

Detective June's MOST THRILLING CASE



CAPTURED BY THE GREY FALCON!

By PETER LANGLEY

JUNE GAYNOR, niece of Noel Raymond, the famous young detective, went to Port Craig college disguised as a new girl, Dorothy Whiteman. Her object was to solve the mystery which surrounded an old play which the Upper Fourth, led by Julie Vermont, intended producing in the ancient refectory, which was used as the school theatre.

She was startled to discover that her case and that of her Uncle Noel, who was out to capture the Grey Falcon, a mysterious master-crook, were connected.

Thanks to the Grey Falcon's treachery, it was rumoured that Noel himself had turned crook, and that he himself was the Grey Falcon!

Noel Raymond, accused of stealing jewels from the hear-by Manor, tenanted by Howard Wyndham, chairman of the college governors, lived in secret in one of the college attics.

June suspected Miss Tuft, the Upper Fourth Form mistress, of being the Grey Falcon's unknown helper, and, wearing a hooded mac, followed the mistress to the refectory, and down a secret passage to her meeting place with the Grey Falcon and his two accomplices.

June was caught and brought before the masked Grey Falcon. He reached out a hand to rip off her concealing hood.

JUNE stared in consternation at the masked figure of the Grey Falcon, and involuntarily she shrank back as he stretched out a hand with the object of tearing off the hood which concealed her features.

"We'll have a torch to this job," he said with a grin that sent shivers down June's spine.

Helpless in the grip of his two accomplices, she watched in horror as he felt in his pocket. It looked as if utter disaster was about to overwhelm her. Any moment now the secret of her identity would be revealed. Oh, how she wished she had confided in Uncle Noel before embarking upon her perilous adventure!

Producing a big, silvery torch from his pocket, the Grey Falcon took another step forward.

"Now we'll have a good look," he said.

As he raised his free hand towards the hood of her mac, he levelled the torch so that the light should fall full on her face.

But he did not get a chance to switch on the torch, for suddenly there came a startling interruption.

"Stop that—and don't move!" rapped a voice. "If anyone's identity is going to be revealed, it's not that girl's, but yours, Mr. Grey Falcon!"

At the sound of that ringing voice the master-crook and his hirelings swung round. While June stared in amazed wonder.

Unnoticed, a motor-boat had nosed its way into the cavern, and now, engine shut off, it bobbed up and down, its solitary occupant silhouetted against the darkening sky outside.

June could hardly believe her eyes. Incredible she surveyed the lithe figure who, revolver in hand, stood in the stern of the boat.

"Noel—Uncle Noel!" she gulped.

Not a murmur came from the Grey Falcon and his gang. As if petrified, they goggled at the one man they had had cause to fear—at the famous young detective they had believed to be dead.

Still keeping them covered, Noel Raymond beckoned to his niece.

"Jump aboard—quick!" he ordered.

The two crooks who had clutched June's arms had now released their grip, but for a moment the schoolgirl detective did not move. Her brain was still in a whirl. How had Uncle Noel known of her danger? And how had he known that the Grey Falcon and the others were meeting in this cave?

Then with an effort she thrust the mystery from her and eagerly darted forward. The Grey Falcon's hirelings, cowed by that grimly pointing gun, made no attempt to detain her. The motor-boat was bobbing up and down very near the edge of the rocky platform, and June found it an easy matter to jump into the roomy well.

"Good girl. Now start up the engine and get ready to take the wheel."

Though Noel spoke to her, he did not take his eyes from the four glaring figures on the platform. He knew that the slightest slackening of his vigilance would be fatal. The Grey Falcon was as dangerous as he was audacious.

As June, her heart now thudding with the

existence of it all, stooped to carry out her uncle's instructions, the Grey Falcon managed to find his voice.

"Noel Raymond!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "Then you have been bluffing us all along. You weren't drowned."

A dry smile twitched the detective's lips. "Sorry to disappoint you," he said, "but it looks as if you're right. The report of my death was rather exaggerated. But we will discuss that later. At the moment I am interested in you. And I dislike talking to a person whose face I cannot see. Please be good enough to take off your mask."

The Grey Falcon clenched his fists and made as if to take a furious step forward. Then, warned by the stern look on Noel Raymond's face, he let his tensed muscles relax.

June, in the act of switching on the engine, gave a silent cheer. Never had she admired her uncle more than she did at this moment. It thrilled her to know that he had complete command of the situation, thrilled her even more to know that in another moment or two the identity of the master-crook would be revealed.

Breathless with expectancy, she watched and waited. Slowly the Grey Falcon raised one hand to his face. His fingers closed over the tapes of his mask.

June felt the suspense almost unbearable. Her gaze was riveted on that concealing strip of black crepe. So was Uncle Noel's. They had no eyes for anything else.

And then it happened. The Grey Falcon's other hand, dangling loosely at his side, swung up with lightning swiftness. And from that hand whirled the heavy torch it had been clutching. At startling speed it came hurtling through the air. Not for Noel, but for the unprepared June.

By aiming at the girl the Grey Falcon showed his cowardly cunning, for Noel, his one concern June's safety, lowered his gun and pulled her aside—just as the missile struck the back of the cockpit with vicious force.

For perhaps twenty seconds the crooks on the rocky platform were uncovered. That was more than enough for their purpose. Even as Noel made to raise his gun again, another missile hurtled forward, to strike the brass rail of the boat.

It was a smoke bomb! As it burst, there was a blinding flash, then choking clouds of black vapour engulfed the motor-boat, blinding both June and Noel and completely blotting out the crooks at the back of the cavern.

"Now's our chance!" It was the Grey Falcon who triumphantly cried out, and with the words came the crack of a gun.

Frantically Noel grabbed his niece by the shoulder.

"Lie down—keep under cover!" he panted. "Leave everything to me!"

As another bullet came whistling through the smoke the young detective leapt for the wheel and spun it round. Though furious at the way he had been out-tricked, his one concern now was to get June out of danger as quickly as possible.

Round whirled the motor-boat, and, accompanied by a crackling fusillade from the back of the cave, it went cleaving through the water, heading for the open sea.

June gave a gasp of relief as the smoke and blackness vanished and they emerged from the mouth of the cave. Shakily she rose to her feet.

"Pew! That was a narrow squeak!" she exclaimed. "But of all the rogues! Another second and we'd have known who he was." Then, as the motor-boat went roaring on, she regarded curiously the tensed figure at the wheel. "But how ever did you guess what was happening, uncle?" she asked.

Noel Raymond smiled. "You forget that my attic window overlooks the quad, and I guessed something was afoot when I saw you shadowing Miss Tuft. So I

climbed through the window and down the ivy. But by the time I got down you had both disappeared. I knew the Grey Falcon and his gang sometimes use that old smugglers' cave as a meeting-place, so I thought I'd borrow a motor-boat and go and investigate—and a good job I did," he added.

June nodded contentedly. "I have been reckless," she agreed. "but don't be angry with me, nunky. I felt I simply had to follow up the clue I'd found. Now all I've done is to make a proper hash of things. The Grey Falcon knows you're alive, and—"

She broke off and they both stiffened. From the distance there came a high-pitched humming sound. The noise of a powerful engine. June cast a look over her shoulder, then gave a gasp of dismay as she saw a long, sleek shape emerge from the cavern.

"It's the Grey Falcon and his gang!" she exclaimed. "They're chasing us!"

Noel nodded, but did not waste time on words. He flung the throttle wide open, and sent the motor-boat thundering on at top speed.

Except for themselves and their pursuers the sea was deserted, nor was there any sign of life on the cliff top. Not that Noel would have dared to shout for assistance, even if there had been anyone about—for he was still a fugitive; a man liable to arrest on sight.

A DESPERATE CHASE



HELPLESS to do anything but stand there and silently watch that desperate pursuit over the water, June caught in her breath.

Every moment she half-expected to hear the menacing crack of a gun, but none came.

Like Noel, the Grey Falcon was not anxious to attract attention. He wanted to capture and deal with the detective in his own way.

From the oncoming enemy June's gaze went to the high cliff. Ahead she saw a winding path; at its foot a wooden landing-stage. It was for that stage Noel was heading.

Could they possibly hope to reach it before the other boat drew alongside?

June found the suspense almost unbearable. Slowly but surely the landing-stage drew nearer. But so did the light and speedy launch. She could see the Grey Falcon clearly now; could see also his two confederates, and that ghostly figure whom she was convinced was Miss Tuft, her own Form-mistress.

"Heave to!" It was the master-crook who shouted, and menacingly he brandished something that glinted in his hand. "Heave to! You can't escape!"

"Don't take any notice, uncle!" gasped June. "He wouldn't dare shoot!"

But to her dismay the detective throttled down the engine and spun the wheel. Round swung the boat, its engine hardly ticking over. There came a shout of triumph from the other craft, and swiftly it plunged nearer, hissing spray rising from its bows.

June stared in consternation. "Uncle—"

"—she began, then gasped. For as the other boat drew across their bows, without warning Noel flung the throttle wide open again.

It was an audacious move—one which took the Grey Falcon completely by surprise. Before he could realise what was happening, Noel's boat hurtled forward.

"Hang on!" panted Noel. Frantically June clutched at the brass rail, and only just in time.

Crash! With a nerve-shaking thud the two boats collided. June was swung first this way, then that. The shock jarred her from head to foot and a hissing sheet of water swamped her.

As, dazed and gasping, she clung on to the rail, she heard Noel give a triumphant cry.

"Done it! That'll keep them busy for a bit!" Knuckling the spray from her eyes, June stared, then she also shouted, for, although their heavier boat had emerged unscathed from the shattering collision, a jagged hole had been stove in the side of the frailer launch. It was now wallowing helplessly, its furious occupants all engaged in a frantic effort to try to stem the water which was pouring aboard.

"Oh, well done, uncle! It was a risk, but it was worth it," whooped June, a glorious feeling of exhilaration replacing her former fear, and as their boat was racing on she waved a mocking hand. "So long, Grey Falcon! Here's to the next time!"

Greater and greater grew the distance between the two boats, and soon Noel and June found themselves drawing nearer the landing-stage. One hand on the wheel, the young detective turned to his niece.

"Get ready to jump," he said. "And you had better go on ahead. It wouldn't do for us to be seen together."

June's lips pouted.

"But I've got some exciting news to tell you, uncle," she protested. "I discovered quite a lot while I was in the cave. And not only that! Her grey eyes sparkling, she regarded him provokingly. "I actually discovered the secret of the Refectory dressing-room!"

"What!"

In amazement Noel surveyed her, and June chuckled as she saw his expression.

"Yes, I know now why the Grey Falcon plotted to get it put out of bounds to us. You see—"

But already the boat was bumping against the old timbers of the landing-stage, and, as he busied himself with the mooring ropes, Noel cut her short.

"Sorry, but I'm afraid your news will have to wait, dear," he said. "Off you go. Don't worry about me. I'll find a way of getting back to my attic without being seen, and as soon as the coast is clear you can slip upstairs and we can have a talk."

Swallowing her disappointment, June reluctantly clambered up on to the landing-stage. For a moment she stood there, hesitating, and looking across to where the Grey Falcon & Co. were still struggling to plug the hole in the side of their launch. Then, as she heard a distant clock chiming, she gave a gasp.

"Golly, it's nearly time for roll call. I must scoot!" she cried. "Take care of yourself, nunky. No running into danger the moment my back's turned, remember."

Noel broke off mooring the boat to laugh.

"That's excellent advice," he said, a twinkle in his eyes. "I hope you'll remember it in future, my dear."

June laughed too, then, with a final word of farewell, went running down the landing-stage and up the steep path. As she hurried on back to the college, she reviewed the evening's exciting happenings, and, despite the set-backs, she could not help feeling a little glow of satisfaction stealing over her.

"The Grey Falcon knows Uncle Noel is still on his track," she murmured. "That means it won't be long before the police get busy, searching for him." She gave a sigh as she thought what a shame it was that anyone so straight and fine as Uncle Noel should be forced to become a fugitive. Then abruptly her frown lifted. "But it won't be for long," she told herself confidently. "Thanks to what I've discovered it ought to be fairly easy to get at the truth and put everything right."

She thrilled as she remembered all that she had learned, and as she hastened on she speculated eagerly to what secret could lie hidden in that labyrinth of underground passages beneath the old refectory.

The Grey Falcon had hinted that that secret would bring a fortune to himself and his rascally associates, and he had asked his girl helper to secure an ancient volume which now reposed in the college library.

June's lips set determinedly. She meant to make certain that that vital volume did not fall into the Grey Falcon's hands. At the first opportunity she would obtain possession of it herself.

Her mind still busy with plans for the future, she reached the college grounds. Then, as she looked up at the clock on the tower, she broke into another run.

"Roll call will be nearly over!" she told herself, with a heave.

But she need not have worried. Although she found the rest of the school gathered in the Assembly Hall, there was no mistress on the rostrum. As she entered, Julie Vermont and her chums in the Upper Fourth regarded her in surprise.

"Hallo, where have you been?" they chorused.

"For a stroll," June said evasively. "I went rather farther than I'd intended, and I didn't notice the time."

"Well, for once you're lucky," said Julie, with a nod to the vacant rostrum. Miss Tuft's supposed to be taking roll call this evening, but she's not turned up. Can't imagine where she's got to," she added, with a puzzled frown. "It's not like her to be late."

With difficulty June suppressed a chuckle. What a shock Julie & Co. would have if they knew what had really been responsible for the young Form-mistress' absence! And how amazed they would be if they knew what June herself had been up to!

Ten minutes passed and still there was no sign of the missing Miss Tuft. The girls began to get restive.

"I vote we break up," said Lady Sue.

"After all, it's not our fault if old Tuft's gone off on the spree," said Celia Treves.

But before they could disperse the door opened. It was not the Form-mistress who entered, however, but Miss Stanton. The Head looked surprised when she saw the girls still gathered there and learnt that the register had not been marked.

"Really, this is most irregular," she commented. "What can have become of Miss Tuft?" She pursed her lips crossly, then stepped up on to the rostrum. "It is not fair to keep you waiting any longer," she declared. "I will mark the register myself."

One by one she called out their names, and then she departed. Julie and the rest, however, showed no eagerness to disperse. Intrigued by the mystery of Miss Tuft's absence, they gathered in groups to discuss the strange incident.

But June made for the door. She wanted to make certain that Noel Raymond had managed to get safely back to his refuge up in the attic. But, instead of making straight for the stairs, she turned right and went hurrying down the corridor that led to the library. Now was her chance to make certain that the old volume the Grey Falcon had mentioned did not fall into the master-crook's possession.

The library was deserted, and eagerly June went from bookcase to bookcase, scanning the packed shelves. At the far end of the long apartment, near the french windows, was a small bookcase whose front was protected by a metal grille. Here were kept special volumes not for general circulation.

"That's the most likely place to find it," June told herself, and peered through the mesh of the grille at the faded, leather-bound books beyond. Instantly she gave a triumphant little cry. "There it is!" she exclaimed.

Excitedly she made to open the grille, but to her dismay it refused to budge. It was kept locked, and suddenly she noticed the small plate which was affixed to it:

"These books can only be borrowed by obtaining the special permission of the head-mistress."

"Oh, blow!" In dismay June stood there, but she knew a little consolation. "Anyway, Miss Tuft won't be able to get at it easily," she told herself. "She won't dare ask the Head

for the key, and that grille looks pretty tough."

Thoughtfully she regarded the ancient volume, with the title "The Tale of the Three Virtues" in faded gilt lettering.

Why was the Grey Falcon so desperately anxious to get hold of that book? What secret did its pages contain? And was it possible that the secret was connected in some way with the legendary play which the Upper Fourth intended to produce on Foundation Day?

As she stood there, tantalised by the nearness of the vital volume, June heard startled shouts coming from the quadrangle. Wonderingly she turned, then, as she looked through the window, an amazed cry escaped her:

A NEW THREAT TO NOEL



DRAWN up outside the headmistress' house was a smart two-seater, and gathered around it was a crowd of girls.

But it was not this which made June cry out. It was the sight of a tall, soldierly figure carrying a limp burden from the car.

The man was Howard Wyndham, the chairman of the college governors, and it was a woman he was carrying across to the entrance of Miss Stanton's private apartments.

"Why, it's—it's Miss Tuft!" ejaculated June. Blankly she stared. The Form-mistress seemed to be unconscious, but she no longer wore the ghostly garb of Sir Richard de Coreville. She was attired in the costume and light coat which she had worn when June had seen her leave the college earlier in the evening.

But what had befallen her? June asked herself in bewilderment. Surely she had not met with an accident in the water-logged motor-launch? That didn't seem likely, for in that event how had Mr. Wyndham come to take charge of her?

That queer premonition which had warned June of imminent danger on many previous occasions once again began to steal over her. An unbearable feeling of uneasiness gripped her, and, flinging open the french windows, she went running across the quad.

By the time she gained the scene Mr. Wyndham and his unconscious burden had vanished into the house, and the excited, agitated school-girls had crowded around the car to question Mr. Wyndham's chauffeur. Julie was one of them, and eagerly June grasped her by the arm.

"Whatever's happened?" she gasped. "That was Miss Tuft, wasn't it?"

Julie nodded.

"Yes. Mr. Wyndham found her lying outside the refectory."

"Out—outside the refectory?"

Incredulously June stared. The Upper Fourth captain gave another nod.

"That's right. The poor dear had an awful fright. It seems she ran full tilt into the Grey Falcon."

"The—The Grey Falcon?" June could only echo the words. Her head seemed to be going round. The situation was beyond her. "Do you mean Noel Raymond?" she asked. Julie nodded, and June pretended to be amazed. "But he's dead—he fell over the cliff and was drowned!" she protested.

"That's just where everyone was mistaken, miss." It was the chauffeur who spoke. "Apparently that was just a crafty trick on the part of that rascal to avoid arrest. Actually, he's very much alive. And what's more"—the man paused, as if anxious to make his statement seem as dramatic as possible—"what's more," he went on slowly, "he's been living not very far away. In fact, the master has a suspicion that he's actually been hiding here, somewhere in the college!"

"Wha-aaa-t!" There came a startled, incredulous gasp from all around. Only June did not join in it. Suddenly she had gone very pale, for gradually she was beginning to suspect the truth.

That Miss Tuft had really fainted when suddenly confronted by Noel Raymond's "ghost" was obviously absurd.

"It's all a trick," June told herself. "A trick to start a hue and cry for Uncle Noel. I'll bet anything that Miss Tuft only pretended to faint when she saw Mr. Wyndham driving along, then she must have told him some story before pretending to faint again."

Whether her theory was accurate or not, June suddenly realised how great was her uncle's danger. By now he would have regained his hiding-place up in the attics, and without any suspicion of what was afoot, would be waiting her visit to him.

But supposing Mr. Wyndham insisted on the college being searched? Certainly he would do so if he really believed that the supposed Grey Falcon had taken refuge here.

"Oh, my golly!" June gulped, and, turning, went hurrying away.

At all costs she must warn Noel Raymond of the latest startling development, but as she gained the main building she was surprised to see a whole crowd of girls stream through the doorway.

Though puzzled, she was too intent on getting to Uncle Noel to ask what was the reason for this general exodus.

"Excuse me," she gasped, and started to push her way through the jostling girls, only to find her arm gripped.

"Hallo, where are you going?" inquired a voice, and, turning, June saw that it was Beryl Maude, one of the prefects, who was detaining her.

"Upstairs! Why?" asked June. "Sorry, can't be done. No one's allowed indoors. Miss Stanton has just phoned across," was the astonishing reply.

"Not allowed indoors!" gasped June, staring. "But why ever not?"

"Because of this Grey Falcon scare," the prefect explained. "I think it's absurd myself to think that, even if he is still alive, he can be hiding in the coll, but apparently Miss Stanton has other views. Anyway, the whole place is to be searched, and until the search is over no one's allowed inside."

Helplessly June stood there, an icy shiver running down her spine, for it looked as if Uncle Noel was trapped. And if he were found he would be led off under arrest—accused of all the crimes committed by the very man he was striving so hard to capture!

Isn't there any way in which June can warn Noel of his danger? Be sure you don't miss a word of next Friday's splendid chapters of this serial—in the GIRLS' CRYSTAL.

WILD DOG OF THE FOREST

By

ENID BOYTEN

A grand story of adventure and mystery in the lumber-lands of Canada, and it will appear complete in next Friday's

"GIRLS' CRYSTAL."