

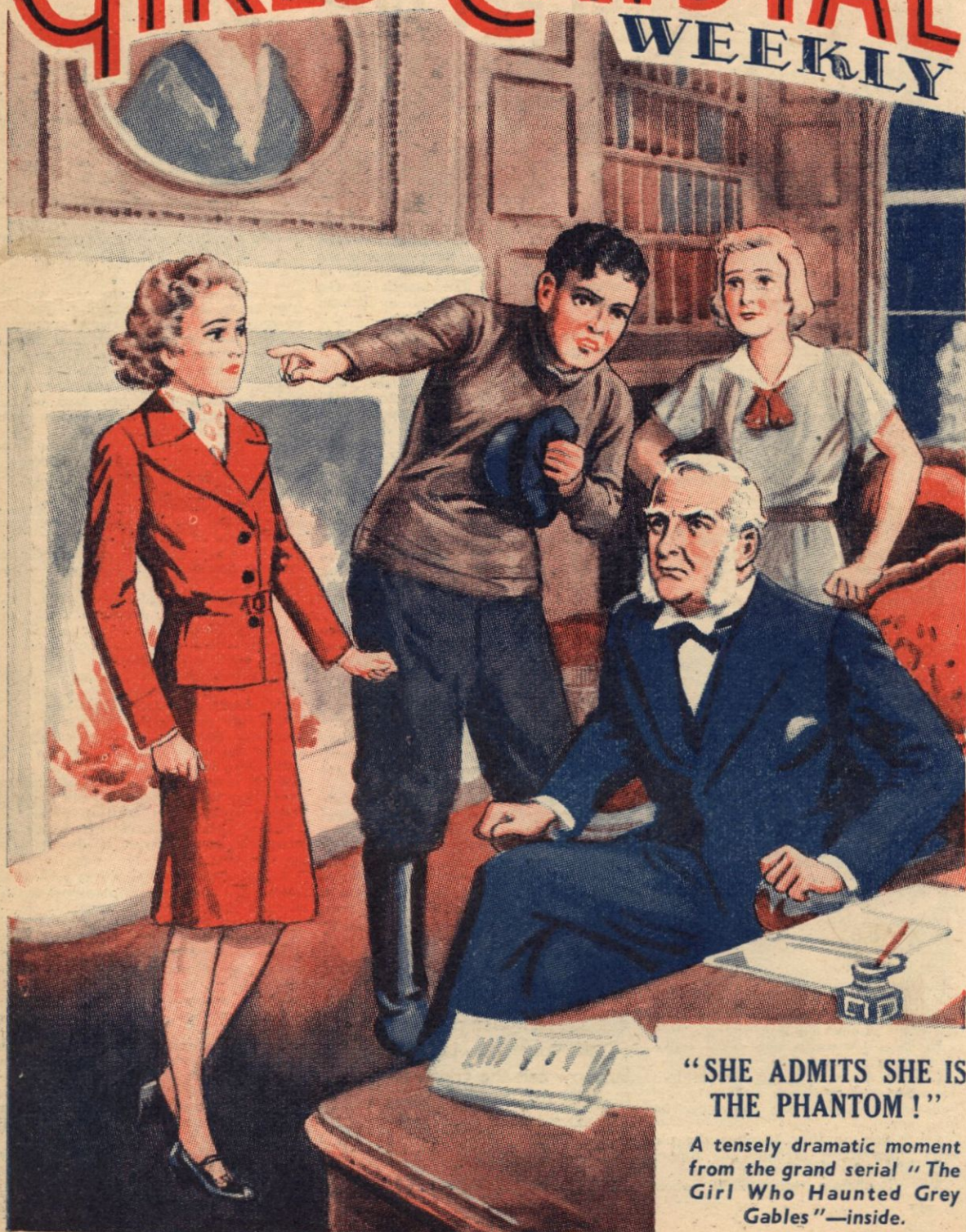
**"THE ELEPHANT THAT VANISHED"** — One of the Six  
Splendid Stories for  
Schoolgirls—inside.

No. 174. Vol. 7.

EVERY FRIDAY.

Week Ending February 18th, 1935.

# GIRLS' CRYSTAL <sup>2<sup>D</sup></sup> WEEKLY



**"SHE ADMITS SHE IS  
THE PHANTOM!"**

*A tensely dramatic moment  
from the grand serial "The  
Girl Who Haunted Grey  
Gables"—inside.*



# The GIRL WHO Haunted GREY GABLES



By RENEE FRAZER

## NORMA IN FLIGHT

**N**ORMA ROYSTON, living in the Cornish village of Clovellyn, looked after a small shop, whose owner, Ben Tregellis, had disappeared, leaving his grandchildren, Elsie and Martin, in her care.

Norma believed that Grey Gables, a large house near by, contained a secret connected with her dead father.

The owner, Mr. Penhale, was her enemy; but Gerald Graham, a boy who lived there, was very friendly.

In order to carry out her search, Norma had to impersonate the ghost of Lady Rowena, which was supposed to haunt the place.

Though he nearly caught the "phantom" several times, Gerald did not seem to suspect it was Norma.

Then Norma realised that someone else was masquerading as the ghost, and terrorising the village.

One night Norma, in her phantom costume, went to Grey Gables to recover some incriminating photographs that had been taken of her by Mr. Penhale.

She found there a letter from Ben Tregellis to Mr. Penhale, which seemed proof of Penhale's villainy.

But even as Norma stood in the library with the letter, Mr. Penhale appeared in the doorway.

"Who ever you are," he said, "give me that letter!"

**N**ORMA backed away, holding defensively to the vital letter.

By the glitter in the man's ferret eyes, she realised her danger only too well. Mr. Penhale was desperate, and his desperation was stronger than his fear.

"Give me that letter!" he repeated.

Norma drew her veil more closely round her face.

"Richard Penhale, the time has come," she said, in muffled tones.

"Your misdeeds have found you out."

"You trickster!" breathed the other harshly. "Look out for yourself!"

He leaped towards her as he spoke, attempting to seize her.

But Norma was too quick for him. Turning, she sped for dear life, the footsteps of her enemy pounding behind her.

There was no time to close the picture. She raced through the tunnel, and out on to the moonlit terrace.

Mr. Penhale's triumphant shout

reached her ears as he espied the secret entrance; the next moment his shout was drowned by the crash of falling masonry. The mouth of the ancient tunnel had caved in behind her!

Norma halted, white to the lips, gasping for breath.

It had been a narrow escape; a moment later, and she would have been trapped by the falling stonework. Her pursuer, brought to a stop by the unexpected obstruction, was forced to retrace his steps.

Almost sobbing with relief, Norma gathered her spectral robes more closely around her, and hurried towards the trees.

She made her way by a devious path, keeping in the shadows. She was determined to call on Squire Guthrie at Clovellyn Hall, intending to make a clean breast of everything, backed up by the proof that she held.

He would—he must believe her!

She had reached the outskirts of the estate when, to her dismay, she heard the sound of running footsteps and threatening shouts:

"The Phantom!"

"It came this way!"

"After it, lads!"

Norma halted, with a sharp intake of breath. She must have been seen, though by whom she could not imagine.

And she was not prepared to face the angry villagers in her spectral robes. It was not likely that they would pause to listen to reason, however strong her proof.

Instinctively she looked round for a hiding-place. Near at hand loomed a thatched barn—one of the many on the squire's estate.

Swiftly she pushed open the door

Norma has no choice but to admit that she has been playing the part of the phantom Lady Rowena. But how can she convince people that she was NOT responsible for the damage caused by another phantom figure?

and crept inside, waiting with thumping heart as the hurrying footsteps passed along the cart track outside.

The voices grew fainter, and Norma was congratulating herself on her escape, when a faint, stealthy sound reached her ears. She turned, and the blood drained from her face as she saw the door of the barn slowly open, to admit a dim figure.

Just then the moon came out from behind the clouds. An incredulous cry was stifled on Norma's lips as she saw the figure more clearly.

Tall and ghostly, in a flowing robe and pointed hat, it might have been a reflection of herself!

And as she watched, spellbound, the spectral figure of her "double" raised its arm.

There was a sudden red glare, and a blazing torch hurtled from the spectre's hand, landing on a pile of hay and straw in a corner of the barn.

The spell was broken.

Horried, Norma sprang towards the doorway, to be met by a cloud of acrid smoke and scorching flame.

Too late she realised her peril. Her phantom double had deliberately set fire to the barn, and she was trapped, with little hope of escape!

Even now the flames were creeping over the floor, reaching out hungry fingers towards her trailing robes.

Once again Norma attempted to reach the door, only to be driven back by the heat.

A little sob of despair was torn from her as she was forced to retreat to the farthest corner of the barn.

The sound of distant shouting lent her a momentary gleam of hope. The villagers must have seen the flames, and were returning from their fruitless chase.

Norma endeavoured to cry for help, but her parched throat barely uttered a sound.

A last despairing cry broke from her lips—a cry drowned by the roar of the flames and the shouting outside.

Then, with a splintering crash, part of the wall at the rear of the barn caved in, revealing the gleaming end of an axe.

Again! Who ever was wielding the axe had muscles of steel, and a desperate determination

The boards caved in, and through the cavity struggled a dishevelled, boyish figure.

Gerald!

Norma tried to cry his name, but no sound left her parched lips. She felt herself caught in powerful arms, lifted from the ground.

The scorched veil hung in tatters around her face, and Gerald's eyes stared straight into hers in the lurid glare of the flames.

"Norma," he whispered huskily, "I might have known it."

Then Norma's senses left her. She lay limply in the boy's arms, her face pale as death.

Norma came to her senses some ten minutes later, to find herself in the cool night air, lying on a heap of soft bracken, covered by someone's coat.

The musical ripple of running water came to her ears, and, raising her hand to her aching head, she discovered that someone had been bathing her forehead.

She sat up unsteadily, staring round her, as memory came flooding back.

"Gerald!" she breathed.

Had she been dreaming, or had it really been Gerald who had rescued her from that blazing inferno?

If so, why had he left her? What must he think—now that he knew the truth?

From the distance came a clamour of voices and an ominous crackling. Norma could see the sky between the overhanging branches—a dull, lurid red.

A shudder passed over her, and she struggled weakly to her feet, grasping the bushes to support herself.

She was still clad in her spectral robes, badly scorched and torn.

Her thoughts flashed back to the cause of the fire—that other ghostly figure, clad in garments almost identical with her own!

Who or what was it? What malignant purpose had prompted its latest, dastardly outrage?

True, it could not have known that the barn was occupied, but the act in itself was wicked and seemingly without purpose.

With a stab of horror, Norma realised that Gerald might suspect her of being responsible for firing the barn; he might suppose that she had been trapped while attempting to escape!

She felt beneath her tattered robes for the vital proof of Mr. Penhale's villainy; but in her agitation she could not find it.

For a moment her heart sank, but she decided that it must have got caught up in the lining. She decided to creep home and change before the villagers discovered her.

The village, when she reached it, seemed strangely deserted. Practically all the able-bodied men had been called to aid in extinguishing the fire.

Norma pushed open the door of the little shop, to find the lamp-lit parlour deserted, the fire smouldering low in the grate.

Milly had departed, leaving her work-basket and sewing scattered on the floor.

Her heart sinking, Norma raced upstairs. She found the two children, pale and scared, huddled together in their bed-room.

They darted towards her, with cries of relief; little Elsie burst into sobs as she clung to Norma's tattered skirt. Young Martin stared speechlessly at her bedraggled attire.

"It's all right, dears," whispered Norma brokenly. "Don't worry. Where's Milly?"

They could tell her very little excepting that the girl had left hurriedly, after receiving a message, and had promised to return to fetch them later.

Norma's heart sank. That could only mean one thing. The villagers must suspect; someone must have told them! But who?

Gerald was the only person who knew her secret, and he—

Norma thrust the thought from her, her face rather pale. Reassuring the two frightened children, she changed hastily, and searched her scorched robes for the vital letter.

But it was nowhere to be found; she must have dropped it during her escape from Grey Gables, or in the blazing barn.

Norma's last frail hopes were dashed to the ground; the vital proof was lost for ever. Who would believe her fantastic story without some evidence to back her up—

Startlingly her thoughts were interrupted.

A thunderous knocking came from downstairs, accompanied by an angry muttering of voices.

Into Norma's bed-room darted little Elsie, her eyes wide with terror; young Martin followed at his sister's heels, his boyish face pale.

"Norma," he panted, "there's a big crowd of people in the street. They—they're calling for you."

Norma, holding tightly to little Elsie's hand, felt her blood run cold.

The moment had come that she had long dreaded. Sheer panic prompted her to hide, or attempt to escape; but she fought against the weakness.

There was a gleam of determination in her eyes as she turned to the two scared youngsters.

"Wait here," she said gently. "I'll go and see what they want. Look after your sister, Martin."

Her voice shook as she turned and hurried from the room, making her way down to the shop.

The knocking was repeated more loudly.

"She's frightened to come down!" declared a voice.

Norma's lips tightened. Holding her

head high, she crossed to the door and pulled back the bolts, throwing it wide.

"I'm here," she declared quietly, confronting the surging crowd. "What do you want with me?"

"I ADMIT I'M THE PHANTOM!"

NORMA'S calm appearance and steady voice momentarily took the angry crowd back. But the phase lasted only for an instant.

Then the angry murmurs rose again. Ted Gaspard, a local fisherman, stepped forward, holding something in his hand.

"Norma Royston," he said gruffly, "we've come to see you—an' mebbe you c'n guess why we've come."

Norma shook her head, keeping a firm hold on herself. In vain her eyes searched the crowd of lowering faces for a friendly glance. Some of the men looked uncomfortable, others determined.

Ted Gaspard cleared his throat; he had evidently been elected spokesman, by reason of his influence with the crowd.

But it was equally obvious that he did not relish his task.

"Miss Norma," he said gruffly, "since you came to the village—a stranger from Lunnon—there've been happenings here that have worrit us all, and now things have come to a pass when we village folk mean to put a stop to 'em."

"I'm afraid—I don't understand," replied Norma unsteadily—though she understood only too well!

"Show her the proof, Ted!" spoke up someone.

The young fisherman held up the object he had been concealing—something that reflected the yellow gleam of the lanterns carried by the crowd.

The blood drained from Norma's face as she recognised it.

It was the chain girdle from her phantom robes; too late she remembered having left it behind!

"You recognise this, Miss Norma?" demanded Ted Gaspard accusingly. "Is this yours?"

Norma clenched her hands, realising the futility of denial.



"You recognise this, Miss Norma?" demanded Ted accusingly, and he held up the girdle of the Tudor gown. "Is this yours?" Norma realised that it would be futile to deny the accusation. "And what if it is?" she asked.

"And what if it is?" she asked. Her reply was greeted by an angry shout.

"She admits it, folk!"

"It was her, right enough!"

Ted Gaspard pointed an accusing finger.

"You're the phantom of Grey Gables," he exclaimed—"the phantom that's been terrorising the kiddies round here, an' thieving an' destroying property! You can't deny it!"

Norma, white to the lips, returned the angry stares.

"I'll admit I played phantom," she replied, "for a purpose of my own. But I swear I have not done the things you accuse me of!"

"That's a lie!" shouted one of the men. "We saw you with our own eyes, setting fire to Squire Guthrie's barn—the fire in which two of our chaps were hurt, besides others!"

"Turn her out!" screamed a woman's voice. "She's not fit to live among decent folk, let alone to have care of Tregellis' youngsters!"

The blood drained from Norma's face; she heard a stifled cry behind her, and a cold little hand was slipped into hers.

Elsie and Martin had crept into the shop, and had overheard the accusation. "Wait!" exclaimed Norma brokenly, as she confronted the crowd. "You must listen to me. I had a reason for playing phantom—a reason I can't tell you now; but I can prove that it was not I who committed the thefts, or set fire to the barn. There is someone else in the village masquerading as the phantom!"

An incredulous gasp greeted her words.

"Come, Miss Norma!" put in an old fisherman gruffly. "We may only be simple folk in Clovellyn, but we aren't taken in as easy as that! We all saw the Phantom throw a lighted torch into the barn, and make off among the trees towards the village!"

"Ay, we saw 'un right enough!" came the ominous chorus.

Norma's eyes flashed with a sudden gleam of hope.

"Then I can prove it!" she exclaimed. "Ask Gerald Graham, Mr. Penhale's nephew. He'll tell you that the figure you saw could not have been me; he was with me at the time."

The angry murmurs were hushed; the villagers exchanged bewildered glances.

"Master Gerald—with you this evenin'?" demanded Ted Gaspard incredulously.

Norma nodded, clinging to the faint hope.

"I—I was caught in the flames," she replied unsteadily. "Gerald rescued me. The person who threw the torch was an enemy of mine as well as of yours—I swear it!"

Her tone carried conviction; the villagers held a hasty conference, and Ted Gaspard announced the verdict.

His tone was a trifle less aggressive as he turned to Norma.

"We're willin' to give you the chance to prove your words, Miss Norma!" he said gruffly. "Are you ready to come up to the Hall with us to see Squire Guthrie? Mr. Penhale is with him, and mebbe Master Gerald as well."

Norma nodded without hesitation. "Of course!" she replied. "I'll come at once. But—but the children who'll—"

"I'll take care of the children till you come back, my dear!" put in widowed Mrs. Tregurtha, who had just pushed her way through the group, to

slide a motherly arm round Norma's shoulder. "Don't you be worryin' what these folk say. And you, Ted Gaspard—you ought to be right well ashamed of yourself for baiting the poor lass so!"

Norma threw a grateful glance at the old lady, and her eyes filled with sudden tears.

Ted Gaspard looked a trifle sheepish, but he stood his ground, backed up by the others.

"Are you ready, miss?" he asked bluntly.

Norma nodded. Waiting only to see the two children taken under Mrs. Tregurtha's motherly care, and bidding them a smiling good-bye, she joined the crowd of villagers who were waiting outside.

The strange little procession made its way up to the Hall.

A startled manservant opened the door to them.

Ted Gaspard stated his errand. A few minutes later they were ushered into the spacious library, where Squire Guthrie was awaiting them, seated at his desk.

Behind the squire's chair stood Mr. Penhale, a sardonic smile on his handsome features.

Squire Guthrie's bluff face held an expression of utter bewilderment as he rose to his feet; evidently he had not fully grasped the message.

"What is this? What is this?" he demanded, staring at the deputation. "Miss Royston—Gaspard—Hemlow? Did I understand Walters to say that you had managed to trap the dastardly trickster who has been causing so much trouble? Hey? Where is the scoundrel?"

It was Ted Gaspard who replied, his expression rather strained, as he encountered Mr. Penhale's sardonic glance.

"Beg pardon, squire, but—this young lady—she's the Phantom! She's admitted it from her own lips!"

"What?" echoed the amazed squire, staring from Norma to her accuser. "Miss Royston—the Phantom? What nonsense!"

Norma's face was deathly pale as she encountered the squire's bewildered glance.

Mr. Penhale smiled unpleasantly. "I suggest, my dear Guthrie," he remarked, "that we allow the young lady to speak for herself. Her expression seems passing proof of her guilt. I am not surprised!"

The squire started, his eyes troubled. He glanced sternly at Norma.

"What have you to say to this amazing accusation, Miss Royston?" he demanded.

Norma clenched her hands, her face very pale, as she stepped forward.

"I admit I am the Phantom, Mr. Guthrie," she replied calmly. "I have played the role for a purpose—to obtain proof of a certain person's villainy, and to right an old wrong. But I swear I have done no harm!"

"Ha!" exclaimed Mr. Penhale. "You hear that, Guthrie? She admits it!"

The squire's face had darkened.

"Miss Royston," he exclaimed, his voice shaking with mingled incredulity and anger, "what is this? You admit masquerading as the Phantom? Bless my soul, I can hardly believe my ears! Then it was you who set fire to my barn, and robbed me of important papers!"

"No!" exclaimed Norma desperately.

"I swear I had nothing to do with that, Mr. Guthrie! I played the Phantom only—she hesitated, wondering how much she dared say—"only to carry out a certain request of my

father's, and to unmask a scoundrel who has been deceiving all of you!"

"What!" exclaimed the squire, starting. "And who is that person, young lady? Speak out!"

Norma, plucking up her courage, pointed an accusing finger at Mr. Penhale.

"Ask him!" she exclaimed. "Ask Mr. Penhale what he is hiding at Grey Gables—and what happened to Ben Tregellis on the night the old man disappeared!"

## WOULD GERALD HELP HER?

NORMA's words were greeted by a startled murmur from the villagers.

Mr. Penhale's face had turned a sickly hue; he was obviously fighting for self-control.

"Ridiculous!" he exclaimed huskily. "The girl is crazy! How dare she make accusations of this kind, without an atom of proof?"

The squire was staring in troubled amazement from one to the other.

"Miss Royston," he put in sternly, "you are making a very grave accusation against my friend in an attempt to justify your extraordinary imposture. I demand instant proof."

Norma threw back her head, her eyes flashing.

"Please send for Gerald," she said. "I gave him a cap that I found in Grey Gables—a cap belonging to Ben Tregellis. There was a certain message in the lining. And he can prove, too, that it was not I who was responsible for firing your barn, Mr. Guthrie; he was with me at the time!"

"Indeed?" demanded the squire, taken aback.

Mr. Penhale laughed unpleasantly.

"The young woman feels safe in making that statement," he sneered. "No doubt she is aware that my nephew, Gerald, was badly injured in the fire in question—and is at present lying at home in a critical state."

A horrified cry escaped Norma's lips. Gerald had been injured in the fire—and she had not known it!

"Let me go to him!" she gasped, impulsively. "Please!"

Mr. Penhale smiled vindictively.

"I'm afraid that is impossible, Miss Royston," he replied. "The doctor's orders are that Gerald shall not be disturbed by visitors on any account."

Norma clenched her hands.

"Then let me send a message," she breathed. "I must send a message to him!"

"That's fair enough, Penhale," put in Squire Guthrie. "I'm anxious to get this painful business cleared up, once and for all. Send someone down to Grey Gables with Miss Royston's message, and we will await Gerald's reply. The proof of her innocence, or guilt, will depend on your nephew's answer."

Mr. Penhale hesitated, his eyes narrowing; it was obvious that he would have refused—only the eyes of the villagers were upon him, and his refusal would have suggested a fear of the possible reply.

"Very well," he replied reluctantly. "I do not like to worry the boy, but it seems the only way. Miss Royston will show us the message she sends—and we shall read Gerald's reply."

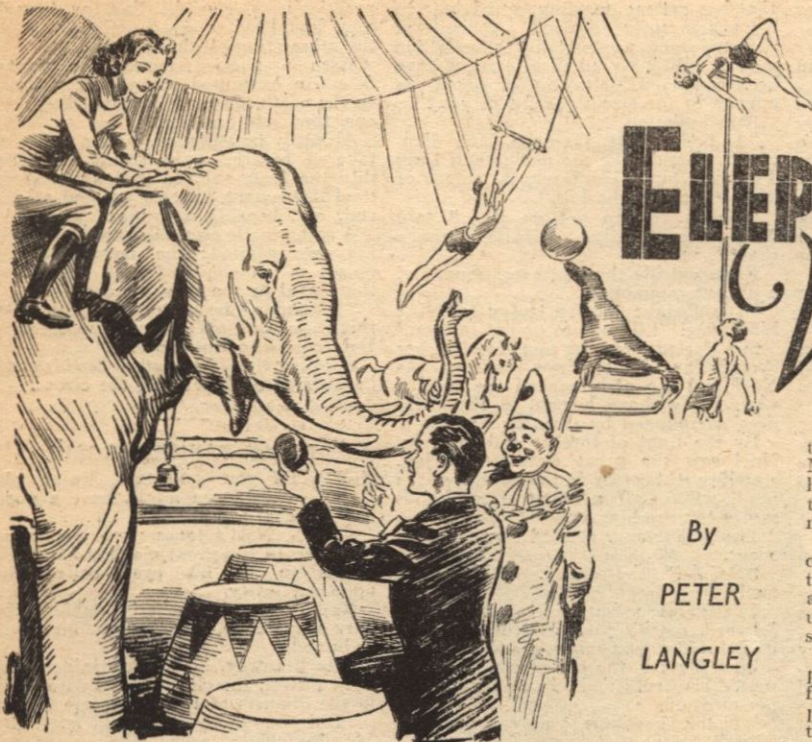
Norma bit her lip. It was the only way; she dared not hesitate now.

Her hand trembling, she wrote a little message—a message of gratitude and appeal.

(Please turn to the back page.)

# The ELEPHANT that Vanished

By  
PETER  
LANGLEY



## MYSTERY IN THE CIRCUS

"JOLLY fine show, Miss Stanway!" declared Noel Raymond. "You seem to be able to do anything with that elephant of yours—short of making him talk!"

Rita Stanway, the girl animal-trainer, flushed with pleasure at this praise from the famous young detective.

"I'm glad you liked our turn, Mr. Raymond," she replied softly, "but it's Rajah who deserves all the praise."

Noel grinned boyishly as he glanced across the now almost deserted tent. One by one the flaring lights were extinguished, as the audience streamed out into the misty night.

Noel had lingered to speak to the young animal-trainer, to whom he had been introduced by a mutual friend—Jock Farrel, a circus clown.

The old clown had once helped Noel in obtaining evidence about a daring burglary, and the young detective had declared that he would return the favour some day.

When, some months later, he had received a note from Jock, enclosing a ticket for the evening performance at the travelling circus, he had cancelled an engagement in order to visit the little town where the circus was appearing.

Up till now, he was completely mystified as to the reason for the invitation. The show had been a fair sample of its kind—with one outstanding performance, that of Rita Stanway and her elephant, Rajah.

The clown had departed to change, and Noel was left with Rita.

Her momentary smile had faded, and Noel could see that the girl's face was curiously pale, and there was a hint of lurking worry behind her fearless eyes.

"Did—did Jock tell you?" she demanded suddenly.

"About what?" asked Noel.

"About Rajah—"

She broke off with a swift intake of breath, as there came a sudden commotion at the entrance of the big tent.

A broad-shouldered, red-faced man was attempting to thrust his way past

a protesting attendant; he was evidently in a furious temper. Just then the circus manager appeared, pale and agitated.

"Really, Mr. Hargrove—what is it now?" he demanded.

"Need you ask?" barked the newcomer angrily. "It's that elephant of yours again! Ruining my grounds—trampling on the bushes—uprooting the trees! I'll have the law on you for this!"

There came a sharp, horrified cry from the girl trainer.

"But—it can't be Rajah this time!" she exclaimed. "He's safely locked in his cage!"

The newcomer snorted incredulously; the agitated manager turned, beckoning to the girl.

"Has this happened before?" Noel asked.

"Twice," whispered the girl. "But there's some dreadful mistake. Jock said that you might help—"

Noel's hand tightened reassuringly on her arm.

"Come on!" he said quietly. "I'm interested!"

They joined the excited group at the entrance of the big tent.

"Miss Stanway," said the manager, "here's another complaint. Mr. Hargrove declares that the elephant has got loose again—and is trampling over his grounds."

"Impossible!" gasped the young

Carefully Rita Stanway locked her elephant in his cage—with Noel Raymond watching. Yet, despite precautions taken, somehow the elephant became free—free to cause damage that was to make his young owner very unhappy. For if it continued, she would have to be parted from her pet.

trainer, white to the lips. "I tell you, Mr. Martin, I locked Rajah safely in his cage half an hour ago—when our turn was over. There must be some mistake."

"Mistake?" echoed the irate landowner. "There's no mistake! I heard the brute trampling through my copse—and found a number of valuable trees uprooted! It's gross carelessness on someone's part—"

"Just a minute!" put in Noel, stepping forward. "Before we go any further, I suggest it would be as well to put Miss Stanway's assertion to the test."

Both men stared at him. The manager looked surprised and relieved. The aggrieved landowner glared indignantly.

"Who are you, sir?" he demanded.

Noel calmly produced his card; the other's expression changed.

"A detective, eh?" he growled. "It's just as well you're here. You can put my complaint before the police."

Noel explained that he had no connection with the police—but the other was not listening.

"Come on, young woman!" he barked impatiently. "If you're so convinced of your precious elephant's innocence, it'll be simple enough to prove—as this young gentleman points out."

Her head held high, Rita Stanway stepped out into the open, followed by the irate Mr. Hargrove. Noel and the manager brought up the rear.

"I've heard of you, of course, Mr. Raymond," confided the latter, in an undertone. "It's fortunate you were on the spot this evening; it's not the first time this has happened—and it's getting the circus into disrepute."

"What's your own opinion—frankly?" Noel asked.

The manager shrugged, his expression troubled.

"I'm afraid there's no denying the fact that the animal has escaped—on two previous occasions—and caused considerable damage. Miss Stanway declares that the elephant was locked up securely on each occasion—but what am I to believe? The evidence points to negligence on her part."

They reached a large green canvas tent, strengthened by stout wooden posts. The girl trainer pulled back the flap and entered, followed by the others.

"You see," she exclaimed, holding the lantern above her head, "there's Rajah's cage, and—"

Her voice trailed off in a sharp cry of horrified dismay. Noel started forward, staring at the massive iron cage, its door swinging wide open.

The cage was empty!

"There! What did I tell you?" shouted the indignant landowner. "What more proof do you want? The brute's gone!"

White to the lips, the young trainer was staring at the empty cage.

"I locked it!" she declared. "I swear I locked it! Someone must have let him out!"

"You're the only one who has the key, Miss Stanway," put in the manager grimly, "and the only person in the circus who can handle Rajah. You know that, as well as I do."

"It's gross carelessness!" declared the landowner. "The cage was obviously left unlocked, and the animal walked out. I warn you, your circus will have to pay heavily for this!"

The manager bit his lip and turned to give an order to several men who had collected in the doorway.

Noel stepped forward and examined the cage door, with its massive padlock. There was a puzzled expression in his eyes.

"Just a minute!" he said, staring keenly round the tent. "I'll stake my professional reputation that the elephant did not leave the cage of its own accord."

A glimmer of hope sprang into the young trainer's eyes.

"How do you make that out?" demanded the manager.

Noel pointed to the heavy bolt of intricate pattern to which the padlock was attached.

"Even assuming that Miss Stanway neglected to lock the door—and I'm prepared to accept her word that she did lock it—there still remains the bolt. No elephant, however well trained, could have negotiated that bolt from inside the cage!"

"Another thing," he went on, crossing to the entrance of the tent, "as I came in, I nearly tripped over that bucket and broom. Who was the last to use them?"

"I—I was," put in the girl quickly. "I swept out the tent, after locking Rajah away for the night."

"The mystery deepens," Noel remarked dryly, as he turned to the two men. "You'll see that there's barely two feet to spare between that bucket of water and the pole supporting the entrance. Will you tell me how a full-grown elephant, escaping from its cage, could have negotiated that narrow space without overturning the bucket or disturbing the broom?"

The manager looked blank.

"The animal's trained," cut in the landowner irritably. "Anyway, my trees have been ruined, and someone will have to pay. If it happens again I'll apply to the police to have the animal destroyed!"

A broken cry was torn from the young trainer's lips.

"No, you couldn't! It would be cruel. Poor Rajah—"

"You have only yourself to blame, Miss Stanway," interjected the manager coldly. "I have already warned you, but I shall give you one more chance. Any further trouble with Rajah, and I'll instruct the cashier to pay you a month's salary in lieu of notice. We'll find someone else to take your place in the ring."

With a curt nod he left the tent, followed by the angry complainant.

"Hard luck, Miss Stanway!" said Noel quietly.

The girl was standing by the empty cage, one slender hand clasping the bars.

"I don't care—for myself," she breathed. "I—I may find another job. But Rajah—I'd hate to leave him. We understand each other. No one else can handle him, except Mr. Martin. Oh, if only we could do something to prove how Rajah escaped!"

"Leave it to me," put in Noel. "There's a mystery behind these escapes

that has got me guessing, and I hate to leave a mystery unsolved. Apart from the apparent impossibility there's the motive. Why should these escapes have been contrived, unless out of spite? Is anyone in the circus jealous of you?"

Rita hesitated. "I know that Gaspard, the lion-tamer, doesn't like me much; and Ling Fu, the Chinese conjurer, is jealous of my position on the bill."

"That's two to get on with," said Noel thoughtfully. "Hallo, what's that?"

From outside the tent came sounds of a distant commotion.

"It's Rajah: they're trying to bring him home. I'll have to go out to him."

She darted from the tent, Noel at her heels. The shouts drew nearer. As Noel and the girl reached the road a vast, bulky shape loomed in the darkness, surrounded by shouting figures.

By the light of torches and lanterns, Noel saw the great elephant, Rajah, standing stubbornly in the middle of the road, while half a dozen circus hands strove to urge him on.

The girl trainer started forward with a cry.

"Rajah!" she called. "Rajah—to me!"

The great animal instantly ambled forward, reaching out its trunk towards its beloved young mistress and trainer.

Jock Farrel, the old clown, was present, his rubicund face bathed in perspiration.

"Thank goodness you came along, Rita!" he panted. "We've had the dickens' own job trying to urge him out of old Hargrove's spinney. He's pulled up a dozen young saplings, as it is."

Noel tapped the clown on the shoulder, and Jock's good-natured face lit up.

"You here, Mr. Raymond? It's a good thing I sent you that ticket for tonight's show. What do you make of this business, sir?" he added, lowering his voice.

Noel drew the other aside.

"I want to ask you a question, Jock. Has the elephant done any damage to property, other than Mr. Hargrove's?"

The clown glanced at him queerly.

"It's funny you should ask that, Mr. Raymond, but the animal's not touched anything except the trees in Hargrove's spinney. Almost like he'd got a grudge against the old chap."

Noel whistled softly.

"You've given me an idea, Jock. Better go back with Miss Stanway and see that the elephant is safely locked up. I'll join you later."

Just then the girl plucked at his sleeve.

"Mr. Raymond," she cried, "Rajah's been ill-treated—I'm certain of it! I can tell it by his restless manner, and there's an ugly mark under his ear where a probe has been used!"

Noel's lips tightened.

"I thought as much," he said. "But don't worry, Miss Stanway—I've got an inkling of the truth. There's something I want to follow up. I'll rejoin you in about ten minutes."

He left the girl and hurried across the fields, following the elephant's tracks, that were now plainly marked on the soft ground.

He found that the fence surrounding the spinney had been smashed down, and the bushes on the other side were trampled.

A moment later he came upon the uprooted trees in a plantation of young firs and spruce.

About a dozen trees had been dragged out by the roots, and lay in a heap on the trampled soil.

What surprised Noel most was the fact that the uprooted trees formed

practically a straight line, as though they had been selected deliberately by the marauding elephant.

With a puzzled frown, the young detective examined the gaping hollows in the earth, flashing his torch first into one, then into another.

Abruptly he stiffened, with a swift intake of breath, as he thrust his hand into the loose soil, to pull out a short steel instrument, sharply pointed at one end, and bearing a pronged hook.

A soft whistle escaped Noel's lips, and his eyes glinted; he recognised the object as an elephant-goad, similar to those used by the Indian mahouts.

"I wonder," he muttered, "who owns this little toy? We're getting warmer! But there's no time to lose."

Slipping the steel goad under his coat, he hurried back towards the circus.

## RAJAH VANISHES AGAIN

"PITY you can't talk, Rajah, old chap; you might have a good deal to tell us!"

Noel's tones were jocular as he spoke to the great elephant, but the expression in his eyes belied his apparent levity.

Rajah moved restlessly behind the bars of his cage, reaching out his trunk to be fed.

Rita Stanway, his young trainer, and Jock Farrel, the clown, stood with Noel in the dimness of the menagerie tent.

"Did you—did you find out anything, Mr. Raymond?" asked Rita anxiously.

Noel shrugged, non-committally.

"Enough to confirm my theory that there's a deliberate purpose behind these escapes," he replied. "I've got an idea about the motive—a pretty fantastic idea, but I need more proof. What is bothering me at the moment is how Rajah manages to get out—after you've locked him up for the night."

He examined the massive padlock closely, and shook the heavy cage door to make certain that it was secure.

"It seems safe enough," he declared. "But I'm taking no chances—to-night. Has the manager said any more to you?"

The girl nodded, her lips trembling. "He—he told me that he'd hold me responsible for Rajah's safety; the boss—the owner of the circus—is expected down from Scotland to-morrow evening. If anything should—should happen, it will be serious for me."

Noel's eyes glittered.

"Nothing will go wrong, Miss Stanway," he assured her. "I'll take care of that. Go back to your caravan and get a good night's sleep. I want a word with Jock."

After the girl had departed, the old clown glanced questioningly at Noel.

"Anything I can do, Mr. Raymond?" he asked.

Noel nodded, producing a torch.

"You and I are going to keep watch to-night, Jock," he declared. "I've an idea there'll be another attempt to release Rajah—and for Miss Stanway's sake we've got to nip it in the bud."

Jock whistled, a glimmer of determination in his eyes.

"Just give the word, sir! I've known Rita Stanway since she was a kiddy. Her father and me were in the same show together—and I promised Bob Stanway that if anything happened to him, I'd keep an eye on his youngster. Well, that's how it is."

"Good for you!" declared Noel, clapping a hand on the old clown's shoulder. "You're the man I want. Take this torch and keep watch in the field behind the tent. I'm going to watch from the front; there are some convenient bushes,

and no one's likely to spot me. It's a dark night, but that's all to the good."

Outside the tent they parted company, making for their respective points of vigil.

The young detective waited till the other was out of sight; then from under his coat he produced the steel goad.

He dropped it on the short grass, near the opening of the tent, and concealed himself among the bushes.

Five minutes passed—ten minutes. Noel crouched motionless in the bushes, hands in his pockets, his keen eyes narrowed and alert.

Then abruptly he stiffened as the faint crack of a twig reached his ears.

A stealthy figure shambled softly across the clearing, halting near the menagerie tent.

Noel recognised the furtive figure in the dim light, a noiseless whistle escaped his lips.

It was Ling Fu, the Chinese conjurer. The Chinaman hesitated, and, taking a torch from under his robes, flashed it on the opening of the tent.

The light gleamed on the pronged goad, and the Chinaman bent to examine it; then, with a shrug, he continued on his way across the clearing.

Noel smiled wryly; his experiment, so far, did not appear to have been a success. If Ling Fu had recognised the goad, he had given no signs of it.

Even a Chinese illusionist, reflected Noel, could hardly vanish a full-grown elephant!

Just then there came the sound of footsteps, and voices. Mr. Martin, the circus manager, appeared with a uniformed attendant.

The manager was obviously making his rounds for the night. He took the lantern from the attendant.

"Wait here, Thomas," he said. "I'll see if Miss Stanway's locked that elephant up safely. I can't trust her these days."

He approached the menagerie tent, almost tripping over the pronged goad.

"Who left this here?" he demanded angrily, as he tossed it aside and entered the tent.

A moment later he reappeared, his eyes dilated.

"Thomas, give the alarm!" he shouted. "Fetch Miss Stanway! That confounded elephant's got away again!"

Incredulously, Noel burst from his hiding-place.

"That's impossible, Mr. Martin!" he exclaimed. "You must be mistaken. I locked the cage myself, and the tent hasn't been out of my sight."

The manager stared at him. "Well, one of us is going potty," he rejoined. "Look for yourself."

He pulled back the flap, and though the lantern gave hardly any light, Noel was amazed to see an empty cage.

In spite of his precautions, Rajah, the elephant, had mysteriously vanished from the tent.

The thing was fantastic—incredible. Yet Noel was forced to believe the evidence of his own eyes.

The elephant had gone. But how? And when?

By what means had the unwieldy animal been spirited away under his very eyes?

A broken cry from behind brought Noel back to earth; he turned to encounter the anguished appealing glance of Rita Stanway, the young trainer.

Her hair dishevelled, a coat flung over her shoulders, she had run from the caravan on hearing the alarm.

"Mr. Raymond, is it true?" she gasped. "Has—has Rajah got away?"

Noel nodded, biting his lips, a baffled look in his eyes.

"He's got away right enough!"

snapped the manager. "And I'll hold you responsible, Miss Stanway, if there's any more damage!"

He caught Noel agitatedly by the arm as the young detective was about to enter the tent.

"Hark!" he jerked. "What's that?"

A sudden commotion came from the direction of the road. A man of the tramp class came running across the field, his face working with terror.

"I seen 'im!" he gasped. "The elephant! Came chargin' past me in the dark."

"Which way?" snapped Noel.

The man pointed, gulping for breath. Noel turned to Rita, grasping her by the arm.

"Go back to your caravan, please, Miss Stanway," he said firmly, "and stay there. Let me handle this."

"But Rajah won't obey anyone except me!" gasped Rita. "I must come with you!"

"Mr. Raymond, is it true that Rajah's got away?" he panted.

Noel caught him by the shoulder. "Did you see anything?" he countered tersely. "Or anyone?"

The other shook his head.

"Not a soul—and I didn't remove my eyes from the tent once, sure as my name's Jock Farrel. It's uncanny, that's what it is!"

Noel smiled grimly.

"We're dealing with a pretty cunning scoundrel, Jock, but I fancy I've got him taped. I want you to look after Miss Stanway; see that she stays in her caravan, and mount guard outside."

The other stared blankly.

"You don't mean—you don't think there's any danger—for her?" he gasped.

"I don't know, Jock," replied Noel gravely. "Best not to take risks. Hurry, man!"



"The elephant did not leave the cage of his own accord," announced Noel. A glimmer of hope sprang into Rita's eyes, though she was amazed at Noel's next question. "Who was the last to use that bucket and broom?" he demanded.

"Please do as I ask," said Noel, lowering his voice urgently. "I mean it!"

Leaving the girl staring after him, he hurried towards the road. The manager overtook him.

"It's too confoundedly dark to see anything," he grumbled. "But I suppose the animal must have left some tracks."

Noel nodded, his expression curiously grim, as he flashed his torch across the muddy road.

Deeply imprinted in the mud was a trail of giant footprints leading out across the fields.

"He can't have gone far!" declared the manager. "I'll get a couple of men to help. We'll overtake you."

He hurried away, leaving Noel to follow the trail.

The young detective crossed the road and bent to examine the spoor. There was a curious furrow between his eyes.

With sudden decision he retraced his steps, cutting back across the field towards the circus tents.

In the gloom he almost ran into Jock Farrel.

The old clown was out of breath, his usually rubicund face looking pale and agitated.

The old clown departed without further demur.

Noel, a thoughtful gleam in his eyes, made his way by a devious route to the great marquee.

It was deserted now, and in complete darkness. Noel hurried across the sawdust ring and entered the portion of the tent set aside for the performers' dressing-rooms.

Torch in hand, he searched among the strange paraphernalia left by the circus clowns.

At length he discovered what he sought—a rather grotesque object, which he thrust hastily under his coat.

And just then his keen instinct warned him that he was not alone!

Someone—or something—was crouching in the shadows of the tent, watching his movements.

The young detective spun round, flashing his torch across the tent. He could see nothing. Then abruptly a faint sound came from above his head. He looked up sharply, in time to see a shadowy figure leap from one of the swinging trapezes.

Noel attempted to spring back—but the next instant he was sent crashing to the ground, his unknown assailant on top of him.

The young detective's head struck the ground and he lost consciousness.

Noel came to his senses a few minutes later, his head throbbing dully. He attempted to sit up—only to discover that his wrists and ankles were securely fastened with cord and a handkerchief had been tied round his mouth!

But the young detective had been in tighter corners than this. By dint of patient perseverance he contrived at length to free his hands and remove the gag. Then, with the aid of his knife, he cut the cords that bound his ankles.

His face was pale, but there was a glitter of determination in his eyes as he hurried from the tent.

Running unsteadily, he reached the caravans; but the girl trainer's caravan was in darkness, the door wide open.

With a sharp premonition at his heart, Noel aroused one of the circus-hands who was dozing outside his tent.

"Where's Miss Stanway?" he demanded. "And Jock Farrel?"

The man blinked protestingly.

"Gone!" he muttered, waving his hand sleepily. "Gone to follow that darned elephant. Wish 'em joy!"

A gleam of anxiety crept into Noel's eyes as he broke into a stumbling run across the fields.

The very thing he had most feared had come about! No doubt Rita Stanway had set out to trail the missing elephant, and the old clown had followed, loyal to his promise.

Would he be in time to avert the danger that threatened them?

Even as the thought flashed into his mind there was carried on the breeze a girl's pitiful cry of terror!

#### RITA STANWAY'S PERIL

NOEL ran desperately, heading in the direction of the cry.

A few minutes later he overtook Jock Farrel, limping from a badly strained ankle.

"Quick, sir!" panted the old man. "That was Rita—something's happened to her! She gave me the slip—"

Noel did not wait to listen, he was racing across the next field. The ground became soggy and insecure underfoot; the young detective realised, with a stab of horror, that this was one of the treacherous marshes that abounded in the district.

Yet the trail of the supposed elephant's spoor led clearly towards the very centre of the marsh!

"Miss Stanway!" called Noel.

A faint cry came back to him—ominously faint. Torch in hand, Noel struggled on, knee-deep in the clinging mud.

Then abruptly he caught sight of the girl, half-submerged in the treacherous quagmire.

She was almost fainting when Noel dragged her to safety.

Noel knelt at her side, his own face rather pale as he urged her to sip the simple restorative he took from his pocket.

The girl shuddered slightly and opened her eyes.

"Rajah!" she whispered. "He came this way—towards the marsh—"

"On the contrary," put in Noel. "You've been the victim of a cunning and unscrupulous trick, intended for me. I saw through it, but too late to stop you. That trail you've been following is a fake trail, laid on purpose to get me out of the way. Look!"

From an inner pocket of his overcoat, Noel pulled a bulky and grotesque object, fashioned out of drab grey cloth, closely resembling the foot of some gigantic animal.

"Recognise it?" he asked, with a grim smile. "It's part of the 'sea-

monster' costume, used by the clowns in their comedy act."

"Oh," gasped Rita, swift anger mingling with her relief, "what a hateful trick! But why—why should anyone have done such a thing?"

"That," rejoined Noel grimly, "is a question we're going to clear up."

Three dishevelled figures stumbled into the circus encampment half an hour later, to be greeted with bad news.

Rajah, the elephant, had been captured in Mr. Hargrove's grounds, after causing fresh havoc among the trees. He was at present chained up in his cage, under sentence of being destroyed.

With a choking cry, Rita Stanway broke away from Noel.

"They shan't do it!" she cried fiercely. "They shan't!"

"I CAN'T make head or tail of it, Mr. Raymond," declared Jock Farrel huskily. "How did Rajah escape from his tent, with us looking on? And why—"

"One question at a time," put in Noel dryly. "Rajah did not escape from his tent; he was led out, after we had been cleverly decoyed away."

The old clown stared blankly.

"But—but his cage was empty—"

"A cunning illusion," rejoined Noel. "Come with me, and I'll show you."

He led the way to the menagerie tent. They found the girl trainer on her knees, unlocking the chain that secured Rajah's massive foot.

"They're not going to take him!" she declared, her eyes flashing.

"Good for you!" rejoined Noel, with a smile. "With your help, Miss Stanway, I think that Rajah can prove his own innocence."

The girl stared uncomprehendingly. "To start with," said Noel, "let me clear up the point about Rajah's supposed escapes. They were cunningly contrived by someone who possessed a duplicate key to the cage, and who was in the position to be able to divert attention from his movements."

"See this!"

As he spoke, he flashed his torch into a dim recess of the tent, and produced from beneath a pile of straw a dusty roll of canvas.

Partially unrolling it, he held it at arm's length, revealing an amazingly skilful piece of scenic painting, representing an empty cage.

"This," explained Noel, "was once part of the circus property, but was utilised by a cunning scoundrel for his own ends. Seen in the dim light of the tent, it was realistic enough to hoodwink me for a moment, and no doubt it has been used before. Someone imagines that they see an empty cage—a hue-and-cry is started—and under cover of the excitement, our cunning friend releases the elephant."

"But why?" gasped Rita.

"And who?" demanded Jock grimly.

Noel glanced at his watch.

"It's pretty late," he commented; "but I fancy our astute friend is busy at this moment, searching for his spoils. Like to take Rajah for a little stroll, Miss Stanway? We're paying a visit to a neighbour's estate, to examine some young trees!"

Noel refused to explain further. A few minutes later a surprising little procession set out from the circus tent, headed by Rita Stanway, leading her elephant, while Noel brought up the rear with the old clown, and one or two bewildered circus hands.

Rita gave a nervous gasp as there

stepped from the spinney the irate landowner, Mr. Hargrove.

"Well?" he snapped, glaring at the group. "I'm here, as you suggested over the phone, Mr. Raymond. But I'm dashed if I can understand what you're getting at? Is that brute safe?"

"Perfectly safe," replied Noel, "when he's not roused. But, with your permission, I propose to try a little experiment. Have you got the spinney surrounded, as I requested?"

"I've got a dozen men posted round the estate," replied the landowner.

"Stand back, please—all of you!" Noel said. "Miss Stanway, I should like you to leave Rajah to me."

Noel approached the elephant; then, with an unexpected movement, he snatched from beneath his coat the pronged goad, and waved it in front of Rajah's small, beady eyes.

The elephant gave a shrill trumpet of rage and fear as it backed away. Then abruptly it heaved itself round, and, seizing a small sapling with its trunk, dragged it from the ground.

There came a startled shout as a furtive figure sprang hastily from the shrubbery, and made a dash for safety, grasping a rusted iron box.

Noel caught the man by the shoulder as he made to escape, revealing Martin, the circus manager!

There came a shout from Mr. Hargrove as he opened the box.

"My wife's jewels!" he exclaimed. "The heirlooms that were stolen three years ago!"

"Exactly!" replied Noel, with a grim smile. "I happened to be interested in the robbery at the time, and it's baffled me ever since to discover where the thief could have concealed his loot. He was discovered to have been an ex-circus hand; but what was not discovered was that he apparently had a confederate among the labourers who were working on your spinney at the time, planting young trees."

"The box containing the jewels was obviously planted among the roots of one of the young trees. The thief was caught, but refused to disclose the hiding-place of his loot."

"But Martin, the circus manager, apparently discovered the truth. He bided his time, confronted with the problem of uprooting the trees, now sturdy saplings three years old."

"Then he hit on a brilliant plan. Rajah, the trained elephant, would do the job, noiselessly and thoroughly. He had to use threats to coerce the elephant to do his bidding, and, unfortunately for his plans, the first few attempts brought no results."

"It was necessary to blame someone for the elephant's actions, so he blamed the young trainer."

"I suspected him, in the first place, because he was the only person in the circus, bar Miss Stanway, who had any control over Rajah—a control due to fear on the elephant's part."

"As you've seen, the sight of the goad was enough to make Rajah uproot the trees—and bring Martin into the open."

Mr. Hargrove drew a deep breath. "I hardly know how to thank you, Mr. Raymond—" he began.

"Don't thank me!" put in Noel quickly. "Thank Miss Rita Stanway and her elephant. It is through them that your jewels have been discovered."

And the wealthy landowner proved his gratitude by securing for Rita and Rajah an engagement with the most famous circus in the country.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

"THE SECRET OF CABIN 13"—that is the title of next Friday's thrilling detective story. Don't miss it!



# HER UNKNOWN ENEMY AT School



By  
GAIL  
WESTERN

## THE RIVAL PARTY

**O**LIVE FRENCH, Fourth Form captain at St. Kit's School, and her chum, Letty Johnson, liked Jess Grant as soon as they met her. Jess was an orphan girl, whom a mysterious Miss Dalton had befriended and sent to St. Kit's. Then Miss Dalton disappeared.

The chums soon realised that Jess had an unknown enemy in the school, who was trying to get her disgraced. Then they found that Jess also had a double in the village, in league with this unknown enemy.

Stephanie Warner, of the Fourth, disliked both Olive and Jess, and tried to stir up feeling against them. When Olive started to organise the important Form tea-party, Stephanie announced that she and her cronies were going to hold a rival affair—unless Jess was left out of Olive's party!

"**Y**OU'RE going to hold a rival party!"

Incredulously Olive stared at the group of girls seated in Stephanie's study. Most of them said nothing though they looked a little sheepish and embarrassed. But Stephanie grinned and nodded.

"That's right," she said, a triumphant glitter in her grey eyes. "And ours is going to be a wow of a party, too! It'll make your tin-pot affair look pretty small!"

Olive went white. She was quivering with indignation; for a moment she could not speak.

It was not the blow to her authority as Form captain she minded so much. It was not even the fact that Jess was the innocent cause of this defiance. What made her angry was that Stephanie, out of purely personal spite, intended to use her influence to mar the Fourth Form's big event of the term.

"Oh, you can't mean it!" gasped Olive, finding her voice at last. "You couldn't all be so horrid!" Appealingly she looked around the room. "Surely you must realise that it's essential that we all work together!" she went on desperately. "If the Form

splits itself in half the party's bound to be a flop. There can't be two of them! Please let's forget all this unpleasantness—all this quarrelling—and get to work as one happy team!"

One or two of the girls seemed to be weakening. They flushed and would not meet their Form captain's eyes. But Stephanie only tossed her blonde locks defiantly.

"You're only wasting your time, Olive French," she said curtly. "Our minds are made up. If that new girl, Jess Grant, takes part in the concert, then we just hold one of our own! If you like to drop her out, then we'll come in with you, but not otherwise."

Olive could hardly believe her own ears.

"Well, of all the cheek!" she gasped. "I think you must be potty! Why, I couldn't prevent Jess from coming to the party even if I wanted to. It's a Form affair."

Cecily and one or two of the other girls seemed taken aback.

"You mean you—you won't be sensible?" stammered Cecily.

Olive's lips tightened.

"If being sensible is to be unjust—no," she cried. "Whether you like it or not, Jess is going to sing!"

"Then that settles it," declared Stephanie, hardly able to conceal her satisfaction. "Our arrangements stand. We'll organise a rival party."

A stormy retort trembled on Olive's lips, but with an effort she bit it back and looked around at the other girls.

"Are you all still siding with Stephanie?" she asked.

"You bet we are," smirked Iris.

The anonymous note was the work of Jess' unknown enemy. And at last the chums had a clue to the sender. It must be one of four girls. But how could they find out which?

"Yes," said Cecily curtly, while the rest nodded.

Olive made no further appeal. She realised that to do so would be futile. Without another word she left the study and returned to the Junior Common-room.

"The rest of the Form, who had been impatiently waiting for the meeting to begin, opened their eyes in surprise when they saw Olive come in alone.

"Hallo, where's the rest of 'em?" demanded Molly Barker.

Olive swallowed hard.

"I'm afraid they're not coming," she replied.

"Not coming!" It was Olive's chum Letty who shouted out; then, as she saw how pale Olive was, she darted forward and laid a plump hand on her shoulder. "What's up, old scout?" she inquired.

With an effort the Form captain mastered her emotion. As calmly as she could she turned to the other girls.

"Stephanie and the others intend to organise a rival party," she explained.

"Wh-a-at?"

Everyone gave an incredulous gasp—all save Jess, and she seemed to guess what was behind this rebellion. A flush on her cheeks, she faced Olive.

"Am I the cause of their decision?" she asked with a touch of bitterness.

Olive had to nod.

"I'm afraid you are, Jess, but don't let that worry you. It's not you that Stephanie's really hitting at—it's me."

"You!"

The rest of the girls stared in shocked surprise. Olive gave a fierce nod.

"Yes—me! Ever since I've been captain, Stephanie's done her best to cause trouble. She's jealous, and she's only made Jess an excuse for trying to score over me. For her own selfish ends she's out to spoil the party, but—"

Her eyes flashed, and grimly she surveyed them all.

"But it's not going to work!" she cried. "Blow Stephanie, I say! If they don't want to co-operate with us, then they need't. We'll organise the party without them!"

"Hear, hear!" shouted Molly Barker, while Letty clapped her chum enthusiastically on the back.

"Good for you, old scout!" she exclaimed. "Let's carry on. We can do without that bunch of spoil sports. What do you say, girls?" she added. "Are you going to rally round?"

"Yes, let's buckle to," Olive urged. "Let's show Stephanie that we mean to make the party a success! Let's prove

to the whole school that the Fourth Form can work loyally together!"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the ticket!"

"Good old Olive!"

There came a chorus of approval. Olive's rousing words had done the trick, and she smiled with delight as she realised that she had rallied the girls to her side. Stephanie or no Stephanie, the arrangements for the Fourth Form party were to go right ahead.

#### FOUR SUSPECTS!

**T**HERE, that's finished! Only hope it'll meet with everyone's approval!"

It was the following evening, and Olive, who was seated at the study table, surrounded by a sea of papers, laid aside her pen with a sigh of relief.

Letty, who sat on the other side of the table, dashing off lines as though her very life depended upon it, looked up with a groan.

"Only wish I could say the same!" she murmured. "But I've still got another sixty to do! Blow old Charters! She must have ears like a fox, otherwise she'd never have heard me gassing in class this afternoon!"

Olive smiled sympathetically, then she picked up one of the sheets of foolscap before her.

"Never mind—take a look at this!" she urged. "It's the rough programme for the party."

Ever since the preliminary meeting the Form captain had been busy, sorting out all the various suggestions that had been made, arranging the various turns in some kind of order, even mapping out specimen menus for the supper.

Her impot forgotten, Letty jumped to her feet and eagerly scanned the programme, but it was to the supper her eyes went, not to the details of the entertainment that was to follow.

Anxiously Olive looked at her.

"D'you think it'll do?" she asked.

Letty smacked her lips.

"Golly, but it makes me feel hungry even to read it!" she exclaimed. "Ham and tongue. Veal and ham pie. Real Christmas pudding. Chocolate blanc-manges and fruit jellies. Oh my, oh my, what a feed!" She looked up with glistening eyes. "Will it do?" she echoed. "Why, this is good enough for a Lord Mayor's banquet!"

Olive laughed.

"Chump, it's not the menu I'm worried about," she said, and, turning the sheet of foolscap over, she pointed. "It's the entertainment!"

"Oh, that!" Letty gave a disdainful sniff. "As if that matters. The grub is the only thing that counts. Anyway, what's wrong with it? Seems all right to me."

"It's Edith Fox's turn," explained Olive. "You know how fussy she is. A piano solo seems all wrong sandwiched between your comic songs and that sketch we're going to do. But if I move her—well, it upsets the balance of the first half of the programme!"

Very conscientious was Olive. Not only did she want the entertainment to be a big success, but she was anxious to please all the performers—particularly after the break with Stephanie & Co.

Letty pursed her lips.

"Search me! I'm no stage manager," she declared. "Ask Jess. This is more in her line than mine. Hey, Jess, just a jiffy!"

Turning, she hailed the third member of the study, but the new girl did not seem to hear. Sitting before the fire, her legs tucked under her, she was

peering thoughtfully at a slip of crumpled paper that lay between the open leaves of the school magazine.

"Hey, wake up there!" called Letty again. "What are you day-dreaming about?"

She gave Jess a tap on the shoulder and the other girl turned with a start.

"Oh, sorry!" she ejaculated, her face pale, a queer, excited glint in her eyes.

"Did you speak?"

Letty gave a snort.

"Did I speak!" she cried. "Crumbs, I've got speaker's throat through yelling at you! What's up? Why this far-away look?" Curiously she glanced at the other girl, then, as she recognised the slip of paper that lay on the magazine, she gave a surprised shout. "Why, that's one of those anonymous notes your unknown enemy's been buzzing around!" she exclaimed. "What are you doing with that? Trying to identify it?"

To her astonishment, Jess nodded. Letty stared harder than ever.

"But it's typewritten, you chump!" she pointed out.

"I know!" Jess nodded again, and the excited glint in her brown eyes deepened. "But even typewriting can be identified," she declared. "Why, in a book I was reading the other day the big clue the detective discovered was—"

"Never mind about that, old scout!" cut in Letty. "The point is, have you found any giddy clue?"

"Yes," put in Olive, all her worries about the forthcoming party forgotten. "Have you discovered anything queer about the typewriting?"

Once more Jess nodded, and excitedly she thrust forward the slip of paper.

"This message was written on the same machine as the school mag is typed on," she declared.

"What!"

Her chums stared at her incredulously. "But that's impossible!" exclaimed Olive. "Enid Smailes is responsible for the mag, and she always keeps her typewriter locked up!"

Jess pointed first to the note, then to the magazine.

"Look," she said quietly. "This

anonymous note was typed on her machine. See those 'T's' and those 'R's'? They're not straight. The type's crooked. Well, exactly the same fault appears in the school mag. Compare them yourself."

Breathlessly, Olive and Letty examined the two sets of typewriting, and their doubts vanished. Unless there were two typewriters in the school, both with faulty "T's" and faulty "R's"—a very unlikely possibility, to say the least of it—then Jess' unknown enemy had undoubtedly used Enid Smailes' machine!

But did that mean that Enid herself was the treacherous letter-writer? Enid was a Fifth Former—a studious girl, with few real friends, yet, nevertheless, well enough liked by all who came in contact with her.

"I can't believe it," Olive murmured to herself. Then abruptly she stiffened. "I know. Let's go and see her—see what we can pump out of her! Come along! She'll be in the Print Shop. She spends all her time in there!"

The Print Shop was the name given to the spare study on the first floor where Enid kept her typewriter, the school duplicator, and all the other requisites for producing the termly magazine, and eagerly Letty made to set off for it. But Olive called her back, suddenly remembering the meeting she had called to discuss the rough programme she had made for the party.

"What about the meeting?" she asked.

"Blow the meeting!" snorted Letty. "Let's strike while the iron's hot!"

And grabbing her chums by the arm, she almost ran them out of the room and down the corridor. As they expected, they found Enid Smailes busy in the Print Shop upstairs, running off the front cover of the duplicator.

The Fifth Former was a dumpy, saw-toothed girl, with lank, dark hair and a perpetual, worried frown. She looked round irritably as they entered.

"What do you kids want?" she demanded. "Can't you see I'm busy?"

Olive switched on her most pleasant smile.

"Sorry, but we won't keep you a tick," she said. "We only want to borrow your typewriter to type out the programme for our party."

"All right, but buck up," said Enid, and with an inky hand she pointed to the machine that stood on the table by the window.

With a meaning glance at her chums, Olive inserted a sheet of paper in the typewriter, and with a laborious forefinger copied out the rough draft she intended to submit to to-night's Form meeting. When she had finished, they all gathered round and excitedly studied the various "T's" and "R's." Every one of them was slightly crooked.

"This proves it!" Olive whispered. "Jess, you were right! But I wonder—" Breaking off, she crossed to where the Fifth Form printer stood, frowning at a proof of the new magazine cover. "I say, Enid," she cried, "someone has been banging your machine about. Who have you lent it to lately?"

"Oh, I don't know," Enid shook her head. "Lorna Meredith, of course, she's always using it, and so's Billie Carton and Winifred Butler. But they're in the Sixth. They'd have more sense than to do any damage. It must have been one of you Fourth Form kids."

"Oh, don't say that!" urged Olive, pretending to look shocked. "I'm sure no one in our Form would treat a typewriter like that. Which of them have used it, anyway?"



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How would you like to knit a lovely present for daddy, mummy or your school-chum? Well, even a very little girl can make a "pixie" hood for herself, a scarf or shawl, a "Dusky Sue" tea-cosy, and "Bunny" bed-room slippers, etc., with the help of this book.

**BESTWAY KNITTING BY YOUNG FOLK**

KNITTING BOOK No. 51

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"No one lately—I've taken jolly good care of that," retorted Enid. "Except, of course, Stephanie Warner."  
"Stephanie!"

The chums exchanged startled glances. Stephanie was the one girl whom they had suspected might be Jess' unknown enemy. Yet lately all the evidence had seemed to absolve her.

"Stephanie!" echoed Olive again, and eagerly she surveyed the Fifth Former. "When did she borrow it?"

"Oh, I don't know. Some time last week, I think it was. She came in to type out some potty play she'd written. But for goodness' sake stop yapping and buzz off. Can't you see I'm busy?"

And irritably Enid waved her inky hand to the duplicator. The chums took the hint. In any case, there was no point in remaining, for it was obvious that nothing more was to be learnt from the Fifth Former. Nevertheless, what they had learned gave them food for thought.

All of them knew that Enid kept the Print Shop locked up. Without her permission it would be difficult for anyone to get access to her typewriter. Then surely this meant that one of the four persons she had named must be Jess' unknown enemy.

Lorna Meredith, Billie Carton, Winifred Butler, and—Stephanie Warner!

On the way to the Common-room Olive ticked the four suspects off on her fingers.

"We can rule Lorna out," she declared. "Why, you might as well suspect old Brammy, the Head, as Lorna!"

"Hear, hear," agreed Letty, for Lorna Meredith was the most popular prefect St. Kit's had ever known—a girl who had always had a deep interest in the progress of the Fourth.

"And I can't believe Billie Carton can be guilty, either," Olive went on. "She's also a prefect, and a real sport. But as for Winnie Butler—well, I wouldn't rule her out. She's a bit of a toady, and she's always had her knife into the Fourth."

Letty shook her head. Long ago her mind had been made up.

"Winnie's also a non-starter!" she declared. "Stephanie must be the culprit. We know she hates Jess, we know she's jealous of you, Olive, and we know she's borrowed Enid's typewriter recently, so what more do you want?" she finished triumphantly.

Olive gave a sigh. She shrank from suspecting anyone in her own Form. Even though she had no cause to like Stephanie, nevertheless, she found it almost impossible to believe that she could be so mean and so treacherous.

"Oh, well, it's no good worrying about it now," she said, as they reached the Common-room and she flung open the door. "Let's get on with our meeting."

The rest of the Form—except for Stephanie and the other rebels, of course—were already in their seats, and a cheer went up as Olive & Co. entered. But it was nothing to the cheer that arose when the Form captain read out the details of the programme she had planned.

Her eyes sparkling, Olive looked around.

"Am I to take it that you approve of the arrangements, then?" she asked. "Rather!"

"They couldn't be better!"

A shout of agreement went up, and Olive smiled again. Their enthusiasm made her forget the mystery surrounding Jess' unknown enemy. Made her even forget Stephanie & Co.'s absence.

"Right-i-o," she said, "then let's get

down to business. First of all, I suggest we rehearse the sketch we're going to put on. But before we begin we'd better try on the costumes. Some of them will need altering, I expect."

The sketch was to be an elaborate costume affair, the scene being laid in sunny Italy. Fortunately the Junior School was well provided with theatrical props—used in the stage shows which were given at the end of each term.

Olive nodded across to her chums.

"Buzz along and bring the props, will you?" she asked. "They're in the gym; the two hamperers in the far corner are the ones we need. They contain the costumes we used for the Merchant of Venice last term. With a bit of alteration they ought to do fine."

Letty and Jess departed, and while they were absent Olive handed out the various parts in the playlet. Everyone was happily discussing the forthcoming event when Letty and Jess returned, each staggering under the weight of a massive wicker hamper.



"I hope the Venetian costume will fit me," puffed Letty. Then she stopped, and a surprised gasp arose as the lid of the hamper was thrown up. "Why, it's empty!" she exclaimed.

Dumping them down on the floor, they fumbled with the fastenings, and excitedly the rest of the girls gathered round.

"Hope that Venetian costume will fit me," puffed Letty. "You know, that one with all the ermine round it. It'll be just the thing for —" She stopped, and a surprised gasp went up as the lid was thrown back. "Why, it's empty!" she exclaimed.

"And so's this!" gasped Jess, as she opened the second basket.

For a moment they all stared in consternation, then Olive laughed.

"You chumps, you've brought the wrong baskets!" she said.

Letty snorted.

"But we haven't. These were the only ones in the far corner," she protested.

"Then the real ones must have been shifted," declared Olive. "Anyway, we'll go along and see."

They all followed her to the gym, but a quick look around showed that Letty had been right. The baskets she and Jess had brought were the ones which had contained the Fourth Form costumes.

But where were the costumes now? In bewilderment the Fourth Formers

gazed at each other, and in dismay, too. For those costumes were essential to the success of their playlet. If they had gone astray—

Olive gave a sudden gasp, and stooping, she snatched up a wisp of silk that lay in the dust in the corner. It was an expensive handkerchief. Letty gave an understanding snort as she glared at it.

"Stephanie!" she exclaimed. "She's the one to blame! Why, of all the cheek! Fancy daring to pinch our costumes!"

"Pinch our costumes?" gasped Molly Barker.

The fat girl nodded.

"Yes, it's as clear as daylight. Stephanie means to put on a sketch herself, so she and her crowd have helped themselves to our props."

"Ph-ee-w!"

"Of all the nerve!"

An angry murmur arose, while Molly Barker looked helplessly at the Form captain.

"But we need those costumes!" she



"I hope the Venetian costume will fit me," puffed Letty. Then she stopped, and a surprised gasp arose as the lid of the hamper was thrown up. "Why, it's empty!" she exclaimed.

gulped. "What—what are we going to do?"

Olive set her lips grimly.

"Why, get them back, of course!" she snapped, and grimly she made for the door. "Come on, girls!" she ordered. "Let's go and interview Stephanie right away!"

And off they went, determined to stand no nonsense, determined to put a stop to Stephanie's high-handed action. Those costumes were the official property of the Fourth Form, and the Fourth Formers meant to have them!

### A TRIUMPH FOR STEPHANIE

"HOW do you think this will suit me?"

Stephanie Warner swung round on one toe, holding a shimmering Venetian robe held against herself. From Iris Watts and her other toadies there came gasps of admiration.

"Oh, lovely!"

"It will fit you perfectly, Stephanie!"

Stephanie's grey eyes lit up. She loved flattery, and in imagination she could already see herself in the centre of the stage, bathed in limelight, the cynosure of all eyes.

"Of course, not everyone could wear a costume like this," she commented. "It needs a tall figure, grace, and—er—poise. But unfortunately—"

She broke off as the door opened. Next moment into the study surged an angry crowd of Fourth Formers. At sight of Stephanie, preening herself in the Venetian costume she had already marked as her own, Letty gave a shout.

"What did I tell you? I knew they'd pinched them! Well"—fiercely she glared across at the rival crowd—"you've jolly well got to hand 'em back!"

"I'll say so!"  
"They belong to us. We're the official party!"

"Come on, pass them over!"  
Determinedly the Fourth Formers advanced into the study. Iris Watts and several of the other rebels covered back in alarm, but Stephanie stood her ground. Disdainfully she returned the other girls' glares.

"You can all go and eat coke!" she declared. "First come, first served. We thought of a costume play first, and so we've a right to the props."  
"Rats!"

There came a howl of derision, and for a few minutes Olive could not make herself heard. Then, when she had at last secured comparative silence, she stepped forward.

"I'm sorry, Stephanie," she said. "I don't want to cause any more bad feeling, but those costumes belong to the Fourth, and as Form captain I am in charge of them. I must ask you to hand them back."

Her rival's grey eyes glittered.  
"And suppose I refuse?" she asked.  
"Then we shall have to take them by force," replied Olive.  
Letty gave an excited whoop.

"That's the idea."  
And she made a grab at the costumes on the tables. Molly Barker and one or two more also surged forward. But Stephanie's cronies rushed to the defence of their property. In a moment the study was in an uproar. In vain Olive tried to secure order.

"Cool down, you hot-heads!" she urged. "There's no need to—"  
Crash! went the table, and crash! went a chair, as two of the girls, tugging at one of the costumes, stumbled against it.

"Stop!" shouted Olive again.

"Don't—"  
And then she stopped herself, her face paling with dismay, for abruptly the door had opened, and there now stood a tall, forbidding figure.

Miss Bramleigh, the headmistress!  
"What does this mean?" she demanded. "Be good enough to cease this disgraceful noise at once! Do you hear, girls? Letty, Stephanie, Molly—all of you—do as you are told!"

As they became aware of her presence the Fourth Formers straightened up. An apprehensive silence settled over the room, and, with a sniff, Miss Bramleigh turned to Olive.

"Is this an example of how you control the Form?" she asked sarcastically. Olive flushed, but before she could speak Stephanie stepped forward. She faced the Head boldly.

"It wasn't our fault, Miss Bramleigh. We were peacefully rehearsing a play when Olive, Letty, and all the rest burst in and tried to snatch our costumes."  
The headmistress' frown deepened.

But before she could utter any comment, Letty, impulsive as usual, gave vent to an indignant cry of "Oh!"  
Swinging round on the innocent-looking Stephanie, she said:

"That's not true—and you know it, Stephanie Warner. You and your cronies caused the trouble at the start!"

"What I've said is perfectly true!" retorted Stephanie. "You and Olive and your pals started the rumpus!"

Miss Bramleigh stepped forward hastily, to prevent the quarrel that was obviously developing between the two Fourth Formers.

"Is this true, Olive?" she demanded. Olive's cheeks became scarlet.  
"Well, yes," she confessed. "But, you see—"

"That will do, thank you! I wish to hear no more. All of you, except Stephanie and her friends, will do two hundred lines."

"But, Miss Bramleigh—"  
"Silence! I intend to listen to no excuses, and I warn you all, if there is any recurrence of this disgraceful behaviour I shall close all your studies."  
"C-c-close our s-s-studies!"

"That is all. You may go."  
Molly Barker, Jess, and one or two of the others moved glumly towards the door, but Olive stood where she was.

"But what about our costumes, Miss Bramleigh?" she asked.

Miss Bramleigh pursed her lips.  
"They will remain where they are."  
"But—" In angry resentment Olive stared. "But you don't understand, Miss Bramleigh," she protested.

The Head held up her hand. She was in no mood to listen to explanations.  
"How dare you argue with me, Olive? Be good enough to return to your own study at once!"

For a moment longer Olive remained there, her heart thumping rebelliously. It was so unfair! Those costumes belonged to the Form as a whole, and as captain it was her privilege to say how they should be used. Stephanie had no right to them at all.

She looked across at Stephanie, and she nearly choked at the mocking glint she saw in that girl's grey eyes. Plainly Stephanie believed that as a result of this triumph Olive would have to abandon all her plans—would have to hand over to her the organisation of the Fourth Form Party.

Now that Stephanie feels she has scored over Olive, what difference will this make to Olive's position in the Form? You mustn't miss next Friday's enthralling chapters of this splendid school-and-mystery serial. Order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** right away.

## Your Editor's Corner



**M**Y DEAR READERS,—I've an idea that you've turned to this letter of mine very quickly this week—small as it is!—in order to know more about the new serial I mentioned last Friday.

First I'll give you the title of it: **"BRENDA'S SECRET TASK IN HOLLYWOOD."**

There, doesn't that sound exciting? And it is, too!

Brenda Castle was thrilled as you would be when she found herself actually in Hollywood again. She had lived there when she was younger—with her elder sister and her parents. But, since the death of her mother and father, the two girls had been separated—Marion to stay in Hollywood to look for work, and Brenda to go to Chicago to finish her schooling.

Then Marion wrote, asking Brenda to join her, so that they could live together.

Imagine Brenda's excitement. To see Marion again—to find a job and share a little home with her—in Hollywood!

At last Brenda arrived there, filled with expectation.

But what a shock awaited her! Her sister—Marion had disappeared!

Brenda felt numbed and horrified. What was she to do now? Where to look for her sister?

Then came Brenda's big chance! She had the opportunity of a wonderful job. She was to act as guide to two jolly young girls—to show them all the sights of Hollywood.

The Chinese Theatre, the Hollywood Bowl, the Brown Derby—oh, and tons more places with magic names.

"Girls' Crystal" Office,  
The Fleetway House,  
Farringdon Street,  
London, E.C.4.

### HER SECRET TASK

But also, Brenda had a secret task—one that she could tell no one, not even the cheery girls with whom she so quickly made friends. For Brenda had to find her sister.

Now I'm not going to tell you any more this week. Instead, I'm going to leave you in suspense until next Friday, when you'll be reading the first extra long opening chapters of this serial for yourselves.

Oh, and as I am going to give extra pages to the new serial, you'll find the story about Kaye of the Kennels missing next week. But it'll be back again the week after, so don't think it's gone for good, will you?

### OTHER TREATS

"The Secret of Cabin 13," is the title of next Friday's grand mystery story, featuring Noel Raymond. A complete story starring Pat Lovell, the girl reporter, will also appear, as well as further instalments of Renee Frazer's and Gail Western's splendid serials.

### YOUR LETTERS

What a number of you made that New Year resolution I suggested to you, 'way back in January!

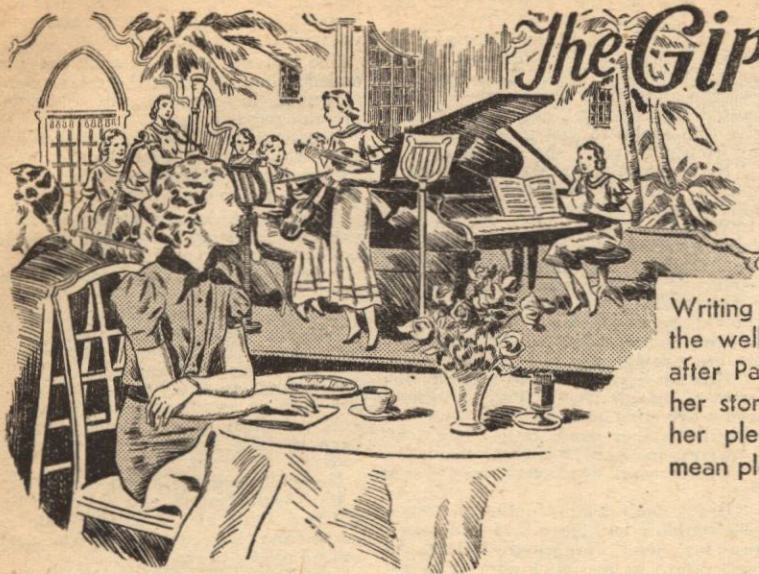
I've had tons and tons of letters from you—and all very nice ones, too!

They've been most helpful as well, so I must say thank you very much! And keep up the fine start, won't you? For reading the contents of my daily postbag is the most enjoyable event of the day, you know.

Oh, and don't forget that "order in advance" resolution, either, will you? That's for your benefit, so that you will make sure of receiving your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** each week.

I should run round and order next Friday's copy right away if I were you, for there's going to be such a rush for next week's number.

Your sincere friend,  
**YOUR EDITOR**



# The Girl Pianist's Secret

Writing a story for her newspaper about the well-known ladies' orchestra was a job after Pat Lovell's own heart. But "getting her story" was as nothing compared with her pleasure at being able to expose a mean plot that nearly ruined the girl pianist's career!

By ELIZABETH CHESTER

## THE GIRL WITH A NEWS STORY

PAT LOVELL, reporter on the staff of the "Midshire Gazette," had a job of work to do, and she settled down to do it. She took a cream bun from the dish of cakes on the tea-table, and ate it.

That was not her entire job, of course, although she was being paid to do it, and there would be no charge for the cream bun. Pat's present job was to "write-up" the Ladies' Orchestra at the Hotel Royal in the county town of Midshire; and while doing it she was the guest of the management.

Although a pianist in a modest, amateur way, Pat did not consider herself a music critic, but she knew what she liked, and she could tell by the applause, and by the manner of the other people in the magnificent palm lounge of the Hotel Royal, whether the ladies' orchestra was giving pleasure or not.

It was, and Pat said so—or, at least, jotted down a note in shorthand in her book. Several of the other people in the palm lounge had noticed that notebook, and one or two had remarked to the waiters upon it. For short of hiding the pad under the table while she wrote, Pat could not conceal it. And there were so many notes to make that she could not rely wholly upon her memory.

She had to remember to mention the palms, the smartly dressed women, one or two well-known people whose names were news, locally, if not nationally; the waiters in their smart blue tail-coats with the brass buttons, could not be forgotten. And, of course, she had to comment on the pretty pale green frocks of the orchestra.

The violinist leader was not very young, although attractive-looking, and the average age seemed to be nearer thirty than twenty. But the pianist was a girl of about Pat's own age, and she played remarkably well.

Pat decided to give her special mention on account of her youth.

As Pat reached out to try a ginger cracker, she became aware of a shadow crossing her table, and then of a girl who moved aside the chair opposite her, and sat down on it, uninvited.

Pat looked up, surprised, but smiling. She had not reserved the table, and people could sit where they pleased.

"Don't think me rude," said the girl. "But I was told you are a reporter, and—well, I'm interested."

Pat knew at once whether she liked

people or not, and as she met this girl's keen eyes, and noted her rather tight-lipped expression, she became on her guard. "Don't trust her," said Pat's instincts.

"Yes, I'm a reporter," said Pat, hiding her feelings and smiling. "Are you thinking of becoming one?"

"I?" said the girl sharply, almost with resentment. "Good gracious, no! I have private means!"

"How lucky!" said Pat. "But I suppose that makes life rather dull, not having a job?"

The girl looked down at her beautifully manicured hands, and smiled in an unamused, superior way.

"I haven't really come here to discuss my own circumstances—or your job," she said, with more than a hint of a snub. "I have come here just to offer you news."

Pat sat up and took notice. "What sort of news? Gossip?" she asked.

"No. Thrilling front-page news," said the girl.

"Speak on," said Pat. "The moving finger writes—" And she held her pencil ready, puzzled to know what the news was, and why the girl had decided to give it to her.

"Very well. Don't look at the orchestra," said the girl in a strange, tense tone. "Have you noticed the pianist?"

"Yes," Pat admitted, intrigued more than ever now. "Why?"

"She won't be pianist here much longer," said the girl, with a marked ring of triumph, a crowing note that Pat did not fail to notice.

"Oh? She's to be sacked?" asked Pat, aware of disappointment, even though she did not know the girl pianist. She had taken a sympathetic liking to her because she was young, unaffected, but successful.

But Pat had guessed wrongly.

"Not sacked—taken away. Sit tight, and you'll see something exciting," went on the girl. "She happens to be a girl reported as missing from home—and within a few minutes a detective will lead her away. If that isn't news, what is?"

Pat did not answer. She had not missed the note of vindictiveness in the other's tone, and it made her uneasy. Her informant was well-dressed, had every sign of wealth in her clothes, hairdressing, and articles of jewellery; and from the fact that she had private

means, Pat took her to be a rich idler. If so, though, how did she know all this? Why did it matter to her that the other girl was to be arrested?

Pat stole a glance at the pianist, who was too busy playing to pay any heed to customers; and the look of peace, of rapt absorption in her playing, made her suggested fate seem all the unhappier.

"Are you really sure of this?" asked Pat. "How do you know?"

The girl shrugged her shoulders and made to rise.

"I know—that's all there is to it. If you doubt it, just wait and see. But—there's something else you may as well know: her name, and why she is to be arrested. Her name is Hilda Storer, and she will be accused of stealing her aunt's jewellery. If you have a list of missing girls at your office, you can soon check her up."

She nodded to Pat and rose. But Pat caught her arm.

"Just a moment," she said quickly. "Can I have your name and address?" The other's answer came promptly. "You certainly cannot!"

And she walked across the room to another table where she had been sitting before—not alone, but with a lean-faced man, who rose when she returned, pulled out her chair, and then spoke in a low tone to her earnestly.

Pat was silent. She looked at the pianist, and from her to the girl who had brought the startling news; and her heart was heavy.

And then, as she glanced at her informant, Pat saw her rise from the table and cross the room with the man.

Trained by her job to be observant, Pat noticed that the girl signed the bill. She also noticed that she was, unlike most of the other women and girls present, hatless.

"Ah-ha! Staying in the hotel, then?" Pat asked herself.

Whether the story she had been told was true or false, Pat wanted to know the identity of the informer; and to make sure that her surmise that the girl was staying in the hotel was correct she left her table and followed to the exit.

The girl and her escort had gone along the corridor that led into the hotel main building, and Pat, following, was in time to see the man follow the girl into the small automatic lift.

He did not see her, but closed the outer gate when she was still a yard

from it. But Pat had learned what she had come to find out. They were staying in the hotel—and, therefore, from a waiter or the office, she could find out the girl's name.

But Pat, about to turn back, stopped; for a remark the man made came to her clearly. It shocked and startled her.

"If we can fix it on her I hope you'll stop worrying, Sylvia—" he said in a somewhat impatient tone.

He was trying to close the inner lift gate, which had jammed.

"If we can," answered the girl who had spoken to Pat, "we will. She ran away—and that's proof of her guilt."

"Proof, but maybe not enough. But now we've tracked her down—"

The man's words were drowned as the lift started working.

But Pat had heard enough to bring a glint to her eyes, to fill her with anger. For there was no mistaking the meaning of the girl's words, or her escort's.

They were trying to fix something on someone—trying to pin guilt on to the runaway girl; and they were hoping that the mere fact of her having run away might be sufficient proof. But if not—

Unfortunately, Pat had heard no more; and what followed was most important of all.

But now she understood why she had been told this story, and she was puzzled no longer by the girl's vindictive tone.

Yet what Pat had heard was not really proof of anything but that those two thought the runaway girl innocent of the crime with which they intended to charge her.

"It's enough for me," murmured Pat. She returned to her table, tore a leaf from her pad, and wrote a hurried message.

Giving the message to a waiter when the piece the orchestra was playing concluded, she asked him to let the pianist know who had sent it.

"If you are Hilda Storer," Pat had written, "please meet me during your break in the corridor. I have an urgent warning for you."

### PAT IN THE ORCHESTRA

THE pianist, resting from her beloved labours at the piano, turned with obvious surprise as the waiter delivered the message; and Pat, watching her closely, wondered how it would affect her.

The girl looked across at Pat, who smiled and nodded. She was clearly puzzled, not recognising Pat, and opened the message, frowning.

Never in Pat's life had she seen a girl more startled, horrified, and surprised than the pianist as she read the message. She jumped, her right hand went to her mouth as though to stifle a cry, and she swivelled on her stool to stare at Pat—wide-eyed, afraid.

Next, crumpling the message, she nodded her head vigorously; and then, as the leader struck up, turned her attention to the piano.

But now her rapt look was gone; she was tense, worried, pale, and more than once she struck wrong notes. Indeed, she played so faultily that when the piece ended the leader turned to her in an irritable manner.

Pat was in the corridor when the girl came through the swing doors. She was deeply distressed, pale, and agitated.

"How did you know my name?" breathed Hilda Storer. "Who are you? I've never seen you before."

Pat did not beat about the bush; in

a low tone she told exactly what had passed.

"Yes, I'm Hilda Storer," the girl admitted, when Pat had finished. "But no one knows it here. You—you see, I've run away from home and—" She paused, and her eyes hardened. "That girl who spoke to you must have been my Cousin Sylvia," she declared.

"Sylvia—yes, that was the name," nodded Pat. "And the man?" she added, describing him.

"Why, her husband! I read that she'd married him. She's only nineteen, though!" exclaimed Hilda. "But—but why do they want to blame me? I didn't steal the jewels! I didn't know they were stolen. And if she recognised me, why didn't she send for me straight away?"

"Because she wants to attack you secretly, meanly," said Pat. "She'll send a detective here—"

Hilda put her hands to her face. "Arrest me here?" she quavered.

"Unless you slip away, yes," said Pat.

"But I can't let down the orchestra. I—I couldn't get leave. If I desert I lose my job," protested Hilda. "I can't return to my aunt's now. I've got to earn my living."

"If you're arrested, even though you are innocent, you'll lose your job," pointed out Pat worriedly. "You'll have to have a fainting fit. Isn't there anyone who could take your place? Anyone who—"

And then Pat stiffened as a daring idea came.

"Hilda!" she said. "My goodness! Faint—become ill. I can play the piano well enough for this once, with the rest playing their best. Enough not to ruin everything! And, don't you see, if the detective comes—if he calls to see the pianist—he'll see me, not you?"

Hilda hesitated, and then, being in no mood to play—being far too worried and alarmed to give anything like a reasonable performance—she agreed to Pat's plan.

Pat loitered near the dressing-room used by the orchestra, and presently the door opened, and the leader looked out, seeming worried and displeased.

"Are you Miriam Turner's friend?" she asked.

Pat guessed that she must refer to the pianist.

"Yes," she said. "Miriam is ill. If I could help by taking her place—"

"She's in a state of collapse; she's had bad news," said the leader. "And certainly couldn't be trusted to carry on. If you could possibly play—"

Pat walked into the room. Her confidence was reassuring to the rest of the orchestra; and, as Hilda had had very little pretending to do to seem on the verge of collapse, they were all relieved to find this stop-gap so unexpectedly.

It was necessary for Pat to change into Hilda's frock, but their sizes tallied closely enough for it to be a good fit.

"Thank goodness you were here," said the leader. "We'll give you all the help we can, and if you can follow us, that's what really matters."

With a few more instructions, Pat was ready, and she walked into the palm court with the others, determined to do her best.

But when she saw the audience she had unexpected stage-fright. However, knowing what she had to play, having suggested it as being something she knew well, Pat stilled her qualms. And the worst of her nervousness was gone when the piece was half-way through. Then, lost in the music, she became oblivious to everything else—even the

man in the brown suit who had come through the swing doors and stood regarding her closely.

She did not see him until the piece ended; then he walked across to her, frowning, looking from her face to a piece of paper he held.

The detective! He looked fixedly at Pat, who met his gaze haughtily and turned away. Then he walked nearer, and coughed to draw her attention.

"I am only doing my duty in asking you this question," he said in a low tone. "But are you Hilda Storer?"

"Hilda Storer? Gracious, no!" said Pat. "Why?"

He dropped his mouth in a wry smile. "Another false scent," he said. "I'm sorry, miss; she's someone we're looking for, and she's seen daily in a hundred different places at the same time. Someone sent an anonymous telephone call. Just a foolish joke, I suppose, but we have to take note even of anonymous calls."

He apologised again and turned away. Pat's heart leaped, and she could have chortled with glee. Hilda had been saved—and the cunning Sylvia neatly robbed of her prey.

As well as she could then. Pat carried on with the piano-playing. It was not up to Hilda's standard, but good enough to earn praise from the orchestra leader. She played until the next break, when she returned with the others to the dressing-room.

Hilda was waiting, with dread she could not conceal; but Pat's smiling face reassured her.

Pat told the story of the detective's thinking she was someone he knew quite openly—except that she did not mention that he was a detective. But as she did mention the name Hilda Storer she made it quite clear to Hilda that she had been saved.

"If you feel well enough now, Miriam—" said the leader.

Hilda pulled herself together.

"Yes, I think so. I'm sorry it happened. But I had some bad news; but I do feel a heap better now," she said. "And I won't let you down."

She changed frocks with Pat, thanking her fervently for saving the situation. But Pat knew well enough that this was not the end. For when Sylvia learned what had happened she would take other measures.

For the moment Hilda was out of danger, and Sylvia did not know what had happened. But she was to learn quite soon. Pat herself was going to break the news.

She did not tell Hilda so for fear of alarming her; but as soon as the orchestra was playing again Pat went to the desk and asked for the number of Sylvia's room. Hilda had given her her cousin's married name in conversation, and that was all she needed to know.

"Say that a newspaper girl reporter has news for her," said Pat to the bureau clerk.

The clerk put the call through to Room No. 106, and then said that Mrs. Marles would see Pat at once. Using the automatic lift, Pat went to the second floor and found Room No. 106, which proved to be a sitting-room.

Sylvia Marles, smiling, greeted Pat quite effusively.

"So you saw the exciting arrest?" she asked.

Pat played the part she had planned. She looked indignant and resentful.

"I saw no arrest," she said. "And you were quite wrong. The detective brought a photograph of the missing girl, compared it with the pianist, and said there was a mistake."

Sylvia gaped.

"A mistake! The man's a fool. Of course it's Hilda!"

"I should have looked a fool if I had printed it," said Pat sternly. "I don't like jokes of that kind."

"It's not a joke," said Sylvia angrily. "That girl is Hilda Storer, and she is wanted for the theft of her aunt's jewels. I dare say she's got them on her—or some of them."

"In her handbag," said her husband, strolling in from the adjoining room. "The best thing to do is to get on to the house detective. The hotel won't want a jewel thief in the orchestra."

Pat did not mistake their exchange of glances. They had planned to have Hilda charged with the crime, and it was obvious that they intended that incriminating evidence should be found in her handbag.

But how were they proposing to get possession of her handbag to slip in the jewels?

"Don't let's waste time," said Sylvia's husband. "We know it is Hilda, and we've got photographs of her, Sylvia. If you don't care to do it I will. I'll find the hotel detective and denounce her now."

Pat moved to the door. She was thinking hard, trying to find a way of postponing the evil moment, of trapping them.

"There's something you haven't considered," she said. "If she has the stolen jewels she won't have them in her handbag. They'll be at her lodgings, and that's where I'm a move ahead of you. I know the address."

Sylvia turned to her eagerly.

"You know that address?" she asked. "Yes; and if you'll hold off the arrest for half an hour I'll let you have it," said Pat quickly. "Don't forget I have to consider my paper, and we should like a photographer here to take a picture of the runaway being arrested."

They thought she meant what she said.

"Well, all right. What's the address?" asked Sylvia, exchanging an obviously excited look with her husband.

"No. 39, Acacia Road, in this town," said Pat promptly. "Mrs. Smith is the landlady. If there is anything in this charge of stealing jewels that's where they'll be."

Pat went from the room then, and Sylvia turned to her husband.

"Thank goodness she told us that!" she breathed. "It's easy now. I've only got to go to her lodgings and plant them. A simple disguise will do. I can say I'm a dressmaker—anything. And then—well, when they do search her room they'll find the evidence."

It was the simplest possible way of fulfilling their object. But it had one weakness they had not guessed.

The address Pat had given so glibly was not Hilda's, which she certainly did not know, but her own; and as soon as she left their room, she went down by the lift, and hailed a taxi for home.

But if she had tricked the rogues, they had tricked her, too. For within five minutes of Pat's leaving the hotel, the hotel detective was accosting Hilda Storer in the corridor.

He had her photograph in his hand, and there was no possible mistaking her, even though she had dyed her hair black.

"I must ask you to come along with me," he said, "to the manager's office, Miss Storer. There is a warrant out for your arrest on a charge of jewel robbery."

Hilda Storer made no reply; the colour drained from her cheeks, and only just in time the detective caught her as she fainted.

## PAT TURNS THE TABLES

PAT LOVELL did not look herself at all. She had stopped on the way to her lodgings at a theatrical costumier's, a friend of hers, and now, with a white wig, her face cleverly made-up, and old-fashioned gold-rimmed glasses on her nose, she stood in the passage of No. 39.

Mrs. Smith, her kindly landlady, understanding that it was a joke, was chuckling in the kitchen, keeping out of sight, as Pat had asked her to do. Pat was the landlady now, and wore Mrs. Smith's shawl, and practised a cough.

Minutes passed without the arrival of a visitor, however, and Pat began to wonder if Sylvia had fallen into her trap. But the sound of a taxicab drawing-up outside gave her heart a throb.

Next came a knock on the door, and Pat, allowing a suitable pause—for the

the departing steps on the stairs, and was satisfied that she was alone.

Looking about her, she went to the edge of the carpet, lifted it, and put underneath the clasp of a diamond necklet, with a few small diamonds attached. But she wrapped it in a small handkerchief, initialed H. S.

Opening one of the drawers, she tucked a jewel-case down to the bottom of the contents.

The hiding-places were not very unusual, nor clever, but that meant that the things would be found all the more quickly by an investigating detective.

Her object attained, Sylvia decided to wait a little longer to give colour to her story of being a dressmaker. She waited for five minutes, and then the telephone-bell rang, giving her the shock of her life.

Fearful of someone coming up to answer the call, and thus having a chance in the bright light of the room



"Hilda, you're to faint," Pat told the surprised girl. "And I'll play the piano for you! Then, if the detective comes to see the pianist, he'll see me—not you!"

door of No. 39 was never opened at the first knock—opened it, just as another knock was being given.

"That's enough. No need to hammer down the door," croaked Pat, peeping out warily.

But she was filled with disappointment when she saw on the step a shabbily dressed woman, with fuzzy hair, peeping out from a shabby hat, old-fashioned, shabby clothes, and carrying a small basket.

"Oh!" she said, dismayed. "Well?" "I've come to see Miss Hilda Storer," came the quavering reply. "I'm a dressmaker."

"Oh, are you?" said Pat. "Well, I suppose it's all right for you to come in. But she's out!"

But Pat was no longer deceived by the make-up; a more careful glance would have penetrated it, anyway; but the mere fact that the woman asked for Hilda Storer was proof that she was really Sylvia Marles.

Pat led the way upstairs to her bed-sitting room, and opened the door.

"I'm to stay here, and mend a frock," said the supposed dressmaker.

"That's all right, miss," said Pat. "Make yourself at home!"

She closed the door and went downstairs. Sylvia listened at the door, heard

to study her closely, Sylvia decided to take the call herself.

"Hallo, yes?" she said, disguising her voice.

"Is Miss Lovell there?" came a voice. "Who? No!"

"Is that the landlady?"

"I'll tell her," said Sylvia.

Glad of an excuse to go, she turned from the room, just as Pat came scurrying up the stairs.

"The telephone," said Sylvia, and pushed past Pat, who jumped to the telephone.

"Oh, hallo, chief!" exclaimed Pat, recognising her editor's voice.

"What on earth are you doing at home?" he demanded. "You were supposed to be at the Royal Hotel. And while you've been off your job something worth knowing has happened there. A girl has been arrested—the violinist—"

"Pianist," corrected Pat. "But—but she hasn't been arrested, surely?"

"She has. She's under arrest now. She's a girl who's been missing for months. You ought to have got that story."

"I have, chief," said Pat coolly. "But that's only half of it. She's not guilty, and I can prove it!"

"Oh, yes?" he said. "Well, get the

story of the arrest first. Hurry back to the Royal Hotel as soon as you can."

But Pat loitered in her room.

"George!" she called.

The screen that hid the wash-basin was moved aside, and a grinning youth stepped out; George Smith, the landlady's son.

"Here I am, Miss Lovell—and I saw everything," he said. "You'll find something under the corner of the carpet, and something else in the drawer there."

Pat found the handkerchief with the diamonds wrapped in it, and then the empty jewel-case. And her eyes sparkled in triumph.

"Goody-goody, George!" she murmured. "You're a witness; and this is evidence. Get your cap, and come with me."

"Shall I get my name in the papers, Miss Lovell?" asked George eagerly.

"I dare say—but don't worry if your name isn't spelled correctly," said Pat. "Getting something like your name in is the great thing."

Pat telephoned for a taxicab, and while George went down for his hat, she changed out of her disguise.

Ten minutes later they were at the Hotel Royal. But all Pat learned there was that Hilda Storer had been taken to the police station. The orchestra leader told her of the arrest, and seemed quite dazed and stricken; for they had all liked Hilda, and never had connected her with any thought of tense, dramatic happenings such as these.

From the hotel Pat went to the police station, where Sylvia and her husband were discussing matters with a detective and the station sergeant.

"No reporters, miss," said the station sergeant, who recognised her. "You're late for once. The Press bulletin has gone out, and there's nothing more to say."

"Aren't you expecting an arrest at any minute?" asked Pat playfully.

"That's where you're slow," said the sergeant, shaking his head. "We've made an arrest."

"Ah, but only the wrong person!" said Pat coolly.

The detective standing by suddenly stared at her closely.

"I say—I say, you're the girl I saw playing the piano in the hotel!" he exclaimed.

"Why, so I am!" said Pat, as though amazed. "Fancy!"

But the detective was not amused—in fact, he treated it as a serious escapade.

"If I thought that you were shielding a guilty person from justice—" he began grimly; but Pat cut him short.

"Not likely. I won't shield her. I'm here to denounce her," she said.

Sylvia gave her a sudden, queer intent look, and then drew up, startled, as Pat turned to her.

"Sergeant, here is the thief!" said Pat. "Mrs. Marles!"

"This lady?" exclaimed the detective, as Sylvia, hardly knowing what to make of Pat, stared at her fixedly, but in growing dismay.

"Have it your way," said Pat. "Anyway, I mean Sylvia, Mrs. Marles. Has she suggested searching Miss Storer's lodgings to find the jewels?"

The detective nodded agreement, frowning.

"She has. It's the obvious thing to suggest."

"And what address did she give you to search?" asked Pat, smiling.

"Why, No. 39, Acacia Road."

Pat laughed aloud.

"But that's my address, not Hilda's!" she said, and looked at Sylvia. "Oh, gracious, you've haven't planted the stolen jewels in my sitting-room, surely? How on earth can you fix the theft on me? That was careless of you."

Sylvia did not answer, but the detective wanted the matter discussed. It was the telephone directory that convinced him, for Pat's address was given in it as No. 39, Acacia Road.

Sylvia then became white as chalk.

"I thought it was her address. This girl told me it was. But if she is going to interrupt with foolery, I am going. I have to return to the hotel, anyway. Come on!" she added to her husband.

No sooner was she gone than Pat turned to the detective.

"After her! Ten to one she'll go to my flat. She hasn't guessed I found

the jewels she hid under the carpet. Here they are," she added, putting down the handkerchief containing the diamonds. "They were under my carpet, and my landlady's son was witness of the fact that they were put there by Mrs. Marles disguised in shabby clothes. You'll find the clothes in her room probably, and he'll describe them now. But someone ought to go like a flash of light to my address. You'll find Mrs. Marles there."

The detective did not wait to argue. There was a police car outside, and it whisked him to Pat's address. Outside was the Marles' car, and Sylvia was arguing with Mrs. Smith, trying to enter. Finally, unaware that she was watched by the detective, Sylvia forced her way into the house to recover the jewels.

She reached Pat's room, and the detective was close behind her, treading softly. It was only necessary for him to see her lifting the edge of the carpet, and looking in the drawer to know that Pat's story was true.

He opened the door, walked into the room, and put his hand firmly on her shoulder. The "early arrest" Pat had expected had been made, and this time he had the right culprit.

"Oh, Pat, I'm so happy!" sighed Hilda Storer. "I feel I haven't a care in the world. Even my aunt no longer scares me after that almost cringing letter of apology she wrote. She said that Sylvia wanted me out of the way so that my allowance would go to her husband. I'm free now. Aunt said I can live and do what I please, and still have my old allowance. Life is going to be fun."

"It always is fun," said Pat. "Grand fun, except for crooks. Your Cousin Sylvia is lucky not to be in prison. If your aunt hadn't withdrawn the prosecution, she would be."

But Sylvia was to go abroad with her husband. Her aunt had stopped her allowance, so that she no longer had private means. And, as he was a waster, there was the prospect of hard work ahead for her. As Pat said, it might be the making of her.

The family name had been kept out of the paper, for Hilda's arrest and release following so quickly one upon the other had not been worthy of publication.

But if the "Gazette" had missed the story about the arrest of the missing girl and the stolen jewels, it was well rewarded by the articles Pat wrote, in which she described in most vivid detail the ladies' orchestra and the success it had had.

So cleverly had the girl reporter written her articles, that for the rest of its short season at the Hotel Royal, the orchestra played every day to a very full audience—an audience so appreciative that the ladies' orchestra was asked to come and play again, whenever its engagements would permit it.

Of course, all the members of the orchestra were told the full story, both Pat and Hilda agreeing that it was only fair that they should know. And the delight of the players when they knew that their popular young pianist was not to be lost to them was unbounded. But as Hilda Storer said, it was Pat they had to thank for everything!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Don't miss the delightful story by Elizabeth Chester, featuring Pat, the Girl Reporter, which appears in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**. Order your copy as soon as possible.

## Brenda's MYSTERY TASK in HOLLYWOOD



By  
DAPHNE  
GRAYSON.

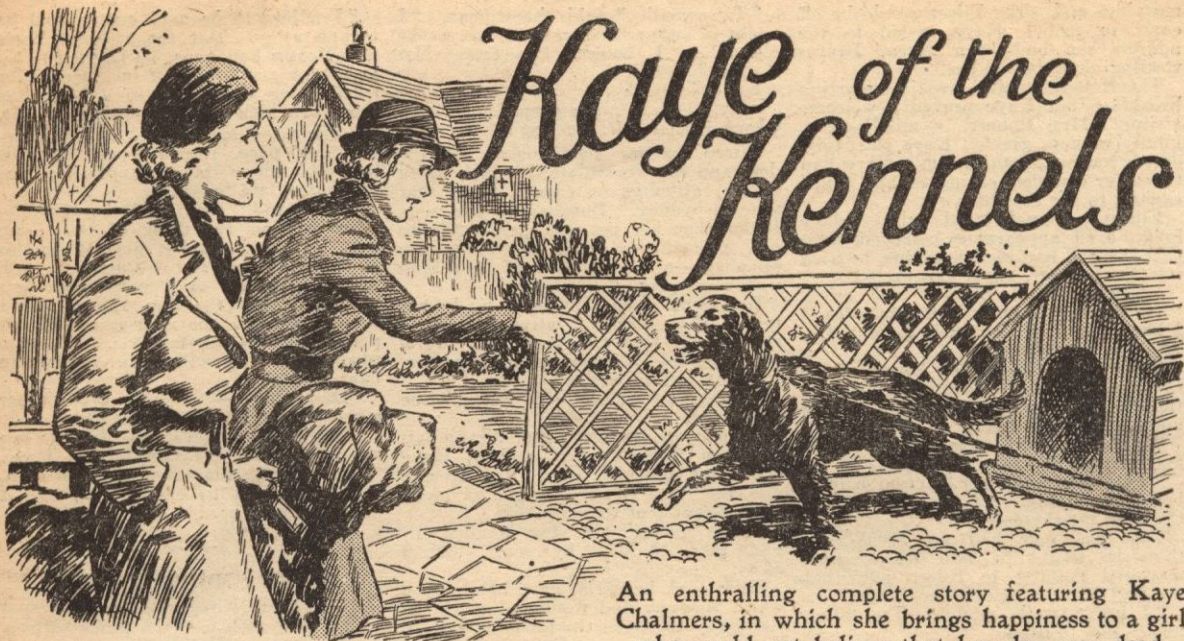
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An enthralling complete story featuring Kaye Chalmers, in which she brings happiness to a girl who could not believe that her dog was dead.

By IDA MELBOURNE

### THE DOG THAT HOWLED

**K**AYE CHALMERS turned over restlessly in bed. She was dreaming. And according to her dream, Brutus, her St. Bernard dog, was ringing her up on the telephone to say that someone was at the gate.

Brutus was the head dog of the Chalmers' Kennels, and it was his duty to act as gateman and to keep Kaye informed of the arrival of visitors.

In Kaye's dream—and anything is possible in a dream—Brutus had the gift of speech, using a deep throaty voice.

"I say, Kaye," he said.

Kaye stirred, and the first thing she heard on awakening was his bark, mingled with the insistent ringing of the telephone bell. She got out of bed and groped her way to the receiver.

"Hallo! Yes, this is Chalmers' Kennels—Kaye Chalmers speaking," she said.

"I'm terribly sorry to trouble you," said a woman's soft voice, "but is there a dog in your kennels howling?"

Kaye, puzzled by the question, listened.

"None of them are howling," she said. "My watch-dog is barking, but only because he heard the phone ringing. But why do you ask?"

"Please forgive me, but it is really an important matter. There is a dog howling somewhere; it is a most unusual howl and my daughter is certain that it is her own dog."

"Where is her dog then? Is he lost?" asked Kaye, for a lost dog won her sympathy instantly.

The woman paused before replying.

"It's a strange thing to say," she answered hesitantly. "But the truth is my daughter's dog died while we were away, and—and nothing will convince her of it. She fancies she can hear Betty howling. And it certainly does sound like poor Betty's howl."

Kaye was fully awake now, thoroughly startled by this strange story and yet wondering if, after all, she were not dreaming.

"You mean that she thinks that she has been deceived—" Kaye began.

"She thinks so; but, of course, I know that Mr. Curzon would not lie to us."

Geoffrey Curzon kept some kennels at Bilborne, and from what Kaye knew of him he would have lied to anyone if he stood to gain by it. But she could not slander him by saying so.

"Perhaps I can help you in the morning," said Kaye. "I'm dreadfully sorry to hear that your daughter's dog died. Poor girl! I know just how she must feel, and, of course, she must find it terribly hard to believe it. All the same—"

"All the same, she must believe it, or she will worry herself ill," sighed the mother.

Once again then she apologised for arousing Kaye; but Kaye had too kind a heart to feel annoyed at being disturbed when there was something that mattered as this clearly did to Eileen Roberts.

Mrs. Roberts had given her name and address before she rang off, and Kaye had promised to call round in the morning so that she could have a description of the dog and make inquiries.

Although Kaye had not said so over the telephone, she had sufficient doubts of Mr. Curzon's honesty to warrant making inquiries.

Putting on a dressing-gown, she called from the window to Brutus and told him to keep quiet. Then, as she was up, she thought it would be a good idea to make a cup of tea. So she went downstairs and put the kettle on. Then, still wondering about the mystery dog that howled, she opened the door and stepped out.

It was a mild night, and Kaye stood outside for a moment, looking up at the stars. Then, as she listened intently, she heard the howling of a distant dog.

The howl was shrill and mournful, as if the dog were fretting her heart out, and it was different to any howl that Kaye had heard any other dog make.

"From the north-east. Now, where on earth can it be?" Kaye asked herself.

There was a hull, and then again the dog howled. If Eileen Roberts could be accused of imagining it, Kaye could not, and, suddenly impressed by this mystery, she hurried indoors, made tea, and took a cup-up to drink while she dressed.

"Strike while the iron's hot," decided Kaye. "The dog won't howl in daylight, and this is my best chance of locating her."

Ten minutes later she went down to the kennels and aroused Brutus. Brutus, rumbling in deep sleep, became the alert watch-dog with a sharp bark.

"All right, silly billy, it's only me," said Kaye. "Come on—and quiet as you can!"

Brutus, having no need to dress or wash, lumbered out of his kennels, shook himself, and gladly followed his mistress down to the gate. It was an unusual hour for a run, but any hour for that excellent purpose seemed good to Brutus.

Taking her direction whenever the dog howled, Kaye presently found herself in a wide street flanked by houses on either side. Beyond it was a mere lane with two or three houses. And from the garden of one of them came the howling.

Kaye quickened her step, and on drawing nearer she heard a window opened and an angry voice shout to the dog to keep quiet. It sounded then as though something were thrown.

Half a minute later Kaye was at the fence that cut the garden of the house from a vacant building site. On peering over the fence, Kaye saw the dog's kennel.

Brutus sniffing, was aware of the dog's presence, and made a rumbling noise that brought a sharp bark instead of a howl, and there jumped out on a length of chain a brown dog, marked with a white spot.

The starlight was not bright enough for Kaye to see it clearly, but she took the risk of flashing her torch and being mistaken for a burglar.

The rays fell on the dog, and she saw that she was a cross-breed, bright-eyed, and alert.

"All right, lassie, quiet!" said Kaye.

A light shone at a window of the house, and Kaye tiptoed away, rewarded by a final howl in the same odd tone as before.

Whether the dog was Betty or not Kaye was not in a position to say, but this was the howler, and on the morrow Eileen herself could decide.

Despite her interrupted night, Kaye was up at her usual early hour the next

morning, and, since Eileen would be off early to school, Kaye cycled to the address she had been given, Brutus trotting along beside her.

The Roberts family was just starting breakfast, but Kaye proved a welcome visitor. Mrs. Roberts, a middle-aged, kindly woman, greeted Kaye effusively, deeply touched by the trouble Kaye had taken for complete strangers, and called eagerly to her daughter.

Eileen, a pale-faced girl, whose hollow-eyed appearance betrayed signs that she had had restless nights, hurried into the passage, eager and excited.

"You've found Betty?" she cried. "Oh, mummy, I know Betty isn't dead! I know it! And now she's found! Oh, where is she, please?"

Kaye hurriedly warned Eileen of the shock she might receive, for although the dog had howled she certainly could not swear it was Betty.

"She's a brown dog with a white mark on the left side," she said.

"Yes, yes—that's her!" cried Eileen, her eyes shining. "I know it's Betty. Oh, take me there—"

That she had had no breakfast—that she might be late for school—mattered nothing to Eileen now that she had hope of finding her loved pet.

"I won't wait, mummy—I'm going now," she insisted.

And almost shaking with excitement, she went with Kaye.

The lane in which the dog lived was a mile away. Accompanied by Brutus, they cycled there. On the way Eileen related the whole story. With her parents, she had gone abroad, her father having been offered a lucrative temporary post there that might have become permanent. As Betty could not have been taken into England on their return without quarantine, Eileen had been persuaded to leave her with Mr. Curzon. And it was six months after they had left that the blow had fallen. Mr. Curzon had written to say that the dog was dead.

Eileen had grieved—had refused to believe it—and now, a year later, the Roberts family being in England on leave, she was determined to learn the truth.

"Mummy says I've dreamed Betty howled. I did dream it abroad; but this is real," said Eileen. "And hark—that's her bark!"

Kaye could not hold her back; Eileen pushed open the gate of the house and ran round excitedly into the garden.

### INTERVIEWING MR. CURZON!

"It is Betty. 'It is my pet!'"

The dog rushed to the end of its chain, barking. Then, as Kaye and Brutus arrived on the scene, the back door of the house opened and a woman, looking angry, stepped out.

"What are you doing? Teasing my dog?" she asked.

"Your dog? It's my dog!" snapped Eileen. "It's Betty!"

"Rubbish! Her name's Jane, and I've had her since six weeks old!" was the retort. "You get out of this garden at once—at once, both of you!"

Kaye moved back, feeling guilty of trespassing, and then paused, staring at the dog.

"Eileen," she exclaimed, "I think you're wrong! You're making a mistake. How old was Betty when you left her?"

"A year old. Why?"

"That was a year ago, wasn't it? Well, I'm afraid that that dog is only just a year old now," said Kaye quietly. "If that—"

"Ten months," said the woman. "I ought to know. She was only six weeks old when I bought her from Mr. Curzon."

Kaye jumped. "Mr. Curzon?" she gasped. "That's where Eileen left her dog!"

Eileen, calmer now, looked at the dog, and the woman stood aside. Even Eileen, although no expert, knew that she was young. But having last seen Betty when her pet was merely a year old, she still expected her to be the same age—a human failing she shared with most people.

But now, calmer thought made her realise that Betty, if alive, would be rather more than two years old. Moreover, the dog, although glad to see her, was not wildly excited.

"She—she's awfully like Betty!" she murmured.

There were tears of bitter disappointment in Eileen's eyes, and as Kaye explained quickly what the trouble was, the dog's owner changed in mood from resentment to sympathy.

Eileen patted the dog, fondled it, and then, blinded by tears, turned away.

Kaye took her arm, gave her hand a warm squeeze, and wondered what she could say to lessen the hurt for Eileen. To offer hope that Betty still lived would be to keep the wound open; to encourage the idea that she was dead might seem brutal.

There was only one obvious thing to do, and that, so it seemed to Kaye, was to find out from Geoffrey Curzon just what had happened.

She did not mention her thought to Eileen, but parted from her at their house, saying how sorry she was that she had raised the girl's hopes.

"But I know now," said Eileen heavily. "I know the truth. I—"

And, hands to her face, she went into the house, broken-hearted. But Kaye was not satisfied. She did not trust the owner of the rival kennels.

She went at once to Mr. Curzon's place.

"Ah! My deadly rival!" he greeted her with a sneer. "Or have you given up the kennels?"

"Not yet," said Kaye quietly. "I came to say that there have been complaints about a dog howling at night—and it isn't one of mine!"

"Nor mine!" retorted Curzon, frowning. "If it makes a funny kind of howl, I can tell you which dog it is, and where it lives."

He named the house correctly.

"My word! You're a clever salesman," said Kaye, with soft flattery.

"Fancy selling a howling dog like that!"

"Huh! I sold another to a smallholder out at Dun—". He ended his sentence abruptly. "Forgotten the name of the place!"

"Oh, there was a litter of them!" said Kaye. "Did you breed them here? If so, I can guess who the mother was."

"I did, and—"

He broke off, giving Kaye a quick, searching look.

"What's the idea of all these questions?" he asked sharply.

"The mother was the dog belonging to Eileen Roberts!" said Kaye challengingly, a glint in her eyes.

"Was it? Well, a clever dog trainer like you ought to know!" he sneered.

"But it so happens that dog you're speaking about died a year ago. It was run over!"

"The Roberts family think it died of meningitis," cut in Kaye.

She saw the man freeze up instantly, and a nasty glint came into his eyes.

"I'm busy!" he said curtly, and he turned away. But the moment Kaye and Brutus had gone, he hurried to his small car and drove off in haste to the smallholder who lived in a place the name of which he had chosen to forget.

Kaye saw him dash by, and, quickening her pace, returned to her own kennels, where her grandfather was making a late breakfast.

"Granddad," she said breathlessly, "I'm hot on the track of Betty—the dog I told you about first thing this morning! That rascal Curzon is hiding something! And one thing he's hiding is that the dog Eileen and I went to see this morning is one of her pups. There's another one. It's at a place beginning with Dun—somewhere near here!"

"Dun—Dun—" said her grandfather musingly. "Not Dunburne?"

"Might be. Let's go there when you've finished breakfast," said Kaye. "I've a hunch that Betty is still alive. It's a hundred to one she is, and I mean to find her!"

### KAYE'S "MUSICAL" RUSE!

A BROWN dog with a white spot lay with head on paws, sighing occasionally, listless, taking no interest in anything.

For a two-year-old, she did not seem lively, and had not done so for a year. The contrast between her manner and that of the white dog with the brown spot was marked. But, then, that other dog was hardly a year old—hardly more than a pup.

The brown dog, hearing a step, looked up eagerly and with new brightness. But the bright look waned as two men came into view.

Men did not interest this brown dog; her whole life interest was in a girl, just one girl with mouse-coloured hair, and pale skin.

There are some dogs who forget; but this one would not forget even in five years, supposing that she could live as long, eating her heart out.

"There she is," said the older, stouter of the two men. "Lying down, lazy, sulking, good for nothing."

The other man frowned at the brown dog.

"What do you call her now?" he asked.

"Tony. But even if I call her Betty, it's no better."

"Well, don't call her that," the flashy one implored uneasily. "I told you to be careful when I let you have her."

"You can have her back."

"What, now? Talk sense! She's supposed to be dead!"

Then they strolled away, and the brown dog, once known as Betty, once Eileen Roberts' pride and joy, sighed more heavily, and lowered her head. For she had no further interest in life. Some dogs are like that.

Because of her peculiar night howl, she had been useful to this smallholder, who had built up a chicken farm. There were rats and other vermin who preyed on the chicken, but some queer quality in Betty's howl kept them at bay. It kept human thieves at bay, too.

But now the younger dog had learned the same howl, and he was brisk and lively. Two howlers were not needed on so small a holding, when one could scare away night prowlers as well, so behind the scenes it was being arranged that Betty's days were numbered.

Geoffrey Curzon, whose approach had caused Betty to look up eagerly, stayed only a short while, but long enough for his purpose; and in somewhat

jauntier mood than he had arrived, he departed.

As the unscrupulous dog-breeder returned home in his car, he suffered a shock.

Approaching was a car he knew by sight, and as it came nearer he recognised Kaye Chalmers in the passenger's seat. It went past him, as though making for the very place from which he had himself just come.

"But she won't find the place," he consoled himself.

Kaye Chalmers, hot on the scent, however, did not mean to give in. Having seen Curzon on this road, she felt sure that Dunburne was the village she wanted. Once there, she did not think it would take long to locate the howling dog.

When Kaye reached the village she left her grandfather in the car, and explored with Brutus. But the village was scattered, and houses and small farms lay in every direction, so that to visit them all would take several weeks.

When night fell, Kaye might be able to track the dog down, but she did not want to wait so long. The idea was growing in her mind that Curzon, having sold a dog, which he had stated was dead, would try to remove it to another district. Even to buy it back at a high price would be better than to have his trickery made public.

"No good just hunting around, granddad," said Kaye briskly. "Be a darling, and run me down to the village, will you, or the small town about three miles away?"

"Why? What do you want to buy?" he asked.

"Bagpipes," smiled Kaye. "Bagpipes! You can't play them!" he exclaimed, astonished.

"Well, a cheap cornet, a set of tin whistles—something that will make a dog howl," answered Kaye grimly. "I may get them all howling, poor dears, but there's one howl I shall recognise a mile off."

Her grandfather, resigned as usual to her whims, smiled, and drove her to the town, and there, watched by Brutus with growing alarm, Kaye brought an instrument, the mere sight of which made the St. Bernard's ears twitch.

The shopman was even more puzzled. He had never before had anyone try an instrument on their dog. But Brutus was Kaye's tester. If he uttered a yawn the instrument was no good; if he howled so hard that he lifted his head, it was a wov.

But, naturally, having made one test, Kaye did not continue just to make Brutus howl. Choosing an odd instrument with combined bellows, fiddle string and horn—a vibro attachment being an extra at no additional cost, Kaye knew that she had a real winner.

One toot in the street made Brutus, a terrier, and a spaniel yowl.

"Got it," said Kaye; and back she went to the village.

Her grandfather stuffed his ears with cottonwool, and Kaye wound her scarf round Brutus' head, in order that he should not suffer; then, standing up through the sun roof, while the car proceeded at little more than walking pace, Kaye raked the district.

As though Bedlam were let loose, dogs howled and moaned; then, suddenly, Kaye heard in the distance the well-known singing howl. And not one howl, but two.

Twenty minutes later the car was stopped at the gateway leading to the smallholder's drive, and Kaye hurried to the door.

A brown dog with a white spot

rushed to greet her, and at one toot of the instrument he let out a howl with a yipping bark.

"Found her!" cheered Kaye.

But the door opened, and a wrathful man sprang out.

"What's the idea making my dogs howl?" he asked.

"Dogs? Have you two who can howl like this?" said Kaye eagerly.

The man fixed her with a shrewd look.

"Not like that," he retorted. "The other's a retriever."

"Oh, I suppose you've no idea what happened to this one's mother?" asked Kaye.

"The mother? Oh, run over by a car or bus or something, and got meningitis!" said the man. "But what has it do do with you?"

"I'm looking for a dog called Betty," said Kaye candidly.

"Well, there's no dog Betty here," he answered coldly.

Kaye, disappointed, baffled, turned away, but before she went she added: "It's funny. I could swear I heard two howls like this one makes."

"So do other people; it's just the echo," said the man, and closed the door.

Kaye did not go away. She petted the dog, and then walked round to find his kennel. There were two of them, and outside one was a chain to which an old collar was attached.

Kaye moved forward, took up the collar and examined it, but on the plate was no name to identify the dog. Examining it carefully, however, she found that it was still warm, and just on the inside were brown hairs.

"A brown retriever, eh?" mused Kaye. "It must be a tiny one." Thoughtfully she turned back to the car. "Granddad, I think she's there," she said. "But she's hidden. I'm

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going back to fetch Eileen. Believe me, that rascal, Curzon, will act quickly."

But the rascal, Curzon, acted more quickly than she thought. Waiting in a side lane, he watched her car drive past on the homeward journey; then at top speed he rushed to fetch Betty. Putting her in the back of his car, he slung the rug over her.

He pulled up at his kennels, fastened Betty's collar by a cord to a staple on the floor, and then hurried inside to get what was necessary for his purpose—a gun!

"OH, Kaye, I hope you're right!" said Mrs. Roberts anxiously, as she stepped into the car. "But if you're not, it's better I should go than you. Betty knows my call, and I certainly know hers. I'll see there's no fooling."

"We've got to hurry, Mrs. Roberts," said Kaye briskly. "If Curzon suspects that I'm on his trail, he may get desperate. The way he rushed off to that place this morning is proof of that."

"I'll drive past his place to see if his car's outside," said her grandfather. "If it is, there's not much to fear."

They were in sight of his kennels entrance in a few minutes, and Kaye sighed as she saw his car at the gate.

"It's all right," she said. "He—"

She said no more; for Geoffrey Curzon came from his gate at that moment, hurried out to his car with something tucked under his arm. He stooped and half-turned but no movement could conceal what it was he carried.

"A gun! Granddad, stop!" cried Kaye.

Her grandfather applied his brakes, and Curzon at the same moment started his engine. But his path was blocked by the other car being swung across.

Leaning from the window, red with rage, he shouted:

"What's the idea of this? You ought to be locked up—"

Kaye leaned from her window, but she did not shout. She put her instrument into deadly action, and the shrill, discordant jarring notes burst forth.

Betty, hidden in the back of the car, lifted her head. She howled—a long, high-pitched howl that ended in a kind of yapping bark.

Out of the car rushed Kaye; but Curzon was as quick, and barred her way. Then Brutus rushed from the rear of the Chalmers' car; he went flat under the big dog's weight. Even as his head thumped the ground, Kaye had the door open, and was hauling back the rug.

"Betty!" cried Mrs. Roberts. Betty looked up. The dull glow in her eyes became a light. A half-sobbing, half-yelping sound broke from her, and, with a frenzied tug of the head, she snapped the cord that held her to the floor. With one spring she hurled herself into Mrs. Roberts' lap.

It was a good thing that she met Mrs. Roberts first, or the shock of seeing her beloved Eileen might have proved fatal. As it was she rolled over, yelped, wriggled, and leaped. Betty had come into her own again. She was happy, although it must be confessed, no happier than Eileen, who later dropped hot tears of joy on her muzzle.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Another delightful story about Kaye and her pets the week after next. Meanwhile look out for "BRENDA'S MYSTERY TASK IN HOLLYWOOD," the grand new serial that begins in next Friday's "GIRLS' CRYSTAL."

# Their Quest AT THE Winter Sports



## SYLVIA VANISHES

**D**OREEN CARSDALE and Jean Hinton, on holiday at St. Lauritz, in Switzerland, had been helping Sylvia Drake to fight against the scheming of the Ross family.

The Rosses were trying to deprive Sylvia of a fortune, which she would gain only if she won the St. Lauritz skating championships. Sylvia's chief rival was Irma Ross.

On the eve of the championships Sylvia disappeared, and the chums realised that the Rosses had lured her away.

**"WE'VE** got to find her!" Doreen cried. "We've got to rescue Sylvia!"

Again she stared at the message, from that across to her startled chum. Jean nodded.

"We must tell the others—"

"Yes; come on!" Already Doreen was leaping towards the door.

Downstairs the two chums flew.

Just as they reached the foyer of the hotel Aunt Elizabeth and Douglas Drake were coming out of the manager's office.

"Everything's all right!" Miss Hill beamed. "We've managed to get Douglas squeezed in. But he's having to sleep in one of the attics—Doreen, my dear, what is the matter?" she added abruptly, suddenly aware of her niece's frantic agitation.

"It's Sylvia!" Doreen panted. "She's been tricked. Look! This was the message she received—"

With a startled cry, Douglas seized the piece of paper and read it; his face paled.

"But you didn't send her this! Gosh, I get it!" he exclaimed. "The Rosses sent it! They're going to kidnap her—hold her prisoner so that she can't appear in the championship."

"That's their game all right," Doreen said grimly. "Douglas, we must go after her. We'll go to the top of the funicular and get on Sylvia's track from there—"

"What's this—what's this? What's happened now?"

It was Tony Semers' voice. He had just come through the swing doors into

the Hotel Crestina—and with him were Jack Huntley and Madame Marie.

The old Frenchwoman ran forward. In a moment Doreen was telling her what had happened. They were all looking grim now.

"The rotters!" Tony exclaimed. "And you're going after her? My hat! Jack and I are in on this, too. We've got to rescue Sylvia—"

"Yes, yes, of course!" Aunt Elizabeth broke in, both startled and worried. "But, Doreen, you must be careful—" "Look here, I suggest you girls stay behind," Douglas said. "We chaps can manage this—" "We're coming!" Doreen told him firmly.

"And I, too," Madame Marie said, her dark eyes gleaming fiercely. "Do not fear, Mam'selle Hill. I will look after your niece and her friend. It is better that we should all go—"

You'll find suspense, adventure, and thrills in these final chapters of

## DAPHNE GRAYSON'S

exciting serial.

"Oh, let's hurry!" Doreen exclaimed. "Sylvia went over an hour ago; and the longer we delay the more difficult it might be to pick up her trail."

"Doreen's right. Come on, everybody!"

Hastily Doreen kissed her aunt, smilingly reassured her that everything would be all right; and then the party set out.

"We shall want skis, shan't we?" Jean asked.

"We can get those at the top of the funicular," Douglas said. "Hey, there—stop!"

He hailed a couple of passing sleighs. The girls and Madame Marie climbed into the first, the boys into the second.

"The funicular—as fast as you can go!" Douglas instructed the drivers in French.

Ten minutes later they were at the mountain railway station.

The little train drew in and stopped. From the carriages poured a stream of

happy, laughing people, skis slung across their shoulders, having just returned from enjoying some thrilling sport on the higher slopes of the mountains.

But there were few people making the ascent—for St. Lauritz was just settling down to its midday meal—and the rescue party had one of the two coaches forming the train practically to themselves.

At last it started. With a whirr of electric motors, the engine began pushing the train on its steep, tortuous journey up through the mountains.

Higher and higher they climbed, with the view becoming more and more unbelievable awe-inspiring.

The first station was reached; then on again—climbing, climbing, winding through the mountains through tunnels. But at last they were at the top and passing through the barrier, giving up their tickets to the collector.

"Hold on! I'll ask this chap if he remembers seeing Sylvia," Douglas said. "If he can only tell us in which direction she went, or what happened when she got here—"

In rapid French he began questioning the collector. The man looked puzzled at first, then he nodded his head vigorously and jabbered swiftly in reply.

"What's he say?" Doreen asked eagerly.

"He remembers her all right," Douglas told them. "She was met by a guide. She hired skis, and then they went off together towards the Divide."

"The Divide? What's that?"

Douglas frowned uneasily now. Madame Marie, too, was looking startled and anxious.

"Well, it's where two tracks lead up to the summit of this particular mountain. One always has been dangerous, and very rarely used; the other was popular and safe until a glacial movement only last year, and since then guides have avoided it, and always take mountaineering parties by a third route."

"Golly!" Doreen gasped. "And Sylvia's been taken towards the dangerous ones—"

"Come on, let's get skis and get started," Douglas said in a quiet voice that did not disguise his apprehension.

From a cabin adjoining the station

they hired skis; then, faces grimly purposeful, they set off.

Douglas and Madame Marie led the way. They knew these mountains—knew where to stop, knew the hundred-and-one dangers that lurked for the novice, and carefully they avoided them.

Then they had reached the Divide. There was a difference in the scene now. They had come up more or less smooth slopes, but now ahead of them the way was uneven and difficult.

Huge jagged rocks juttied out through the snow. Near by was a ledge, with a sheer drop of hundreds of feet beyond.

"One of the tracks goes along that ledge," Douglas said; "the other goes up over there—not so dangerous until nearer the summit." His gaze roved round. "The question is—which one was Sylvia taken along?"

Doreen had been asking herself that, too. Eagerly she looked round, hoping that there was some sign which would tell them. But there wasn't.

"There must have been a fall of snow up here within the last hour or two," Madame Marie said. "Very often it is local. The ski tracks which we could have followed have been covered over."

"There's only one thing for it," Douglas said. "We shall have to separate. Marie, you will lead the girls along that track." He pointed to the less dangerous one. "I shall take the other one; and if Tony and Jack care to come with me—"

"Of course we're coming!" said both boys together.

"Stout fellows!" Douglas smiled. "Now, just a final word. I don't think Sylvia will have been taken too far. The fact that she was told to hire skis, and not climbing kit, rather indicates that. Whoever finds her first must return here and wait for the other party. In any case, whatever happens, we must all be back here just before dark. Is that understood?"

"It is," Doreen said. "And now let's get started. Good luck, boys!"

"And good luck to you!"

With those parting words, both groups started off on their perilous journeys in quest of the missing Sylvia.

### WHEN THE STORM RAGED

**S**OON now we shall reach the first cabins. They are erected at intervals all the way to the summit.

Even as she spoke, Madame Marie halted. Her black eyes burned fiercely as she gazed steadily ahead of her. Then suddenly she pointed.

"See, the first cabins!"

Ahead of them was a narrow defile through sheer rock. And just beyond were the cabins—two of them—which had been erected when this route had been used by mountaineering expeditions.

Sight of them gave new hope to Doreen and Jean. Eagerly they pressed on, with Madame Marie still leading.

"Look! Tracks in the snow—leading to that first cabin!" Doreen cried suddenly. "Someone's been there. Oh, come on—come on! I believe we've found Sylvia!"

"But the Rosses—what if they're there?"

There was no holding back Doreen now, however. For once she threw all caution to the winds.

"We'll chance it!" she exclaimed. "And we've got our ski sticks. We'll fight if we're driven to it. If Sylvia's here, then we're going to rescue her. Now—"

It was Doreen who led the rush.

Jean and Madame Marie were close behind her. Down on the cabin they swooped. They saw that the door was barred on the outside. The one small window was shuttered.

"Sylvia!" Doreen called. "Are you there—?"

"Doreen! Help—help!"

Sylvia's voice! Sylvia was a prisoner in the cabin.

In a moment Doreen had grabbed the iron bar that secured the door, and wrenched it out of its sockets with her mittened hands. Then she was swinging the door open. Next moment she was rushing into the cabin.

There was Sylvia, lying on a bunk in one corner, her hands fastened behind her.

"We'll soon have you free," Doreen cried. "Jean, stand by the door, and if you see anyone coming, shout!"

Obediently Jean stood on guard, while Doreen and Madame Marie, hampered as they were by their skis, hurried across to the bunk. But even as they feverishly commenced to unfasten Sylvia's bonds, there was a scuffle outside.

Too late, Jean heard a crunch in the snow. She was unprepared when suddenly, from behind the open door, there darted two figures. Two hands seized Jean, and lifted her bodily into the cabin. Then another pair of hands slammed the door shut. The iron bar clattered back into its sockets.

"Good work, Henri!" It was the voice of Stephen Ross. Triumphantly he was grinning at his tall, lean companion. "That's their hash settled. They're evidently anxious to be with Sylvia, so they won't mind keeping her company until after the skating championship to-morrow."

Doreen & Co., far from rescuing Sylvia, were themselves prisoners now!

**"DOREEN**, what can we do? We—we'll never be able to escape now!"

Sylvia Drake choked, and gazed helplessly across at her friend.

Doreen, lying on another bunk on the opposite side of the little room, struggled desperately with the bonds that secured her hands behind her back.

But they remained tight and immovable.

An hour had passed since Doreen and Jean and Madame Marie had been imprisoned with Sylvia.

And during that time much had happened. They had heard from Sylvia how she had been tricked; how, suspecting nothing, she had been brought to this cabin by Henri, who, it seemed, had been a St. Lauritz guide, who, after being involved in some shady business, had had his mountaineering licence taken away from him.

Sylvia had confidently been expecting to see her friends in the cabin, had hoped that Douglas would be with them. Instead, she had found Stephen Ross, who had promptly made her prisoner.

Then it was Doreen's turn to tell Sylvia everything that had happened at St. Lauritz. Amazed and thrilled, Sylvia had listened, hardly able to believe the incredible news. Her cousin free! How glad she was! A fortune awaiting her if she won the skating championship—

But swift on the heels of excitement had come dismay and despair, as realisation of her plight came home to her. What hope of winning that fortune, when she was a prisoner in the hands of the man who was scheming to rob her of it?

Stephen Ross and his companion had forced Jean and Madame Marie into the adjoining room—there were two compartments in the little cabin—and there roped them to bunks on opposite walls so that they could not release each other.

Doreen and Sylvia had suffered a similar fate. Then stoves had been lit in both rooms.

"You're staying here all night, so you'll need some warmth," Mr. Ross had said harshly. "You scored over me this morning, when you tricked me with the wrong clock, but now I get the last laugh. The police will never find me here. And to-morrow, when Irma has won that fortune, I shall make my getaway. Yes, the last laugh is on you."

Then he and Henri had departed to their own hut. That had been twenty minutes ago. Now—



Sylvia and Irma were level. The chums stood up in their excitement, urging Sylvia to greater speed. For on the result of this race depended not only fame, but a fortune as well!

Now it seemed that everything indeed was lost. But in the dim glow of the stove Doreen's eyes suddenly gleamed.

"Don't lose heart yet, Sylvia," she whispered. "We've still one hope."

"Oh, Doreen, what do you mean?"

"Well, the boys," said Doreen. "It's a faint chance, I admit, but we mustn't despair."

Even as Doreen spoke, there came a whining sound outside the cabin. The whine became a shriek, and the door shook.

With uncanny suddenness the blizzard started. Soon it was howling and roaring over the mountains, lashing the cabin with a fury that threatened to lift it from its foundations.

And in a sudden lull, as the gale momentarily died away, Doreen's hopes sank.

They sank, and did not rise again as the wind shrieked with renewed force and violence. For during that lull she had heard the swish of falling snow.

Now she knew that Douglas and the boys would be caught in the blizzard on the other side of the mountain, and would have to take shelter until the blizzard died away.

And the blizzard, with no signs of abating during the last hours of daylight, raged on far into the night.

**D**OREEN stirred and shivered. She was cold—dreadfully, achingly cold. Drowsily, she reflected, she must pull the bedclothes closer about her.

But there were no bedclothes. She could not even move her hands.

With a start, memory came flooding back to Doreen, and she jerked upright. Of course, her hands were bound; she was a prisoner, and there had been that blizzard.

It had died away now. Outside the world was still and hushed.

Again Doreen shivered, groaning with the torture of cramp. And then she gave a violent start.

Another day—and this was the day of the St. Lauritz skating championships. This was the day when Sylvia was—

"Sylvia—Sylvia, are you awake?" she gasped.

"Yes, Doreen," Sylvia's voice quivered. Through a crack in the shutter of the window near her bunk she had seen the first glimmers of day, had seen the sun rising. "Doreen, it must be gone seven, and—and—"

"What time does the championship start?"

"Ten o'clock."

"Less than three hours, then!" Doreen spoke through gritted teeth.

"Oh, Sylvia, don't despair yet!" But fiercely though Doreen spoke, she was biting her lip. She was near to losing heart herself now.

From the next room came Jean's voice; then Madame Marie's.

"Can't you get free, somehow?" Doreen called.

"We're trying—"

Doreen was trying. They all were—desperately, frantically. But Henri had done his work well.

An hour passed. It must be eight o'clock now. If rescue did not come by nine, then they could never get back to St. Lauritz in time for the championship.

One hour more—one hour, during which hope could still remain, though with the passing minutes it would grow fainter and fainter.

Wildly, frenziedly, Doreen was tugging at her bonds, gritting her teeth

against the pain. No good. Hope was fading, dying.

Then suddenly she was tensing. Outside there was a crunch of footsteps, a swishing sound over crisp, frozen snow.

"M'sieur!" a voice shouted.

"What is it, Henri?" That was Stephen Ross replying.

"Ze police—zey come!"

Police! Doreen and Sylvia thrilled. Hope flamed anew in their hearts. The police coming!

But outside Stephen Ross was trembling—they could tell it by the shakiness of his voice.

"What? Where are they?"

"Zey be here in a few minutes," Henri said.

"Confound it! They'll arrest me! They've got me on the run!" Mr. Ross sounded panic-stricken. "Henri, you've got to help me get away!"

"You will do ze leap, m'sieur?"

Doreen's brow puckered. The leap! What did the guide mean by that?

But then came Stephen Ross' voice again, frantic with fear.

"No, no! You fool! It's too risky. The other way—get the tackle! Hurry—hurry!"

"And ze girls, m'sieur?"

"We'll have to leave them here! Hurry, man!"

"Oui, m'sieur!"

Inside the cabin, Doreen and Sylvia were quivering with excitement. Stephen Ross was on the run—was fleeing. But that didn't matter. The police were coming—rescue was at hand!

From the distance came shouts.

"Yell! Doreen cried."

"Help! Help! Rescue!"

They all shouted—again and again. Then answering cries:

"We've found them! They're in those cabins!"

"Coming, girls!"

"The boys!" Doreen shrieked.

"They must be with the police!"

Suspense and excitement and activity then. The sound of skis, swishing over the snow, mingling with shouts. A crash at the door—a clatter as the iron bar was wrenched out.

And then the door burst open. Douglas and Tony and Jack were charging in. Doreen & Co. were being released. Everybody was talking at once.

"Sylvia!"

"Douglas!"

"What's the time?" Doreen panted.

"Can she do it—the championship?"

"Just about—but it'll be a race against the clock!" Douglas cried.

"We had to shelter in a hut during the blizzard. Then this morning we found ourselves snowed up. Took us nearly two hours to get out. Then, when we got to the Divide, we found the police just coming. Your aunt, Doreen, sent them when we didn't return. But explanations later. The championship—that's the thing! Sylvia, where are your skis?"

But the girls were already putting them on. Then came shouts from outside.

The gendarmes, yelling and gesticulating, were standing on the edge of a near-by precipice which looked down into the valley far below. The girls, Madame Marie, and the boys joined them there.

"Stephen Ross! Look, there he is!" Douglas cried. "Down in the valley!"

"And there are more police!" Jean shouted.

"They're trying to head him and Henri off!"

"But they won't!" Doreen, staring

downwards, saw how Mr. Ross had made his escape. With a recklessness which could only have been born by his frantic fear of arrest, he and Henri had climbed down the sheer, treacherous face of the precipice. Henri, expert mountaineer that he was, had been able to help him do it. "He'll get away!" she added breathlessly.

"He won't!" Douglas' voice was grim. His face was resolutely determined. "I'll stop him!"

"But how?"

"I'm going to ski-jump it!"

Sylvia's face blanched. She gripped his arm.

"Douglas, you can't—you mustn't! You'll be killed!"

"Don't you worry! I've done these jumps before! Sylvia—girls—you get back to St. Lauritz!"

He shook his arm free. He turned, went ski-ing back over the smooth snow for some distance. Then, turning again, he came swishing back. Faster, faster, crouching low!

Everybody stood breathlessly still. Sylvia closed her eyes. Doreen's gaze was fastened on that flying figure, fascinated, thrilled as she had never been thrilled before.

He raced towards the edge of the precipice. He went over it—soaring through the air like some human bird. Then he was dropping, dropping, arms outstretched, perfectly poised, perfectly balanced.

Down, down! It was breath-taking, spell-binding, magnificently thrilling!

"He's done it!" Tony shrieked.

"He's landed! He's chasing after them!"

"C'est magnifique!" Madame Marie exclaimed, her eyes a-glitter with pride and admiration.

And Doreen laughed. Down below in the valley Douglas was swiftly closing in upon Stephen Ross and Henri, hampering them while the police raced to make their capture.

"Oh, come on!" Doreen cried, taking Sylvia's arm. "Douglas has done his stuff—now you've got to do yours! You've got to win the championship!"

#### A NEW CHAMPION!

**T**HE lake at St. Lauritz was a blaze of colour and a mass of people!

At any moment now the famous skating championship would begin, and everybody was agog.

The beflagged grand stand was packed. The banks of the lake were dense with spectators.

On the edge of the lake, close by the competitors' entrance, Irma Ross leaned over the barrier talking to her mother.

Irma was looking pleased with herself. She was dressed all in white, from the little bobble of her jaunty beret to the tips of her high skating boots. Very attractive she looked, and many were the admiring glances cast in her direction.

"Listen! They're announcing the names!" she whispered to her mother. "In less than five minutes now the first race will have started. And Sylvia won't be here!"

Mrs. Ross' eyes glittered.

"No, she won't be here!" she repeated exultantly. "She'll not rob us of that money, Irma, for now you are certain to win!"

"What happens afterwards?" Irma asked, still talking in a whisper.

"As soon as your father knows the championships are over, he intends to escape over the frontier into France," Mrs. Ross replied. "He has made all

the arrangements with that guide, Henri. We shall collect the money and join him later. Then we shall go to America, or somewhere, and lead the life of luxury I've planned for us!"

Irma almost purred with pleasure at the thought. Then a volley of hand-clapping rent the air; feet began to stamp. The first of the competitors were whirling on to the ice.

"He's calling my name!" Irma cried, as the announcer's voice boomed again through the loudspeakers.

With a swirl of her short skirt she spun round and flashed towards the centre of the lake.

"Miss Sylvia Drake, also of England, is—"

Irma gave a start, but then she smiled again as the announcer continued:

"Ladies and gentlemen," he went on, "I am informed that Miss Drake is not here. She has been missing since yesterday morning!"

Immediately there was a sensation. An incredulous buzz swept round the lake, growing in volume. Sylvia Drake missing! Sylvia Drake, who had been confidently expected to win the championship!

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am further informed by Miss Hill, a friend of Miss Drake, that she fears the missing girl may have been caught in yesterday's blizzard. Already search-parties have been sent into the mountains and the police informed. We earnestly hope that no harm has befallen Miss Drake. But the championship must go on, and we must abide by the rules. If Miss Drake is not here by ten o'clock exactly, then, much as we regret it, we must cancel her entry!"

Again there was a buzz. And again Irma smiled, glanced towards the big clock on the grand stand. One minute to ten. One minute to go—and she knew that Sylvia Drake would not turn up!

But then, suddenly, Irma went stiff and rigid, seemed to freeze in her tracks. Wide-eyed, she was staring across the lake as a terrific cheer rent the air.

"She's arrived—"

"Hurrah—"

Irma trembled. How could Sylvia be here?

But she was! Irma herself saw Sylvia a moment later—saw her running towards the announcer's box. Sylvia, with Doreen and Jean and two boys. Then the announcer's voice, pitched on a key of excitement, came again:

"Ladies and gentlemen, she's here! This is marvellous! Miss Sylvia Drake has just arrived. She will take part in the championship—"

A tremendous volley of cheers drowned his voice. While below in the dressing-rooms, a minute later, Sylvia was frantically changing into her costume, Doreen was fixing one skating boot, Jean the other.

"Oh, Doreen, we've done it! We're here in time!" Sylvia cried, her voice thrilled, her face flushed.

"Of course we have!" Doreen laughed. "Now, you're ready! Good luck, Sylvia! May you win—but there we know you are going to win!"

Then Sylvia was whirling out on to the ice, the two chums were rushing up into the grand stand to join Aunt Elizabeth and Tony and Jack.

And on the lake, the first of the heats had started.

Then followed thrill after thrill, race after race, with Sylvia brilliantly winning her way towards the final.

All the competitors had been "seeded"



# FROM ONE GIRL TO ANOTHER

## Cheery Chatter and Helpful Hints by Penelope

Courts round about the time of the French Revolution.

Immediately you'll be guessing that you can only do your hair this way if it is a fairly long bob.

You comb up the side pieces and fasten them back with invisible grips so that your ears show. The back hair is then combed together at the nape of the neck, just as if you were going to plait it.

But instead, it is tied with a very small bow of flat ribbon. (Can you imagine a gentleman's evening-dress tie there? That will give you some idea as to the size of the ideal bow.)

There, quite simple, isn't it? And so girlish, too. School teachers also approve of this style, for it does keep hair out of eyes!

### A STITCH IN TIME

Here's a neat little mending case that you could easily make for a tiny present. You require a strip of leather—or leatherette (which costs sixpence for a quarter of a yard). This strip only needs to be 2½ inches wide and 6 inches deep.

Fix three mending cards of useful coloured cotton to one half, using a jab-through paper clip to keep them in position.

On the other half of the leather place a fragment of flannel—gluing it on in position at the corners only. But before you stick this flannel in place, I want you to do the decorations on the front side. Mark one stitch, then under it, the word SAVES. Under that mark more stitches—nine in all.

As you can see, this is but an easy way of writing out the old proverb—"A stitch in times saves nine."

Fasten the case with a piece of ribbon at each end that ties in a bow when closed, won't you?

Good-bye now until next Friday!

Your own,

**PENELOPE**



**H**ALLO, EVERYBODY!—Isn't it infuriating when you lose one glove! This Penelope of yours lost one to-day, and is so peeved about it.

No, fortunately they weren't very new, so it could have been worse, I suppose.

It's a left glove that I have retained, and in order not to waste it, I suppose I shall have to keep it for slipping on when making up the fire, or something. (It is black, so that's something.)

You have seen the proper coal-gloves—or coal-mitts, as I think they are called—haven't you?

They are made of black velveteen, as a rule, and shaped like a baby's mitten, with no fingers—just a thumb. And they're so loosely fitting, that you can wear them either on the right or the left hand.

They hang over the coal-scuttle in the sitting-room, you see, then if you do have to use your hands to put more coal on the fire, because the tongs won't work—as they often won't—you don't get so grubby that you immediately have to go and wash them.

If you're taken with the idea, it would be quite simple to make one of these gloves—unless you can spare sixpence to buy one!

### THE LATEST STYLE

Have you tried wearing your hair in the Coachman style? This is a most attractive hair-dressing for young people—and for older ones, too, for that matter.

In very swish hairdressing salons it is often called the Dauphin style—for it does remind one of those elegant young men at the French

into two sections, with Sylvia, leading on points from the figure-skating competition, heading one section, and Irma, second in points, the other section.

Thus it had been hoped that first and second favourites would be in opposition when it came to the final race. And so it turned out to be.

Now Irma knew that her only hope of gaining that fortune was by winning the championship, beating Sylvia. Trickery had failed. Now she must rely on her own skill.

And skill she had. No doubt about that. Race after race she won. The semi-final was reached. Amid tremendous excitement it took place. And Irma won, with Sylvia second.

The rivals were in the final. Rivals

for championship honours and the fortune that went with the winner of the Golden Goblet.

Then came an interval, during which the band played, and the spectators had time to regain their breath and recover from their hoarseness. In the grand stand, Doreen suddenly let out a glad cry.

"Here comes Douglas! You're just in time for the final!"

"That's fine! And Sylvia's in it? Grand!"

"What happened—"

"Oh, they got him! Stephen Ross is on his way to the police station now. He tried to bluff me with a revolver as I tackled him in that valley, but it wasn't loaded. Well, well—"

"They're off!" Jean suddenly shrieked, leaping to her feet.

And everything else became forgotten then as they all turned to watch that last race—that race which even old-stagers declared to be the most thrilling they'd ever taken part in or watched!

First Sylvia, then Irma was leading as they whirled round the lake.

But Sylvia, in allowing herself to be beaten into second place in the semi-final, had had the final in mind. Deliberately she had withheld her strength for the last terrific effort which she knew would be needed.

They were level—they were still level at the half-way stage. Everybody was on their feet with the terrific excitement.

It was going to be a dead-heat—But no. Suddenly Sylvia spurred. A yard, two yards separated them—the finishing line was a hundred yards away.

And then—as if by some miracle, Sylvia forged ahead. Streaked ahead, leaving Irma dropping farther and farther behind.

"It's Sylvia's race!" Douglas yelled. "Sylvia wins!" Doreen shrieked.

And Sylvia had won, was whirling over the finishing line—skating champion of St. Lauritz!

THEY acclaimed her after the race. They acclaimed her through the streets of St. Lauritz as in triumph Doreen and Jean, and Douglas and Tony and Jack, and Aunt Elizabeth escorted her back to the Crestina Hotel.

She begged Gerald to reply, if he felt well enough.

The note was dispatched to Grey Gables by special messenger, and the little party at the Hall waited, in uncomfortable suspense.

The squire paced the room, a heavy frown on his face; Mr. Penhale fidgeted uneasily, glancing at the clock.

Norma sat motionless in front of the blazing log fire, staring unseeingly into the embers.

Only Gerald could help her now! The ticking of the big grandfather clock became insufferable; Norma sprang to her feet, her hands clenched—and just then there came the sound of a car in the drive.

The messenger had returned from Grey Gables!

The footman appeared a moment later with a thin sealed envelope. It was addressed, not to Norma, but to Squire Guthrie.

The handwriting was Gerald's—though shaky and uncertain, obviously owing to his weakness.

His hand a trifle unsteady, the squire ripped open the envelope, and unfolded the single sheet of paper.

Then his expression changed; his eyes became stern. In an unsteady voice, he read the reply aloud.

"Dear Mr. Guthrie,—I have suspected for some time that Norma was the Phantom trickster; this evening I received ample proof.

"She has deceived us all, and I can think of no excuse for her treachery. For my part I am done with her, and have no wish to see her again.

"That is my last word.—GERALD."

With a stifled sob, Norma drew back. Gerald had written that! No, she couldn't—she would never believe it!

Squire Guthrie was eyeing her sternly as he folded the note.

And that night, in the hotel's magnificent ball-room, during the grand championship dance held in her honour, they acclaimed Sylvia again.

And there it was, flushed with happiness and triumph, amid deafening applause, that she was presented with the Golden Goblet.

"Three cheers for the skating queen of St. Lauritz!" Doreen cried.

The cheers rang out. And then, on to the platform stepped an elderly gentleman.

"Miss Drake," he beamed, "I represent the firm of Wiggs, Benson & Wiggs, lawyers to the late Mr. Robert Drake. By the terms of his will, you, having won the skating championship of St. Lauritz, will inherit his fortune. It will be held in trust until you come of age, during which time I have arranged—and know it will meet with your approval—that Miss Elizabeth Hill, and your cousin, Mr. Douglas Drake, will act as your trustees!"

And again Doreen led the cheering. The excitement never died down that night—it didn't for days—but during a more or less quiet lull all the friends were together, sipping drinks in the lounge.

Sylvia and Douglas were there; Aunt Elizabeth, with Doreen and Jean; Tony Semers and Jack Huntley; and Madame Marie, too.

"Oh, I'm so happy!" Sylvia breathed. "So happy! It doesn't seem possible that it's all ended like this."

"Sylvia," Aunt Elizabeth smiled, "I have a suggestion to make, if Douglas agrees."

"Oh, what is it, Miss Hill?"

## THE GIRL WHO HAUNTED GREY GABLES

(Continued from page 444.)

"That, Miss Royston," he said grimly, "is your answer. You have tricked and deceived us all, and may consider yourself lucky to escape arrest. Here is the money for your fare to London." He tossed a note on to the table. "I shall arrange for a trap to take you to the station. Gaspard—you will see her safely out of the village."

"Ay, ay, sir!"  
"And the children?" inquired Mr. Penhale blandly. "You agree that they shall be put in a home?"

"No!" sobbed Norma, finding her voice. "No—not that—please!"

"Silence!" exclaimed the squire coldly. "You have proved yourself unfit to have any say in the welfare of the children, Miss Royston; my friend, Penhale, will make any arrangements that he considers fit. And now—go!"

Norma, pale as death, feeling too stunned to protest further, was led out of the house.

A few minutes later the trap drove up, the driver muffled against the keen night air.

"We'll just make the nine-fifteen for Lunnon," he declared.

Norma begged to say good-bye to the children; after some hesitation, Ted Gaspard agreed.

They drove to old Mrs. Tregurtha's cottage; the two children ran out to meet them.

"Norma!" they exclaimed excitedly, tugging at her hand. "Mrs. Tregurtha says we may all stay with her for a time. Supper's all ready, an'—"

Norma shook her head, smarting tears in her eyes.

"I'm going to suggest that after your holiday you return to England with us and go to the same school as Doreen and Jean—"

"Aunt! It's a marvellous idea! You—you wonderful thing!" Doreen cried. "Sylvia—Douglas—"

"I'd love to!" Sylvia breathed.

"And she shall!" Douglas approved. "I shall be returning to England, too, of course. Now that the Rosses can no longer interfere—now that my name is completely cleared—I shall have Uncle Robert's business to look after. Marie is coming with me—and is going to look after me as she did when I was a little kid!"

Madame Marie's eyes were strangely blurred and moist, but pride and happiness shone in their depths.

"And we're all going to have a ripping time here all together for the rest of our holiday," Tony put in boisterously, "and I hope we shall see lots of each other back in England!"

"We shall!" came a chorus.

And then a crowd burst into the room, and they were all being rushed back to the ball-room.

And jollity and happiness reigned between these friends who had been brought together at St. Lauritz. And for Doreen and Jean and Sylvia, in particular, it was a friendship that would last for ever.

THE END.

Haven't you enjoyed every word of this splendid serial? Now you can look forward to the extra long opening chapters of a new story by Daphne Grayson, which appear next Friday, entitled "BRENDA'S MYSTERY TASK IN HOLLYWOOD."

"I—I've got to go away, dears," she said unsteadily. "For a while. I—I want you to promise me to be good children while I'm away. Martin, you're a big man now; you'll look after little Elsie for me, whatever happens."

Impulsively she bent to kiss them. They clung to her, asking bewildered questions; little Elsie burst into tears.

But Ted Gaspard was growing impatient, and the driver of the trap was glancing at his watch.

The children were hustled into the cottage, the door slamming.

Her hands clenched, Norma stumbled blindly towards the trap. The driver assisted her into her seat.

A moment later, the whip cracked—and the trap bowled swiftly away.

Norma felt too numbed by the shock even to cry; the parting with the children had been the final, cruel blow.

She was conscious that the trap had slowed down, and she looked up, supposing that they had reached the station.

But she saw only a lonely country lane, the trees silvered in the moonlight.

The driver had turned, and was staring at her strangely.

"We get out here, miss," he said gruffly.

"Here?" repeated Norma uncomprehendingly.

To her amazement the driver chuckled and pulled back his scarf, revealing a boyish face, and a pair of daring blue eyes, alight with laughter.

"Gerald!" she gasped.

The boy's hand closed on her lips. "Hist!" he breathed. "We're in this together now, Norma—and mum's the word!"

Don't miss the thrilling developments that follow in next Friday's instalment of this grand mystery serial. Order your GIRLS' CRYSTAL as soon as possible!