

"HER UNKNOWN ENEMY AT SCHOOL" One of the six splendid stories inside.

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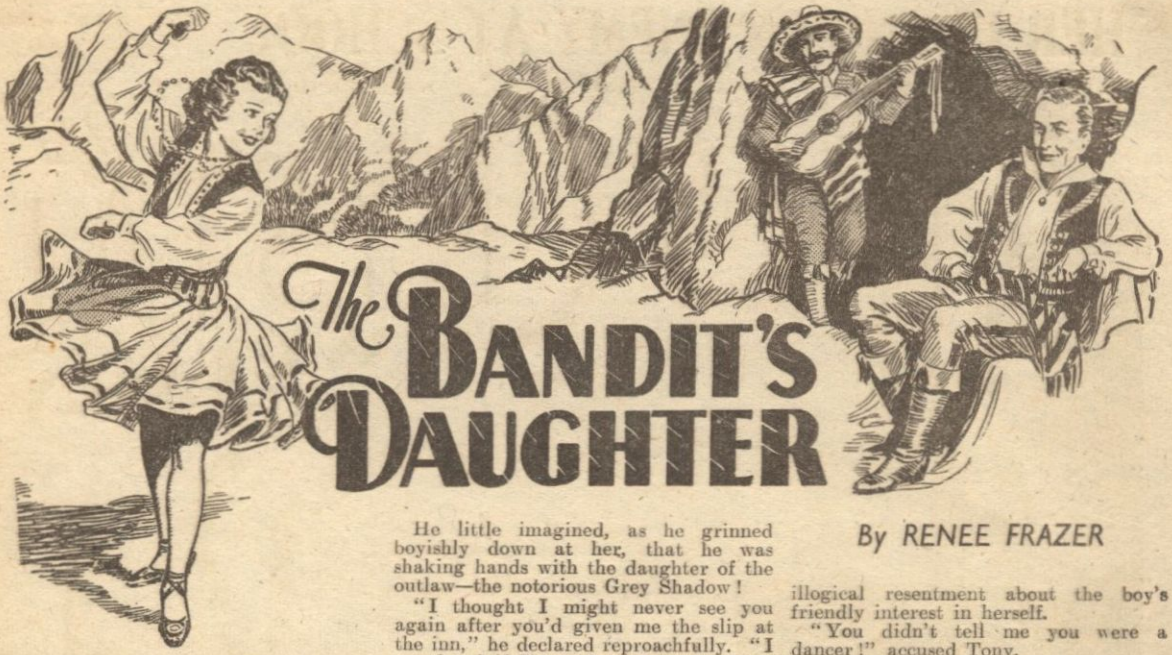
# GIRLS' CRYSTAL<sup>2</sup> WEEKLY



## THE RED INDIAN VASE

—Had Ruby come to discover its secret?

*A dramatic moment in "Brenda's Mystery Task in Hollywood."*



# The BANDIT'S DAUGHTER

By RENEE FRAZER

## LOLA'S DANCING DEBUT

**L**OLA SHARMAN returned to her Mexican home, after leaving school, to start a career as a dancer. But what a shock she received when she discovered that her father was the Grey Shadow—a bandit!

He had been outlawed because of the treachery of Ramon Garcia, his enemy, and was fighting to clear his name. Lola determined to make a success of her dancing, to aid him.

Tony Creswick, a young Englishman, was trying to track down the Grey Shadow, not knowing the bandit was Lola's father.

Lola went to the cafe of Senor Lopez for a dancing audition, and found Maria Garcia, another dancer, there—a rival. Lola delighted Senor Lopez with her dancing, and he engaged her.

Then Tony Creswick suddenly appeared. He announced that someone had been seen to ride from the bandit's secret camp in the hills towards the town that morning. Had anyone been to the cafe who might be a spy of the Grey Shadow?

**L**OLA stood motionless, her face rather pale, as she encountered the gleam of recognition in Tony Creswick's eyes.

He was the last person in the world she had expected to see at that moment—the friendly, cheery boy from whom she had escaped at the inn; the boy who was her father's avowed enemy!

His face lit up as he took a half-step towards her across the floor of the cafe.

"Why, if it's not Lola—Miss Sharmán!" he corrected himself, with an obviously delighted smile. "I say, fancy meeting you here!"

He held out his hand, seemingly forgetful for the moment of his grim errand—oblivious to the curious stares of the onlookers.

Lola flushed nervously as he grasped her hand; she was torn by conflicting feelings.

Though in her heart she was glad to see him—a friendly face among a crowd of strangers—she could not forget the purpose of his visit.

He was here in search of her bandit father!

He little imagined, as he grinned boyishly down at her, that he was shaking hands with the daughter of the outlaw—the notorious Grey Shadow!

"I thought I might never see you again after you'd given me the slip at the inn," he declared reproachfully. "I wondered if I'd said or done anything to offend you."

Lola smiled coolly, trying to check the violent thumping of her heart. The boy must never be allowed to suspect her real reason for evading him!

"It wasn't that," she replied, with a shrug. "You seemed busy—and I thought I might be in the way."

The boy gave a wry smile. "My behaviour must have seemed a bit queer," he admitted. "But I've got an old family account to settle with that scoundrel the Grey Shadow, and I was mad to think that he had got the laugh of me."

His blue eyes flashed at the memory of his discomfiture.

"But I'll track him down sooner or later!" he added, with confidence.

"Really?" Lola's blood was boiling, but she managed to speak as though scarcely interested. "You seem very sure of yourself," she added.

The boy flushed.

"I suppose you think I'm boasting—but I mean it. I'm following up certain clues of my own, though the police have got their own views about the scoundrel's hiding-place. Anyway, let's forget the bandit for the moment—and talk about yourself!"

He regarded her quizzically. Lola tossed her head, biting back the angry words that sprang to her lips in defence of the father she adored.

How dared Tony say such things about him! True he could not suspect for a moment that the Grey Shadow was her father, but he was judging the outlaw without any knowledge of the real facts.

And because of that she felt an

Lola was glad to see Tony Creswick again. He had been her only friend since her return to Mexico. And yet she dared not become too friendly, for she must not forget that he was out to track down her bandit father!

illogical resentment about the boy's friendly interest in herself.

"You didn't tell me you were a dancer!" accused Tony.

"Am I obliged to tell you everything about myself?" countered Lola bitingly. The boy looked rather nonplussed.

"N-no, I suppose not," he admitted. "I say, you're not annoyed with me, are you?"

He spoke anxiously, a slightly puzzled expression on his good-looking face.

Lola laughed. "What an idea!" she rejoined lightly, as she picked up a tambourine and twirled it on her hand. "As you see, I'm rather busy with my dancing practice. If you'd excuse me—"

She dropped a mock curtsy. Tony made a wry grimace.

"I suppose I asked for it," he muttered, "but honestly, Lola, I—"

Just then the energetic Senor Lopez, the proprietor of the cafe, hurried up.

"Come, young señor!" he put in impatiently. "You interrupt my business—and this young lady's work! We have seen no bandits here, though we have heard many rumours. I suggest you seek elsewhere for your Grey Shadow"—he waved a plump hand towards the door—"or remain here to watch the dancing."

"Thanks!" replied Tony, quite unruffled. "I'll stay and watch the dancing."

Lola, encountering his glance, saw a gleam in his blue eyes as he drew up a chair to one of the marble-topped tables.

He was determined to satisfy his curiosity about her, regardless of snubs!

Lola tried to feel annoyed, but in spite of herself she concealed a smile behind her tambourine. There was something infectious about Tony Creswick's friendliness—though she considered that she had every reason for hating him!

She endeavoured to thrust him from her thoughts as, at Senor Lopez's urgent request, she repeated her interrupted dance.

It was the same dance that she had performed by the glow of leaping fires in the outlaw's mountain retreat—a dance of pathetic grace, descriptive of a bird in captivity.

As she danced she forgot her surroundings—the decorations of the cafe, the dark, watchful faces of the proprietor and his customers.

She was back again in the bandits' rocky fastness, dancing for her handsome, daredevil father—and for him alone.

She did not see the rapt look on the faces of the customers; the delighted smile hovering on Senor Lopez's lips; the expression of amazement and admiration that shone in Tony Creswick's eyes.

And she did not see—and neither did the onlookers—the vindictive glitter in Maria Garcia's dark eyes as that girl, keeping in the shadow of the wall, edged nearer and nearer to the young dancer.

The concluding phase of Lola's dance revealed the caged bird released from its captivity—spreading its wings in its first taste of freedom.

Her cheeks slightly flushed, she swung across the floor of the cafe in a wildly graceful pirouette.

Everything depended on the effective conclusion of the dance, to which all the rest had led.

And at that instant something became entangled between Lola's feet—a piece of trailing vine broken from the wall of the courtyard and tossed in front of her by her rival!

Lola, spinning dizzily, lost her balance and flung out her arms, with a cry.

The next moment her dance would have ended in a pitiful fiasco—with possibly serious injury for herself.

But just then a figure leaped from one of the tables, catching the young dancer round the waist and supporting her.

There was a moment's breathless silence, followed by a tumultuous roar of applause as Lola regained her balance and stood poised, her face a trifle pale, her hand resting lightly on Tony Creswick's arm.

It was as effective almost as a pre-arranged tableau, and Lola alone realised how near she had been to disaster!

Her fingers tightened on the boy's arm. The anger she had felt towards him was momentarily swept aside in a wave of gratitude.

"Thank you!" she whispered unsteadily.

Tony grinned at her cheerfully. "Pleasure's all mine," he rejoined, in an undertone. "Not bad for a beginner, eh? You were marvellous, Lola!"

Senor Lopez was hurrying across the floor to congratulate them. Maria, her dusky features twisted with fury, hovered in the background.

Just then Tony bent swiftly to pick up something that had fluttered to the ground as Lola tripped—a grey silk kerchief she had used as a scarf for her dark hair.

It had been a present from her father, and it bore in a corner the crest he had adopted years ago—a falcon surmounting the letter "S."

Tony raised it gallantly at arms-length.

"In the old days, Lola," he declared, half jokingly, "you would have granted me this favour—as a keepsake."

But Lola snatched at it anxiously, her heart in her mouth.

"I'm sorry, Tony," she faltered. "Perhaps another time—"

The boy's face fell, and Lola was conscious of a momentary twinge of remorse at her seeming ingratitude.

She was aware that Maria was edging towards them; and just then someone entered the restaurant in haste, shouting out some news in Spanish.

A horseman had been seen riding at

reckless speed along one of the lonely roads on the outskirts of the town.

Tony was galvanised into instant action. It was plain from the flash of his eyes, the involuntary stiffening of his boyish figure, that everything else was momentarily swept from his mind.

"The Grey Shadow, or one of his men!" he breathed. "So-long, Lola!" His hand tightened on hers. "I'll be along this evening, without fail, to see you dance. Look out for me."

With a wave of his hand, he sprang for the door. Lola stared after him, her heart in her mouth.

Could the rumour possibly be correct? But, no! If her father had intended to visit Santa Crede he would have told her so last night. It was just another scare—and Tony Creswick was pursuing an elusive shadow.

When he came back she would laugh at him, and perhaps next time he would not be so keen on setting off on his quest.

Lola clenched her hands, with a feeling of half-guilty elation at the thought.

If only she could win Tony round to her side!

It would be another triumph to cap her new success as a dancer—the success that marked the first rung of the long and treacherous ladder to fame.

Lola drew a deep breath as, turning, she encountered the smouldering jealousy in Maria Garcia's dark eyes.

It was an expression that held an unmistakable warning of trouble to come. And, in spite of herself, Lola shivered slightly as she turned away, to encounter Senor Lopez's benevolent smile.

"You will be famous, senorita," declared the cafe proprietor, rubbing his hands. "Mark my words!"

"And mark mine, you little fool," came Maria's low-voiced, sibilant whisper. "You're dancing—for a fall!"

## IN THE MARKET PLACE

LOLA banished Maria's threat from her mind.

Her big chance had come, and she was not going to allow vague fears to deter her from her glittering goal.

It was not only elusive fame that beckoned, but the thought of security—security that she could share with her outlaw father, repaying him in part for all that he had done for her in the past.

She must succeed—for both their sakes. And success lay within her reach.

Her feet, nimble, ever-restless, tapped out a score of dance tunes as she made her way from the cafe, through the picturesque streets of the little Mexican town.

Lola was searching for lodgings. She realised plainly from her father's parting words to her that it was best they should live apart—until his name was cleared.

She had a little money of her own, and a few pesetas that her father had slipped into her purse when they parted.

This would suffice to buy all necessities until her first week's salary became due.

After one or two disappointments, Lola found comfortable and homely lodgings with a middle-aged couple—a retired ranchero and his buxom wife.

They asked no awkward questions, but were sympathetically interested in the attractive young English girl who was striving to make her living as a dancer.

She was shown to her room—a delightful little room with lattice windows, low-timbered ceiling, and rush mats covering the uneven floor.

A soft breeze crept through the open window, carrying with it the scent of the flowering orchard surrounding the house, and the more distant smell of the pines.

Lola pushed the casement wide, staring with smarting eyes towards the far-away hills—like blue-grey shadows against the darkening sky.

Somewhere out there her father was in hiding, perhaps thinking of her at this moment, as she was thinking of him, wondering how his daughter was faring.

If only she could have let him know of her success!

But he had warned her against even attempting to communicate with him in



"Senorita—quickly! For you, from your father!" called a husky voice. Next instant a package came through the window, falling at Lola's feet, and the shadowy figure vanished.

his mountain retreat. It would mean danger—for both of them.

She could only dream of him, and hope—hope that somehow the news of her success would reach his ears.

Impatiently she shook herself, blinking back her momentary tears, forcing a quick smile.

To-night to-night was to see her first professional appearance before the public, and here she was indulging in morbid thoughts.

Lola drew a quick breath, and blew a kiss towards the distant hills.

Then, with quickened enthusiasm, she set to work to prepare her costume for the evening's performance.

To-night she was going to give them the "flame" dance—one of her favourites, as it was one of the most difficult in her repertoire.

The costume—her own creation—was fashioned from flame-coloured satin, trimmed with silver lace, and lent itself to the slightly barbaric motif of the dance.

Lola spent the intervening time in practising the intricate steps of the dance.

As the hour approached for setting out to the restaurant, her nervousness increased.

So much depended on her performance that night. Would she fulfil the expectations of the enthusiastic Senor Lopez? He had promised to advertise her dance, and had assured her that he expected the cafe to be filled to overflowing.

It was nearing dusk when she finally set out from her lodgings; the pearly grey of the Mexican sky was slashed with an occasional streak of crimson.

The streets of the little town seemed unusually crowded; people stood in whispering, chattering groups, gesticulating excitedly.

There was rumour in the air—rumour and a sense of foreboding that communicated itself to Lola as she hurried on her way.

She wore a coat over her flame-coloured costume, and her dark hair was concealed by the grey silk scarf.

Only an occasional casual glance was turned in her direction; the people seemed more interested in the general topic of the hour.

Lola caught the dread word "ladrone"—bandit—repeated on several occasions; and a name that sent her heart beating wildly.

"The Grey Shadow!"

In spite of herself, she halted near one of the groups surrounding a lean, dark-featured individual who was addressing all and sundry.

The man wore a slouch hat pulled over his eyes, but his blustering manner seemed vaguely familiar to Lola. She wondered where she had heard that voice before.

"I tell you, my friends, this Grey Shadow is the scourge of the country—and the sooner he is trapped, the better for all of you! He has spies everywhere—one of them may be here, now, in this very crowd—"

He waved his hand dramatically, to emphasise his point—and his finger pointed towards Lola, who, unwisely, had allowed herself to be elbowed towards the front of the group.

Her heart beating quickly, her face rather pale, she attempted to back out of the crowd.

Her movement at once attracted the attention of the speaker; his eyes narrowed.

"The senorita seems in a hurry!" he sneered. "Yes, why should she be afraid—unless she has something to hide? Or perhaps she is one of those who sympathise with the blackguard who has terrorised our country?"

The attention of the crowd was immediately focused on Lola; some glances were merely curious—others hostile. A few were sympathetic.

For an instant, Lola was seized by a wave of fresh courage—a longing to say something in defence of her father whose name was being blackened in public.

"I've nothing to hide!" she rejoined breathlessly. "But I'll never believe that the Grey Shadow is a scoundrel. There are many who think he is not!"

Her bold retort brought a murmur of admiration from a section of the crowd; the speaker's lips curled unpleasantly.

"So? Fine words, senorita. Perhaps you would step up here and repeat your statement?"

Lola, regretting her rashness, endeavoured to back away; someone caught her by the shoulder. "Shame!" put in a voice. "Let the young lady alone!"

The crowd took sides; Lola, struggling desperately, was jostled between them.

She managed to break away at length, thanks to the kindly assistance of some of the onlookers; sobbing for breath, her heart thudding painfully, she raced down a narrow side-street that led to the rear of the cafe.

She was safe—but badly shaken. Her coat had been almost dragged from her shoulders, her flame-coloured frock torn at the hem, and her scarf had been snatched by one of the onlookers.

She did not regret the impulse that had prompted her to defend her father—yet she realised that it had been unwise to become involved in such a scene on the eve of her big performance.

Trying hard to compose herself, she presented herself at the side door of the cafe.

Almost at once she became aware that the place was thronged with customers. The astute Senor Lopez had wasted no time. A large placard over the main door announced:

"La Bella Lola—the Young English Dancer!"

A buzz of voices and laughter came from the direction of the open courtyard, lit by a score of swinging lanterns; the tuneful thrumming of a mandolin sounded above the clamour.

Senor Lopez himself, his plump face pale and rather anxious, hurried to meet her.

"Senorita, you are late!" he panted. "I had almost given you up. Quickly, into the dressing-room! I shall send Maria on first, with the troupe, and you will follow with your solo turn. Remember, senorita—I am depending on you!"

He hustled away, and Lola made her way to the dressing-room, her heart beating painfully.

As she crossed the portico, she caught a glimpse of the crowded courtyard—the light-hearted customers occupying every available table, the medley of picturesque attires.

But she looked in vain for a familiar face among the crowd. She had hoped to see Tony Creswick—but apparently the boy had forgotten his promise, or had been prevented from coming.

Vaguely depressed—the elation she had felt earlier in the afternoon completely gone—Lola pushed open the door of the dressing-room.

A buzz of voices ceased abruptly at her entrance; Maria Garcia, a graceful, rather striking figure in a black lace shawl and mantilla, ornamented with a huge Spanish comb, was standing with the rest of the troupe.

She eyed Lola from head to foot with a deliberate, insolent stare, one hand on her hip.

"Enter La Bella Lola—the girl

wonder!" she sneered. "The ragamuffin dancer!"

A faint snigger, hastily stifled, greeted this jibe at Lola's dishevelled attire.

Her head held high, her cheeks slightly flushed, Lola ignored the speaker, and proceeded to take off her coat and arrange her crumpled costume.

Some of the girls glanced at her with friendly interest, but it was obvious that most of them were rather in awe of Maria.

Just then a bell rang outside—a signal for the troupe of dancers. There was a hasty, last-minute touching up of costumes as the girls streamed from the room.

Maria lingered behind the rest, and strolled insolently over to Lola.

"I wish you joy of your first appearance in public," she sneered. "What a triumph it will be! Not a friend in front to witness your superb performance—not even the so-charming English boy. Your people, I suppose, were not sufficiently interested to come—if you have any people!"

With that final taunt, she sauntered from the room.

Lola clenched her hands, fighting back her tears—pluckily trying to regain her composure. It was all so different from what she had imagined—her appearance as a dancer in Mexico!

Who was there in that crowded audience to care whether she succeeded or not? Tony had forgotten her—her father, an outlawed fugitive, had his own cares; how could she expect him to think of her?

Her eyes smarting, her hands unsteady, she tried to repair the damage to her costume, and to contrive some way of replacing her lost headdress.

And just then, faintly to her ears, came the muffled clatter of hoofs outside the cafe.

She paid little attention to the sound, for horsemen were common enough in this Mexican town. Possibly some new customer had arrived.

Then, directly outside the narrow window of the dressing-room, came a low, uncanny cry.

The cry of a coyote!

Lola stiffened, her pulses racing incredulously. Only too well she remembered the last time she had heard that cry.

Instinctively she stared towards the darkened aperture of the window.

Silhouetted for an instant against the dim grey light she saw the head and shoulders of a mysterious figure wearing a huge sombrero hat.

"Senorita—quickly— for you—from your father!"

The husky voice was that of the jovial bandit Pedro, her father's second in command.

At the same instant something was flung through the window to fall at her feet.

A square package, addressed to her in her father's characteristic, dashing handwriting.

With a little cry of joy, Lola bent to snatch it up. At the same instant the shadowy figure vanished from the window.

Her hands shaking, Lola tore open the package; there was a box inside and a brief message from her father:

"To my dear daughter—wishing her all the success she deserves."

With a little sob of happiness, Lola raised the note to her lips.

Then daddy—daddy had not forgotten!

Slipping the precious message under her frock, she opened the case.

(Please turn to the back page.)



# The HOUSE of VANISHING TREASURES

## THE INCRIMINATING SCARF

"SORRY to trouble you, but could you direct me to the old Treasure House?"

Noel Raymond spoke with a disarming smile, but the pale, fair-haired girl in nurse's uniform who was pushing a bathchair along the sunlit promenade looked far from pleased at the interruption.

She regarded the young detective reproachfully and glanced down at the occupant of the chair—a grey-haired old gentleman whose lean, aquiline features were partially concealed by a woollen muffler.

His eyes were closed, and he made no reply as she bent over to speak to him.

"I was afraid you might disturb my father," she whispered, her annoyed frown slightly relaxing as she encountered Noel's apologetic glance. "He has been very ill—following an accident. The doctor has ordered complete rest and quiet."

"I say, I'm awfully sorry," murmured the young detective, in genuine concern. "I wouldn't have disturbed you, only there appears to be no one else about. I'm a stranger to the district."

The girl's manner became a little more friendly; she regarded Noel curiously.

"You were asking for the Treasure House?" she said. "It's about half a mile from here. If you take the path through the trees you can't miss it."

She indicated the path in question, and bent to adjust the invalid's rugs more snugly against the keen wind.

The gesture was a dismissal. Noel took the hint and, raising his hat, hurried along the winding path.

He was barely out of sight of the promenade when he halted, a soft whistle escaping his lips.

"Great Scott! I thought I recognised the old chap's face!" he exclaimed. "That's old Professor Pallister himself—who owns the Treasure House. No wonder the girl looked at me queerly. I didn't know he had a daughter."

The young detective took something from his pocket—a telegram from a friend of his who was on business in Scotland.

Its contents had brought Noel post-haste to this small seaside resort.

The message ran:

By PETER LANGLEY

"Please go at once to the Treasure House, Wrothlingsea. Investigate strange thefts. Pallister too ill to worry. Following by later train.—WALTON."

Noel had heard of the old Treasure House—as had most of the public—for it had been widely mentioned in the papers.

An old farmhouse, it had been recently converted into a museum of art treasures, lent by generous collectors.

The scheme had been originated by Professor Pallister, an invalid art connoisseur, with the backing of a number of influential business men—Noel's friend, Colonel Walton, among them.

Noel's natural curiosity had prompted him to come down at once, without awaiting his friend's arrival.

A few minutes later he came in sight of the house itself, a quaint, picturesque farmhouse dating back many hundreds of years.

He entered the dim porch, handing his hat and stick to a spruce, uniformed porter.

A moment later a dark-haired, attractive young girl appeared—from her attire obviously the curator. Her manner was quiet and efficient, though it seemed to Noel that there was a strained, almost haunted look in her dark eyes.

"You wish to be shown round, sir?" she asked.

"If you please," said Noel, eyeing her keenly.

He decided, for the moment, to say nothing of his errand. He would see

One valuable curio after another had vanished from the museum in broad daylight—always when Jean Clifford was in charge. Everything pointed to her being the thief. But Noel Raymond did not believe it—and resolved to track down the real culprit!

the collection for himself, and ask questions later.

The young curator's nervous manner became less noticeable as she pointed out the various treasures. She was evidently well-versed in the subject, and keen on her job.

Noel observed that the old house was well guarded against burglars. There were stout iron bars at most of the windows, and burglar-alarms fitted to the doors.

"I suppose this stuff's pretty valuable?" he remarked casually, glancing round at the fine collection of pictures, old furniture, and bric-a-brac that crowded the rooms.

"Very—very valuable." The girl's hand shook slightly as she pointed out some of the rare pieces. "They've been sent from all parts of the world."

Noel noticed that a space on the wall opposite the windows had been screened by a heavy curtain.

"To protect the pictures from the sunlight," explained the girl, in reply to his question. "Those three are genuine old masters, and Professor Pallister was anxious to take every precaution as they were sent here on loan."

"May I see?" inquired Noel, with a smile, as he crossed to the wall.

"Of course."

The girl turned, busying herself in arranging some of the bric-a-brac. Noel drew aside the curtains that screened the pictures.

He started, a surprised look crossing his face.

There were three pictures on the wall—or, to be precise, three frames.

Two of them contained old portraits—one of a cavalier, the other of a cardinal in his red robes.

But the central frame was vacant, revealing only the dusty woodwork behind!

Noel glanced sharply at the girl, who, busy with her task, had not looked round.

"Excuse me," he remarked, "haven't you made some mistake? I mean, there are only two pictures here."

The girl turned, a delicate vase in her hand.

"I beg your pardon—" she began. Then the words seemed to be frozen on her lips. Noel saw the look of incredulous horror that sprang into her eyes.

She gave a stifled, bewildered cry. "It's gone!" she choked, staring at the empty frame. "No, it's impossible! It was there—I saw it myself a few minutes ago—before you came in—"

Her voice rose sobbingly, almost hysterically as she darted to the wall, running a trembling hand over the bare woodwork.

Noel caught her by the arm. "Just a minute!" he said tersely. "Let's get this clear. You say the picture was in its frame a few minutes ago? But that's impossible!"

"I tell you it's the truth!" The girl turned to him desperately, her face

hastily pale. "It was there a few minutes ago, when I pulled the curtains—and I've hardly left the gallery since then."

Noel bit his lip; incredibly though her story sounded, the stark conviction in her tone could not be doubted.

Unless she was an astoundingly accomplished actress, the girl was speaking the truth.

The young detective stared round the sunlit gallery, with its barred windows. Here was mystery with a vengeance; his friend's urgent wire had been no unfounded scare.

He stared keenly at the white-faced, tearful girl.

"What other visitors have you shown round the place this morning?" he asked.

The girl stared at him, her eyes tragic.

"You—you're the first one," she whispered.

"Phew!" breathed Noel, his amazement deepening. "Then where have you been since you pulled the curtains?"

"In the next room," faltered the girl, indicating a smaller show-room leading off from the main gallery. "It would be practically impossible for anyone to come in without my seeing or hearing them. In any case, Rogers would have seen them."

"The porter, you mean?"

"Yes," whispered the girl. "I—I—" She broke down, covering her face with her hands. "It's ghastly, uncanny! And it's happened before—"

"So I gathered," Noel took her arm in a kindly fashion, his boyish face grave. "As a matter of fact, I came down here at the request of Colonel Walton—one of the governors. Try to pull yourself together and tell me what you can."

He slipped a card into her hand. The girl stared at it through her tears, a strange look creeping into her eyes—an expression that might have been hope or fear.

"Were pictures stolen on the previous occasions?" asked Noel.

"No," whispered the girl. "The first time it was a valuable old vase; the second time it was a silver snuffbox from one of the cases."

"And you were on duty on both occasions?"

The girl nodded, unable to reply.

Noel made a swift tour of the gallery, examining the windows and doors. Apart from the main entrance through which he had come, there were only two other doors. One led to the smaller show-room where the girl declared she had been on duty; the other was locked.

"Where does this lead?" demanded Noel, trying the handle.

"That—that leads to Professor Pallister's private quarters," explained the girl. "No one else is allowed to use it."

"Perhaps someone might have obtained his key?" suggested Noel.

The girl shook her head.

"He—he always takes it with him when he goes out; he's very anxious about the treasures. He wanted to call in the police, but his daughter was afraid of the scandal."

There was a curiously bitter note in her voice that Noel was at a loss to comprehend.

He fancied that no love was lost between the two girls.

With a shrug he dismissed the idea, concentrating on his present task.

The young curator's name, he learnt, was Jean Clifford; she had held a similar post before, and had obtained this one by special recommendation to Professor Pallister.

She slept on the premises, as did the

professor and his daughter. The hall porter, Rogers, came daily—at the same time as Mrs. Dene, the professor's housekeeper.

The five of them formed the sum total of the occupants of the Treasure House.

A significant aspect of the thefts was that they had always taken place by daylight—when the museum was open to the public!

"Queer!" murmured Noel thoughtfully, as he completed his examination of the gallery.

The time chosen suggested that an outsider was responsible—though he could not entirely rule out the porter and the housekeeper.

"Who has the keys to the gallery?" he asked.

"I—I have," replied the young curator.

"Then I suggest you lock up for the time being," said Noel. "I'm going to have a word with Rogers—and you'd better come with me."

They left the gallery, and Noel watched the girl double lock the massive doors.

In the outer lobby they found the porter reading a newspaper. He proved to be a brisk, alert young man; he answered Noel's questions without hesitation.

"You were the first visitor this morning, sir," he declared emphatically. "I've been on duty here all the time, and I'd have seen anyone if they'd tried to sneak in."

"What time do you expect Professor Pallister and his daughter back from their walk?" asked Noel.

"Any minute now, sir," replied the porter, with a glance at his watch. "They lunch at one."

"Then I'll have a look round the grounds before they arrive," said Noel. "Better keep a sharp look-out for any trespassers; if you see anyone, grab them—and hold them till I get back. Miss Clifford, you'd better wait here in the lobby."

Leaving the house, Noel made his way quickly along the path that skirted the grounds. It had been raining earlier that morning, and the young detective was keeping a sharp look-out for any traces of footprints.

All the downstairs windows were securely fastened; but on one of the flower-beds Noel discovered an unmistakable trace of footprints!

He measured them carefully, and just then he heard someone approaching along the gravel drive from the direction of the road.

Straightening himself hurriedly, he glanced down the path—to see that Miss Pallister had returned with her father.

They entered the porch of the private residence, and Noel hastened to overtake them. As he reached the porch the girl was assisting her father out of his bathchair.

She glanced at Noel in quick surprise, and the professor turned weakly.

"Who is this gentleman, Leila?" he asked.

Noel smiled gravely as he produced his card.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I'd have introduced myself on the promenade if I had known to whom I was talking. I have come down on behalf of Colonel Walton."

The girl's pale face lit up.

"Why, father, it's Mr. Noel Raymond, the London detective!" she exclaimed. "He has come about the thefts."

The professor held out a trembling hand.

"I'm glad to see you, sir—very glad indeed. I'm a sick man, as you see,

and the worry of these disappearances is not helping my recovery. Please come in. You must stay to lunch—I insist. Leila, my dear—your arm."

Leaning heavily on his daughter's arm, the professor opened the door with his latchkey. Leaving his daughter to show Noel into the dining-room he gave the housekeeper—a grey-haired, middle-aged woman—instructions about lunch, then hobbled his way upstairs.

For a minute or two Leila and Noel talked, then the young detective deemed that the time had come to relate what had happened.

"I'm afraid I have bad news for you, Miss Pallister," he said gravely.

The girl started, her face turning a shade paler.

"You don't mean—another theft?"

"I'm afraid so; one of the pictures from the gallery has vanished—"

The girl caught warningly at his sleeve—but too late. His whispered words had reached the ears of the old professor, who, leaning heavily on a stick, had just entered the room.

"A picture—gone!" he exclaimed unsteadily. "What picture? Not—the Red Cardinal?"

Noel shook his head.

"No, the picture next to it. As a matter of fact, I was in the gallery a few minutes after it disappeared."

The old man was trembling.

"Thank goodness it wasn't the Red Cardinal," he muttered, passing a hand over his forehead. "Yet it is bad enough. Mr. Raymond, this business is getting too much for me. Who is responsible for these dastardly thefts, and how do they manage to get away without being seen, in broad daylight?"

"That," said Noel dryly, "is what I'm here to find out. I shall need all the information you can give me, professor, and you, too, Miss Pallister. For instance, are your employees above suspicion?"

Before either could reply, there came a muffled scream. Leila stared, her face paling, as she glanced at her father.

"What was that?" demanded Noel sharply.

"The art gallery," breathed the professor. "Quickly—the private entrance, Leila!"

He dragged a bunch of keys from his pocket; Noel snatched them and unlocked a door leading from the study. Leila followed, supporting her father.

They passed through the private door into the art gallery. A swift glance showed Noel that it was deserted.

Then a horrified ejaculation escaped the professor's lips. Lying face-down on the floor was the framed picture of the Red Cardinal, and bending over it was the girl curator.

"What happened?" demanded the professor.

Jean Clifford shook her head.

"I—I don't know. I—I became uneasy, so I came in here to see if everything was all right. But I found the picture on the floor."

His face grim, Noel bent and lifted the heavy frame, turning it over. A stifled cry escaped Leila's lips, as her father staggered, clutching at Noel's arm.

The picture of the Red Cardinal had vanished from its frame.

Then Noel's sharp eyes detected something wedged behind a radiator. He dragged it to light—revealing a curious bronze knife, wrapped in a silk scarf. On the blade of the knife was a trace of painted canvas.

"The picture was cut out with this!" he snapped. "And this scarf was used to obliterate finger-prints—"

There came a sudden, accusing cry from Leila.

"That scarf!" she exclaimed. "It belongs to Miss Clifford! I've suspected it all along—she is the thief!"

And she pointed a shaking hand at the young curator.

### ANOTHER PICTURE STOLEN

**T**HERE was a moment's stunned silence. The young curator shrank back with a stifled sob.

"It's not true!" she burst out. "The picture had gone when I entered the gallery!"

"That's your story!" flashed Leila; "but it's not a very likely one!"

"Just a minute!" cut in Noel. He looked across at the girl curator. "Do you admit that this is your scarf, Miss Clifford?" he asked gently.

The girl curator nodded, her lips trembling.

"Yes, it's mine," she breathed. "But I swear I don't know how it came to be there—wrapped round that knife."

"Do you recognise this knife?"

"It—it's part of the collection," faltered the girl. "It was among the other weapons, in that case in the middle of the room."

"What's the use of talking?" muttered the professor. "The picture's gone—gone! And it is worth a fortune. This will mean ruin for me."

His daughter slipped a comforting arm round his shoulder, flashing an angry, bitter glance at the young curator.

Noel rose from his examination of the shattered frame; his mind was working swiftly, endeavouring to find some glimmer of light in the baffling mystery.

If the girl curator had stolen the picture, where had she hidden it? Despite the evidence, he could not believe her guilty. Her indignant denials had seemed so sincere. But if she were innocent, then who was the thief?

Apart from the barred windows, there were only two entrances to the gallery. The girl curator possessed the keys to one of them—Professor Pallister to the other.

The professor had been out at the time of the first theft, and had only just returned when the second robbery took place. Noel could prove that by the evidence of his own eyes.

Then no one could have gained access to his keys.

Miss Pallister had been out with her father—so she was completely exonerated from suspicion.

There was no one else, excepting the porter or the old housekeeper—a very faint possibility.

Noel beckoned to Leila Pallister.

"I think you'd better take your father to his room," he said. "He's been badly shaken by what's happened. I promise to sift this affair to the bottom—and trap the thief!"

"Thank you," murmured Leila, with a sidelong glance towards the young curator.

She took her father by the arm, leading him through the private door. As it closed behind them, Noel turned to the young curator.

"You swear you know nothing about this?" he demanded gravely.

"I swear it!" breathed the girl unsteadily.

Noel nodded.

"I believe you. There's a lot more behind this affair than meets the eye. I suggest you close the museum this afternoon and go out—anywhere you like. You look as if you could do with a change."

The girl's face cleared.

"You're awfully kind," she whispered.

Noel pressed her hand with a boyish smile as he accompanied her to the door.

He watched her don her hat and coat and leave the house, walking quickly down the drive.

With a sigh of relief, he went in search of the porter.

He found that young man in the lobby, smoking a cigarette. Noel asked for a light.

Clumsily he dropped the matches the other handed to him, his fingers brushing against the other's shoes.

He straightened himself, his eyes glinting. On his finger was a trace of wet mould.

"What were you doing on the flower-bed outside the professor's study window this morning, Rogers?" he demanded sharply.

The porter's face paled, he swallowed hard, unable to reply.

"Kindly answer me!" snapped Noel.

"I'm sorry, sir," muttered Rogers.

"I wasn't doing any harm—honestly. I thought maybe I'd be able to catch the

Noel drew a deep breath, determined to put his theory to the test.

Over lunch, in the professor's cosy dining-room, Noel outlined part of his plan—though without revealing his precise purpose.

He realised that the housekeeper was hovering in the background.

"I suggest that it would be best to have the more valuable articles removed from the gallery, and placed in a safe-deposit," he explained. "I am expecting Colonel Walton this evening, and we will make all arrangements. Meanwhile, it would be advisable for you and your daughter to remain within call—in case I require you."

"I shall take my father for his usual ride in the grounds this afternoon," explained the girl. "We shall not be out of sight of the house."

Noel nodded, and changed the subject as the housekeeper entered the room.

That afternoon he watched the professor leave the house in his chair, well wrapped against the chill breeze.

It seemed to Noel that his fine, aquiline features looked even paler and more drawn; no doubt the strain of



"You mustn't be found here!" cried Noel. "Go out through the kitchen and wait for me in the grounds." For Noel knew that if Jean remained she would be blamed for the loss of the valuable picture.

housekeeper, Mrs. Dene, up to her old tricks."

"Old tricks?" demanded Noel sharply. "What do you mean?"

"Well, sir—whenever the professor and his daughter go out, I hear someone moving about in the professor's study. It must be Mrs. Dene—because there's no one else in the house. I thought I'd catch her on the hop—and report her. If you ask me, she knows more about these thefts than she'll say!"

Noel stared at the young man keenly, convinced that he was speaking the truth.

"Better keep quiet about this, Rogers," he said. "But thanks for the information."

There was a thoughtful gleam in his eyes as he returned to the professor's private apartments; an amazing, almost incredible theory had flashed into his mind!

So someone had been moving about in the professor's study after he had gone out. It might have been the housekeeper, as the porter suggested; on the other hand—

the mysterious robberies was affecting his health.

Leila waved her hand to Noel, as she pushed the chair across the grounds. She, too, looked pale and anxious.

The young detective returned swiftly to the museum entrance. He had sent the porter on an errand into the town—an errand he could check up, if necessary. With a skeleton-key, he admitted himself into the gallery, closing and locking the door.

The fading sunlight of the late afternoon crept through the tall windows—slanting on the cases of curios, the suits of armour and framed pictures.

Noel examined the picture of the cavalier—the last of the valuable trio of old masters.

He was sufficiently versed in the subject to realise that the set of three pictures, by the same artist, would be a priceless possession to any dealer. He was convinced that the mysterious thief would strike again—and before nightfall!

He tried the inner door leading to the private apartment—but it was securely locked. As an added precaution, the

young detective affixed a seal across the jamb.

Then, silently, he took up his stand behind one of the heavy curtains in the window alcove.

From where he stood, he could see most of the gallery—and out of the window across the grounds. After a while Leila Pallister appeared, pushing her father in the bath-chair; the professor had obviously fallen asleep. His hand lay limply on the coverlet—his grey head was bowed.

The girl chose a secluded seat under a tree, and taking out a book commenced to read.

The light became fainter as the sun sank below the trees. Noel was growing a little weary of his vigil; nothing had happened yet—and it seemed as though nothing would.

Then abruptly the young detective stiffened, his heart missing a beat. Faintly there came the sound of stealthy footsteps; they seemed to be crossing the gallery—as though some invisible person was present in the room!

Noel sprang suddenly from his hiding-place, darting towards the curtain that screened the remaining picture.

He imagined that something had moved behind it!

Even as he reached it, he heard a faint scream—and a thud. Noel dragged aside the curtain—and a startled ejaculation was torn from his lips.

The picture of the cavalier had been cut partially out of its frame and one corner hung out into the room!

But there was no sign of the amazing thief.

His face pale, the young detective turned as a stifled moan reached his ears. It came from behind the locked door leading to the professor's study.

It required only a minute for Noel to force the lock and fling the door wide. He started into the darkened room, almost tripping over a motionless figure that lay on the threshold.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Noel huskily.

For the figure was that of Jean Clifford, the young curator; and the girl lay in a dead faint.

### THE RISK JEAN TOOK

"MISS CLIFFORD!" breathed Noel, dropping to his knee beside her. "Miss Clifford!"

The young curator opened her eyes dazedly, a bewildered, half-frightened expression on her face.

Gently he questioned her, but she returned evasive replies.

"Who let you in?" he demanded. "Mrs. Dene," replied the girl, a trifle defiantly.

"The housekeeper?" Noel started. "Yes," replied the girl. "I—I wanted to keep watch outside the door, in case the thief returned. Suddenly I felt a—hand close round my throat, and I suppose I fainted."

Noel regarded the young curator steadily.

"There's been another attempt on the pictures," he said. "The picture of the cavalier has been partially cut out of its frame!"

The girl's eyes widened with swift dismay.

"Then—then—if I'm found here, they'll think that I—"

Footsteps crunched on the gravel path outside the window. Noel heard voices, and through the big window he saw the professor.

"Quickly!" breathed Noel. "You mustn't be found here. Go out through the kitchen entrance and wait for me in the grounds near the gate."

Pausing only to give Noel a look of gratitude, Jean stepped through the door. When she had gone, Noel stepped into the hall as the front door opened to admit Leila—pushing the bathchair.

"Why, Mr. Raymond!" she exclaimed, starting at the sight of the young detective.

"Is—anything wrong?" queried the professor, rousing himself weakly.

"I'm afraid so," replied Noel, a stern expression in his eyes. "Another attempt has been made on the pictures—but the thief was not quite quick enough. I think I've got the scoundrel taped. He's concealed in this house!"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated the startled professor.

"But don't worry," said Noel. "Colonel Walton should be here any minute now, with the police; I telephoned him after lunch. You'd better remain here till I get back."

With a brief, reassuring nod, he hurried out into the grounds.

But he looked in vain for any signs of the young curator; she had failed to keep her appointment!

JEAN CLIFFORD threw an anxious, half fearful glance over her shoulder, as she entered the dark museum gallery.

The young curator was desperate—desperate to clear her name and to solve the mystery surrounding the gallery of disappearing treasures.

For she believed, in spite of his assurances, that Noel Raymond suspected her of the thefts!

Her heart in her mouth, Jean approached the curtained alcove containing the picture of the cavalier.

She reached out her hand to touch it—and a choking scream was torn from her lips as claw-like fingers fastened on her wrist.

And just then there was a faint whir and a crash; Jean felt herself released suddenly, as a panel slid back in the wall and a dimly seen figure leaped into the room.

There was a struggle—a muffled shot; a bullet whistled through the air, lodging itself in the wall opposite.

"The blighter!" panted a familiar voice. "Miss Clifford—are you hurt?"

A torch flashed in the darkness, and Jean Clifford clung sobbingly to Noel Raymond's arm.

"That's the way he got in," snapped the young detective, indicating the secret panel. "He's got away with the Cavalier—but he won't have gone far."

He sprang through the opening, Jean following tremblingly at his heels.

She found herself in the grounds outside the professor's private residence.

A car was drawn up on the drive, its brilliant headlights revealing the ivy-covered porch. A tall, military figure stood in the porch, chatting to Miss Pallister. It was Colonel Walton, Noel's friend.

Behind them, in the hall, Professor Pallister was reclining in his bath-chair.

"Raymond!" exclaimed the colonel, staring at the young detective's dishevelled appearance, and at the white-faced girl. "What's happened? I've been waiting here for ten minutes—I understood from your wire that you'd managed to trap the thief?"

"I have," replied Noel grimly. Leila Pallister raised an anxious finger to her lips, glancing towards her father.

"Please," she whispered. "Can we talk somewhere else? We may disturb him."

Noel smiled grimly. "I'd rather talk here," he replied.

"The scoundrel in question, Walton, has just made an attack on Miss Clifford and myself. He has got away with another picture—"

"Great Scott! But who is he?"

Noel smiled sternly.

"Professor John Pallister!" he rejoined.

There came a horrified, protesting cry from Leila.

"Mr. Raymond—what do you mean?" she gasped. "How dare you—"

"You must have taken leave of your senses, Raymond!" exclaimed the colonel. "The professor is a sick man; besides, he's been within my sight for the last ten minutes. He has not moved from his chair—"

"Precisely," snapped Noel. "It was the professor's stillness that first aroused my suspicions. Even a sleeping man shifts his position occasionally."

"It was very convenient that he should always be seen in his chair when these thefts took place; but the possibility occurred to me that he might be in two places at once!"

As he spoke, Noel stepped swiftly to the bathchair; Leila Pallister caught his arm with a protesting cry, but the young detective thrust her aside and, seizing the grey-haired figure by the shoulder, hauled it out of the chair.

There was a crash—and a horrified cry came from the young curator as she stared at the broken wax figure lying motionless on the ground!

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Colonel Walton, staring like a man in a dream. "A dummy!"

"A dummy—precisely," agreed Noel, as he bent over the wax figure and jerked back its coat—revealing several carefully wrapped parcels, and two rolls of canvas. "And here, if I'm not mistaken, are the stolen curios!"

He made a grab at Leila Pallister as she sprang for the door; the girl evaded him—but Noel smiled grimly.

"She'll be caught in the grounds, with her father," he said. "The place is surrounded by police. I anticipated that he would make a final attempt before you arrived."

"The whole thing was a cleverly staged plot—to rob the public," he went on. "The professor purchased this old house, and inveigled himself into your confidence. He posed as a sick man—and had this wax figure specially made. Whoever was accused of the thefts, he reckoned that he'd be safe."

Jean Clifford was very pale, but her eyes were shining.

"And I—I was very nearly accused," she whispered. "I might have been arrested, if it hadn't been for you, Mr. Raymond. How did you tumble to the truth in the first place?"

"By eliminating possibilities," rejoined Noel dryly. "You and Professor Pallister were the only ones who possessed the knowledge, the skill and the opportunity to commit the thefts; impossible though it seemed, I decided on the professor."

"Why?" whispered the girl.

"Because," said Noel, his eyes twinkling. "I'm rarely mistaken in a face—and yours is not the face of a thief, Miss Clifford."

"Thank you," murmured the young curator, blushing.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

"Rosina the Film Star" is the title of next Friday's grand detective story. It features the daring and elusive Rosina Fontaine. Don't miss it!



# Brenda's Mystery Task in Hollywood



## TRAPPED IN THE TREASURE-ROOM

**B**RENDA CASTLE felt she was very lucky to be employed by Mrs. Benson, in Hollywood, to act as guide to Molly and Audrey Duncan—two English girls—for Brenda had a secret task to carry out.

She had to clear the name of her sister Marion, who had been dismissed by Mrs. Benson in disgrace. So that her object should not be known, Brenda adopted the name of Collins.

Mrs. Benson, Molly, and Audrey were all charming, but Brenda felt that Ruby Fletcher, Mrs. Benson's secretary, was suspicious of her.

At a film studio she met her sister, and Marion told her that something connected with their future was hidden in Mrs. Benson's "treasure-room"—a room full of curios. Marion confirmed Brenda's suspicion that Ruby was their enemy.

That night Brenda went to the treasure-room to search for the ancient Redskin vase Marion had said she must obtain. But before she could search, she received a shock.

Someone had entered the room. Would Brenda be found there?

**S**HE mustn't be found here—she mustn't!

The thought hammered through Brenda's brain. In a second or two the door would open, and whoever was outside would come in. She must do something—now—or discovery was inevitable.

"Hide!"

Even as her lips formed the word she looked round frantically for a hiding-place. Over by the desk was a painted screen. In a moment she was behind it. And in that very same moment the door of the treasure-room opened.

Brenda trembled with the narrowness of her escape. Her heart thumped madly. She listened to the sound of soft footsteps crossing the floor. Who could it be?

She dared not look. She expected the door to be flooded with electric light.

But it wasn't. She heard a faint click, and then saw the beam of a torch.

Brenda's bewilderment increased. It couldn't be Mrs. Benson, who had entered; she would have switched on the light, not have come in this furtive manner. Then who could it be but—

"Ruby!" whispered Brenda under her breath. There was no one else in the house she could suspect, except Jenkins, the butler, and the footsteps were too soft to be his. It could only be Ruby Fletcher.

Suddenly Brenda became aware that to one side of her, hanging on the wall, was a large mirror. In it she could see the rest of the room clearly.

Yes, it was Ruby who had entered! Clad in dressing-gown, pyjamas, and bed slippers, she was standing in front of the case of old Redskin pottery. The very case which Brenda had come to examine!

The girl had laid her torch on top of the case, and was now unwrapping a brown paper parcel. And as Brenda watched she almost cried aloud.

For from that parcel Ruby had taken a vase—a Redskin vase. It was exactly the same shape as the one pictured in the drawing Marion had given her; it must surely be the actual vase Marion had told her to look for!

What on earth did all this mean? What was Ruby, the enemy of the two sisters, doing with it? Fascinatedly Brenda watched, her gaze fixed on the mirror that reflected the scene.

Now Ruby, holding the vase in one hand, was opening the case with the other. She must be going to put it with the collection there.

Oh, what could it mean? Had that vase originally been part of the collection? Then what had Ruby been doing with it? Obviously not stealing it, since she was now returning it.

A startled light appeared suddenly in Brenda's eyes.

A queer sensation was prickling her nose. She had felt it coming, but had not heeded it in her excitement. Her hand flew to her pocket.

She was going to sneeze!

From behind the screen, Brenda watched the furtive figure examining the Redskin vase. Why should Ruby Fletcher be so interested in the very vase which Brenda herself was so anxious to examine?

By DAPHNE GRAYSON

Frantically she grabbed for her handkerchief. Desperately she fought to prevent it. If she sneezed—

But irresistibly, uncontrollably, it came.

She did sneeze! Her mouth and nose were buried in her handkerchief, but the sound of that sneeze was like a thunder-clap in the silence.

There was a gasp of terror from Ruby.

Brenda, still watching the mirror, saw her go rigid, as if she had suddenly become a statue. Then:

Crash!

The Redskin vase had dropped from Ruby's nerveless fingers. It had fallen to the floor.

There it now lay, broken—cracked and shattered!

## THANKS TO MOLLY AND AUDREY!

**F**OR a moment there was a deathly, electric silence in the darkened room.

Behind the screen, Brenda felt she must be rooted to the spot on which she stood. She could not move. She had betrayed herself!

On the other side of the screen, Ruby Fletcher was just as petrified. But then her horrified gaze fled to that mirror on the wall. For the first time she saw Brenda's reflection.

"You!" she hissed. "Hiding there! You've seen—"

Ruby became galvanised into desperate, frantic action.

Quick as a flash she turned. Just for one moment she stood in front of the case. Unseen by Brenda, Ruby grabbed at something. Then she was leaping towards the door. She saw the key which Brenda had left on a shelf near by, and grabbed that up, too.

Brenda also had whirled into life. But even as she sprang from behind the screen the door slammed shut, and there came the sound of a key grating in the lock.

Ruby had locked her in! But Ruby did more than that. Suddenly her voice aroused the echoes.

"Help, help!" she shouted. "Mrs. Benson! Help!"

Brenda gasped.

Ruby was deliberately raising the alarm! She would say she had heard noises in the treasure-room, had crept down to investigate, and found Brenda there.

Ruby, having been responsible for getting Marion dismissed because that girl had known too much, was now determined to see that the same fate befell Brenda.

Brenda realised it; she knew now that that was Ruby's game.

Brenda had not undressed for bed; she had had what was supposed to be the only key to the treasure-room. She would be found here in the room with the smashed Redskin vase.

Everything would point to her guilt. She would be dismissed; no doubt about that.

Those thoughts, those fears, raced through Brenda's mind. Outside Ruby was shouting at the top of her voice.

"Help! Burglars! Mrs. Benson, come down—come down!"

Brenda switched on her torch, looked desperately around her. She saw that the key was gone. She was trapped.

"Oh, what am I to do? What can I do?" she gasped.

Everything was at stake. Everything had depended on her keeping her job and staying at Greenways. And now all seemed lost. It would be lost unless—

Her eyes shone, her heart raced.

The window!

Ruby, confident she had Brenda trapped, had forgotten that.

Through the window was a way of escape. At least, she would not be caught red-handed in the treasure-room. Brenda ran forward. She lifted the catch, flung back the window.

Immediately throughout the house bells began jangling, buzzers rang. She had set off the burglar-alarms.

But Brenda did not heed. She flung herself through, found herself outside under the black, velvety sky.

She raced on, a desperate idea forming in her mind. On the side terrace were the columns supporting the balcony running outside the room occupied by Molly and Audrey.

The two girls, disturbed by the alarm, would go rushing down with Mrs. Benson. If only Brenda could gain their room unobserved, then she could swiftly rush up to her own room, change into pyjamas, and then rush downstairs as if she had just been aroused by the disturbance.

There was a chance—a desperate chance that she could bluff her way out of this crisis.

Panting, breathless, she jerked to a standstill. Overhead was the balcony. Nimbly she shinned up the wooden column, reached the balcony rail. Then her heart nearly stopped beating.

"Brenda," a startled voice cried, "what on earth are you doing?"

Standing there, framed in the french windows, were Molly and Audrey.

Brenda swung herself over the rail, stood looking at the girls desperately.

"You set those bells going!" Molly said, in bewilderment. "We saw you climb out through that window. Brenda—"

"Molly, you've got to trust me!" Brenda cried. "You've got to help me!"

"But look here—"

"Please!" Brenda pleaded. "Yes, I was in the treasure-room, but Mrs. Benson mustn't know. I swear I was doing nothing dishonest. But Ruby caught me there. Ruby herself was in the room. She'll try to get me sacked. Molly, you must believe me. I—I'll explain things to you later—really I will. But you must help me now. Will you?"

For a moment, one instant that seemed an hour of agony to Brenda—Molly hesitated. Her eyes, shrewd and penetrating, were fixed on Brenda.

Brenda knew her fate hung in the balance. Molly and Audrey had caught her. If they refused their help—

"Yes, I believe you," Molly said, and gripped Brenda's arm and dragged her into the room. "But what can we do?"

"Lend me a pair of pyjamas. Don't say you've seen me. Molly, you angel!" Brenda cried fervently. "And you, too, Audrey—"

"Here we are!" Molly was diving in the drawer of her wardrobe. "Slip these on. Nobody's seen these pyjamas, so they won't be recognised as mine. Hurry, for goodness' sake!"

But no need to tell Brenda that. In a moment she had flung off her frock and slip, and was donning the pyjamas.

"Good! Let's go!" she panted. "And thanks again—"

"Leave that till later," Molly said.

They rushed downstairs. The burglar alarms had been switched off. There was the sound of voices coming from the direction of the treasure-room. Ruby's voice, shrill and accusing, as she said:

"It was Brenda! I saw her, Mrs. Benson! She was here in this room."

Then Mrs. Benson, stern and angry, replying:

"Ruby, you are positive?"

Molly flashed Brenda a faint smile; then with Audrey they were rushing into Mrs. Benson's museum.

"Aunt, what on earth's happened?" Molly gasped. "What's this about Brenda?"

Mrs. Benson, in her dressing-gown, was staring down at the broken vase. There was a look of sorrow in her eyes, but the expression on her face was grim and forbidding as she swung round at the girls' entry.

Her gaze darted to Brenda. Ruby, too, was staring at her, and gave a start as she saw that Brenda was now wearing pyjamas.

"What has happened?" Mrs. Benson cried angrily. "There has been an intruder in this room. This valuable vase has been smashed. And"—she drew a deep breath—"Ruby tells me that she saw Brenda in here. Brenda, what have you to say?"

But before Brenda, thinking desperately, could say anything at all, Molly had come to her rescue.

"Ruby says what?" she exclaimed. "Ridiculous! It's absurd, aunt! How could Brenda have been down here when all the time she's been with Audrey and me in our room?"

A lump seemed to rise in Brenda's throat. Dear Molly! Molly had promised to help her, and staunchly Molly was keeping her word.

But Ruby's eyes glittered.

"It's a trick!" she hooted. "I tell you I saw Brenda in this room. She escaped through the window—"

"Aunt, Ruby is making a mistake!" Molly cut in quickly. "Brenda has been with us."

"Of course she has," Audrey loyally supported. "When we got upstairs we didn't feel tired. Brenda came in, and we've been making plans for tomorrow."

"It's not true. Brenda was down here. I saw her—"

"Ruby!" Mrs. Benson exclaimed frowningly. "I will not have you saying Audrey is untruthful. She and Molly have said Brenda has been with them, and I accept their word."

Overwhelming relief swept through Brenda. Thanks to Molly and Audrey, she had been saved.

Ruby, however, stood biting her lip furiously. She knew very well she had not been mistaken. Molly and Audrey were shielding Brenda.

For once Ruby had been speaking the truth, but with no effect. She knew she dared not persist. This girl—this Brenda Collins—had seen her with the vase, was obviously suspicious of her. And though Ruby had tried to turn this disaster to her own advantage, she had failed.

But now Mrs. Benson was stooping and retrieving the broken vase. Half in sorrow, half in anger, she looked at it.

"I can see what happened," she cried. "The thief was in the act of taking this, but was disturbed by Ruby and dropped it. It is irreplaceable. It spoils the whole collection, which is particularly precious to me because of its sentimental associations—"

She broke off, a startled, disbelieving look coming into her eyes.

"But this is not one of the collection!" she cried. "This is a fake!"

"A fake?" the girls echoed.

"Yes." In sudden consternation Mrs. Benson turned to the showcase which contained the Redskin pottery. "Seven!" she exclaimed. "Only seven, when there should be eight vases. Then one is missing. The thief, whoever it was, has got away with one—"

Again she broke off, her eyes gleaming angrily.

"So!" she cried. "Now I think I know who has been here to-night—who the thief is. That girl, Marion Castle! I caught her in the act of stealing one of these vases before, and that is why I dismissed her. Now the wretched girl has succeeded in getting away with it."

Brenda's heart had given a sickening lurch. So that was the full explanation of Marion's dismissal. Mrs. Benson had believed her to be a thief!

"Yes, there can be little doubt about it," Mrs. Benson went on grimly. "It must have been Marion who was here to-night. She would know how to get into the house. She would know where I keep the key of this room—Brenda," she added, as a thought occurred to her, "you had the key, didn't you?"

"I found it in the lock, Mrs. Benson," Ruby put in spitefully.

"I—I'm afraid I must have left it there," Brenda faltered, realising that was the only thing she could say.

"Then that was very careless of you," Mrs. Benson said.

"I'm sorry—"

"But, aunt," Molly broke in quickly, "how did you know the smashed vase was a fake? They all look the same to me."

"Very simple," Mrs. Benson replied. "All these pieces of pottery have a mark just inside them. There is no such mark on this one. I will show you."

The girls crowded round as she took one of the pieces of pottery from the case.

"Here it is," Mrs. Benson added.

Just inside the lip of the bowl she held was a little square of faded paper which had been stuck to the earthenware. And on that paper was a curious dragon-shaped design, surmounted by an intricate scroll.

Brenda, gazing at it interestedly, suddenly found her gaze riveted.

That design—she had seen it before! Such a design was engraved on the signet-ring which Marion, her sister, wore. And that same design had also been engraved on the ring which had

been worn by their father, who had died a few years ago.

"WELL, Brenda, perhaps now you'll tell us what all the jolly old mystery is about!" Molly smiled. "For there is a mystery, isn't there?"

Brenda started. She was in the room occupied by Molly and Audrey, whither they had just made their way after leaving Mrs. Benson's museum.

Brenda was still thinking of that monogram she had seen marked on the Redskin pottery. Her father's monogram!

Brenda thrilled at the mere thought. It sent her brain whirling trying to puzzle out what this could mean—what its significance could be.

Did Marion know anything about it? Again Brenda tingled.

"Brenda, if you'd rather not tell us, we'll understand," Molly said now. "But you did promise; and perhaps we can help, you know."

Brenda looked across at the two girls as they sat on the edge of their beds.

By shielding her they had saved her from disgrace and dismissal; there could be no doubt about that. Even if she hadn't promised, they would have deserved to know. Molly and Audrey were to be trusted. What she told them she knew they would keep secret.

So Brenda did tell them. Not everything, for she felt that that would be too dangerous. What Molly and Audrey did not know they could not inadvertently reveal.

She did not tell them that her real name was not Collins. She did not explain that she was the sister of the disgraced Marion Castle. But she did admit that she knew Marion; that Marion had been that extra whom they had seen her talking to at the Suprema Studios the previous day.

She told them, too, about Ruby—of her suspicions; how in some mysterious way Ruby was trying to threaten her future happiness. She told them what she had seen Ruby doing that night; but she did not say anything about the monogram.

Molly and Audrey listened in amazement; then Molly nodded.

"I knew it must be something like that," she said. "All along we've had a feeling that Ruby was working against you. We've noticed things, haven't we, Audrey? But, Brenda, what can it all mean? What are you going to do now?"

Brenda's eyes shone with excitement. "I'm seeing Marion to-morrow," she breathed, "down on the Santa Monica beach. That was why I was so glad when Gloria Deane invited us there. But, Molly—Audrey," Brenda added anxiously, "you won't breathe a word of what I've told you. If Mrs. Benson knew—"

"Not a word!" Molly promised.

"Cross our hearts!" Audrey smiled.

"And if there's anything more we can do—well, you've only to ask us," Molly added. "I'm glad you've told us, Brenda. It's all jolly mysterious, but we trust you."

"You darlings!" Brenda exclaimed impulsively.

And she was glad, too—glad that she had told them. Her heart felt lighter; a burden seemed to have been lifted from her shoulders. Yes, she knew they would help her—and their aid might be invaluable in the fight that she knew must come now that Ruby was aware she was definitely suspicious of her.

But Brenda would not have been so happy—the smile would not have been on her face when, a few minutes later, she made her way up to her room—if

she had known that another figure, unseen, had passed along the corridor in front of her. The figure of Ruby Fletcher!

Ruby had been listening outside the door. Ruby knew of Brenda's plans for the morrow.

And already Ruby was scheming that the girl she still believed to be Brenda Collins must never meet Marion Castle.

### THE FILM STAR'S DREAM HOME

"THERE she is! There's Gloria!" Brenda cried excitedly.

"Coo-ee!"

"Hallo, girls!"

And Gloria Deane waved gaily as the three girls raced over the golden sands towards her.

It was the following morning—a glorious morning of blue skies, of hot sunshine.

"So this is Santa Monica!" Molly breathed. "It's lovely!"



"Look!" Brenda exclaimed. "That girl waving through one of the portholes—" It was her sister Marion, beckoning to her.

Crowds dotted the beach. Gaily coloured beach-umbrellas and bathing huts were everywhere. Before them stretched the Pacific, vividly blue, its rollers crashing on the sands in a smother of white foam. Bathers were disporting themselves in the water.

"I say, look at that sailing ship!" Molly exclaimed. "What ever's it doing anchored out there in the bay?"

"Something to do with the filming, perhaps," Brenda suggested. "Is it, Gloria?"

Gloria Deane laughed. "That's the Jolly Roger," she told them. "A floating restaurant."

"Oh, how thrilling! And can anybody go aboard?"

"Sure! It's one of the most popular haunts round about. There's dancing—and cabarets, too, at nights."

"We'll have to go there," Molly said eagerly.

"Now don't you forget my party. You haven't forgotten it, have you?" Gloria laughed.

"As if we would!" the girls chorused. Admiringly they gazed at the famous star. Gloria was looking more beautiful than ever. She was wearing a vivid

green bathing costume and white helmet, and she had already been in the sea.

"The water's just perfect this morning," she smiled. "You'll be going in, won't you?"

"Rather!"

"Then you must come along to my bungalow and change into your costumes," Gloria said. "I only wish I could stay in, but there's work to be done. Shooting is due to start in half an hour's time."

"Will we be able to watch?" "Everybody on the beach will be watching," Gloria smiled. "There'll be scenes on the sands, and then some surf-riding shots."

"Surf-riding?" Molly exclaimed. "I'm having some of that before the morning's out."

But now they had reached Gloria's bungalow. It was set on rising ground just off the beach. It was a veritable dream place—white-walled and rambling, built in Spanish style, with large windows overlooking the whole sweep of the bay.

Gloria led the way into the spacious lounge hall. The floor was of red tiles.

In the centre of one wall was a huge open fireplace. Large settees, deep, luxurious chairs, soft pouffes dotted the floor.

"You can change in my dressing-room," Gloria smiled.

It was a gem of a room, in the palest shade of pink. Over by the open windows, through which came the murmur of the sea, stood a large dressing-table with oval mirrors.

"Now I must get my make-up on," Gloria told them. "You just change, and then have a dip. Don't wait for me. And regard this place as your own, to use just when you wish!"

"Oh, thank you, Gloria!" Eagerly the girls changed. They were happy—so happy. Gloria's friendliness rather took their breath away. They were dazzled by her loveliness, her charm—still unable to believe that it could be true that the famous star was taking such an interest in them.

But now they were ready, looking pretty and charming in their gay-coloured costumes.

Gloria smiled. "You look perfect!" she exclaimed. "You all three of you ought to be on

the films! I'll see if I can persuade Carl to give you a chance in some more scenes later on. Would you like that?"

The girls' eyes shone.  
"We'd love it, Gloria!"  
"Now run along, girls, and enjoy yourselves. See you on the beach later!"

They went racing off, down on to the golden sands. A little distance away they could see the Suprema Film unit preparing for "shooting." There was a mounted camera, reflectors placed to catch the sun's rays. They saw Carl Leiner, in shirtsleeves, dodging about issuing a string of instructions. There was the usual army of technicians.

"Come on!" Molly cried. "Who's going to be first in? I say, this is simply gorgeous!"

But Brenda was looking about her eagerly.

Amid all this pleasure she must not forget her real purpose in coming here. Was Marion with the film unit?

She strolled nearer, but saw no sign of her sister. When would Marion come?

Brenda quivered with excitement. What tremendous news she had for Marion! All the previous night she had found herself thinking of what had happened in Mrs. Benson's treasure-room.

The discovery of her father's monogram on the Redskin pottery—it was as amazing as it was unexpected; as thrilling as it was intriguing.

What ever could it all mean? Again and again she had asked herself that question.

Perhaps Marion would know. Marion must know something, to have asked her to visit the treasure-room? Obviously those Redskin relics must have some connection with the mystery

## Your Editor's Corner



**M**Y DEAR READERS,—With this week comes the first day of spring—on the 21st. So this means we can now look forward to longer evenings and to better weather—we hope.

The first of spring also means a new season ticket for this Editor of yours. It means looking forward to Easter, and it also means spring cleaning.

Not, mind you, that I'm clever at spring cleaning myself. I do make an effort to sort out all the old sketches belonging to the **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**—with Penelope's help—and I also go through my desk, which has a habit of flowing over about this time of the year.

The actual spring cleaning of the office will be done by our very efficient cleaners.

I only hope they don't decide to stain the office floor this year, as they did last.

They pinned a notice on the door, saying "Please step over the wood on to the carpet," which I conscientiously did. But only once. The next time I quite forgot, and a large

—a mystery which, so Marion had said, concerned the sisters' future happiness!

It didn't seem to make sense. It was utterly fantastic. Yet the link must be there—must be! Yet how? How?

Oh, when was Marion coming?  
"Can you see her?" Molly asked, guessing why Brenda was gazing about her so intently.

"No."  
"Then come for this dip," Molly smiled. "She'll turn up soon."

But even as they began running down to the water's edge, a voice hailed them.

"Wait for me!"  
Brenda swung round sharply. It was Ruby Fletcher. She had just appeared on the beach, and was running towards them.

A look of dismay spread over Brenda's face. At any moment now Marion might appear. But she dare not meet her sister if Ruby were anywhere near.

Once already, at the Suprema Studios, Ruby had seen them together. Now, if she saw them meeting again, she would become more than ever suspicious.

Little did Brenda dream that Ruby already knew that the "extra" she had seen at the studios was Marion Castle. Fortunate it had been that Brenda had not mentioned their real relationship when she had told Molly and Audrey something of the mystery.

Now, this morning, Ruby had purposely asked for the day off so that she could watch Brenda. Fear was making Ruby desperate. Somehow she'd got to prevent Brenda from meeting Marion. Everything she had schemed for—everything she hoped to achieve—had been endangered by the arrival at Greenways of first one of them, then the other.

Ruby raced on across the sands towards the three girls. Brenda suddenly chuckled grimly.

"We've got to dodge her," she said.  
"But how can we?"  
"Quickly—into the water!" Brenda

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

footprint in the middle of a sea of varnish was the result!

### ROSINA REAPPEARS

There will be a particularly good programme of stories for you in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.

That daring and elusive Rosina Fontaine will reappear in another of Peter Langley's stories. When Noel Raymond, the young detective, and Rosina, the girl crook, meet you can be sure of a grand tale. Don't miss "**ROSINA THE FILM STAR**."

"The Fugitive from the Wreck" is the title of the tale in which Pat Lovell, the young girl reporter, features. It's a story packed with thrills which you'll revel in.

You'll also be reading a complete story of Kaye Chalmers and her wonderful pets, and further instalments of our three splendid serials.

Don't forget to tell me how you like the stories when you write, will you?

Cheerio, until next Friday!  
Your sincere friend,

**YOUR EDITOR**

said. "Ruby can't follow us there—she isn't wearing a bathing costume!"

"Clever!" Molly applauded.  
They plunged into the sea.  
"Stop! Wait for me!" Ruby yelled again.

"Bow-wow!" Audrey grinned.  
"Whoops! Look out for this wave!" Molly exclaimed.

"Dive through it!" Brenda laughed.  
They dived—and dived again and again as the rollers came relentlessly in.

"Look at Ruby glaring!" Molly spluttered.  
"We've diddled her all right!" Brenda said, with satisfaction.

They had. Ruby stood glowering by the water's edge, biting her lip, looking savage.

Now the three girls were swimming strongly, drawing farther and farther away from the beach.

"Race you to that raft over there!" Molly challenged. "Look, it's not far from that old ship! We'll be able to see what's going on!"

Arms and legs thrashed the water, and they were all streaking towards the raft.

Molly and Audrey were good swimmers, but Brenda was faster. She was the first to reach the raft. On to it she scrambled, giving a helping hand to reach the others as they splashed up a second or two later.

"Grand!" Molly opined. "Soon get a lovely tan here—and to the strains of music!"

A dance band was playing on the deck of the Jolly Roger. The craft was anchored only fifty yards or so from the raft, the Jolly Roger itself flapping in the breeze at its masthead.

They could see people sitting at tables under a striped awning; one or two of them were dancing. A motorboat sped towards it, taking a number of people to the floating restaurant.

"We must have lunch these one day," Molly said, her eyes eager.

"Or perhaps Mrs. Benson would let us go to a cabaret one night," Audrey put in. "What do you say, Brenda?"

But Brenda, sitting on the edge of the raft, her legs dangling in the sea, suddenly became tense.

"Look!" she exclaimed. "On the ship! That girl waving through one of the portholes!"

A thrill ran through Brenda.  
It was a girl whose coppery hair shimmered in the sunshine, waving to them.

"It's Marion!" Brenda cried jubilantly, waving back.

"She wants you to swim across to the ship," Molly said.  
Brenda was already on her feet.

"Come on!" she cried. "We'll go across now. You must meet her!"  
"We'd love to!"

They all three stood poised on the edge of the raft. And then Brenda suddenly swung round as a sound came to her ears.

A slim body was cleaving its way through the water towards the raft.  
"Ruby!" Brenda gasped.

Ruby Fletcher it was. They hadn't dodged her. She had changed into her bathing costume, had seen where they had gone, and followed.

On towards the raft she came, and a fear gripped Brenda.

Had Ruby seen Marion? How could she swim across to Marion now, when Ruby was here, able to watch her every movement?

Next week's instalment of this exciting and glamorous serial will hold you spell-bound. Make certain that you read it, by ordering your copy of the **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** to-day.

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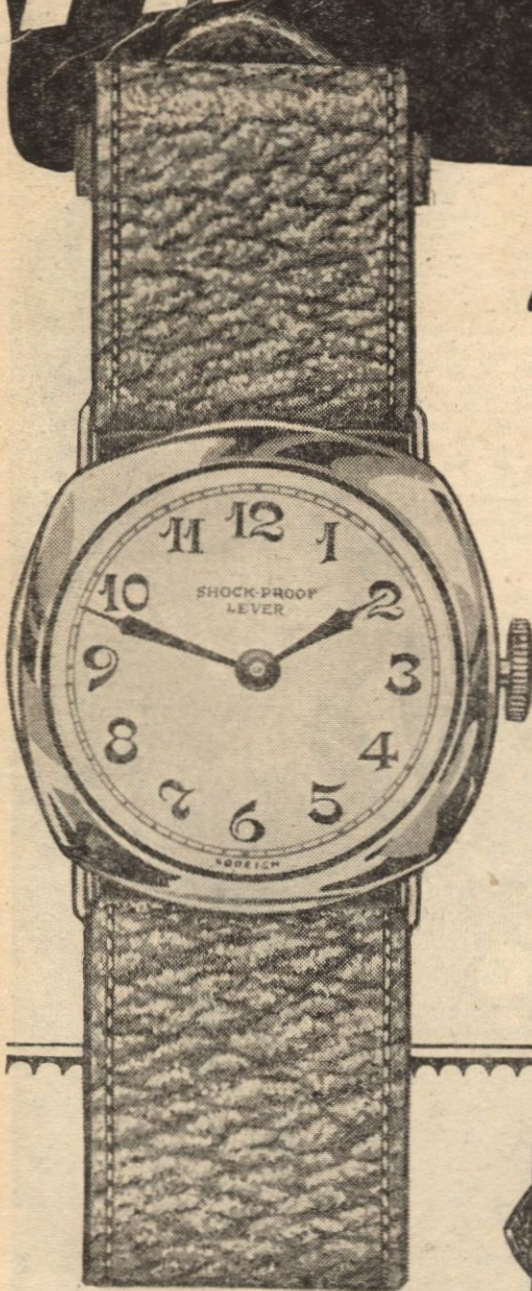
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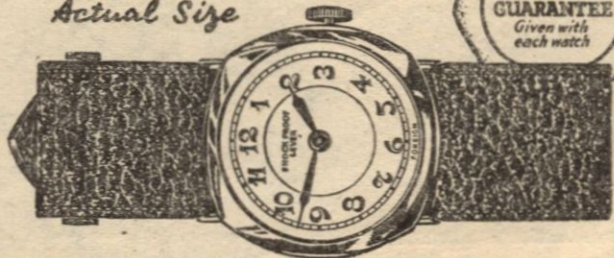
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# The Wild Girl from Mahiti

By  
ELIZABETH  
CHESTER

## TERSINA RUNS AWAY

**J**UST a minute, Pat!" Pat Lovell, the girl reporter, turned as she heard the editor of the "Midshire Gazette" hail her from the doorway of his office.

"Where are you going?" he asked. "Off to interview that Wild Girl from Mahiti?"

Pat nodded.

"Yes, it's to-day when she's coming out, as it were," she reminded him. "The Press have been invited to meet her before the party this evening."

"I know, but I'm afraid the party may be cancelled," the editor said.

"Cancelled? Oh!" exclaimed Pat, disappointed. "But why?"

"Because," the chief replied, "Tersina from the South Seas won't be there. She's gone wild again. I've just had a phone message to say that she's run away from the house where she's been staying."

Instantly Pat was interested, for she had hoped to get a big story from Tersina, the girl who, after having been shipwrecked when a baby, had lived until lately on Mahiti, a little-known isle in the South Seas, inhabited only by natives.

Her explorer uncle had eventually found her and for a time he had stayed on the island with her, winning her confidence and teaching her English. Eventually he had brought her home, but shortly after reaching England he had died, and during the last few months Tersina had been cared for by distant relatives. She had been given special training, and a big party had been organised to introduce her to Society. But now, at the eleventh hour, the Wild Girl had bolted.

"Poor kid," said Pat sympathetically. "I should say she's lost her nerve. I don't blame her. It would have been an awful ordeal meeting dozens of strange people. But what do you want me to do, chief?"

The editor's reply was decisive.

"Find her," he said. "It's believed she's hiding in the woods near the house where she's been living. Find her and

interview her—and you'd better take a camera along in case you can get a photo."

Pat set off to carry out his instructions. It was a beautiful spring day, and as she made her way through the woods, she sympathised more than ever with the girl from the South Seas.

"This weather's enough to make anyone pine for the fresh air," she murmured. "I'm not surprised that Tersina—"

She broke off as she saw a group of men approaching. They were a mixed group. One was a chauffeur; another Pat guessed to be a farmer. They seemed to be searching, and at sight of Pat the man she thought to be a farmer gave an excited shout:

"She may have seen her!" He smiled at the girl reporter. "Excuse me, miss," he said, "but have you seen anything of that Wild Girl?"

Pat shook her head.

She wondered why they were hunting her, and noted that they were armed with small tree-branches, a garden-fork, and hoe. They were an organised party—but for what purpose?

"What has happened?" she asked quickly. "If it's news, please tell me everything because I'm a newspaper reporter."

The men all brightened, and started to talk at once, every one of them eager to give his version. But Pat was used to this kind of thing, and knew how

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When Pat Lovell met the 'wild girl from Mahiti,' she was surprised to find how charming she was. Then why, Pat wondered, should the 'wild girl's' English relatives try to make out that she was completely uncivilised?

---

ready people were to have their names in print.

"Mr. Harper can tell," said one of the farm labourers.

Pat found then that she had made a sound guess in judging the spokesman to be a farmer, for he gave her his name willingly and said that he came from the near-by farm.

"There's little to tell," he said, frowning. "This Wild Girl has been going round setting fire to the woods. She's a menace. The whole woods'll be ablaze before long."

Pat's eyes widened as she heard how on three different occasions these men had had to stamp out fires. Even though it was not a time of year when fires start or spread easily, a forest fire was nevertheless something to fear. The damage to trees, the marring of the countryside, and the ever-present dread that houses and cottages might be engulfed made it a very serious business.

"I say, I say!" she murmured. "She can't be allowed to go on like this—"

"She isn't going to," grunted the farmer. "As soon as we catch her, we'll hand her over to the police for safe keeping."

Pat made a note of the names and addresses of the others, and jotted down one or two comments they had to make. Naturally, everyone's story could not be given in the paper, but one man—the chauffeur—had scorched his hands, so he would be mentioned; and the others were left in doubt as to whether this week's "Gazette" would become a family treasure or not in their homes.

Before Pat had quite finished her notes there came a shout from another part of the wood. The men recognised the voice as being one of the searchers, and they all ran to join him.

Pat put her notebook away, and joined in the hunt. For a hundred yards she kept up with them, but then slowed. Her quick eyes had caught sight of a coloured garment amongst the leaves of a tree to the right.

Slowing, Pat took a keener, closer look, and knew that she was not mistaken. Hiding in that tree was someone dressed in a red-and-blue frock!

Pat pointed, but before she could speak, the branches stirred, the leaves rustled, and a girl swung down from an upper branch of the tree—a girl whose skin was sun-tanned a light golden brown—a girl whose long hair trailed free about her shoulders!

Before Pat could give the alarm, the Wild Girl dropped to the grass and looked appealingly at her.

"No!" she cried, in frantic urgency. "No—not tell! Oh, please—not tell!"

Pat hesitated, but not for long. There was something so pathetic-looking about Tersina that the girl reporter just could not ignore her appeal.

"All right," she said. "Don't run, and I'll keep quiet."

Tersina gave a nod of agreement and understanding.

"Not run," she said.

Pat moved from the path; and Tersina, although she did not run, nevertheless moved back in a wary manner, on tiptoe, as though if Pat made an attempt to take hold of her, she would spring away like a hare.

"So you're the Wild Girl," smiled Pat.

It was apparently the wrong thing to say. For Tersina drew up with great dignity and eyed Pat in reproof.

"I am not wild girl," she said. "I am Tersina. I am English."

"I'm sorry—of course you are!" nodded Pat, taking note of the queer garment Tersina wore. It seemed to be just a length of patterned material wrapped about her, and then rolled over at the top to keep it in place. Anything less English-looking Pat could not have imagined. But she did not want to contradict Tersina.

"Because I lived—with natives, I am not savage," said Tersina proudly.

"No," admitted Pat. "But everyone wonders why you are living in the woods like this."

Tersina's face clouded, and she did not immediately answer; so Pat prompted her.

"The sunshine calls you, perhaps?" the girl reporter said.

"I love the sunshine—yes," admitted Tersina. "But—it is not that. There is good reason; but if I told you you would not understand. You do not know Yorundu."

"Yorundu?" echoed Pat, feeling that she was now getting to the heart of the mystery. "No. Tell me, please. And why do you set fire to the woods?"

Pat got out her camera as she spoke. Unfortunately for her plan, Tersina realised what she intended to do; and with a quick movement she jumped forward and pushed the camera aside.

"No. No pictures! It might be printed in the papers," she said breathlessly. "No, no, please! And how dare you say I set fire to the woods? I do not!"

And then she suddenly wheeled, putting her head to one side, listening; next moment she was gone, scurrying through the woods, leaping, swerving, springing lightly on sandalled feet.

A moment later Pat heard what had startled her—the men's voices as they re-traced their steps.

Tersina was out of sight now, and Pat, not anxious to put the men on her trail, turned aside, hoping to pick it up later herself. Dodging back the way she had come, she managed to avoid being seen by the men.

Reaching a clearer patch between the trees, Pat walked on, keeping in the direction taken by Tersina.

Presently, hoping to hear the sounds of movements, she halted in a glade. It was a pleasant spot, and from it she could see the big house that had been Tersina's temporary home. It was a gloomy, rather forbidding place, surrounded by a high, red-brick wall, and Pat was not really surprised that the girl from Mahiti had tried to escape from it.

Nevertheless, she could not quite understand why Tersina had taken to the woods and the old native costume. There was some mystery about the whole affair.

"Who—or what—is this Yorundu?" mused Pat, frowning. "And she said, too, that she didn't set fire to the woods! She sounded indignant!"

Her thoughts were interrupted by the sound of stealthy movement in the undergrowth. Ducking down, she kept as still as she could. The sounds were louder now—nearer; but not for another minute or two did Pat lift her head. Then what she saw surprised her.

Some dozen paces from her was a girl dressed in a green frock. She was English-looking, and—so Pat judged by her appearance—of well-to-do parents, yet she was gathering up sticks of wood. She dumped a bundle, gathered more, then dumped the second lot.

Pat, by moving forward, had a clearer view of her and what she was doing, and saw that there was quite a stack of dried sticks on the ground. They were not arranged, but heaped in a pile—such a pile as one building a bonfire would make.

"My golly, it is a bonfire!" Pat murmured to herself.

In confirmation of that suspicion, she saw the girl take a box of matches from the pocket of her frock, and look around her warily, as if to make sure that she was not watched.

What she intended to do was obvious. She meant to set light to the bonfire, and then run! In a moment the flames would leap up, engulf the near-by bushes, and spread—spread right across the woods!

But as the girl struck the match, Pat ran forward.

"Stop!" she cried angrily. "Stop, you stupid creature!"

#### INTERVIEWING MRS. MORLEY

WITH a cry of fright, the girl wheeled, dodged to the left, and then to the right as Pat swerved to catch her. Fleet of foot, pale-faced in fright, she went through the trees as hard as she could go.

After her went Pat, but the unknown vanished from sight, and suddenly Pat found her way barred by the high brick wall around the house where Tersina had lived.

There was a door in the wall, but it was now shut and locked. Had the fugitive escaped that way? Frowning, Pat halted. Who was the girl in the green frock, she wondered. Obviously she had been the person who had caused all the fires. But what was the motive behind her wicked act?

As the girl reporter stood there, she heard voices in the garden on the other side of the wall. One voice was a girl's, excited, breathless. And, although she had not heard the girl in the green frock speak, Pat guessed that it must be she there.

"What happened, Geraldine?" a woman's voice asked.

"I—I was seen, mother," was the girl's panted reply.

"Seen!" It was a cry of alarm from her mother. "Good gracious—by whom?"

"Oh, no one we know—no one who knows me," said Geraldine. "Only—only she mustn't see me again."

No more was said, and Pat Lovell hurried on to the gates of the house.

She walked boldly up to the front door and knocked. Showing her Press card to the maid, she was admitted, and asked to take a seat in the large hall.

She had been there only a minute or two when a door opened and a middle-aged woman appeared.

"I am Mrs. Morley," she said. "The maid tells me that you are a reporter, so I suppose you have come to ask questions about poor Tersina."

Pat, who had already decided what line to take, nodded gravely and took out her notebook.

"Yes, Mrs. Morley. We have been informed that Tersina is now running wild in the woods, and, so I have been told, starting fires. Is this so?"

Mrs. Morley's face showed relief; the tense look that had been there vanished.

"Alas, yes!" she said. "The poor child is still half-savage, I'm afraid. We have done our best for her; no one could have done more. Everything possible to make the girl feel at home has been done. But clearly she does not like English life. She will never be civilised. And, of course, this fire-raising is quite unforgivable."

Pat scribbled shorthand earnestly, but all the while she was thinking of something else. This woman was the one who had spoken in the garden to Geraldine—the girl's mother, in fact. And what she had said proved that she knew that Geraldine was the fire-raiser. She must have known what it was that Geraldine was doing when she had been seen, caught in the act. Yet now she was deliberately throwing the blame on to Tersina.

"I see," murmured Pat, keeping those thoughts to herself. "And, of course, this will mean that the reception for this evening cannot take place?"

Mrs. Morley shook her head.

"By no means. People have been invited from various parts of the country, and they cannot be disappointed. Moreover, as you may know, the purpose of this reception was to show what result civilising treatment has had upon Tersina. It is as fair to show the result when it is bad as when it is good."

Pat Lovell's eyes gleamed, for now she thought she could guess the truth. She could guess why Tersina was being blamed.

"And now that it is proved that she cannot be civilised," she said, "she will go back to the South Seas, I suppose."

Mrs. Morley gave an exaggerated sigh.

"I fear so, poor girl. There is no alternative. My brother-in-law—her uncle, who brought her back—was foolish, as I said at the time, to try to civilise her."

Pat closed her notebook, and tried to keep anger from revealing itself in her eyes.

What Pat wanted to say was:

"You cheats! You want her driven out of here; you want to make her seem wild; you want her to be a failure."

For that was obviously the truth of the matter. Tersina was to be driven back to the South Seas by these so-called friends who were, in fact, her deadly enemies!

But Pat did not utter her thoughts aloud; instead, she brought forward her camera.

"You would have no objection to my taking a photograph of Tersina?" she asked.

"No, no; of course not!" said Mrs. Morley.

"I can print any I have been lucky enough to take," Pat went on.

"Of course!"

"Even one of her starting one of the fires?" ended Pat artfully.

"Well—yes. In fact, if you could do that—"

Pat swung the camera over her shoulder.

"Then that's all right," she said. "Thank you, Mrs. Morley! It's a pity that Tersina doesn't look wilder. That green frock of hers is quite ordinary."

She turned away, waiting for the woman's startled cry. It came—just as she expected.

"Stop!"

Mrs. Morley's manner was changed now. Her eyes were frightened, her face was pale, and all her calm was gone.

"Yes?" said Pat, as though surprised.

"Tersina is not wearing a green frock. If you have a picture of the girl in the green frock it's not of her!"

Mrs. Morley exclaimed in panic. "That girl—she—"

She was completely stupefied, lost for words, bewildered and alarmed, just as Pat intended her to be. For quite wrongly she supposed that Pat had actually taken a photograph of her daughter starting a bonfire in the woods. And if that should be printed in the newspapers—

Pat Lovell moved to the door. She knew that she held a trump card. Even though there was no such photograph in her camera, the woman believed there was, and rather than have her daughter's wickedness exposed she would surely change her cruel plan to disgrace Tersina.

But before Pat reached the door there came the sound of a scuffle outside, a girl's shrill, plaintive cry, followed by the "brrr" of the door-bell.

Pat herself opened the door, and then fell back in dismay.

In the porch, held by Mr. Harper and the chauffeur, was Tersina, struggling frantically.

### PAT PLANS A SURPRISE

"WE'VE got her, Mrs. Morley," said Mr. Harper, as he and the chauffeur pulled Tersina into the house. "Just started another fire, but we put it out."

"No, no!" cried Tersina. "I did not start fires! Never, never! Nor have I broken windows, nor torn frocks, nor done anything—unless I am under a spell and do not know it."

Mr. Harper made a scoffing sound. "Likely story!" he said.

"Yorundu!" cried Tersina. "Oh, if I have done these bad things it is he who is to blame, and he is coming here. He will see me. I cannot stay!"

She struggled fiercely, and Pat stepped forward.

"Let her go!" she said sharply.

"Not likely!" retorted the farmer. "There's no telling what a wild girl like this will be up to next—stealing chickens, perhaps setting houses on fire. Who knows?"

Pat looked angrily at Mrs. Morley. "This girl is not the one I saw lighting the bonfire!" she exclaimed.

But her words were lost to the men, for now Tersina was struggling frantically, and by a sudden manoeuvre she managed to wriggle free. Ducking low, she leaped up the stairs.

Pat Lovell did not hesitate. As the men moved forward she sprang between, and they, unprepared, crashed into her. All three toppled to the floor, and next moment there came a crash from upstairs. Tersina had locked herself in her bed-room!

A general rush was made for the stairs, and angrily the men tried to force the locked door. In the general excitement Pat managed to slip unnoticed into the room next door.

She closed the door behind her and turned the key in the lock, then crossed to the window and opened it.

She looked out, and in her excitement nearly fell out, for Tersina suddenly came into view, climbing through the adjoining window. At first she did not see Pat, but when she did she swung desperately to the rain-pipe.

"All right," called Pat softly, "I'm your friend. Meet me in the woods. I have something important to tell you. Don't run right away."

Tersina paused and looked at Pat intently. The light of fear went from her eyes, and she gave a trusting nod.

"Meet me in five minutes' time," breathed Pat. "I'll call 'Coo-ce!' and you call back the same."

Then, wishing the girl luck, Pat re-

turned to the corridor. The men were debating with Mrs. Morley as to the advisability of leaving Tersina there or forcing the door.

Leaving them still arguing, Pat went downstairs, but she got a shock when she picked up her mac and camera she had dropped when she had fallen. For the camera had been taken from the case and opened—opened so that the films were exposed and ruined. Either because of haste or incompetence, the camera had not been shut again, so that what had happened was quite obvious.

"Mrs. Morley must have done it," Pat told herself as she left the house. "She didn't know I was bluffing. She really thought I had photographed her daughter."

But what was behind all this mystery?

Pat's experience as a reporter had told her that money is the root of many ills; and she had heard of numberless cases in which deep and bitter quarrels had been caused by relations disputing the right to inherit fortunes.

den, where I go to read books and learn."

Tersina's secret den was a leafy bower, well-hidden amongst the trees and bushes. It was a pleasant spot, which she had made even cosier with rugs and cushions. In a suitcase she had food supplies, and with charming graciousness she asked Pat to share a meal.

Only when they had eaten did the girl reporter broach the subject of Yorundu. The name caused Tersina's gaiety to vanish for a while, but, after hesitation, she spoke freely.

Yorundu, it appeared, was a magician on the island where she had lived. He was a caster of spells, and from her earliest years she had feared him and had believed that he had unusual powers. English education had almost completely convinced her that such powers were at best mere trickery; but it had not robbed her of her fear of Yorundu.

"But he is far away in the South



"Stop—stop, you stupid creature!" cried Pat angrily, just as the girl was about to strike the match. With a cry of fright, the girl dashed away. What could be her object in deliberately causing these fires?

It struck Pat as being likely that the uncle who rescued Tersina from Mahiti had made some provision for her future. And it was but natural to suppose that whatever money he now left her would otherwise have gone to Geraldine.

At the moment it was not more than a supposition; but Pat intended to find out whether it was just a guess or the hard truth.

Re-entering the woods, she made her way to the spot where she believed she had originally met Tersina. Eagerly she called, but at first there came no response. Then, after a few minutes the undergrowth stirred and cautiously the Wild Girl appeared to view. She greeted Pat with a radiant smile.

"My kind friend, I knew I could trust you," she murmured. "But why are you my friend?"

"Because I like you," Pat answered simply. "But let us go where we shan't be found. Do you know of any safe place where we can talk?"

Tersina looked into Pat's eyes as though seeking final confirmation of her own trustfulness; and then, taking Pat by the arm, led her forward.

"Yes," she said softly, "my secret

Seas!" protested Pat. "He can't harm you."

Tersina shook her head. "He is in England, Geraldine has had letters from him; her mother went to see him, and he is coming here. He will be here this afternoon."

Her face was pale, and Pat saw that she really was afraid. In the past, no doubt, when Tersina was very young, the magician had frightened her—and she had never forgotten it.

But was he really in England? Pat smiled grimly as she remembered Mrs. Morley and Geraldine's cunning.

"Tersina," she burst out, "don't let yourself be fooled. This man is not in England. Geraldine is your enemy. I saw her lighting fires. She lit the fires—and she let you take the blame."

Tersina, startled, drew up. At first she could not believe what Pat said: Pat told her just what she had seen and what had happened in the house, and Tersina's eyes gleamed, her brow furrowed.

"If they are as wicked as that, perhaps they have broken the windows," she said. "I know I did not—not unless I have been under a spell—"

"Under a spell? Bosh! I suppose they suggested that, too," said Pat.

Tersina nodded and coloured with shame.

"Yes—they said he had written to say so; and that was why they were bringing him, even though I said I would run away rather than meet him."

Pat jumped up.

"Tersina," she said, in tense, excited tones, "there is more behind this than you guess. You've got to end it all. You've got to give them the surprise of their lives, turn the tables on them. And I've planned how it can be done."

"How?" asked Tersina eagerly. "If they are my cruel enemies, they must be punished. My uncle, my dear friend, left me in their care; but they've been disloyal to him, I know. If they are evil—"

"They are—at least, they are treacherous," said Pat. "And if you want to stay in England—"

"I do, I do. I want to become really English. It's what my uncle wanted so much, and what I want," said Tersina, her eyes shining with eagerness. "If I please a schoolmistress who is coming this evening, I am to go to a boarding-school—"

"Ah! That's one thing we've got to make happen then," said Pat. "Listen, Tersina! I've got a plan to surprise the guests this evening!"

Pat Lovell held Tersina's rapt attention as she unfolded her plan, and the girl's eyes sparkled as she understood its wisdom.

"Yes, yes—" she cried. "It is wonderful. I will do everything as you say—everything!"

#### TERSINA'S DRAMATIC RETURN

PAT LOVELL assembled that evening with the other reporters and guests at Mrs. Morley's house.

There were professors, educationalists, friends of Tersina's uncle, the schoolmistress the Wild Girl had mentioned, and a member of the board of governors.

They were assembled to meet Tersina. There was plenty of chatter and eager discussion, but also an undercurrent of excitement.

Pat Lovell got into conversation with the white-haired, elderly headmistress, who was looking very worried, and intended to question her—but it was the headmistress who asked the questions when she found that Pat was a reporter.

"Is it true that the girl is actually in the woods now, running wild?" she asked fretfully. "And did she really break windows and set fire to the woods? That is what I have heard."

"Well, she isn't here," said Pat, "and I've heard rumours to that effect—"

She broke off as a wild cry came from the far end of the garden. Everyone who could do so crowded to the windows that looked in that direction, and startled gasps came as a dusky-skinned girl, wearing a strange frock patterned in red and blue, leapt suddenly from the shrubbery shouting and dancing.

There was a garland of flowers on her head and about her neck, and she looked a typical South Sea Islander.

With a wild yell, she darted back into the bushes, waving her arms.

"Tersina!" cried Mrs. Morley. "Gracious—has the child come to shame me before you all?"

"It looks like it," said the headmistress. "My goodness! I could never accept that girl at my school, never!"

A disapproving, surprised murmur came from the other guests, and Mrs. Morley sent a maid to seek for Tersina.

"But don't bring her into the house, she might go wild," she warned her. "Try to calm her; lock her in the summer-house."

Then she turned to the guests with a despairing gesture.

"This is too awful. I fear she is quite beyond hope."

A short, rather stoutly built man now approached Mrs. Morley, and after a word or two to her, turned to the others. Mrs. Morley called for silence, and Pat took out her notebook. She could feel in her bones that some important announcement was coming.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the stout man. "It was by the wish of Mr. James Gurnley, Tersina's uncle, that this strange unhappy girl should be given the opportunity to settle down in this country. He had no wish for her to remain here if she were unhappy."

"Hear, hear!" came a chorus. "The time limit expires to-day," said the stout little man. "And as his solicitor, I am here to explain matters. Trustees have been appointed—and all are present with us. It is for them to decide whether Tersina is happy being Anglicised, and if it is in her best interests that she should remain here and lead the life of an ordinary English girl."

The lawyer paused.

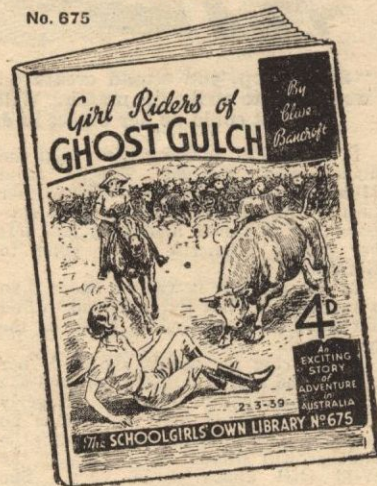
"If so—if they decide she shall stay," he went on, "then they have funds for her education and future. If they decide that she would be happier in Mahiti, then they will pay her fare back. The residue of the money, in that case, would then revert to the family."

Pat's eyes gleamed. So her suspicions had been right!

"Could you tell us the sum involved?" she asked. "How much would the family get if Tersina did return to the South Seas?"

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"Oh, round about ten thousand pounds!" was the reply.

Pat's lips narrowed. The whole plot was clear now. Mrs. Morley and her daughter had wanted to disgrace Tersina so that she would be sent back to Mahiti, and so that they could get the money.

"Seven o'clock!" cried Pat suddenly. "She should be here in a minute."

"She—who?" asked the solicitor. "Tersina," said Pat, craning her head to see down the drive. "And, unless I am mistaken, here is her taxi now!"

There was something like a rush to the windows as the taxi pulled up and a well-dressed girl of about fifteen years of age, pleasantly sunburned, stepped from it.

Silence reigned in the room while the bell rang and the door was opened.

Mrs. Morley, pale as chalk, tottered rather than stepped forward as the door of the room was opened by the maid.

"Miss Tersina," announced the servant.

And into the room walked Tersina, clad as an English girl—in a frock of Pat's—smiling shyly.

The guests looked at each other in bewilderment—a bewilderment that deepened as another wild shriek came from the garden.

"If this is Tersina," gasped the solicitor, "who is that girl in the garden?"

Pat laughed.

"Why, Geraldine Morley, dressed in Tersina's clothes," she said. "She found them in the woods with a note saying that Tersina had run away. But fancy her putting the things on and dressing up as Tersina! What a strange idea!"

Mrs. Morley did not speak, but suddenly she ran from the room, leaving everyone talking excitedly.

Pat Lovell, taking Tersina by the arm, led her to the headmistress and introduced them, while the other guests, amazed, shocked, and sympathetic, gathered round. No explanation was needed for Geraldine's conduct; the solicitor's story was enough to set them all thinking on the right lines. Nevertheless, the story of Yorundu was to be told.

"But—but—why did you run away, Tersina? Why did you go into the woods?" asked the solicitor.

Tersina shook her head.

"I cannot tell you yet," she said. "Not until half-past seven. It is an exclusive story."

"Exclusive?" was the puzzled murmur.

Pat gave the answer.

"Exclusive to the 'Midshire Gazette,'" she said. "At seven-thirty the paper will be on sale—with the full story. Excuse me, I must use the telephone."

And Pat Lovell for some minutes was busy talking to her excited chief, putting the finishing paragraph to that exciting news story which all Midshire was waiting to hear—Tersina the Wild Girl's own story, told exclusively to Pat Lovell.

Weeks later there was another story from Tersina in the "Gazette," a happier one, telling of her life at the famous English boarding-school, where she was as English as any of them, already brilliant at tennis, and third in the Form list! Tersina had come into her own.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Another enthralling girl reporter story next Friday. Make certain of reading it by ordering your GIRLS' CRYSTAL now.



# KAYE of the KENNELS

A delightful complete story, featuring Kaye Chalmers and a dog who was forced to part from the master he loved.

By IDA MELBOURNE

## THE DOG WITHOUT A HOME!

"HALLO, hallo!" murmured Kaye Chalmers, youthful proprietress of the Chalmers' Kennels, blinking at the dog that stood before her: "Who are you, and how on earth did you get in here?"

It was two o'clock in the morning, and Kaye was out in the yard, having been aroused from sleep by barking from the kennels. She had hurriedly dressed and gone down to investigate, accompanied by Brutus, her great St. Bernard.

And standing in the yard she had found the object of the commotion—this guilty looking, drooping-eared dog, with the shaggy coat and Airedale-like appearance. Now he was hanging his head, as though knowing he had no right to be there, as though he had nothing to say for himself, and no excuse to offer.

"All right, chappie," said Kaye, in her kindly way. "Don't look so scared; every dog's welcome here, even if he has gate-crashed. Cheer up!"

She walked nearer, and then, his ears still back, he stretched out his right paw, as though offering the hand of friendship, yet at the same time beseeching mercy.

Kaye stooped and patted his head, and such was the magic of her touch that his whole manner instantly changed. His ears went up, his eyes brightened; and lifting his head, he looked into her eyes.

"Well, well!" smiled Kaye. "So he just found his way in." She stooped and patted him gently, studying him to see if he was well-nourished.

The other dogs, no longer barking, were watching with great interest. Brutus, wandering round to the side of the stray, sniffed at the back of his neck, and then, opening his mouth, but not barking, he lifted his paw, too.

"Jealous?" asked Kaye; but then, as Brutus' forehead became corrugated with heavier frowns than usual, and his eyes turned to the other dog's neck, she knew that he was trying to draw her attention to something important.

Kaye never missed any signal Brutus gave her. Now, standing up and moving sideways, she looked to see just what it was that Brutus wanted her to see. She saw; attached to the dog's collar was a piece of paper.

"Hallo," murmured Kaye, her interest quickening and her manner changing. "Not just a stray, then—a message-bearer."

Kaye unfolded the crinkled paper, and focused her torch upon it. As she guessed, it was a message. Reading it, Kaye blinked her eyes, and her lips trembled a little. For that message was not dramatic, but pathetic.

Once before a dog had arrived with a message fixed to its collar. The message had been a plea for help, sent by the dog's owner. This, too, was from the dog's owner, but it asked help not for himself, but for his dog.

"This is Jack," ran the message, "my pal. I'm out of a job, and I can't give him the food he ought to have. It's not fair to keep him. It's not fair to ask you, either, but I know you're kind to all dogs. Maybe you get scraps left over he could have. If you can't keep him you might know of a good home. He's a mongrel, but he's clever, and a real pal. Be good to him, and please don't find him another home sooner than you need, for I'm praying to get a job so's I can have him back."

The signature of that closely written message was just "Jack's Master."

Kaye folded the note, and, her eyes misty, she looked down at Jack, so quiet and pathetic—a homeless dog. She wanted to speak to him consolingly, but words would not come.

Blinking, Kaye drove back the tears, swallowed the lump in her throat, and then folded the note; and folding it, she saw that there was another message on the back, brief but important: "Be good to him."

"Oh, Jack," she said softly, a moment later. "I'm so glad he brought you here. We'll find scraps all right. Don't worry, chappie; this can be your home."

She fondled the outcast's head against her, petted him, and then, ever practical, looked along the kennels, wondering which one should be his. She understood now how he had managed to get into the kennels, even though all the holes in the fence had been blocked; his master must have lifted him over the gate.

"Which kennel? Um—we'll decide in the morning," Kaye said. "You're lonely to-night, and very sad and unhappy and puzzled. Just for to-night you shall sleep in my room."

Jack held out his right paw again, and Kaye took it, giving it a little shake to cement the vow of friendship.

"Pals?" she asked. "Good! Then come with me."

Patting Brutus, telling him he was a wonderful watch-dog, she left him at the garden gate, and called to Jack to follow her, which he did without the slightest hesitation, just as though he knew that his master had left him in Kaye's charge, and she had a right to give orders.

Any doubts he may have entertained about this being a good home were settled in the kitchen. He was hungry, and Kaye knew just the mixture of meat and biscuits that would suit him.

From the landing a voice called down. Kaye's grandfather, a retired veterinary surgeon, had been awakened, and he wondered what was going on. In a few words, Kaye told him, and he came down into the kitchen to look at the dog. As kind-hearted as Kaye, he was full of sympathy for the outcast, and patted and petted him.

"Granddad," said Kaye. "However kind we are, we'll never mean as much to him as his master. He'd have stayed on with his master, even if it meant going short of food; but the man did right. What we've got to do is to find him a job—and I've been thinking."

Her grandfather smiled at her affectionately.

"You'll make someone give him a job for the dog's sake—I can see it coming," he said. "Have you picked the victim?"

"Mr. Bennet," said Kaye promptly. "Mr. Bennet—" her grandfather echoed. "He's employing two men—"

"One now; the other has left," said Kaye. "He wants a useful odd-job man. Strangely enough, I heard him mention it in the grocer's in the village."

"You did? Then there's hope. A nice old gentleman, Mr. Bennet," said her grandfather. "It's a rambling house, rather lonely, and he ought to have some man living in. I've heard he has some valuable stuff there. Collects old coins and various things, doesn't he?"

"He's going to collect a new odd-job man and a watch-dog in the morning," said Kaye firmly.

"If you can find this dog's master, that is!" said her grandfather.

"If I can? Jack will do that, all

right, even if he's thirty miles away," smiled Kaye.

Then, glad that she had thought of Mr. Bennet, and feeling lighter-hearted, Kaye took Jack up to her room, and made him a comfortable bed there on the old couch that had often before been used for the same purpose.

The dog was sad, yet eager to show gratitude to Kaye, demonstrating in his simple way that he appreciated her kindness. But she knew dogs well enough to be aware that it was his master he really wanted; and the pathetic note was proof enough that his master still wanted him.

Kaye fell asleep thinking of Mr. Bennet, and planning arguments she could use to persuade him to engage Jack's master; and when she awoke the next morning, even though she had slept soundly, Jack was her first thought.

She wasted no time putting her plan into action, and as soon as she had finished her routine jobs, exercising the dogs, attending to those who had need of nursing attention, she dressed for the visit to Mr. Bennet.

It was quite a long walk to Mr. Bennet's house, and Jack went willingly; he even pulled on the lead. Kaye did not let him run free in case he galloped away in search of his master.

Mr. Bennet lived in a large, old-fashioned, lonely house on the fringe of the woods. There were many rooms in it—mostly filled, it was said, with the coins and other curios he collected—and thus ample accommodation for an odd-job man, as well as himself, the gardener, and his housekeeper.

Arriving at the gates, Kaye halted and glanced at the dog.

"Now, steady," she warned him softly. "We've got to make a good impression, the two of us. We've neither of us been here before, so we must behave like strangers and visitors. And what's more, Jack, you've got to win his heart."

Then, pushing open the gate, Kaye walked boldly in, while Jack, just as though he understood, and was eager to get to the interview, strained on the lead.

As they walked up the drive, the gardener, busy with some spring flowers, turned, and seeing the dog he gave a noticeable start. At the same moment Jack, as though noticing the man's manner—his obvious hostility—drew back.

"Good-morning; I've come to see Mr. Bennet," said Kaye.

The gardener strode forward. He was a surly looking man, and his battered felt hat heightened the roughness of his appearance. Any dog might have been forgiven for disliking him at sight; his heavy boots had a suggestion of kick in them, and his thick, corduroy trousers were just the kind that tempted mischievous dogs.

"Take that dog out of here," he snapped.

"He's under control, and on a lead," said Kaye. Her tone was curt, for she objected to his instantly aggressive manner.

"I'm not saying he isn't," retorted the gardener. "But he doesn't belong here any more."

Kaye halted and stared at him, impressed by the significant words.

"Any more?" she echoed.

"Yes—any more. His thieving master was sacked from here a week or more ago, and we don't want the dog. We don't want to see either of them again!"

And to make his meaning even clearer, the gardener lifted the trowel he carried and made a threatening

movement at Jack, who, tugging at the lead, moved back behind Kaye.

"Clear out!" snarled the gardener.

### HIS MASTER A THIEF!

A MAZE of thoughts was in Kaye's mind. Her newly risen hopes were gone—gone completely.

For if Jack's master was a thief, he had little hope of finding another job easily. But with that thought came another: how could such a considerate master, so beloved by his dog, be a thief? Chasing that thought was the sure knowledge that once before this, at least, Jack had suffered at the gardener's hands. She had not forgotten how he had reacted to the sight of the man.

"Well?" demanded the gardener truculently. "What are you waiting for? The dog doesn't belong here any more. Take it away."

But Kaye did not intend to go. With no more proof than that Jack's master was a true dog-lover, she was convinced that some terrible mistake had been made.

"I've come to see Mr. Bennet, not you," she said curtly to the gardener. "I want a reference for Jack's master."

The gardener seemed likely to become even ruder, but before he could speak a lower window was opened and a white-haired old gentleman looked out, and in a mild voice asked what the cause of the disturbance was.

Kaye got straight to the point, explaining that she had come to make inquiries about his recently dismissed odd-job man. With gracious politeness, Mr. Bennet—for such he was—asked her to go to the main door; and before she reached it he was holding it open.

"Why, Jack!" he exclaimed. "Dear old fellow. Back to the old haunts, eh?"

Jack's wagging tail, and the way he held out his paw, was proof enough that he had met a friend whom he was delighted to see again.

In Mr. Bennet's museum-like study, crowded with glass cases containing coins and other curios, and lined with bookcases, Kaye explained her mission, while he listened with grave politeness, fondling Jack's head the while. Then, when she had finished, after a moment's thoughtful silence, he explained what had happened.

"I am afraid," he said gently, "that I must disappoint you, Miss Chalmers. Jack's master, Wrayford, seemed a good fellow, and I liked him. Unfortunately, I had conclusive proof that he stole some of my most valuable coins."

Kaye was on the defensive.

"It's only for Jack's sake I'm asking. But was the proof really conclusive?"

Mr. Bennet shrugged his shoulders.

"Coins were found hidden in his room—not all, but one or two; a jemmy—that is a small crowbar used for forcing open cases, lids, doors, and so on—was found there, too. Someone in the house was the thief, and that meant either Wiggins, the gardener—"

"The gardener?" said Kaye sharply.

Mr. Bennet saw what was in her mind, and shook his head.

"No; I am convinced that, surly though his is, he is not a thief. He is too direct to be artful, and this theft was cunningly planned. It took place just after a passing tramp had been given a meal in the kitchen, and suspicion was at first thrown on him."

As Mr. Bennet was speaking Jack turned to the window, and his lips curled, showing his teeth, while a growl rumbled deep in his throat.

Kaye, dropping the lead, crossed to

the window with quick, soft steps and looked out. But all she saw was the rustling movement of a bush—not, as she had expected, the gardener. Yet the rustling bush was proof that someone had brushed past it only a moment ago.

"What is it?" exclaimed Mr. Bennet. "Someone was listening at the window," answered Kaye sharply—"someone interested in what you were saying; and, by the fact that Jack snarled, I can guess who it was."

Mr. Bennet did not comment on that, but rose from his chair.

"Let Jack go into the kitchen," he said. "I dare say Mrs. Mullins has a tit-bit for him. She'll be glad to see him, anyway. Jack never did any harm here, whatever might be said of his master."

Kaye let him go, and then reopened the subject of his master; but Mr. Bennet made it clear that he had said all that he intended to say on that subject, and turned the conversation to his beloved subject—coins.

But just as he was telling her that the stolen coins had been worth more than a hundred pounds, Kaye heard the gardener outside shout furiously.

"Get away from here, you wretch!"

Kaye went to the window again and looked out. This time she saw the gardener. He was swinging back his trowel to fling it at Jack, who, on the far side of the garden under the hedge, had started to dig.

"Stop!" shouted Kaye.

The gardener, unheeding, hurled the trowel, and with such force and accuracy that Jack, struck by it, leaped back with a yelp of fright and pain.

Kaye swung over the window-sill, and, hands clenched, ran to the gardener. Cruelty to a dog set her blood afire, and such was the blaze of anger in her eyes that the gardener, turning to her, dodged back in alarm.

"You brute! You cruel beast!" said Kaye, in fury. "You might have maimed him!"

"And it's what he deserves!" snapped the gardener. "Digging up my bulbs!"

"Bulbs! You don't grow bulbs under a hedge—or ought not to if you know your job!" retorted Kaye, in scorn. "More likely he has buried a bone there!"

She took a step forward, but the gardener caught her arm and held her. Eyes glinting, Kaye took his hand and thrust it from her. Then, calling Jack, who was licking his back, she examined the scar where the sharp edge of the trowel had struck him.

"It's a good thing his master can't have the job here! I wouldn't let him have this place for a home if the choice were mine," said Kaye indignantly—"not while you stay here!"

Then, looking back to where Mr. Bennet, puzzled and disturbed, stood at the window, she bade him good-morning, and, putting Jack on the lead, took him from the house. It was only when she was outside in the lane that a startling thought struck her.

"Jack," she exclaimed, "what were you digging for? My goodness, was it—could it be—"

But she shook her head. A wild thought had flown into her mind—a suspicion that the gardener's anger was caused by something more than fear for his bulbs. There had been fear in his manner, certainly; for it was not thought for his bulbs' safety that had made him hold her back. But was that fear caused, as she suspected in a moment of intuition, by dread of Jack's digging up something that the gardener himself preferred hidden?

Were the missing coins there?

Of a sudden she made up her mind. "Jack, find your master!" she said, and slipped the lead.

Jack looked up at her, puzzled and intrigued.

"Find him! Seek him out!" urged Kaye. "Where is he, then—eh? Master! Find him!"

Jack put up his head, barked, and ran on. Then he galloped back, wildly excited, ran on back, and, obviously understanding what was wanted, became frenziedly eager to find his master; but not only to find him, to lead Kaye to him, too.

"We'll find him!" vowed Kaye. "And we'll find, too, what it is buried in that garden! Come on, Jack! Tally-ho!"

### JACK SUPPLIES THE EVIDENCE!

It was five miles farther on that Jack, in wild excitement, rushed up to a man who sat by the roadside, footsore and weary. He was shabby; he was listless and pale. But to Jack he was the most wonderful man in the world. Jack wriggled all over, whined, licked, jumped, danced, leaped. If a man's head should have been turned by flattery it was the odd-job man, Wraysford's.

"Why—why, Jack!" he stammered, and then wrapped his arms about the dog, and gave him a hug that brought a wincing gasp.

When Kaye, all smiles, halted before them, she saw that the man's eyes glistened. He blinked a little, doffed his cap, and, smiling broadly, stood up.

"Why, miss, you brought him back!" he said huskily. "It's like a dream come true; only—only it'll be harder parting again. I've missed him—I've thought I did wrong; but it was right. He's been used to good meals, and—"

Kaye put a hand on his sleeve, and her voice was gentle.

"I'm not turning him out or sending him back to you," she said. "You did the right thing, and I admire you for it. I've only come to tell you that the way you should be going is not on—but back to Mr. Bennet."

Then swiftly she told him all she knew and all she suspected, and, as her story was unfolded, Wraysford's brow darkened.

"Why, you think what I've thought all the time, miss. It's that cruel, cunning rascal, Wiggins, who's the thief! But—but he's too cunning for us."

"The truth can always be proved," she said. "And Jack is the one to prove it. There's something hidden in the garden, and to-night we've got to go there. Jack can search, and with my torch we can see what he turns up. If you're game, I am."

Wraysford, though doubting the possibility of success, was eager to take the chance, and most gladly he accepted Kaye's invitation to return to the kennels and discuss it over a meal.

At ten minutes past ten that evening, the three set out for Mr. Bennet's house, reaching it in silence and pitch darkness.

Not a light showed anywhere, not a sound could be heard as Kaye gently climbed the wall, with Wraysford's assistance, and then took Jack from him.

She led Jack to the hedge, and whispered, "Seek." But he needed no urging. He almost jumped at the earth under the hedge and started to dig. For a minute he dug busily, sending the earth flying. Then he paused, listening intently.

Kaye saw that he looked towards the house, and, fearing that their movements, soft though they had been, had

attracted notice, turned in alarm. No light showed; there was no sound of a door or windows being opened. But from the back of the house there came an odd, creaking sound.

Jack pricked his ears, and then followed Kaye as she tiptoed over the grass. Halting, she listened again, and, being nearer the source of the sound now, she could guess what caused it. A door was being levered open—a door or window.

"Burglars!" she murmured.

At the word Jack leaped forward. He made not a sound, but flew over the grass. Only when he turned to the back of the house did he snarl. It was a ferocious sound he made, and there came a muffled yell. But that yell was followed almost instantly by a dull, thudding blow, and a sharp yelp.

Silence reigned, broken presently by a soft sound as of a window being opened. Not a sound from Jack, nor movement. Kaye, fear gripping her heart, flashed on her powerful torch, and, heedless of the risk she herself ran of receiving a blow from the burglar, reached the back of the house. She paused there, horrified, heart almost still as she saw, motionless, sprawled on the concrete by the rear door of the house, poor Jack.



"I'm Bessie Bunter, the cheeriest girl at Cliff House School! Meet me in—"

**THE SCHOOLGIRL**  
Every Saturday - - - 2d."

Kaye ran to him, dropped to her knees, felt his heart, and then only breathed freely again. His heart was beating—slowly, but steadily. Stunned, slammed on the head by a cruel blow, he still lived. And in his jaws was tightly clenched something that Kaye prised gently from them.

Standing up, nervy, Kaye flashed her torch on to the back door where a jemmy was jammed, well wedged, left there by the would-be burglar.

"Mr. Bennet!" she called; and then, hearing a step behind her, swung round in alarm. But it was Wraysford who stood there, and next moment he was kneeling beside Jack.

"Stunned, but not by anything sharp," said Kaye gently. "Wrap him up; keep him quiet. Don't try to rouse him."

And then she looked up at the window above, which had just opened.

"What is it? Who's there?" asked Mr. Bennet's rather quaky voice.

It was hard for Kaye to explain what she was doing there, but he recognised her voice, and a moment later was at the back door, which hung now by only the last few threads of its retaining screws.

The burst lock, the jemmy, Jack's unconscious form, were all the confirmation Kaye's story need, and Mr.

Bennet, considerably perturbed, called for the gardener, who slept upstairs.

"Bring the poor brave dog in," he said to Kaye. "But for him and you I might have been robbed of the rest of my treasures."

Down the stairs, candle in hand, clad in pyjamas, slippers, and dressing-gown, rubbing his eyes, came the grumbling gardener, asking what the fuss was, seemingly still half asleep.

"Burglars breaking in, eh?" he mumbled.

"I want you to go for the police, Wiggins," said Mr. Bennet. "Put your things on quickly, please."

But as the gardener turned to obey, Kaye intervened.

"Just a minute," she said. "I think Wraysford had better go for the police."

"Wraysford—why?" said the gardener sharply.

Kaye opened her hand, in which she had held concealed the thing she had taken from Jack's mouth.

"For once you were too cunning, Wiggins," she said coldly. "Look at this—a piece of thick, brown corduroy. You were the burglar!"

"Me? I've been in bed and asleep!" he retorted hotly.

"You got in through a window, you mean," snapped Kaye, "and changed into pyjamas; but by doing that, you rogue, you've robbed yourself of the excuse that you were chasing the burglar when the dog flew at you. This came from your trousers. Prove that it didn't, if you can!"

Mr. Bennet took the piece of material from Kaye, and with darkening brow studied it; then he wheeled upon the gardener, his eyes glinting.

"Get those trousers!" he commanded. "Now!"

The man hurried up the stairs. A minute passed, two, and then from the garden came a crash. Wraysford, who had just put Jack down on the couch in the kitchen, ran out, and there followed the sounds of fiercely exchanged blows and struggling.

But before Kaye could reach the scene the struggle was over, and the gardener, held in a powerful wrist and arm grip, was brought to the door.

"Trying to escape!" panted Wraysford. "And there's a piece torn from his trousers. It's proof positive, Mr. Bennet."

Mr. Bennet looked at him almost guiltily, and a touch of colour came to his cheeks.

"Wraysford, my good fellow, I'm sorry," he said. "I sacked the wrong man; and I sacked at the same time the bravest, best watch-dog in the world. But if you'll both come back, I—"

Jack, on the sofa, stirred, and Wraysford crossed to him, dropping to his knees.

"We're back, sir," he said.

KAYE returned to the house the next morning, to find that Jack had made an amazing recovery. By then he had dug out the hole under the hedge, and found the missing coins.

"Good old Jack!" said Kaye, patting him. "Happy?"

Jack gave her his paw, and, as she took it, licked her hand.

"We're both happy, miss," said Wraysford, smiling. "And now I know I did the right thing. We're home again, and this time for keeps."

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Another equally charming story by Ida Melbourne, featuring Kaye and her pets, will appear in next Friday's GIRLS' CRYSTAL. Order your copy to-day, and so make sure that you don't miss it.



# Her UNKNOWN ENEMY at School

By  
GAIL  
WESTERN



## THANKS TO OLIVE

**O**LIVE FRENCH, Fourth Form captain at St. Kit's School, and her chum, Letty Johnson, liked Jess Grant, the newcomer to the Fourth, as soon as they met her.

But there was some mystery about Jess, and the chums soon realised that an unknown enemy in the school was trying to get her disgraced. Also, in the village was a girl who was Jess' double, and who was in league with the unknown enemy.

Thanks to Jess' enemy, Olive & Co. fell into disfavour, and there was unrest in the Fourth.

When Jess accused Lorna Meredith, the school's most popular prefect, of being her unknown enemy, Stephanie Warner, of the Fourth, got the Form to send her to Coventry. Even Olive and Letty felt Jess had made a mistake about Lorna.

One morning Olive and Letty persuaded Stephanie and two of her cronies to row them out to Peewit Island, for they believed that Jess' enemy and her double were to meet there. Jess was left behind. The schemers did not arrive, but Jess' double stole their boat. Then the tide began to rise, covering the island, and though the time passed, no rescue came. Unless Jess would send help, they were in a desperate position!

**"W**ERE trapped!" Letty gasped, and desperately she looked across at the Form captain. "Olive, what are we to do? If the tide rises much farther—"

There was no need for the fat girl to finish. All the Fourth Formers were grimly aware of the danger that threatened. Unless they could escape from Peewit Isle they might all be drowned!

But how were they to escape? Helplessly they stared through the rain at the waves that the wind was sweeping nearer and nearer to the ruined tower where they had sought shelter.

Already half the island had vanished from sight under the rising tide. Only the hillock on which they stood remained, and soon that, too, might be engulfed.

Stephanie Warner, her haughty face now pale with alarm, glared across at Olive.

"This is all your fault!" she burst out. "If anything happens to us you'll be to blame!"

Olive flushed indignantly, but she checked the angry retort that rose to her lips. This was no time to quarrel. Her chum Letty was not so wise. Fiercely she came to her chum's defence.

"That's not fair, Stephanie!" she cried. "Olive couldn't help the boat being stolen!"

"I don't care whether she could help it or not," flashed back the other girl. "She was responsible for bringing us to this island."

"Hear, hear!"

There came a chorus of agreement from Iris Watts and Edith Fox, and Letty's plump cheeks went redder than ever.

"Look here—" she began, but Olive caught her by the arm.

"Don't argue, Letty," the Form captain urged. "Just listen to me for a moment. I've got an idea. There's only one way to get out of this mess, and that's to swim for it!"

"Swim—what, across the lake?" Stephanie stared incredulously. "Why, you must be mad!" she gasped.

"Besides," put in Iris Watts, "I—I can't swim a stroke! Oh, don't leave me here alone! Don't—"

Olive interrupted her panic-stricken wail.

"Don't worry; no one intends to desert you, Iris," she said. "And no one's asking you to swim the lake, either, Stephanie. It only needs one of us to attempt it."

Letty, realising what her chum had in mind, gave a horrified gasp.

"You mean you're going to risk it?"

Higher and higher the water came up over the island, threatening to cover it entirely. The Fourth-Formers stranded there shouted for help in vain. There was only one hope of rescue—and that was for one girl to swim to the mainland!

she cried. Olive nodded, and Letty's alarm grew. "Oh, but you mustn't! I won't let you. It's too dangerous. Why, it must be half a mile to the mainland! And in this storm— Oh, please don't go, Olive!" Frantically she tugged at the Form captain's sleeves. "Let's all stick it here. Sooner or later Jess is bound to turn up."

Stephanie gave a jeering laugh. "What a hope!" she declared. "If we wait for her we'll wait for ever."

And to some extent Olive agreed with her. At first she had been certain that Jess would come in search of them, but as hour had succeeded hour she had begun to lose hope.

Even now Olive could not help wondering why Jess had not returned to find them. It was not as if she did not know that they had gone to Peewit Isle. It was not as if—

Olive smothered her perplexed thoughts, and gently shook her arm free of Letty's detaining fingers.

"We can't stay here," she declared. "One of us must go for help, and as I'm a strong swimmer—"

"But, Olive—"

"No, Letty, it's no good arguing. My mind's made up. Anyway, there's no danger, you chump. I've swum half a mile many a time."

As she spoke, the Form captain kicked off her shoes and tore off her coat. Then, before her apprehensive chum could attempt to stop her, she went running forward. As she splashed through the encroaching water she turned and waved cheerily back to them.

"Don't worry—I'll soon be back with a boat!" she cried; then headlong she dived into the lake and began to swim out into the gloom.

Their hearts in their mouths, the others watched. Even in Stephanie's grey eyes there was a reluctant glint of admiration. Farther and farther that bobbing head receded in the distance, until at last it disappeared altogether.

Stephanie and her chums returned to the shelter of the ruined tower, but Letty remained where she was. Oblivious of the driving rain, she stood there, staring vainly across the grey, heaving waters.

To her an eternity seemed to pass, but there came no further sign of her courageous chum. Surely by now she



ought to have reached the shore? She waited a little longer, then ran forward and began to shout:

"Olive! Olive, old scout!"

But only the howling of the wind answered her. The blood drained from her face. A terrible fear tugged at her heart. Suppose Olive had found the effort too much! Suppose—

She turned away with a gulp. The suspense was unbearable, and at that moment there came an impatient call from the tumbledown entrance to the old tower.

"Isn't there any sign of her yet?" Dumbly Letty shook her head, and Stephanie gave an irate snort. "Then what the dickens can she be doing? She's had time to swim there and back!"

Letty felt the blood surging back to her face. In place of her anxiety came a wave of indignation.

"If it's so easy, why didn't you go yourself?" she shouted. "Because you were scared—that's why! Why, you ought to be ashamed of yourself—standing there, grumbling! Don't you realise that Olive may have gone under? Don't you realise—"

Choked with emotion, she turned away, and even Stephanie had the grace to look sheepish.

"I say, I'm sorry!" she blurted out. "I didn't mean to—"

But Letty was not listening. In wild excitement she had gone rushing down to the water's edge. Faintly she had heard a creaking sound—the sound of oars rubbing against rowlocks.

"Olive!" she panted. "Olive!"

For a moment there came no reply, then to her delight through the darkness came a familiar voice, followed by the shape of a big, cumbersome boat. And there was her missing chum, bending over the oars, breathlessly rowing towards what remained of the island.

"Olive!" gasped Letty again, and, half-crazy with delight, she plunged into the water, and went wading forward. "Oh, you hero! Oh, you brick! Then you managed it, after all!"

Smilingly the Form captain nodded.

"The last hundred yards was a bit of a teaser—but I managed to stick it," she said. "Sorry I was so long, but it took me some time to find the boat. It had been hidden amongst the reeds."

At sound of their voices, Stephanie and the others came running out of the tower, and excitedly they gathered around the boat.

"Good old Olive!" cried Edith Fox.

"You've certainly saved us!" declared Iris Watts.

And even Stephanie smiled approvingly.

"A jolly good effort," she said.

Eagerly they clambered into the boat, and, seeing how exhausted her chum was, Letty took the oars. Vigorously she pulled on them, and soon Peewit Isle had been left far behind.

"Better row straight back to the ferry," suggested Olive. "We've got to hand back the boat. Besides, Jess may still be waiting there for us."

As if by magic, Stephanie's mood changed. It only needed Jess' name to be mentioned for all her dislike to rise to the surface. Derisively she looked across at the Form captain.

"Rats! Jess will have scuttled back to school long ago!" she declared. "She's not likely to hang about after pinching our boat."

Olive flushed.

"But it wasn't Jess who took the boat," she protested. "It was her double."

"That's what you say!"

"I say it because it's the truth! Look here, Stephanie, why won't you

be sensible? Why must you always run Jess down?"

"I run her down," snapped the other girl, "because she deserves it! She may be clever enough to hoodwink you, but she can't fool me. I don't care what you say, Olive. I know—"

She broke off as the boat bumped against the landing stage at the ferry, then, as they all scrambled out, she gave a startled cry and triumphantly she pointed down-stream.

"Look there!" she cried. "There's your precious chum—in the same skiff we saw her in earlier on! Now perhaps you'll believe what I say. Now perhaps you'll realise that it must be her who took our boat!"

For a moment even Olive and Letty stared, aghast. For in the skiff that was swinging round towards the landing-stage, was a girl in a blue raincoat and a school hat.

As she saw the Fourth Formers gathered there, the approaching girl gave an excited hail, and waved her hand.

There could be no mistake about it. The rower was the real Jess Grant, and the skiff in which she sat was the same one that had been used to steal Olive & Co.'s rowing-boat. Jess' guilt seemed to be proved!

### JESS FINDS A NEW CLUE

"I DON'T believe it! Jess is true-blue! She wouldn't do a thing like that!"

Once she had got over the first shock, Olive shook her head decisively, and Letty gave a nod of agreement.

"Of course she wouldn't, old scout," she said. "P'r'aps that skiff isn't the same one. P'r'aps—"

Stephanie turned to her with a sneer. "Still inventing excuses for her, eh?" she murmured. "Well, they won't wash with me." She beckoned to her two chums. "Come along," she added. "If I stay here I'll lose my temper, and I'd hate to do that. That mean wretch isn't worth it!"

And with a contemptuous look at Jess, she went striding off through the rain. Iris and Edith went with her, but desperately Olive called after them.

"Just a minute," she urged. "Don't be chumps! If you'll only wait until

Jess comes ashore, I'm sure she can explain things."

Stephanie flung a derisive laugh over her shoulder.

"Thanks, but I've heard enough of her tales!" she snorted, and walked on.

Ruefully Olive and Letty watched the other three go, then they turned and helped Jess ashore. The new girl was quivering with excitement.

"You'll never guess what's happened!" she exclaimed. "You'll never—!" And then she stopped, warned by their manner that something was amiss. "What's the matter?" she asked. "And, goodness, you're wet through, Olive!"

Quietly they told her. Jess caught in her breath as she learnt of the danger they had been in, then her eyes dilated with horror as she heard what Stephanie had said.

"They think that it was me who took the boat!" she gasped. "Oh, they couldn't be so mean! I know they don't like me, but—!" She clutched appealingly at Olive's hand. "Surely you and Letty don't think I'd do a wicked thing like that?" she panted.

Olive shook her head and gave her quivering hand a comforting squeeze.

"Of course we don't!" she replied.

"The idea's crazy!" declared Letty. Nevertheless, she eyed Jess curiously.

"But what have you been up to, old scout?" she asked. "And why didn't you come in search of us?"

"I—I never guessed you were in trouble!" was the breathless reply. "You see, I've been having a bit of an adventure myself. I've been chasing my double!"

"Wha-a-at?" The other two girls gave a gasp. Jess nodded.

"Yes, chasing my double!" she repeated. "You see—"

Swiftly she explained, and Olive and Letty listened in increasing excitement, their wet clothes forgotten.

It seemed that, after waiting in vain for her chums to return, Jess had started to walk along the river bank in search of them. But suddenly she had seen a skiff coming down-stream. In it had been her double, but the other girl had not seen her; so, keeping to the



"Look there!" cried Stephanie, pointing. "There's your precious chum. Now perhaps you'll realise that she took our boat!" Olive and Letty stared, horrified. There was no doubt about it. The girl in the boat was Jess Grant!

shelter of the reeds, Jess had followed the boat.

Near Fernleigh her double had come ashore, and there Jess had confronted her.

"It was the biggest shock she'd ever had," Jess declared. "For a moment she just stood there and gaped at me as if I were a ghost. Then she turned and ran for dear life. I tried to grab her, but she was too quick for me, and, finally, she managed to hop on to a passing bus."

"So you returned to the skiff and rowed back here?" Olive ended for her. Jess nodded.

"Yes; but I didn't come away empty-handed," she said. "In jumping on to the bus, she dropped her purse, and—Look!"

She dived her hand into her coat pocket and produced an expensive gold-ornamented purse.

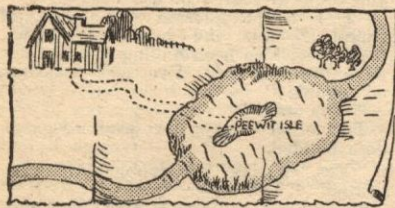
Letty gave a whoop of delight.

"You managed to grab it—eh? Oh, goody! But what does it contain—anything worth following up?"

Again Jess nodded, and, opening the purse, she extracted from it a scrap of paper.

"This is all that was inside," she said. "I can't make top nor tail of it, but it seems to be a chart of some kind."

Excitedly her two chums studied the scrap of paper, and their excitement increased as they saw that on it was a drawing of the lake, with Peewit Isle marked in the centre.



"Peewit Isle!" exclaimed Letty. Then she frowned. "But what are those dotted lines connecting the island with that house? They look like a path, but you can't have a path going across—" She broke off, and her eyes gleamed. "My hat!" she cried. "Suppose they're meant to be a secret tunnel!"

Olive and Jess stared breathlessly at the fat girl.

"A—a secret tunnel?" echoed Jess.

Letty nodded.

"Yes, a secret passage connecting that house with the island. Yes, that's it. I'm sure it is. And that explains why Jess' double and her unknown enemy arranged to meet on Peewit Isle this afternoon."

"Of course!" Olive gave her chum an admiring clap across her plump shoulders. "They intended to explore this underground passage. Golly, but what's it mean? What are those two wretches up to?"

Thrilled by their discovery, they stood there; then Jess, suddenly realising how wet the other two were, folded up the piece of paper and put it carefully away.

"Oh, I say, I am mean, standing here talking, while you two are soaked!" she said. "Come on! You must hurry back to the school! You'll catch your death of cold if you don't get into dry things! And Olive's worn out too!"

At a brisk walk, the three chums set off for St. Kit's. Even the ordeal of the afternoon was forgotten by Olive and Letty in their excitement at realising that possibly the mystery surrounding Jess was nearing solution.

"If only we can discover that secret passage," declared Olive, as they turned in through the school gates, "we'd soon

get at the truth. Oh, Jess, won't it be grand if we do manage to bowl out your enemies?"

Jess nodded.

"It will be wonderful!" she said softly. "Oh, I feel so happy that—" She paused; then, as her eyes went to the school tuckshop, she clutched the Form captain eagerly by the arm. "Let's celebrate!" she urged. "This discovery deserves a celebration! And you two could do with a hot drink after all you've gone through. So you pop along and get changed while I order the tuck," said Jess.

As her chums went running across the quad she entered the tuckshop.

It was deserted except for Cecily Savage and a couple of other Fourth Formers. Unthinkingly Jess greeted them with a friendly smile, but for all the response she got they might have been stone blind. Jess flushed, suddenly remembering that she had been sent to Coventry.

She ordered sandwiches, hot crumpets, cakes, and tea, and, while the motherly shopkeeper went to toast the crumpets, she carried the cakes over to the long table by the window.

Cecily deliberately turned her back as Jess approached. Jess flushed indignantly, but quietly she set down the plates and dragged forward a chair. Seeing that she intended to sit with them, one of the girls found her voice.

"We don't want you here!" she snapped, with a glare. Jess glared back.

"You needn't flatter yourself that I want to sit near you!" she flashed back. "But, unfortunately, there's only one table, so I've got to make the best of a bad job!"

"Why, you—"

The other girl leapt to her feet, but Cecily, with a sniff in Jess' direction, caught her by the arm.

"Don't bandy words with her, Jill!" she urged. "And let's clear out!"

They all rose, and angrily Jess watched them depart. Their scornful treatment made her blood boil. Then, with an effort, she forced away her anger, and she smiled as she thought of the chart she had found.

"Before long they'll realise how unjust they've been," she murmured. "They'll realise—"

She broke off as the door opened and Olive and Letty entered. The fat girl gave an eager shout.

"Tea ready?"

Jess nodded.

"Yes. But are you two feeling quite fit now?"

"Yes, thanks. We had a hot shower before we changed," declared the fat girl.

Olive did not speak. She was frowning a little. She had seen Cecily & Co. emerge from the tuckshop, and she saw now how white Jess was. It did not take her long to put two and two together.

"What did Cecily say?" she asked quietly.

"Oh, nothing—at least, nothing worth bothering about! Don't worry, Olive. I'm O.K.! Let's forget all the trouble in the Form and enjoy ourselves."

"Hear, hear!" cried Letty; and she rushed across to collect the plate of mouth-watering, freshly buttered crumpets. "My hat, these look scrumptious!" she exclaimed. "Good old Jess! You certainly know how to order a tip-top tea!"

Jess smiled, and, forgetting her troubles, she set out to make the little tea-party a complete success. For nearly an hour the three chums sat there, joking and laughing. It was as if they had not a care in the world, and Letty,

polishing off the last of the chocolate eclairs, suddenly looked around with glowing eyes.

"My, this is just like old times!" she exclaimed. "Here's hoping we have tons more of them!"

And she brandished her teacup on high.

"Same here!" smiled Olive; and she also raised her cup. "Let's drink to the future—to the success of our next visit to Peewit Isle!"

The toast was drunk with enthusiasm, and then, suddenly, as the door opened and a broad-shouldered, rather surly-looking girl entered the tuckshop, the smiles faded from the chums' faces. For the newcomer was Winifred Butler, the Fifth Former who was on their list of suspects—the girl whom Olive and Letty, at any rate, believed was Jess' unknown enemy!

At sight of the three Fourth Formers Winifred stopped and a malicious grin curled her lips as she greeted Olive.

"So that's where you're hiding, is it?" she exclaimed.

"Hiding!" The Form captain eyed her in surprise. "What do you mean?" she asked. "Why should I want to hide?"

"Oh, I don't know." The Fifth Former shrugged her shoulders. "I only thought perhaps you were dodging old Brammy."

"Dodging the Head?"

"Yes, she wants to see you particularly. Lorna Meredith has been hunting you for over an hour, and according to what I've heard, old Brammy's not too pleased with you!"

Olive & Co. stared in bewilderment. What did Winifred mean? Was she only trying to frighten them, or was there really trouble brewing?

Looking at her spiteful face, Olive and Letty both felt their suspicions deepen. More than ever they felt that the Fifth Former was the writer of those anonymous letters; was Jess' unknown enemy.

"Look here, what are you getting at?" demanded Olive, rising to her feet. "Why should the Head be annoyed with me?"

Again Winifred shrugged her shoulders.

"How should I know?" she countered. "Perhaps it's something to do with Jess Grant. She's always causing trouble, isn't she? Anyway, why don't you go and find out."

And with a mocking nod at Jess, she turned away and crossed to the counter. For a moment Olive & Co. looked at her frowningly, then Jess, all her new-found happiness gone, plucked nervously at the Form captain's sleeve.

"You—you don't think the Head's really ratty with you, do you?" she faltered.

Olive smiled and shook her head. "Of course not. Why should she be? As far as I know, I've been minding my p's and q's lately. Winifred's just trying to scare us, that's all. It's the kind of joke she relishes. But don't worry. I expect it's about some Form matter old Brammy really wants to see me."

Deliberately, Olive spoke lightly, though actually she felt a little uneasy. Winifred had seemed so certain of her ground; was so obviously looking forward to seeing one of the Fourth Formers she disliked get into a row. However, Olive did not want her chums to worry. As they made to follow her, she shook her head.

"You stay here and finish up the tuck," she said. "I won't be long, and don't look so glum, you chumps. There's nothing wrong, I tell you."

She flashed them another cheeky smile, then she hurried out of the tuckshop.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH THE HEAD

OLIVE'S worst fears were confirmed when she entered the headmistress' study. One look at her face told her that it was about no routine matter that Miss Bramleigh wished to discuss.

Looking up from the papers on her desk, the Head indicated a chair.

"Sit down, Olive," she said, and her voice was unusually frigid. "I have heard rather alarming accounts of what happened on Peewit Isle this afternoon."

"On—on Peewit Isle!"

Olive gave a gasp, and as she sat down she stared at the headmistress in alarm. Surely Stephanie could not have sneaked?

"Yes, on Peewit Isle. If what I am informed is true, a certain member of the Fourth Form acted disgracefully. But you had better read the message for yourself."

As she spoke, Miss Bramleigh picked up a piece of notepaper from her desk. Olive's eyes narrowed. She guessed immediately what it was—another anonymous letter from "Well Wisher"—Jess' unknown enemy.

One look at it told her that her suspicions were correct, although this time the message was printed in red ink. Apparently, after her recent narrow escape in being captured in the print shop, Well Wisher had not risked "borrowing" Enid Smailes' typewriter.

An angry flush on her face, Olive read the curt sentences:

"Five Fourth Formers were nearly drowned this afternoon. Jess Grant stole their boat and left them marooned on Peewit Isle. This wicked act once again proves that Jess Grant is not a fit person to be at St. Kit's. While she remains at the school there will be no peace for anyone.

"(Signed) Well Wisher."

Grimly the Head eyed Olive as that girl looked up from the accusing note.

"Well?" she asked. "Is what is written there true?"

"No, it isn't, Miss Bramleigh!" Her eyes, flashing, Olive jumped to her feet. "It's true that someone did take our boat, but it wasn't Jess. She was nowhere near the spot. I know she wasn't."

"Then why do you suppose this—er—letter-writer accuses your chum?" asked the headmistress.

"Because she wants to see Jess expelled!" Olive said promptly. "Oh, it's not fair, Miss Bramleigh," she burst out. "Jess has done nothing to be ashamed of! It's not she who's causing trouble in St. Kit's—it's this beastly anonymous tale-bearer! Jess is a ripping girl."

Stormily she stood there by the desk, and Miss Bramleigh's face softened.

"It does you credit, Olive, to stand by Jess like this," she said. "As you know, I strongly disapprove of anonymous letter-writing. Usually I disregard them, but so many disturbing reports have reached me about the new girl that I felt I must investigate the matter. However, tell me exactly what happened."

Olive did so, though modestly she minimised the part she had played. The Head nodded thoughtfully.

"So it was this mysterious double of Jess Grant's who took the boat?" she observed.

Olive nodded.

"You are positive you weren't mistaken? You are certain that it wasn't Jess herself?"

"Absolutely positive, Miss Bramleigh."

"Very well, we will say no more about it, but I must confess, Olive, that I am a little worried about Jess. Though she



## FROM ONE GIRL TO ANOTHER

### Cheery Chatter and Helpful Hints by Penelope

#### BUSY DAYS

In the midst of all these luxury thoughts which spring brings, perhaps you'll spare some thought also for—spring cleaning.

People still talk of the time when the house had to be turned upside down, and the family living on bread and cheese, during spring cleaning.

But all this is over now, thank goodness! Mothers and families seem to manage so much more cleverly nowadays—what with vacuum-cleaners and polishers and labour-saving kitchens.

Did you realise that it is possible to HIRE a vacuum-cleaner for the day?

I think this is a good idea. The charge varies from 2s. 6d. to about 5s., with all gadgets; but it's well worth it to the family who hasn't one already.

But in spite of all these new devices, the good old broom, brush, and pail still prove themselves exceedingly useful.

So I wonder if you'd like to make these little spring-cleaning novelties in the picture here.

The long broom, as you can see, is a cute little pin-holder; so is the scrubbing-brush; while the pail would make a most excellent hair-tidy or pin-tray to hang on the bedroom mirror.

The broom is made from a cork, with a skewer stuck into the smaller end for a handle. This is covered with ribbon, which fastens with a drawing-pin, and ties with a bow at the end for hanging up. Pins are stuck in at the end of the cork to represent bristles.



The other brush is made from half a cork, cut through lengthwise. This cork can be painted if you feel like it, and the pins are jabbed in on the flat side.

The pail is made from a small empty cream carton. It has some silver paper or shiny silk material glued all round the outside, and the inside can be painted. Two holes are made to thread the ribbon handle through.

Good-bye all, until next week!

Your own

PENELOPE

**H**HALLO, EVERYBODY!—Here is your Penelope again, feeling as merry and bright as ever; in fact, just a spot merrier and a spot brighter.

You're wondering why?

Well, I'll tell you. 'Cause it's nearly the first of Spring, and that always cheers me up. Yes, even if we had a pea-soup of a fog on the day you still couldn't depress me.

Whatever else may happen, I shall sally forth on March 21st, and choose my young self a new hat—just to celebrate the fine weather in store.

I think it shall be a very prim boater style. But I shan't look like a 1904 river girl in it. Oh, no!

This boater shall have a small brim. It shall be worn precariously forward over my forehead. It shall have a topknot of artificial flowers on it.

And it shall have a veil to tie under the chin.

This veil shall be lavender-blue in colour—thoroughly foolish and frivolous.

#### WHAT'S NEW?

Now, supposing I talk about clothes for schoolgirls, just for a change, instead of about my own self.

First, do you remember those petticoats of long ago that had insertions and lace and even ribbon around the hems?

Well, these are returning into fashion.

Yes, really. Under a navy blue dress it is considered very smart to show just an inch or so of frilly petti. A "lingerie touch," this is called. But, of course, the rest of the dress must match; there must be lingerie touches at neck and wrists—or elbows if it's a short-sleeved frock—as well.

My other spring news for you concerns hair.

It's definitely going to be shorter for the summer. This should please all you tomboy spirits who love to run a comb through your locks easily without having to bother to twirl and twiddle with the ends.

To keep it combed back from your face is the smart idea. Which is a good one, I think, for if you have a wave at all in your hair it always shows more this way than if the hair is combed down, curtain-wise.

may not be to blame for all that has happened of late in the Fourth Form, yet the fact cannot be evaded that she is an unsettling—a very unsettling—influence in the school!"

The Head pursed her lips, and then her stern expression returned.

"However, that is not what I really wish to discuss with you, Olive," she went on. "The question that disturbs me even more than Jess Grant is your own position in the Form."

"My—my own position in the Form?" echoed Olive, going a little white.

"Yes, your position as Form captain."

As the headmistress paused, Olive waited anxiously. What was Miss Bramleigh getting at? She quickly knew.

"As you know, Olive," the Head continued, "until recently it has been the rule at St. Kit's for Form captains to be appointed—not elected by popular vote. When I assumed the reins of office, I changed that rule, but I would not be honest if I did not confess that I have serious doubts as to whether my decision was wise."

"You—you mean, Miss Bramleigh, that you are dissatisfied with me as captain?" faltered Olive, her heart thumping, her lips quivering with dismay.

The Head frowned.

"I prefer to leave my views out of the discussion for the moment," she replied. "What is more important is how the Fourth Form view your leadership. Grave—very grave—reports as to your

unpopularity have come to my notice. Indeed, if what I hear is true, it is not too much to say that you have lost the confidence of the Fourth." Raising her eyes, she looked sharply at Olive. "Is that true?" she asked.

Olive did not know what to say. Her whole being rebelled at admitting the charge, yet how could she deny it in face of what had happened?

"Well," asked Miss Bramleigh, "what have you to say? Is it true that there is dissension in the Fourth?"

Reluctantly Olive nodded.

"I—I'm afraid there is," she confessed. "Some of the girls have taken a dislike to Jess. But it's not Jess' fault. She has done nothing to deserve blame. It's that horrid anonymous letter-writer. She's the cause of all the trouble. But for her—"

The Head held up her hand.

"Never mind about Jess Grant," she said. "It is you we are discussing. Do you think that if there was a new election you would be re-elected?"

Olive flushed.

"That's hardly a fair question, Miss Bramleigh. I don't think you can expect me to answer that."

Miss Bramleigh frowned.

"Perhaps not. But it must be answered. It is essential, Olive, that the captain must have the confidence of the Form. Without it there can be nothing but trouble. I do not wish to be unfair to you. I want to give you every chance

to show that my fears are misplaced—but these doubts must be cleared up once and for all."

She paused, and anxiously Olive waited. An icy hand seemed to be clutching at her heart. She had been so proud of her position. To be Form captain had always been her dearest ambition. Surely—surely, she was not to be forced to give up her captaincy?

For a moment or two the Head sat there, gazing down at the papers on her desk, her slim fingers fidgeting with her fountain-pen, then abruptly she gave a decisive nod.

"This question must be put to the test, Olive," she declared. "You had better call a Form meeting for to-morrow evening and ask the girls for a vote of confidence."

"And—and suppose they don't give it?" asked Olive.

Miss Bramleigh frowned.

"Then I regret to say I shall have to ask you to resign," she replied. "In view of the unhappy events that have taken place recently, a strong leadership is essential. To-morrow you must secure a vote of confidence, or else I am afraid I shall have to appoint someone to take your place!"

What a blow this is to all Olive's hopes! It seems impossible that she will gain a "vote of confidence" from the Form. Don't miss next Friday's enthralling chapters. Order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** right away.

A little gasp of incredulous delight escaped her lips.

Sparkling against a bed of white velvet was a dainty headdress in the form of a crescent set with twinkling stones.

Her eyes shining, Lola tried the glittering crescent on her dark hair, turning to glance at herself in the mirror.

And just then there came a sound of distant clapping, a patter of footsteps. The door burst open to admit Maria Garcia and the dancing troupe.

"They're waiting for La Bella Lola," jeered Maria. "You'd better hurry—"

Her voice trailed away; into her dark eyes flashed a gleam of incredulous jealousy and amazement as she saw Lola standing ready for her entrance, her face flushed with new confidence, the jewelled headdress glittering against her dark hair.

"Where—where did you get that?" gasped Maria.

Lola smiled; she felt she could afford to smile. In some magical moment all her cares seemed to have been swept away.

"From one of my admirers, Maria," she replied tantalisingly; and she swept past the dumbfounded girl and out into the courtyard—to be greeted by a roar of applause.

"La Bella Lola!"

### HER FATHER'S SCARF

FROM the moment she set foot on the floor, and the orchestra struck up the first wild, clashing chords of the dance, Lola was convinced that she would be a success.

Her father's message—his unexpected gift—had acted like a talisman.

She danced for him—and for him alone. She could imagine that he was sitting there at a table right in front, his handsome face intent with interest and pride; a boyish, encouraging smile on his lips.

The lights had been lowered; a single spotlight picked out the young dancer

## THE BANDIT'S DAUGHTER

(Continued from page 564.)

in her flame-coloured costume as she twirled and pirouetted on the floor among the crowded tables—now advancing, now retreating, now leaping into the air as a flame leaps from a fire.

A tense stillness enveloped the onlookers as they watched.

Then startlingly the spell was broken. From outside in the street came a sound of shouting drawing nearer. The door burst open to admit two men supporting a boyish figure between them.

"Make way!" shouted one of them. "The young senior has been hurt."

The crowd at the rear of the cafe parted; the proprietor hurried forward. The music trailed away, and Lola was left standing in the middle of the floor, pale and bewildered.

Instinctively her glance sought the boyish figure, who had been supported to one of the tables.

A broken cry escaped her lips.

"Tony!" she exclaimed, starting forward.

Tony Creswick looked up dazedly, raising a hand to his bandaged head. A faint, apologetic grin crossed his face.

"Sorry, Lola!" he said huskily. "I didn't mean to disturb your dance; I told the chaps not to cause a commotion. But I promised you I'd come along—and I meant to keep my promise."

"But, senior, what has happened?" demanded the agitated proprietor, as the others clustered round.

One of Tony's companions answered for him.

"It was that scoundrel the Grey Shadow! He and his men visited a hacienda on the outskirts of the town and got away with a fortune in jewels. The young senior surprised them—and was fired at."

"It was nothing," put in Tony hastily. "A mere scratch; don't worry about me, Lola; go on with your dance."

But Lola's face had turned as pale as death; there was a dreadful sinking feeling at her heart as she raised her hand instinctively to her dark hair.

Her fingers touched the glittering crescent headdress, and she winced—almost as though it had burnt her.

Horrified, she thrust aside the thought that had crept into her mind.

"Tony, it can't have been—it can't have been the Grey Shadow!" she gasped. "He's far too gallant and chivalrous to have allowed such a thing!"

Even as she spoke she realised that she had said too much. Tony glanced at her questioningly; there came a low murmur from the onlookers.

Maria, an interested onlooker, was swift to seize her advantage.

"So La Bella Lola is a champion of the Grey Shadow!" she exclaimed. "Why should she be so interested in a bandit—a worthless outlaw?"

The murmurs increased. A man rose suddenly at the rear of the crowd—a lean, dark-featured man whom Lola recognised. He was the man who had been addressing the crowd in the market-place.

"The Grey Shadow has many sympathisers in Mexico—especially among the ladies!" he sneered. "There was one of his spies in the market-place this afternoon—a girl who escaped when the crowd tried to detain her. No doubt she had given him information that led to this robbery. But she left behind her a scarf bearing a curious crest. Does anyone here recognise it?"

And he held above his head Lola's grey silk kerchief!

There was a moment's deathly silence—and Lola was conscious that both Tony and Maria were staring towards the fluttering scarf.

Will either Maria or Tony recognise the scarf as belonging to Lola? Don't miss next Friday's grand chapters of this colourful serial. Order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** right away.