longshoreman touting for patronage, Jack considered "Skylark" to be the only appropriate name.

There was not the slightest need for Jack to appeal to his fellow holiday-makers to go aboard. They were mobbing around, only too eager to scramble to places. But Jack felt that it gave a kind of nautical joyousness to go on vociferating:

"Hurry up for the Skylark! Now sailing! Back in time for tea, my hearties! Gangway, please!"

"Please, sir," Polly mock-timidly accosted her



Mr. Creel stood up. "Bit of a breakdown," he confessed. Dismay filled the listening group of Morcove and Grangemoor juniors. The chances of the speedboat in the great contest seemed to be growing rapidly smaller.

brother, "is this the boat I want? Because I'm Polly, and this is Alice——"

"Passports, please!" Jack grimly demanded. "All chocolates, fruit and drinks to be handed over to the purser before going aboard! I'm the purser——"

"Go on with you!" snorted Polly, making her atheletic dash up the short ladder. "Come on, Alice dear! Oh, hurrah—the room there is!"

Alice Creel, of West Dykes, was enjoying the time of her life. Lunch with the Willoughbys, and now this pleasant excursion. Not all the Morcove girls were with her, however.

That was what prevented Alice from feeling guilty, whilst playing truant from West Dykes. She had not the slightest need to fidget about her father. Morcove and Co. were so working things that West Dykes would never be without a sufficient guard.

After that ugly discovery of the barbed wire, this morning, Morcove no longer doubted that Mr. Creel was menaced. It was to someone's interests to see the Silver Swift do badly in the

speedboat contest which was Southville's great Easter attraction.

Yet, when Mr. Creel had gone to the police with a complaint about that obstruction in the fairway, they had refused to treat the matter seriously. He was only "Cranky Creel," and very likely some urchins in the town had been up to larks with him. At any rate, he could hardly expect police protection at a time like Easter!

"Besides," he had been reminded, by a bland superintendent, "there are all those other speedboats at Southville, and none of their owners have made any fuss. So why should you?"

One of those other speedboats was racing over the smooth, sunlit sea even as the Circe—skipped by Pam's father—went bouncing away from the beach, her sails catching the wind just nicely.

Mr. Willoughby was a skilled yachtsman, and amongst the juveniles whom he had taken on board there were several to form a most reliable crew. The off-and-away was made with a success which merited all the proud cheers given. But now the passengers lost interest in the seaman-like activities of Betty and Polly and Jack and Dave, as there was that speedboat to watch.

They did not know which of the Silver Swift's

rivals she might be, but all were convinced that she was a rival who would take some beating!

A mile out she was, on a course parallel with the sea-front, where thousands of holiday-makers were standing to watch her. She was evidently being greatly admired.

Not that there was much of her to be seen. Like all craft of her kind, she had no showy superstructure. Built for terrific speed, above the water-line she was metal-shielded against the sheets of spray which were even now going up as she knifed through the waves.

The Circe had binoculars on board, and eagerly turns were taken at watching the speedboat with the aid of the glasses.

"Goodness, how she does travel," Polly gasped, when her turn came. "Even now, I can hardly see anything of her—only flying spray!"

"Going all out?" Tess wondered.

"It's to be hoped she is, for Mr. Creel's sake," Polly grimaced, handing the glasses to one of her chums. "He's got something to do to beat that!"

"He'll beat it," Jack gaily predicted. "We know, don't we, Dave?"

"Why, what did the Silver Swift do this morning?" clamoured several of the girls. "You were out in her—"

"And you told us," Bunny cried, "that she never went more than twelve miles an hour!"

"Knots, we said," corrected Jack, who was now, he fancied, correctly nautical by being about in bare feet. "But we were not out to show off her speed. You wait for the great day, boys," he advised Morcove. "Then you'll see what the Silver Swift can do! Her works! The inside of her—gee!"

Pam, who had met Alice for the first time at lunch to-day, smiled across to her.

"Yes, well, Alice, I expect the boys are right. Your father's speedboat is 'plus a little something some others haven't got'!"

"So, jolly good luck to him!" yelled that excitable imp, Naomer, "bekas, he deserves eet! What ze diggings, I zink we ought to drink good luck to Mr. Creel, eef Tubby will open ze lemonades?"

"Pipe all hands!" bellowed Bo'sun Jack. "Grog-ho!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Avast! Steady, boys—steady!"

"With a yo, ho, ho," chanted Bunny, "and a bottle of rum!"

The speedboat being already out of sight and the Circe spanking out to sea in a well-behaved manner, it had become a suitable opportunity for sampling the refreshment department.

So Tubby, who had been sitting on a crate of lemonades, got off it. He took out and passed up the bottles. Glasses were forthcoming, as were bags of bananas and cartons of chocolates.

All the nonsense that went on during the next few minutes was just everyday life to Morcove and Co. But Alice was unused to such comicalities as were provided by Naomer and fat Tubby and madcap Polly; by Bunny, too, and Jack, who was wearing a football stocking as a cap, to make himself look like a pirate bold.

Alice laughed so much her sides ached. Yet even at the height of her amusement she was conscious of other thoughts.

She could not forget that these girls and boys now carrying on so ridiculously could also be such earnest, reliable friends.

She thought of the danger that had come to a head in the last day or two. What a lot "Morcove" had already done for her dear father at this critical time! Ah, and what might they not be going to do for him, in course of the next few days and nights, earning her own undying gratitude and his!

Suddenly, rollicking Jack electrified the rest of the boatload with a sensational shout:

"Silver Swift, ahoy!"

"What! Where—where? Oh!" the Morcove girls yelled together as they all saw another speedboat about three-quarters of a mile away. "Is that her?"

"That's her—yes!" cried Alice jubilantly. "Fancy, dad has had her out a second time to-day!"

"Gorjus!" shrilled Naomer, who had just drained a lemonade bottle by simply applying her lips to it. She shied it away into the sea and

began to stamp and clap. "Bekas, hooray—queek, queek, get ze jerk on, some of you! And zen we can sail quite close!"

"Does she know it's us in this boat?" Tess wondered. "She is going only so slowly, even now!"

"Avast! Stand by!" Jack felt it proper to roar, now that Pam's father was promptly and skilfully setting the Circe to tack towards the Silver Swift. "Luff! Haul up the jib-boom, boys, and shake out the fore-gallant tops'! Belay, there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Idiot," said Polly—laughing as much as anyone.

"Full speed ahead, tang, tang!" Jack shouted, as if the Circe had suddenly changed from sail to steam. "Zooo-oomph!" he imitated a steam syren. "Ahoy, Silver Swift; ahoy, there—a-hoy!"

"I believe she's stopped," keen-eyed Tess muttered. "Would that be to let us come up to her?"

"Surely not!" said Bunny. "She should come to us."

"Something wrong?" Betty wondered. "They're waving to us, so they know who we are. Jimmy and Tom are in the boat with Mr. Creel. But—why have they stopped?"

### Breakdown!

**A**N uneasy silence fell. When they had seen that other speedboat, just now, going at such great speed, it was more than disheartening to find the Silver Swift looking so lifeless.

Glancing at Mr. Willoughby, some of the juniors noticed how anxious he looked. But he made no comment, only did the practical thing and kept the yacht sailing towards the speedboat.

The breeze was favourable, and in a few minutes the Circe could down-sail, so as to lie still, close by the Silver Swift.

Jimmy Cherrol and Tom Trevor were looking glum.

Alice's father, who had writhed out of his pilot's cabin, spoke across to Mr. Willoughby.

"Bit of a breakdown, and I can do nothing until I get her back into dock."

A breakdown!

The hearts of the juniors' felt heavier than ever, on account of Alice and her father. The day for the great contest was now so close, and yet here was the Silver Swift—in disgrace!

Was she, after all, a sheer fiasco? Was public opinion right in deeming Geoffrey Creel a mere crank? If so, then what a tragedy it was going to be for Alice herself!

"Let's give you a tow," Pam's father cheerily suggested. "We can do that all right."

"It's awfully good of you," the worried-looking inventor responded. "I don't see anything else in sight that could tow me right the way back to the creek. Your boat, of course, could never do that. But if you could get me to the pierhead, I can tie up there for a bit."

"Right-ho!"

So a rope was passed, and presently the Circe hoisted sail again, with the Silver Swift in tow.

For a pleasure yacht to be taking on a job like this, meant a stern test of Mr. Willoughby's seamanship. The Silver Swift was neither big nor unwieldy, but she was motors, and the Circe—only sail.

Morcove might well feel that the boat should, so to speak, have been upon the other foot! But the girls and boys did not speak to this effect. They realised that Alice and her father must be feeling very humiliated.

Very slow was the tow, and so there was time for hundreds of people to gather at the pierhead, with a mirthful understanding of the situation. As the *Circe* came rising and falling over the gentle waves, with a fine spread of sail, whilst the *Silver Swift* merely wallowed helplessly behind, loud cheering began.

Much of this cheering was in genuine admiration for the yacht's salvage work; but there was some hurraing of a mocking kind for the poor *Silver Swift*.

Her helpless state was consistent with all that holiday-makers had heard about "Cranky Creel" and his "wonderful invention." There was ribald laughter; there were twitting cries.

"What have you got there?" the *Circe* was jokingly asked. "A dead whale?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"*Silver Swift*—ha, ha, ha! '*Swift*' is right!"

"Call her the '*Slow and Sure*,' guv'nor!"

More yells of laughter.

The yacht had dropped her sails as she neared the crowded pierhead. Under the eyes of all the people who thronged the promenade decks and the landing stages at high-water level, she finally enabled the *Silver Swift* to warp alongside and tie-up.

Alice's father, white as death, looked pathetically the crazy inventor. His eyes were wild and his unkempt hair streaked about his forehead. As Morcove could tell, a good many people now began to murmur pityingly. Shame to make fun of the foolish! But there were lots of young men and women whose boisterous holiday mood made them go on bantering him.

And Betty and Co. wondered that Alice did not burst into tears. She, too, was deathly pale, but, ah, how bravely the dear girl was bearing up!

The *Circe* was to set sail again, but Mr. Willoughby first brought her alongside the *Silver Swift*; and then suddenly Alice said in a low, tense voice to some of her chums:

"Good-bye for the present, girls. I'm going

—"

"What!"

"Yes, I want to be with father," she decided, making ready to step off the yacht on to the *Silver Swift*. "I have had a—lovely time, and I'm ever so grateful. But now—I must be with him

—"

And next second she was with him, in the broken-down speedboat.

As the devoted girl got to her father's side, the pierhead crowds sensed the devotion in her action, and they gave her hearty cheers. They might



"Look!" Betty gasped. "The '*Silver Swift*'—she's sinking!" She and the others were certain that this was no accident. There had been foul play somewhere.

think him only a madman, but she at least was a little brick!

Shyness, as Betty and Co. noticed, kept her from looking up to all the people whilst they were cheering her. But when the good-hearted ovation had died away, she raised her face for all to see.

She was standing, then, with a hand resting fondly upon her father's shoulders. Her upturned face had a look which entreated pity for him, and all in an instant there was compassionate silence.

The Morcove girls, as they gazed at those hundreds of faces, felt that there could not be even one that still retained a derisive grin.

Yet one at least there was, as the girls next moment saw.

The handsome face of Cora Grandways, who had suddenly pushed to the front of the crowd up there on the pier's promenade deck; that face was even now charged with a look of malicious delight.

Without pity, that girl! Without pity, if only because poor Alice was one whom Morcove had befriended!

#### At Nightfall!

ABOUT half-past nine that night two girls came out of the lamplit bungalow at West Dykes, to make their way to one of the old creekside buildings. They were Betty Barton and Bunny Trevor whose turn it was to companion Alice at the bungalow for the night.

Bunny's brother, Tom, was to be on hand all night, with Jimmy Cherrol to share the watches. The guard would also include Madge's father, Mr Minden; but he was not due for another hour yet.

A lovelier night Southville's thousands of holiday-makers could not have wished for. Even out here on the low-lying marshland, there was none of that mist which so often blanketed the rank grass after nightfall. A pleasant breeze was coming in off the sea, which was silvered by a moon nearly at the full.

And very helpful Betty and Bunny found the bright moonlight, as they picked their way towards a certain shed from which there came an infrequent clinking—as of hammer upon anvil.

"How I hope Mr. Creel and the two boys are managing to get that repair job done all right," Betty earnestly murmured. "But it must be terribly difficult when there is really no proper workshop."

"Anyway, we must get them to take a spell now for some supper," Bunny rejoined. "They have been hard at work for five hours, without a break."

"If only we could lend a hand! Oh, I'm going to beg them to let me help, Bunny—if it is only to work the bellows!"

"What I fear—and the boys have the same fear, too, we know—the job will be beyond Mr. Creel, no matter how we all try to help him. Tom says that fractured shaft should be replaced with a new one altogether."

"I know! And there's not time to get one. That's the awful thing now, Bunny—no time! Poor Mr. Creel! And, oh, poor Alice—if the Silver Swift is unable to take any part in those contests!"

The anxious talk lapsed. For the last few yards of their way to the shed where work was going on, Betty and Bunny were silent, sending searching glances over those moonlit wastes which lay between the creek and the western outskirts of the town.

Had the two girls glimpsed anybody hanging about on the marshes, they would have at once become suspicious of danger. But the moonlight showed them nothing to create uneasiness.

To detect any sign of life, peering eyes had to look as far as the extreme end of the lamplit promenade.

Plenty of people there! Scores of holiday-makers were astray from more crowded parts of the parade, thinking what a wonderful night this was.

Then Betty and Bunny entered the shed where Mr. Creel and his schoolboy assistants were hard at work. It was the one which housed the Silver Swift, and they saw her afloat in her own little dock. Her way out to the creek was barred by a pair of doors, now closed.

There was a portable forge which, along with an anvil and some other equipment, had been regarded as "scrap" when the buildings were abandoned, after the War. But what was "scrap" to others had proved a great boon to Alice's father, in these days when his money was almost gone.

Tom Trevor was working the bellows of the forge as the two girls entered. A continuous blast of air kept the little fire of powdery coal roaring at white heat.

Mr. Creel was holding a steel bar across the fire, whilst at the old anvil stood Jimmy Cherrol, waiting to act as "striker" with a heavy smith's hammer.

When the glow from the fire was allowed to subside there would be only the light from a couple of paraffin lamps to illumine the strange scene.

The boys, both rather grimy, smiled their welcome to Betty and Bunny; but Alice's father was too intent upon the heating bar to notice the visitors.

Suddenly he whipped the bar away from the fire, laying its white-hot part upon the anvil. Jimmy must have had a turn at striking before this, for he understood exactly how to strike now. At one moment he hit with all his might, and the next—at a word or a nod from Mr. Creel—he plied the hammer only gently.

Bang! Bang! Clink—clank, from Mr. Creel's hammer, followed immediately by Jimmy's well-sung "sledge"—BANG!

So, for nearly a minute, the work went on, whilst the glow from the forge died down. The heavy bar, just where it had been shedding sparks when hit, cooled to a dull red, and at last Mr. Creel took it off the anvil.

He stood it aside and, noticing Betty and Bunny at last, creased his sweating face with a smile.

"You're going to manage, sir!" Betty cheerfully commented.

"Well, with such valuable help as these lads are giving me—I should do some good."

"Then you can afford to take a rest now," Bunny said gaily, "and go to the bungalow for supper."

The inventor had hung his watch upon a nail, above a tool-laden bench. He took a close look at it.

"The lads must knock off now; thank you both very much for turning-to as you have. I shall come back to do a bit more, but—"

"One or the other of us is going to be about," Tom chipped in, "so we may as well lend a hand as be idle?"

"Two hours on and two hours off, sir," Jimmy remarked; "that's not going to knock us up!"

"Ah, my boys!" the inventor sighed gratefully, shouldering into his jacket. "And you girls as well! I wish I could feel I'd be able to reward you all some day."

"To see the Silver Swift beat all rivals on Easter Monday—that will be our reward," Betty said fervently. "And look here, Mr. Creel; Bunny and I will stay here whilst you and the boys are getting supper. She mustn't be left unguarded"—meaning the speedboat. "Although there was no sign of danger just now."

Jimmy and Tom were as quick as Mr. Creel in demurring to Betty's suggestion. They didn't at all like the idea of the two girls going on guard alone, at the sheds.

So it was arranged that Bunny and her brother Tom should stand by, and then he could get his supper when Mr. Creel and Jimmy returned from their own hasty meal.

Betty went away with those who were now going to the bungalow, and Bunny and Tom were thus left together.

"You do look so funny," she gurgled; and he grinned, being well aware of his Vulcan-like appearance.

He had put on a leather apron, had hung up his jacket and furled his shirt-sleeves; and his bare arms were even grimmer than his face.

"And what, Tom dear," she changed from banter to anxiety, "will be the result of all this desperate repair work? Any good at all?"

"Desperate's right!" he grimaced. "He's no better off for implements than a village blacksmith. Jimmy and I reckon that broken part

should be electrically welded. But, mind you, Mr. Creel is a marvel at the way he just won't be beat! He's simply all brains."

"No! He has a big kind heart as well, Tom!"  
 "Course he has! I only meant, Bunny, that he seems to be able to contrive; able to make do — Hallo, though! Did you hear that?"

Bunny quickly nodded. She and her brother instantly stepped together to get outside the dim-lit shed, for what had startled them was a burst of loud talk from those who had just gone away.

It seemed to the brother and sister that Betty and Jimmy and Mr. Creel had all come in for a puzzling surprise on their way to the bungalow.

Bunny and Tom got to the same shed doorway by which those others had made their exit, and then, in the bright moonlight, they saw the three at a standstill.

Their attention had been claimed by a moving figure, some distance away on the marsh.

Bunny gasped her amazement.  
 "Goodness, Tom—how strange! Surely that is one of our girls over there?"

"Must be," he instantly agreed. "Yet why, if it is one of your Morcove chums—perhaps with a message for us—why is she only hauging back like that?"

"She is waving, though—beckoning! Tom, there are ditches out there. Can't she get across? Does she want help? But why did she come across the marsh—alone, too!"

"Don't shout to her," Tom warned his excited sister. "She mayn't want any noise to be made."

At this moment Betty and Jimmy and Mr. Creel set off swiftly together. They were heading as straight as possible for the beckoning girl.



THE SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN. No. 793. Vol. 31.  
 Week ending April 18th, 1936.  
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# My Dear Readers

**R**EQUESTS have been pouring in from readers for information concerning the Secret Code in connection with our secret society. They are mainly from new readers, but many are from those who have mislaid their copies of the Code.

I am reprinting below the Code in full, and I hope you will cut it out or copy it for future reference.

**A B C D E F G H I J K L M**  
  
**N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z**

It is quite simple, you see, once you know it. A becomes P; B becomes O; C—N; D—S; E—R; F—Q, and so on to M, which becomes Z. In the Code, SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN would be written DNUBBWVTFWD BLC.

From the many excellent suggestions sent in by readers, a "Code of Honour" for members of our secret society was drawn up, and here it is, together with the simple rules.

A member of SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN Secret Society earnestly strives to be:

- One who is trusty, helpful and kind,
- Courteous in manner, pure in mind,
- Obedient to elders in word and deed,
- Knowing that valour will help her succeed;
- Smiling through shadows, cheering the sad,
- Always forgiving, finding good in the bad.

**Rules for Society members:**

A girl is an approved member of the Society so long as she observes the Code of Honour and remains a regular reader.

She shall do nothing which would bring disgrace upon herself and the Society.

She shall endeavour to perform not one but many good deeds a day.

She shall strive to succeed in all she does, remembering that those things which are easily attained are often not worth having.

She shall do her best to obtain new recruits for the Secret Society.

Tuesday night shall be regarded as a special meeting night for all branches of the Society.

Any number of girls living in the same district and who are readers of SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN can form themselves into a branch of the Society, and I am always pleased to receive news of their activities.

Peggy Chambers and her friends, who live at Burnham, Bucks, write to say that they intend to read my Chat at each meeting, also practise the Secret Code and write to me. They signalled their very first meeting by each writing part of a letter, for which I thank them very much.

Kathleen Buck, of Tooting, tells me that the members of her Society meet every Monday and Friday, by permission, in the pavilion of some tennis courts.

**REPLIES IN BRIEF**

Margaret Weaver (Malpas, Cheshire).—Welcome to our ever-growing circle of readers, Margaret. How lucky you are to have a pony. I should like a longer letter next time, please.

Doreen Finigan (Highbury).—I expect you had many other nice presents besides the "Popular Book of Girls' Stories," but please write and tell me how you enjoyed the latter. Enclose stamped addressed envelope, and I will send you a personal reply.

"Polly Wolly" (Australia).—Thank you very much for your charming letter. I expect by now you have received by mail the personal reply I sent. Please write to me again soon. Trusting "Whiskers" is very well.

Peggy Yelland (Isisford, Queensland).—I hope your friend, Evelyn, is still a reader of SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN and sees this. Then she will know that you left Wynnum just before she went there to live, and that you are now living permanently at Isisford.

"Mary" (Oldbury).—Many girls write and tell me that they first became readers of SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN when they were ill, and I know all children's hospitals are always grateful for back numbers of our favourite paper. So your kindly thought is greatly appreciated, I'm sure.

"Anne o' Lancaster."—My best thanks for your charming letter. I have shown it to Mr. Shields as you requested. He greatly appreciated your kind remarks and also your suggestions. Mr. Ben Hutchinson has been ill, I regret to say, which is why you have not seen his illustrations lately in our pages.

Another grand story-programme awaits you next Tuesday, dear readers. The fine, long Morcove holiday story is entitled: "WHEN MORCOVE TOOK COMMAND," by Marjorie Stanton, and in addition to this and the thrilling concluding chapters of "Her Fugitive Friend of Mystery," all the other usual features will be there for your enjoyment.

With best wishes,  
 Your sincere friend,  
**YOUR EDITOR.**

"I'm going across to her, too!" Bunny decided. "She may have come with a message from the hotel. She may want to let us know about something, in secret? I do wonder which of our girls it is!"

"I'll stay back, Bunny; I must."

"Oh, rather! Don't dream of leaving the shed unguarded!"

Bunny, as she sped away in the moonlight, could hardly hope to overtake her two chums and the inventor, for they had broken into a run. But she meant to be only a few moments after them in getting to that distant, beckoning figure.

And then, at a mere hundred yards from the shed where Tom remained on guard, she suddenly checked her onrush.

Bunny stopped dead, to turn about and peer back towards the shed.

She had heard the unmistakable jangling of an iron pail, as if Tom had fallen over it, and she wondered how such a thing could have happened.

There had been a pail of water close to the forge; but that was far inside the shed, and she would not have expected him to go back from the doorway. Now he was not in sight to her, in the doorway.

"Tom," she called out to him. "What are you up to, Tom?"

But he sent back no reassuring cry from the great shed.

All that her eager ears picked up was a faint scuffling sound—and that again was alarming!

She felt bound to turn back, and in a few moments she was rushing in by the shed doorway, to find the place full of steamy smoke.

Her immediate and horrifying belief was that her brother had had to deal with a sudden outbreak of fire.

Then, by taking a few quick strides, she saw him in the steam-dimmed light of one of the lanterns—and he was struggling furiously with a man!

Crash! The spirited but overpowered lad was flung to ground by his powerful assailant; and Bunny, no less spirited, knew that she must act—instantly.

She shouted wildly:

"You brute—stop!" And the man, who had knelt and would next instant have dealt Tom a blow to knock him insensible where he lay, jumped about, unnerved.

But it was for a mere split second that he and Bunny were facing each other.

She gained no idea, even then, of what the man was like. She only knew that he was wild-eyed with dismay at her having come upon the scene.

Tom, after all, was not put out of action, but had already started to scramble up.

Bunny was making up her mind that if the man flew at Tom again, she must hurl herself into the combat, when the villain only moved to get to the nearer lantern and dash out its light.

No sooner had he plunged at least this part of the shed in darkness than he darted away.

"Is the shed all right—not on fire?" Bunny anxiously asked, turning round to peer into the smoky interior from the doorway. "What a smother!"

"There was never any danger from fire. What he did—he chucked that pail of water on the forge coals. It was the first thing he did, after sneaking in goodness knows how! I reckon he must have pulled a bit of rotten weather-boarding away. He thought, of course, we'd all gone away from the shed. But I was here in the doorway

when I heard the water suddenly hissing on the fire. I ran to find out, and then——"

"Yes, Tom; but here come Betty and Jimmy, with Mr. Creel."

Bunny said it as she looked out on to the moonlit wastes once more and saw those three figures returning.

"But they've not brought that chum of ours with them!" was her amazed comment. "What's become of her, then?"

**A**T that moment Cora Grandways was running hard across the nightbound marsh, on a zig-zag course for the town.

Last year's long, dead grass and reeds would easily have enabled her to give any pursuers the slip; but she knew that those she had enticed towards her, just now, had turned back. And she rather wished they hadn't, in case her will-o'-the-wisp ruse had come to an end too soon.

"I've had some fun, anyway," she breathlessly chuckled to herself. "And if it didn't give somebody else the chance to do all he wanted—that's not my fault!"

**I**N the shed which housed the Silver Swift stood Mr. Creel, with Betty and Bunny and the two boys.

The haze of reeking vapour was clearing off, but there was still only the light from a single lantern. The one doused by Tom's assailant just now was smashed.

"I wonder whether the police would laugh at all this?" Betty bitterly exclaimed. "A planned attack! That man—if he had had this place to himself for a couple of minutes——"

Tom's voice interrupted from where he had gone to a far side of the shed.

"Here's where he got in, Mr. Creel! As I guessed, he pulled away some rotten boarding so as to be able to crawl through. Now I'm wondering; did he creep in even whilst we were busy at the forge? The noise we were making would have helped him?"

The inventor nodded.

"It may have been so. We were giving close attention to the work."

Hardly had these words been said than a horrified cry came from Betty.

"Oh, look—look! The Silver Swift—she's sinking!"

"What!"

They all rushed to stand at one edge of the "basin" which formed the speedboat's covered-in dock. Every pair of eyes filled with horror then, for the appalling fact was obvious.

In the last few minutes the Silver Swift had sunk lower in the water—and she was sinking still, even as they watched her.

"Then that hateful man—after all, he did!" Betty cried out furiously. "He did do harm!"

She and her chums tore their gaze from the sinking boat, to look at the inventor.

He was tragically mute, his expression a stricken one.

Then suddenly they heard the quick, light step of Alice as she came at a happy scamper to the shed-doorway.

"Daddy darling—and you others! Aren't you ever coming in to have your supper?"

And sadly the chums realised—as did Alice's father—that Alice must now be told what ruin had been done!

[END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]

**B**E sure to read: "WHEN MORCOVE TOOK COMMAND," by Marjorie Stanton, in next Tuesday's issue.