

# GIRLS' CRYSTAL<sup>3</sup>

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"

Week  
Ending  
Feb. 16th,  
1946.



Frank Stuart & Co. Didn't Want A Girl To Join Their Treasure-hunt. They Regarded All Girls As Nuisances—But Denise Quickly Made Them Change Their Minds!—By RHODA FLEMING

## THE SURPRISING COUSIN!

BY the sound of those voices," murmured Denise Gay, "this seems to be the place." There was a merry sparkle in her blue eyes as she halted on the bank of the stream and listened.

The voices that drifted on the breeze were boyish and exuberant, in keeping with the holiday setting.

"Thank goodness we've no girls with us, Frank! They're all right in their place—but no use on an outing like this."

"Oh!" breathed Denise, a little indignantly. "Is that so?"

As she looked round for a means of crossing, another voice drawled out:

"Hear, hear!" it said. "Pass the pickles, Bob. As you were saying, girls are more ornamental than useful. But about this cousin of yours, Frank—what time d'you expect him?"

"Ought to be here any time now, chaps," answered a third voice. "I left a message for him at the house. We've never met, but, judging by dad's wire, he's no end of a sport—"

"Good old uncle!" whispered Denise, as she took a flying jump on to a stepping-stone, and balanced precariously in the shallows.

She repeated the performance, clinging to the overhanging branches, jumping nimbly from stone to stone till she reached the opposite bank.

Flushed, and a little breathless, she scrambled on to the mossy ground that overlooked the glade, where the smoke of a camp-fire rose in a white spiral against the trees.

Where the shallow stream joined the river a boat swung lazily at its moorings, its stern heaped with camping gear and sundry packages.

Three boys, wearing flannels and open-neck

shirts, sat in the clearing, a picnic lunch spread between them.

Her eyes dancing, Denise crept through the bushes towards them.

"As I was saying," declared rugged Bob Harvey of the carrotty hair, "we could do with another chap in the party—a fellow with his wits about him, and not afraid to take a risk or two. What's your cousin's name, Frank?"

"Eh—oh, Dennis!" replied the fair-haired youth, who was brewing coffee over the fire. "I fancy he's a distant cousin on dad's side of the family, though old Parkins at the local post office got the telegram a bit jumbled. Here—I'll read it:

"Expect Cousin Dennis—arriving midday Friday. A good sort—will join in with your holiday plans. Rely on you to give warm welcome.—DAD."

"Sounds all right," drawled the third member of the trio, a good-looking boy in immaculate flannels and blazer. "Going to let him into the secret of our excursion, Frank?"

"Don't see why not" rejoined Frank Stuart. "If he's the kind of fellow I imagine him to be, he'll add to the fun."

"One thing—he won't have to be looked after," grunted red-haired Bob. "Not like a girl, who'd be scared of getting her feet wet or spoiling her dress. What's up Steve?"

Steve Dilorford had risen to one knee, his shrewd, dark eyes scanning the bushes.

"Have a care, you fellows," he muttered. "Someone coming—a girl!"

"A—a girl?" echoed Bob Harvey incredulously. "Out here?"

Frank Stuart started to his feet as a radiant vision emerged from the bushes.

"Crumbs!" he breathed.

A delightful picture Denise made, poised in the sunshine, with her shining, golden hair, flushed, eager face, and dancing, blue eyes, and wearing a gay, summery frock.

"Hallo!" she said, holding out her hand to Frank. "I do hope I'm not late."

Frank gulped as he automatically shook hands.

"I say, there's some mistake, isn't there?" he rejoined, his good-natured face rather red. "I mean—we don't know you, and this is private property."

"Of course," said Denise brightly. "They sent me along here from the house. You're Cousin Frank, aren't you? I'm Denise."

Frank's eyes goggled as he met her laughing, friendly glance.

"Den—Denise— Oh, crumbs!" he stammered confusedly, as realisation dawned on him. "Trust old Parkins to get the message wrong. We didn't expect—that is—"

There came a comical groan from Bob Harvey, while Steve Dilford laughed.

"Great Scott—a girl cousin!" he gurgled.

Denise looked from one to the other, her eyes dancing, and not in the least put out by the lack of warmth in their greeting. Of course, she realised how it had happened—her uncle's hurried wire, misinterpreted by the village postmaster—and a perfectly natural mistake on Frank's part.

And she was quite ready to back out, if they insisted—though it would mean a bitter disappointment. Denise had been looking forward to this outing with her newly found boy cousin and his friends.

Besides that the snatches of conversation she had overheard had been a direct challenge to her sex—and Denise was on her mettle.

So girls had to be looked after? It was time these boys were taught a few facts.

Demurely she smiled at them, summing them up in her quick way. Her Cousin Frank—easy-going and straightforward as his name implied. Bob Harvey—stubbornly masculine and prejudiced against girls. About Steve Dilford it was harder to form an opinion. Meeting the mocking glance of his dark eyes, Denise was on her guard.

"Well," she remarked lightly, breaking the strained silence, "aren't you going to ask me to sit down?"

"Er—yes, rather, of course," stammered Frank, belatedly recovering his manners. "The ground's a bit hard, and all that, I'm afraid—but you can sit on my raincoat."

Denise thanked him prettily and sat down.

"And now," she went on, smiling at the slightly abashed trio, "you'd better introduce yourselves—and then we can discuss the outing."

The boys exchanged meaning glances as Frank hastily made the introductions.

"Hem—about this outing!" he added, clearing his throat. "It's a bit tough going for a girl—I mean, we're not quite certain what we'll be up against—are we, chaps?"

"Rather not!" declared Bob bluntly. "Might lead to anything—even danger."

"More than likely," put in Steve, with relish.

They looked at Denise to see what kind of impression they'd made—and encountered a wide-eyed, eager smile.

"How exciting!" she breathed. "Of course, I won't be a bit scared, with three strong boys like you to look after me."

The roguish twinkle that accompanied the words was lost on the boys. Frank looked rather complimented. Bob distinctly non-plussed. Steve smiled sardonically.

"You don't mean to say you want to come with us?" he asked incredulously.

"Oh, but I do!" declared Denise.

"That's torn it! Ouch!" finished Bob, with a glare as Frank kicked him.

"Where are we going?" added Denise, her curiosity fully aroused.

Frank glanced resignedly at the others, then drew a folded sheet of paper from his pocket. Denise, leaning forward with interest, saw that it was a map or chart of some kind, roughly drawn on age-yellowed parchment.

"We're on a treasure quest," Frank told her impressively.

Denise caught in her breath with a sudden thrill. At the same time she noticed that Steve Dilford was leaning forward intently, a curious gleam in his dark eyes. It might have been just excitement—like her own—but Denise was puzzled. Her feminine intuition had already decided that Steve was "different" from the other two boys.

"A treasure quest?" she echoed softly. "A real one?"

"We hope so," said Frank. "I stumbled on this old map by accident, Denise. It's the map of a river island—supposed to be haunted—just a jungle of trees and bushes that no one ever visits. There should be some kind of key to the map, explaining the markings—but it's missing. We've got to work the whole thing out from scratch. We may have to rough it—take a risk or two—and, as Bob says, there may be danger."

There was a suppressed sparkle in Denise's blue eyes as Steve Dilford reached out for the map.

"May I take a squint at it, old chap?" he asked lightly. "I've hardly seen it yet."

With a grin, Frank handed it over, and just then there came a loud, bubbling sound behind them.

"Coffee!" announced Bob.

"Oh, you're boiling it!" exclaimed Denise, shocked. "Don't you know it ruins coffee to boil it?"

"Does it?" asked Frank.

"Of course. You boys"—Denise snatched the pot from the glowing fire—"you'll have it all muddy if you're not careful! Where's the strainer? A piece of muslin will do—or a clean hanky."

Deftly she managed the coffee-pot, pouring coffee into four mugs. Frank, grinning approvingly, handed her an opened tin of condensed milk. As Denise pushed the jagged lid back with a spoon, she stiffened suddenly, her eyes glinting.

In the gleaming metal she saw a reflection—a reflection of Steve Dilford. Steve, taking advantage of the diversion, was doing something hurriedly with a pencil and Frank's chart—his back half-turned—working with furtive haste as the other two boys watched Denise.

Denise drew a deep breath, her suspicions confirmed. But she proceeded calmly to put milk in the coffee and turned with a disarming smile.

"Coffee with cream, boys—like mother makes it!"

"Thanks," said Bob, a trifle grudgingly. "At least, there are some things a girl can do."

"Just a few things," murmured Denise demurely. "Coffee, Steve?"

That boy was idling with the chart, but there was no trace of a pencil—no hint of the feverish excitement she had accidentally witnessed a moment ago, but her sharp eyes noticed the tiny, screwed-up ball of something he flicked on to the fire.

"Just what the doctor ordered!" he drawled, with his mocking smile.

She longed to know what that was he had flung on the fire, but Steve was watching her, and she was more than anxious not to rouse his suspicions. There was something going on here that neither Frank nor Bob suspected and Denise was determined to ferret it out.

At all costs she must keep up her role of a harmless, if inconvenient, girl cousin.

"Finished with the chart, Steve?" asked Frank. "I'd better take charge of it. We ought to get going if we're to complete our search by daylight. Er—Denise, do you still want to come with us?"

"More than ever," replied Denise firmly. "I wouldn't miss it, Frank, for anything." And as she spoke her blue eyes met Steve Dilford's mocking glance with a hint of challenge.

"Well, there you are, chaps," said Frank. "It's jolly sporting of Denise to offer to come with us. She'll look after the tea-things and all that kind of thing, and we must take care she doesn't run into any danger. Let's get along to the boat."

He took her arm chivalrously as Bob shouldered the picnic-hamper and Steve lingered to stamp out the glowing ashes of the camp-fire.

Denise bit her lip, anxious to play for time. That screwed-up, mysterious ball that Steve had been so anxious to destroy had fallen short of the glowing embers, and was lying half-hidden among the charred grass.

Denise meant to get hold of it, if possible, but the three boys were watching her.

Then a roguish sparkle crept into her eyes as feminine wile came to her aid. With a little frightened cry, she grabbed Frank's arm.

"Oh, look!" she gasped. "There—behind Steve!"

"Eh—what—where?" demanded that youth, spinning round and peering into the bushes.

"Now it's coming towards Bob. Look out!"

Bob sprang nimbly aside, snatching up a stick. Frank hurried forward.

In a flash Denise had bent swiftly and picked up the tiny, screwed-up ball of bluish paper—only in the nick of time.

"I say, what is it, Denise?" demanded Frank, looking round.

Denise gulped, concealing the ball of blue paper in her hanky.

"A—mouse!" she breathed in horrified tones. "Didn't you see it come out of the long grass?"

A loud, scornful laugh greeted her. "My goodness," said Frank, "I thought it was something dangerous!"

"Mouse!" Bob echoed disgustedly. "Just like a girl! What'll you do if you see a water-rat?"

"Please don't talk about it!" begged Denise, with a shiver. "Shall we go, Frank?"

"Sure you'll be all right if you come?" asked Frank anxiously.

"Of course!" breathed Denise, with a bewitching glance. "I know you'll take care of me."

And she hurried to the bank and scrambled into the boat, determined not to allow Frank a chance to change his mind. The boys clambered in after her, and they set off.

Denise, gazing, entranced, at the romantic scenery, careful avoided Steve's mocking glance.

Had she wronged him by her suspicions? The clue wrapped tightly in her hanky would be the proof.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Frank suddenly, as the boat glided into the shadow of the willows overhanging the bank of a small, jungle-like island. "Chuck a rope round that tree-stump, Bob. According to my map, this is the place we should start our exploring. We'll split up and take different paths."

"What about Denise?" muttered Bob in an audible whisper, as Frank gallantly assisted his girl cousin on to the bank.

"Oh—er"—Frank coughed—"I'm sure Denise would prefer to stay here and mind the boat. We won't be long," he added, with an awkward smile. "I've a jolly good book you could read, Denise, or—er—"

Denise, recollecting her role, checked a hot impulse to argue the point. She longed to explore the fascinating island; on the other hand, she was keen to solve the mystery—and the mystery won.

"Thanks, I've got my knitting," she murmured, her eyes twinkling roguishly as she produced a ball of green wool and a partly knitted sports jumper from her satchel. She

had brought it as an after-thought to while away the train journey, but it fitted in with her present "character" perfectly.

"Oh, good!" said Frank, in relief. "Sure you'll be all right? We won't be far off if you want us; just give us a shout. This island's been out of use for years," he added confidentially, "and there's no telling what we may stumble into. You'll be safer here."

"Come on, you fellows!" put in Steve impatiently. "We'll toss for choice of paths." He spun a coin, and won the toss, as Denise half expected. "I'll take the path on the right," he announced. "Whistle if you find anything, Frank. You've got the chart, y'know."

With a grin, he strode away, and Bob set off in the opposite direction. Frank lingered for a moment to make sure that Denise was comfortable, then hurried to overtake his chums.

Alone, Denise's heart beat more quickly as she dropped her knitting and started to her feet. With trembling fingers she unrolled the screwed-up ball of paper—carbon paper, used for tracing.

As she held it to the light her last doubts vanished. Steve had deliberately traced Frank's map, but had inserted certain symbols that had not previously been there.

"I bet—I bet he's got the missing 'key'!" breathed Denise, her blue eyes flashing indignantly.

For a boy deliberately to steal a march on his pals like this made Denise's blood boil. Her warm-hearted loyalty was up in arms at once.

Steve Dilford was a trickster, and she meant to unmask him!

But—how? This scrap of carbon-paper was not sufficient proof. He'd probably disown it completely—accuse her of trying to make mischief. Yet, somehow, she determined she would put "paid" to his little game.

Quickly Denise gathered up her knitting and dropped it into her satchel. Then, with a hurried glance round to take her bearings, she set off along the dark, narrow path taken by the boy she suspected.

Then ahead she saw a glimmer of daylight and heard a stealthy movement. Her heart thumping, she crept forward, parting the foliage. One glance at the figure in the clearing, and she knew she had not been mistaken.

For, before her, Steve Dilford was kneeling, compass in hand, and spread on the ground in front of him was a yellowed sheet of paper, similar to Frank's chart, only more elaborate.

And just then a twig snapped sharply under Denise's foot. She caught in her breath as the boy spun round, his eyes flashing towards the bushes. For the first time Denise noticed the ruthless expression on his pale, handsome face.

"Who's there?" he demanded, starting to his feet, and, thrusting the chart into his pocket, he advanced slowly towards the bush behind which Denise was hiding.

DENISE was conscious of a moment's panic. If Steve discovered her here he'd realise she had been spying on him, and change his plans accordingly. He might even use his influence with Frank to have her left out of the party.

But her wits did not desert her. Without waiting for the boy to come up, she broke through the bushes and ran towards him, grabbing him by the arm.

"Oh, Steve, I'm so glad I've found you!" she gasped.

"Denise!" Relief and annoyance struggled for mastery in the boy's good-looking face.

"What on earth's the matter now?" he demanded.

"I feel lonely," said Denise, with a little sigh, "and—and a bit scared. There were such funny sounds—rustlings and splashing—and I remembered what Bob said about water-rats. Do you mind if I come with you, Steve?" The boy bit his lip.

Denise looked up at him appealingly. Steve was obviously furious and trying to hide the fact. Denise thrilled at the thought. She was upsetting his plans—his plans to double-cross her own cousin and his chum.

His dark eyes narrowed as he regarded her reflectively.

"Very well," he said abruptly, reaching a decision. "You can come with me—if you promise to obey orders. We didn't reckon on having a girl with the party; but now you're here, a fellow can't very well leave you stranded."

"Oh, thank you, Steve!" murmured Denise. "Please tell me if there's anything I can do to help. What kind of clues are we looking for?"

The boy smiled queerly. "Didn't Frank tell you? We're not very clear ourselves; but this island was once inhabited by an old miser, reputed to be fabulously wealthy. He lived in a wooden shack by himself, and kept a fierce dog to scare away intruders. One summer's night, during a thunderstorm, the dog was heard howling dismally, and when a search-party landed on the island they found the animal running in circles, searching for his master. The old miser had disappeared with his supposed treasure."

Denise drew a deep breath. "How thrilling!" she breathed. "And the map—"

"The map," said Steve casually, "was in a wooden box brought away from the island by the search-party. Frank found it among a pile of rubbish dumped in the shed on the river bank."

"But the key was missing?" queried Denise. The boy eyed her sharply; then a sardonic smile crossed his face.

"There wasn't any key, as far as I know; that was just Frank's idea. But we're wasting time," he added impatiently. "We're trying to find the miser's old shack for a start. Let's go."

He set out briskly with a long, easy stride, and Denise had her work cut out to keep up with him.

The thrilling quest was something after her own heart, but her excitement was tempered by wariness. She was puzzled by Steve's unexpected candour; his easy acceptance of her offer to accompany him set her on her guard.

The path through the thicket grew darker and more tortuous; it was clear that it had not been used for years. Every now and then it branched unexpectedly, and the bewildering turns became something like a maze.

Denise had completely lost her sense of direction as she hurried to overtake the tall figure striding ahead.

"Steve, not so fast!" she called breathlessly. The boy paused and looked round, a sarcastic smile on his lips.

"You don't call this fast, do you?" he jeered. "You wanted to come with me, y'know, and we've got a lot of ground to cover. Take it easy, if you like, while I reconnoitre. I just want to have a squint round the next bend."

Denise, her suspicion aroused, caught at the tail of his blazer.

"Promise—promise you won't go far," she begged, unpinning her dainty scarf. "It's so hot, and—I've got a thorn in my shoe, I think. I'll follow as quickly as I can."

"I won't be more than a minute," promised Steve lightly.

With an impatient jerk, he freed himself from her detaining hand and strode towards the bend in the path.

Denise followed him a moment later, her heart beating quickly. As she reached the bend she found that the path forked in opposite directions; there was no sign of the boy.

"Steve!" she called "Coo-ee!"

No reply, except a rustle of the wind in the trees. Steve had deliberately given her the slip!

"And for all he cares, I might be lost!" breathed Denise. "That was probably his idea. Too bad to disappoint him!"

There was a dancing gleam in her eyes as she watched a strand of dark green wool tauten between her fingers and paid it out quickly from the ball in her satchel.

The other end of the strand was attached with her scarf-pin to the tail of Steve's blazer!

"If he thinks he's going to escape me he can think again!" she murmured, with a little chuckle. "He'll never spot the wool unless he turns round, and even then it's hardly visible against the bushes. Here goes!"

Quickly winding the ball, she hurried along the path, following Steve's unintentional trail.

Her one anxiety was that the wool might get entangled in the bushes and snap, but that was a risk she had to take. The ball was unwinding faster than she could rewind it, suggesting that Steve was in a hurry. But suddenly it slackened, and Denise walked more cautiously, determined not to repeat her previous mistake.

She was anxious to watch the boy without being seen.

After several more twists and turns the path opened out abruptly into a hollow glade, a mysterious, intriguing spot, almost shut in by dense trees, and made more gloomy by the lowering stormclouds which had crept over the summer sky.

Denise stole forward, her heart thumping. Then abruptly she caught sight of him.

Steve was engaged in a task that baffled her at first. He was moving quickly from tree to tree, touching first one trunk, and then another, pausing every now and then to study a paper in his hand.

Then she saw that he held a piece of chalk and was marking certain trees, no doubt with the intention of fixing his bearings by the chart.

Suddenly Denise felt the wool tauten abruptly and snap. Steve moved on, marked another tree, then disappeared amongst the bushes.

Denise smiled as she commenced to wind in the wool. Her little ruse had achieved its purpose. Not only were her suspicions doubly confirmed, but now at last she had something definite to work on.

But there was not a moment to lose. Swiftly Denise darted across the clearing. The damp soil and moss underfoot were interspersed by patches of chalk, and Denise paused to snatch up a piece as she reached the trees.

Quickly she examined Steve's handiwork—a simple chalked cross, scarcely visible on the bark.

It was the work of a minute to rub off the marks with her handkerchief and to make new marks on other trees.

If Steve was planning a second visit, as she suspected, she had every hope that the alteration would upset his schemes.

As she made to beat a hasty retreat she heard the boy's footsteps. It was too late to escape. Hastily throwing away the chalk, she quickly sat down on a mossy bank and took out her knitting.

Her needles were clicking busily as Steve emerged from the trees. He halted, his eyes goggling, as he caught sight of her.

"Denise, you—"  
"Hallo, Steve" said Denise, looking up reproachfully. "You have been a long time! And I hurried as quickly as I could."

(Please turn to page 377.)



## The Boy Who Bossed the Castaways

### THE UNWANTED PASSENGER

"MANY happy returns of the day, Elsie!" Julie Wallace greeted gaily. "Same here!" beamed Roly Maynard. "And when you've done gazing, just tell us what you think of our decorations." "Julie did them!" cried Dick Mardle. "She thought up the whole scheme. Whoops, what a party we're going to have!" he added.

He grinned at Julie as he said that, and Julie Wallace's sun-tanned cheeks dimpled their response to his generous appreciation. Roly, the fat boy, grinned more happily than ever, and Elsie Maynard, who had just entered the state room, was wide-eyed with joy and excitement.

Spared certainly Julie, Roly and Dick had spared no effort to make this the most festive reminder of Elsie's birthday. The beautifully-decorated table was piled high with goodies and presents, and in the middle of it was a huge greeting card with the words "Many Happy Returns of the Day to Elsie!"

"O-oh!" Elsie breathed, and her eyes shone. "Oh, Julie, what a darling you are! You are all darlings! It—it's lovely!" she got out breathlessly. "What ever will uncle and the others say?"

If Julie's pleasure had been great before, it had increased tenfold in the pleasure of her friend. It was good to see that sparkling happiness in Elsie's face, grand to see the glistening display of presents upon the table—most of them bought at Capetown, the last port of call—and kept carefully hidden away for this occasion.

For the state room was the state room of the steam yacht *Dafodil*, the magnificent cruising vessel now making a leisurely way through the tropical waters of the Indian Ocean.

Julie was Elsie's friend on the voyage, as Dick was Roly's friend. Roly and Elsie were the nephew and niece of Professor Walter Maynard, the enthusiastic archeologist. He, with a few kindred spirits, and his secretary,

Neil Gilson, had chartered the vessel to carry out excavations on the north-west coast of Australia, about which the professor had some rather startling scientific ideas.

Not that Elsie, Julie, Dick or Roly had any great interest in the professor's activities, but they had certainly all jumped at the professor's invitation to accompany him on the trip. And the celebration of Elsie's birthday on board was all part of the fun.

"Fizzing, isn't it?" Roly beamed. "It's taken us hours and hours to fix it all up—"

"Pity you hadn't something else to do!" drawled a voice from the doorway. Julie wheeled. And then for a moment silence fell. At once there was a different atmosphere in the room—an atmosphere accompanied by a sudden chill. For there, leaning against the door, his hands thrust in the pockets of his grubby flannel trousers, his bare feet crossed, and his mane of black hair, tousled and wiry, was a boy.

"Larry Woodstock!" Julie caught herself breathing.

She never saw Larry Woodstock, the Australian, without a feeling of wonder. The boy fascinated her somehow—seemed to magnetize her. And yet, according to all reports, he was a boy who should have repelled her.

Reports of his daring exploits, of savage insolence, of reckless insubordination, of rank and frequent mutiny, did not make good hearing.

But despite his record, there was something about Larry Woodstock which appealed to her—something about his long, loose-limbed figure, with its hidden suggestion of power, his shrewd, mocking eyes, which made her feel, almost against her will, that there must be something good in the fellow somewhere.

And yet—how could there be, when Larry's very presence on this ship was the result of his lawlessness? Wasn't it because he was being sent back to his own country—Australia—that he was now on board this ship, in the charge of the ship's master, Skipper Stafford?

And wasn't the skipper responsible for handing him over to the authorities at Darwin?

There was that mocking, scornful look in those dark piercing eyes of his now. Despite his tramp-like appearance, he seemed to dominate the whole scene.

Roly flushed darkly.

"Who asked you to poke your nose in?" he demanded.

"Nobody." Larry shrugged. "I just poked it in, that's all. And I say," he repeated, "that it's about time you found something better to do."

"And what do you reckon you're doing with your time?" Dick asked, flushing.

"Wasting it. But then I'm entitled to," Larry replied calmly.

"Entitled?"

"Sure!" He nodded. "I'm not here of my own free will—you are!"

"Oh, put a sock in it!" Roly snapped. "Anyway, you've no right in this part of the ship. Clear off! If the captain sees you—"

"Hey, what's going on here?" came a voice outside, and the next moment the tall, powerful form of Skipper Stafford loomed up, his red moustache bristling. "Who's talking about—?" He jumped as he saw Larry Woodstock. "What are you doing here?"

The Australian boy turned.

"Just—er—arguing," he said.

"Arguing!" the skipper spluttered. "You arguing—with the guests on the ship! Boy, who d'you think you are? And what are you doing in this part of the yacht?"

"My feet just happened to carry me here," Larry replied with cool insolence.

"They did, did they?" the skipper glared.

"That's why you keep your brains in 'em, I suppose? You know what your orders are, young man?"

"I've heard 'em," the boy replied indifferently.

"Then why don't you carry them out?"

"Because I don't choose to."

"You don't—what?" the skipper glared. "By ginger, how much more of this have I to stand from you? Do you want me to clap you in irons for the rest of the voyage?"

"No," Larry said, and then shrugged again. "But I've no doubt my wishes wouldn't count if you decided that's where I should be. I'll just repeat that I don't choose to carry out your orders. And"—with an effrontery which made Julie gasp—"I won't!"

The skipper choked, then, breathing hard through his nostrils, he approached the boy.

"Who's boss aboard this ship?" he demanded.

Fearlessly, the boy eyed him.

"You are—now." He laid a measured emphasis on the words: "You—now!" he repeated, as though turning over something in his mind.

"But there may be a time, sir, when things will be different, when I shall boss you!"

"Larry!" Julie found herself protesting.

But the captain seemed on the verge of apoplexy.

"You—you insolent puppy!" he exploded.

"You—you—you dare stand there and give me this—this mutinous talk! You dare tell me, aboard my own ship, that you might boss me! Woodstock, do you realise your position aboard this ship?"

"Perfectly. I was handed over to you at Louth, where you took in supplies. Your instructions are to take me to Australia, there to hand me over to the police. I am not a passenger, but then, neither am I one of the crew, so I've decided I am in a class of my own. I'll accept your orders if I think they're for the good of the ship, but when it comes to telling me where I may walk and what I may say—well, I'm not interested, see?"

Captain Stafford choked. He purpled. Then he pointed his hand.

"Get out!" he roared.

"When I'm ready," Larry said calmly, and

relapsed into his leaning attitude against the framework of the door.

"Hey! Aho, there!" Captain Stafford belated, and roared down the corridor. "We'll see who's master of this ship, my lad. Hey!" he added as two of the sailors arrived—both of them big, burly men, who sprang to attention. "You two—take this young mutineer to my cabin!"

"Larry," breathed Julie again—for Larry had straightened. For a moment his muscular form stiffened in challenge as the two seamen approached. Then, as they would have laid hands on him:

"Don't bother!" he said curtly, and brushed their grapping arms aside. He cast a look round the cabin, for an instant smiled at Julie, and then, with his head erect, walked off.

But he went with such dignity that the two seamen were left nonplussed. They stared at the furious skipper, then blinked at the leisurely form of Larry ahead. Then, fearful of the wrath they saw gathering in their captain's features, they hurried in pursuit.

"Young dog!" the skipper growled, and glared. "I'll teach him! I'll break his will!"

And still snorting wrath, he hurried off in the wake of his seamen and their prisoner.

"And I hope he gives it to him hot and strong," Roly breathed. "He ought to be clapped in irons for that colossal cheek of his."

Julie, however, could not find herself sharing those sentiments. She was strangely unhappy when, a few minutes later, they all departed to change for the party now due to begin. She was still thinking of Larry as she dressed in her cabin. Thoughtfully fastening her locket round her neck, she seemed to see him—see his face staring out at her from the mirror. What a strange boy he was. What a rebel; what a shameless scapegrace! And yet, with it all there was something strangely attractive about him. Something—

She became aware that the locket—gold with quaint engravings on it—was dull and smears. She took it off again and rubbed it up, smiling a little mistily as she thought of that dear daddy, now dead, who had given it to her.

It had been his parting gift, that locket. He had tried to tell her something when he had handed it to her, but had been too exhausted and weak even to speak. Julie loved the locket, even though she could never get it open, and was afraid to try for fear of straining its frail hinges. But she must certainly wear it on an occasion like this.

Having polished it, she fastened it around her neck again. Then, with a final look at herself, she moved towards the door.

As she made for the state-room she heard sounds of commotion—voices exclaiming, footsteps rushing. And reaching the threshold, she stopped, gaping in horror.

The room was full of people, Skipper Stafford and Professor Maynard among them. There also was Neil Gilson, the professor's lean-faced secretary, and Neil Gilson's young assistant, the pouty-looking Ada Henshaw, whose chief job was to type the notes the professor was making on the voyage.

And amid them, piled in a heap on the floor, was a jumbled litter of presents, of cutlery, cakes, fruits and jellies, all mixed in a higgledy-piggledy heap!

It was evident at once what had happened. Someone in passing the state-room had snatched off the tablecloth, and with it all those delightful surprises that had been prepared for Elsie Maynard's birthday.

"Oh, my goodness, who—who did it?" Julie gasped.

"That's what we want to know!" Roly said angrily. "Nobody saw him, but it's pretty plain, I think. Who could have done it except—"

"Except who?" Julie breathed, and somehow felt herself tense at the answer she knew would come.

"Who but that rotter, Woodstock!" Roly

snorted. "This would be just like him. Just the sort of revenge he'd take a delight in. We— Ada," he added as the secretary's helper, stooped forward, "what's that?"

Julie, jerking back the indignant protest that was on her lips, froze as Ada slowly rose, holding in her fingers something she had picked up from the litter.

"I think this is pretty conclusive evidence, don't you?" she said clearly. "Larry Woodstock did it."

And Julie, staring, felt as though the ground had been swept from under her feet. With a sickened sense of dismay, she recognised the object in Ada's hand. It was one of the badges which Larry Woodstock had worn on the belt round his waist.

### SHE TRIED TO BE KIND!



WHILE they all stared in utter consternation at the object in Ada's hand, Skipper Stafford, bristling like the great bulldog he was, strode out of the room. His voice went bellowing down the corridor in a volume that momentarily drowned the sound of the engines.

"Hitchcock—Wilson—hi! Go and find Woodstock this instant!"

"Yes, sir!" came two startled voices and a sound immediately of running feet.

"Goodness me! Goodness me!" the professor, his blue eyes gleaming behind his spectacles, was staring at the mess.

"Let—let's clear it up," Julie suggested. "Leave it!" the skipper snapped. "Woodstock himself can clear it up. He—Ah!" he added as the two sailors appeared at the door. "Well?" he glared the next moment. "I thought I sent you for Woodstock? Where is he?"

The two glanced rather sheepishly at each other. Then the taller coughed.

"I'm sorry, sir, but he won't come." There was a general gasp of incredulity. The skipper jumped.

"He won't—what?" he choked. "Won't come? You mean to say you stood there and took 'No' for an answer—'No,' when I issued the order?" He glared. "We'll see whether he'll come or not! You come with me!"

And snorting fury, he stalked out of the cabin, brushing the two hapless sailors ahead of him.

It was a long wait in the state-room. Then presently they heard the skipper's rasping voice, heard staggering footsteps along the corridor outside. Then suddenly at the door Larry appeared again—Larry in the firm grip of the two sailors, each of whom held one of his arms, with, behind them, Skipper Stafford, who had a choking grip on the culprit's shirt collar.

His shock of black hair was more tousled than ever. His cheeks were flushed and fierce. But there was no hint of surrender in his face.

With a grunt, Captain Stafford flung him forward.

"Now," he grated, "there's your handiwork! You can get to work and clear it up!"

"That I certainly won't!" Larry retorted. "I'm not doing other people's work for them!" "You mean you—you didn't do this?" Julie asked.

"Does it matter what I mean?" He shrugged. "Does it count what I say? Anything that goes wrong on this ship is my fault. So that means I did this—of course! But"—and he turned round to face the captain—"I'm not clearing it up."

There was a moment's dreadful pause. Even the professor himself would never have dared to affront the purple-faced skipper in that way. A snort came from Captain Stafford. His eyes gleamed. He pointed.

"Woodstock, clear that up!"

"Captain, do it yourself!" Larry retorted.

Again that gasp. Julie felt herself quivering. Things looked like coming to a head. The captain would not give way. But neither would Larry.

She hardly knew why she intervened. She just felt that she had to somehow.

"Captain—please!" she cried. "It's Elsie's birthday! Never mind about him clearing this up. We'll do it. We—professor—" she added wildly, flashing round, "don't let's spoil everything—"

"Er—umph!" the professor said, and flushed pinkly. "Stafford's the captain—"

"But it is your own niece's birthday, professor," Julie reminded him.

"Well, I don't know." The professor glanced helplessly from Elsie, who looked almost ready to cry, to his ship's master. "Perhaps in the circumstances, Stafford—"

The captain snorted. But even he, master of the ship as he was, could not refuse to comply with the wishes of the man who ranked as the yacht's owner. His face was savage as he flung on his men.

"Take him!" he barked. "Get out of here! But don't think you're getting away with this, Woodstock—by ginger, you're not! I'll make you sorry before you're ten minutes older that you refused that order! Hey, where are you going? After him, you two."

For Larry, without another glance round, had strode into the corridor, thrusting his hands into his pockets. He seemed not to have heard the captain's remarks as he disappeared with the two sailors and the angry skipper now stamping furiously after them.

Julie breathed a sigh of relief. Thank goodness, she thought, that was over, though she secretly dreaded what might happen to the defiant Larry now.

"Well, that's that," she said. "Now, what about us all helping—"

"Bless you, child," the professor said. "It's nice of you, Julie, to have stopped that trouble. Gad, the rascal looked like a tiger! Gilson, I'll take a turn along the deck," he added to his secretary. "You'd better come with me. I want to talk to you."

"Yes, sir," the secretary said meekly.

And while they went out, Julie & Co. got to work in earnest. New linen was fetched, crockery cleared away and replaced. Very soon there was no trace whatever of Larry Woodstock's revenge, and when the professor came in again, a smiling Gilson at his side, the room was as festive as before.

With keen enjoyment the birthday tea was begun. With great excitement and jubilation presents were unwrapped, and Elsie was breathless with delight.

By the time the meal was half-way through, with good spirits and good fun all round the table, everybody had forgotten the unpleasant episode of Larry Woodstock.

Then Captain Stafford came in, looking just a little fierce.

"Welcome, Stafford, welcome!" the professor greeted. "Come and join the party. Sit down. Have a cup of tea or—something? How's the—er—prisoner?"

"Where he'll do no harm," the captain growled. "I've put him on to scrubbing the after deck with strict instructions to finish by six. Otherwise—"

"Otherwise?" Julie asked, knowing a momentary knock at her heart.

"Otherwise he goes into irons for the rest of the voyage."

Julie, taking up the pot of tea to pour it out, felt her heart give a quick jump.

Again she found a picture of the outlaw's proud, strong, insolent young face before her eyes. It seemed a shame to think of him out there, scrubbing mutinously under the scorching sun while they sat enjoying themselves. Shame to feel that he was alone, that nobody understood him, that everyone despised him. More than a shame indeed, it seemed—wrong.

What would she feel like in his position? she

wondered. What must it be like to know that you were just a prisoner on this ship of luxury, that you were ordered about and insulted from morning till night? What must it be like never to hear a friendly word or see a friendly smile? And when one possessed such a proud, defiant spirit as that of Larry Woodstock—

Her thoughts broke off there. She felt she could not—dare not—pursue them further.

She dared not admit that she wanted him to know, if possible, that there was at least one passenger aboard this vessel who was interested in him, who would like to offer him at least a word of comfort on this dark ordeal of his own making.

And suddenly, without thinking further, she jumped to her feet.

"The pot's empty," she said. "No, don't trouble to ring. I'll go and make some fresh tea."

She gave none a chance to stop her as she went towards the door. Nobody minded, of course. Everybody was too busy talking, laughing or eating.

Julie, on reaching the galley, there put down the teapot on the refrigerator, and, with a word to one of the stewards to make fresh tea, fled along the passage and raced, three at a time, up the companionway steps.

The deck, when she reached it, was blazing white in the hot sunshine. From rail to horizon the great Indian Ocean rolled, glinting, limitless. But Julie had no eyes for the tropical peace and beauty which surrounded her. Eagerly she hurried her step to the after deck.

There she came to a dead stop.

"Larry!" she breathed.

There Larry was. But Larry was not scrubbing the deck. He was propped against one of the hatchways, his legs stretched comfortably before him. Julie gave a little shudder of dismay as she realised again the inflexible, the iron-willed character of the boy. He did not intend to carry out an order, irons or no irons.

"Larry!" she cried, and then, remembering she had never used his Christian name before, speedily altered her tone. "Woodstock!" she amended.

He gazed up at her lazily, not attempting to move.

"What do you want?"

"I—I came to talk to you."

"About what?"

"About—about—" She paused, nonplussed by his unfriendly directness. "You're not very friendly," she protested.

"Have I any reason to be?" He turned his head and looked at her. "What's the idea?" He asked with a hint of suspicion. "Who sent you?"

"Nobody—I came of my own accord. I—I thought you might feel lonely—"

Again he gazed at her. A puzzled look flickered into his eyes.

"But, my dear girl," he protested, "don't you know that passengers don't talk to people like me? Buzz off now!"

"Oh, Larry, please!" she begged, and then suddenly stiffened as he jumped to his feet. "Larry, I only wanted to say— Why, what's the matter?" she cried in new alarm.

For suddenly he was staring at her—staring with an intensity in his face which for the moment frightened her.

"Where—where did you get that?" he demanded thickly.

"What?"

As her hand went mechanically to her throat she knew what he was talking about—the locket her dear, dead father had given to her and which she had never been able to open.

Swiftly his hand shot out.

"That," he said thickly, "is mine!"

"Larry," she shrieked, "it's not!"

His arm jerked forward. He tugged and the gold chain snapped. There was a sudden blaze of anger in Julie's own face as he opened his hand and looked at the locket with a dazed, bewildered sort of expression in his eyes.

Then, quivering in anger, Julie had jumped forward.

"You—you thief!" she panted and snatched at the locket.

He wheeled and it fell from his hand. But in a second his bare foot had closed over it. He caught her hand.

"What do you know—about the Island of the Golden Palm?" he cried. "What do you know—tell me?"

Then, before she could recover from her astonishment, there was a cry—a shout. The shout was in Skipper Stafford's voice. It was accompanied by a rush of urgent feet along the deck. And even as the outlaw turned, the captain, big, powerful, and furious, was upon him; with one mighty swipe had sent him reeling across the deck just as three or four of the yacht's sailors came into sight.

"This is the end—the end!" he roared. "Grab him, boys! Take him to the hold. He's gone too far this time. I'll teach him to defy orders! I'll teach him to assault and rob my passengers! Take him away!" he roared. "Take him away and clap him in irons!"

## CHANGE OF PLANS



THE next few minutes were a whirl to Julie. She was conscious of the half-dazed Larry being caught up and roughly hauled off; conscious, mechanically, of picking up her locket and then finding herself surrounded by her friends.

She didn't remember what they said to her or she to them. She only knew that she was feeling weak and shaken—disappointed and disillusioned about Larry Woodstock; completely mystified by his strangeness when he had seen that locket. What had he meant by that preposterous assertion that the locket belonged to him? What was the fantastic nonsense he had uttered regarding the Island of the Golden Palm?

As soon as she found herself in her own cabin again she took up the locket and examined it—this time with a greater interest than ever before.

The tiny signs and symbols engraved on it she could not make out. They belonged to no code as far as she could see. Certainly not Greek or Egyptian; certainly not Indian picture-writing signs which she had studied in the Girl Guides. And the locket wouldn't open—had never opened—

Wouldn't it?

"It will!" breathed Julie suddenly.

For in the simple act of turning over the locket it had opened. Whatever fault in its structure had kept it sealed all these years, had evidently been undone by Larry Woodstock's rough handling. Now it slipped into two circular halves revealing to her fascinated gaze two small pictures.

One was a diminutive map of the Indian Ocean, showing a scattered group of islands. In the middle of them, miles away from its neighbours, was one drawn in red, and against it, in neat, tiny letters, the two initials "G. P."

And in the opposite side of the locket was a drawing of an island—an island which rose like a flatish cone from the sea, and on top of the cone was depicted a solitary tree. And underneath the picture was a minute inscription which set her every nerve tingling:

"The Island of the Golden Palm."

"So Larry knew about this!" she gasped. She saw now that the tree on top of the cone was a palm-tree. Now she saw that the two letters in the opposite half of the locket, "G. P.," referred to the island—that the map had been put there to give its exact position.

And suddenly it came back to her—this was the island on which her father had been



marooned when the ship he was travelling on from the East had been wrecked. This was where he had spent nearly two years, waiting for the rescue which must have seemed to him would never come. Wild excitement raced through her veins.

But how did Larry know of this? What connection—

There was a knock at the door. Elsie came in. "Oh, here you are, Julie!" she said. "They've put the Australian boy in irons, and the skipper says we shan't see any more of him this voyage—which is a good job, if you ask me. And—"

"But I say," she added, staring at the locket, "you've got it open—at last!"

A sudden idea, born of her own feverish, new-found ambition, came to Julie. She turned swiftly.

"It just came open," she said. "And look, Elsie, I've told you about my father. You remember how he was shipwrecked on an island somewhere about here. This—this is the island—"

"Golly!" Elsie gasped and looked as excited as Julie herself. "Yes," she breathed. "We shall pass that island within a day's sailing. Julie, what a thrill if—"

"If we could just stop and have a look at it!" Julie said, putting into words the idea she knew to be in Elsie's mind. "But—could we?"

She looked at her friend, and again her thoughts went to Larry, now a prisoner.

"Well?" Elsie looked up. "Why not?" she asked. "We can ask uncle. After all, there's no time-limit to this trip, and I heard uncle saying this morning that he'd give anything to stretch his legs on land again. I know he's interested in these islands. He's always talking about the Java fossil men, and it's his belief that the Java fossil men were some of an early race which spread all over the Indian Ocean. Come on, let's go and ask him."

She tugged her willing chum out of the cabin. With mounting excitement she whisked her outside. They found the professor on the main deck with Neil Gilson, watching the red sun which was now beginning to sink. The professor, of course, knew all about Julie's father. He, too, had felt intrigued about that island on which Mr. Wallace had spent two years of his life and about which he had been so silent on his return.

"And it's just possible, uncle, that you might find something—another of your old fossil men," Elsie said when she had made her suggestion. "Do let's stop there, uncle—just as an extra birthday favour to me."

The professor, profoundly interested, rapidly rubbed his fingers together—a little habit he had when he was stirred by an inward excitement.

He gazed down into the bright, pleading face of his niece.

"Yes," he murmured. "I should like to go—very much. But"—he looked doubtful, and turned to Neil Gilson, who was standing silently at his side—"what do you think, Gilson?"

The secretary nodded.

"Very good idea, sir. As Elsie says, it will afford us a grand opportunity for our research."

"Please, uncle," put in Elsie, tugging at the professor's arm, "as a favour!"

"It'll be no favour," he said. "Yes, I'd like to do it. I don't see what there is to stop us—except Captain Stafford, of course. Wait till he comes off duty and we'll put it to him."

It was dark when Captain Stafford eventually came off duty—dark, with golden stars twinkling brightly in a velvet, black sky, and a huge moon riding up over the horizon. The professor summoned him into his cabin where he, Elsie, and Julie were waiting, and offered him a cigarette. But he looked a little dubious when the professor put the proposition.

"It'll take us out of our way, sir."

"Well, who's to worry about that?" the professor demanded.

"You're really keen on the trip, sir?" the captain asked.

"I am—yes. I've a feeling we might find something—something that will really be important to archaeology."

"Then in that case," the captain said without enthusiasm. "I can't object, sir. We'll go. I'll give orders to change course."

Julie could almost have jumped in her exuberant joy. She must see Larry, she told herself. Somehow she must let him know where they were bound for, find out what connection he had with the Island of the Golden Palm. But even as the skipper a little reluctantly turned towards the door a new excitement came.

Curtiss, one of the ship's officers, suddenly loomed up, halted in the corridor outside, and saluted.

"The boy Woodstock, sir—" he began.

"Well, what about him?"

"He—he's bolted!" Julie felt her breath suddenly caught. "He slipped his irons, sir, and there's every evidence he had the keys, that he'd expected this and planned his getaway in advance. He's at large on the yacht somewhere—must be hidden, sir—"

"What!" the captain exploded.

"By ginger, am I never to hear the last of this pest? Get going, man, search the ship from end to end—from hold to hold. And when you get him—!" He broke off as a sudden commotion came from downstairs. "What's that?"

"I'm sure I don't—" Curtiss began, and that was all.

For suddenly there was a rush, a shout.

"Out of my way," a voice roared, and Julie's heart stopped as she recognised it. It was the voice of Larry Woodstock.

Then, as Curtiss turned, Larry appeared, grim-faced, wild-eyed, but with such a look of desperate purpose in his eyes that for a moment Julie felt afraid. The next moment Curtiss came staggering into the cabin, thrust there by Larry's powerful hand. He crashed against the spluttering captain, and at the same moment the door slammed; the key was turned. There came a sound of racing footsteps.

"This is the end!" Captain Stafford roared. He hurled himself at the door, pummeling it with his mighty fists. "Stop him!" he bawled. "And let me out of here! Come on, somebody! Quick, quick!"

It was a minute before his shouts were answered. Then more steps, and the key was turned. A startled-looking sailor was outside.

"He made for the deck where we keep the motor-boat," he said.

"Then get him!"

They all raced out, Julie in front. Along the corridor they crowded, up on to the deck. But when they reached it they were too late.

"There he goes, sir!" one of the officers cried. "He must have had everything ready beforehand—even to the motor-boat. We can't catch him—we haven't another boat fast enough. He—"

From the sea below as they crowded over the rail came a chug, chug, a mocking voice.

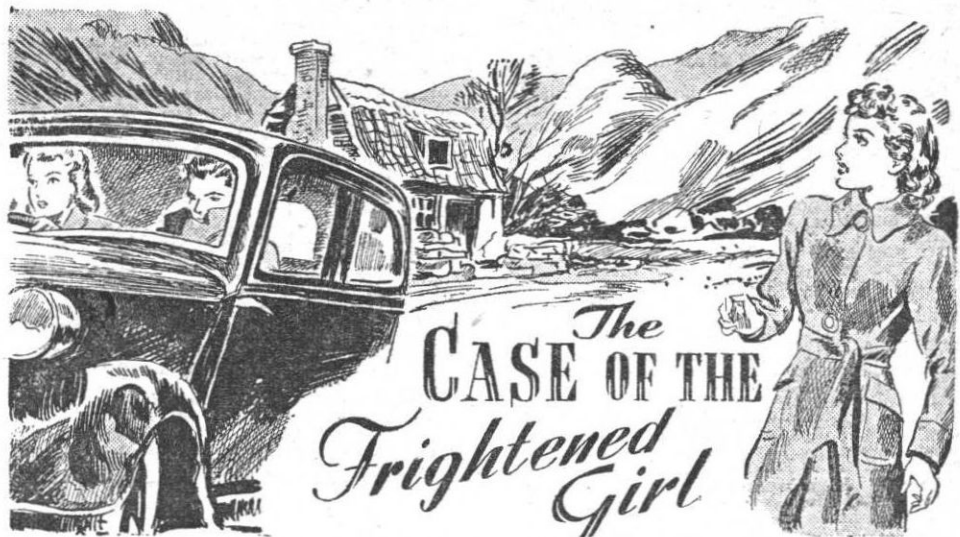
"Farewell, Daffodil!" it laughed. "I'm my own boss now!"

And Julie, craning forward, saw the motor-boat chugging out away from the vessel's side: saw the moonlight gleaming upon the laughing face of the boy who was triumphantly waving a hand as he stood in the cockpit. And suddenly a great empty dismay came to her.

"Larry!" she cried. "Oh, Larry—"

But Larry Woodstock, still laughing, had his back turned, was speeding across the boundless sea.

But Julie does see Larry again—and in the strangest circumstances. Be sure you don't miss a single word of this wonderful new serial, the next instalment of which appears next Friday in the **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.



JUNE—A PRISONER

JUNE GAYNOR, niece and partner of Noel Raymond, the famous young detective, went to Glen Hall to investigate the mystery of a spectral figure known as the Green Rajah, who was supposed to haunt Temple Isle.

June discovered that Colonel Raikes, who had once owned Glen Hall and Temple Isle, had hidden a crystal goblet which was the key to the lost secret of the Purple Mountains. She also found out that the Green Rajah was after the goblet.

June believed that the Green Rajah was in reality Jack Linton, a strangely likeable, but mysterious boy who was also staying at Glen Hall. It also seemed as if Jack's real name might be Ronald Baring, who was a fugitive from the police, and whose sister Eva had pretended to invoke June's help in London.

Jack told June that not only was he not the Green Rajah, but that actually both he and Eva were as anxious as June was to see him captured. He promised to explain his mysterious behaviour, but instead of doing so, disappeared, taking with him a clue to the hiding-place of the missing goblet.

June visited Lone Cottage, where Eva Baring lived, but was tricked by that girl and locked in an empty bed-room.

"UNLOCK this door! Let me out!"

Angrily June shouted, and angrily she tugged at the door handle. From the landing came a desperate gasp:

"I'm—I'm sorry to treat you as an enemy, but I have no choice. My brother's ill. I can't let him be arrested!"

And there came the clatter of heels as Eva Baring went hurrying down the stairs.

Furious at allowing herself to be so easily tricked, the girl detective turned away from the locked door and crossed to the small dormer window. Any sympathy she had felt for Eva had completely evaporated. It looked as if the frightened girl was as big a trickster as her brother.

"If only I can get out of here!" June breathed angrily.

She gave a satisfied gasp as she saw a drain-

By PETER LANGLEY

pipe just to the right of the window. Clambering out on to the sill, she grasped the iron pipe with both hands, and started to clamber down to the ground, but suddenly she paused. From the near-by outhouse came the roar of a newly started motor engine.

"Oh, golly, they're getting away!" she exclaimed, and dropped the last six feet, landing on the frozen earth with a thud which jarred her from head to foot.

Scrambling up, she tore round to the front of the old cottage, but she arrived there just too late. Past her sped an ancient car, with Eva Baring at the wheel.

Beside her sat a boyish figure huddled in an overcoat, the collar of which had been turned up so as to hide his face. It was impossible to identify him, but June guessed that it was Eva's brother.

"And her brother's Jack Linton—that seems obvious now," she told herself, and gave a shout: "Come back! By running away, you'll only make matters worse."

But Eva's only response was to jam her foot down on the accelerator. The car shot through the gateway, and went bumping and lurching over the rough ground, quickly to disappear through a gap in the hills.

June ran forward a few yards, then, realising the absurdity of trying to give pursuit, she turned and walked back to the cottage. Perhaps in there she would find a clue which would enable her to get on the track of the fugitive.

The tumbledown old house was sparsely furnished, and methodically June went from room to room, searching in every cupboard, ransacking every drawer. But when she had finished, June was both tired and disappointed. Her two hours' efforts had been rewarded by nothing. She had made no discovery which would help her in her investigations.

There was nothing for it but to return to Glen Hall.

What would Mr. Henley and Mr. Standish say when they learnt about her latest failure? She made a wry grimace.

It was not difficult to imagine what Roger Standish's attitude would be. Thanks to him, Mr. Henley had already telegraphed to Noel Raymond, asking him to take over the case.

She gave a sigh as she realised what an inglorious end her first case was likely to have. How would she be able to face Uncle Noel? How could she possibly remain his partner if she were dismissed from the manor as incompetent?

Moodily she walked on down the rough road which wound around the mountainside. At last she saw the silvery waters of the lake gleaming on her left, and she gave a sigh of relief.

"Only another half-mile to go," she murmured, "then—"

She stopped, staring in surprise at a battered object which stood by the roadside, beside a fallen boulder. It was an ancient four-seater car, lying on its side, with its uppermost wheels still spinning. Evidently there had been an accident; by the look of it the car had crashed headlong into the boulder.

But where were its occupants?  
Fearing they might be buried under the wreckage, June ran forward, her face pale with anxiety. Then she gave a gasp, for she recognised the car. It was the one in which Eva and her brother had escaped! But there was no sign of the Barings now. Evidently they had escaped unhurt, and had set off on foot.

June took one look at the slowly turning wheels of the car, then her heart leapt.

"What luck for me!" she exclaimed. "They can't have got far."

She turned as she heard the whine of another car. A large saloon was approaching up the road towards her. Three masculine figures were inside it, and June gave a start of surprise as she recognised them. They were Roger Standish, Ted Brandish, and Billie Murdoch.

Seeing her standing there by the overturned car, Mr Standish pulled up, and from the two boys in the back seat came a delighted hail, but Mr. Standish himself only greeted June with a curt nod.

"What's happened? Whose car is that?" he demanded, staring across at the wreck.

"It belongs to the Barings," June replied.

"What!" There came a startled snort from the black-moustached, unfriendly figure behind the wheel. "You don't mean that young scoundrel, Ronald Baring?"

June nodded.

"Yes—he and his sister Eva. They must have met with an accident in trying to escape."

And quickly she related all that had happened. Ted and Billie regarded her sympathetically.

"What a dirty trick—shutting you up like that!" exclaimed the fat boy.

"And what a shame—slipping through your fingers like that," commented Ted.

"Shame?" Mr. Standish gave an irate snort, and, descending from the saloon, he glared across at June. "Gross inefficiency I call it! I told Henley all along it was a mistake to put a girl in charge of this case. A real detective wouldn't have allowed himself to be tricked like that."

June flushed. She was very conscious of her failure, and Mr. Standish's scathing words added to her humiliation.

"I'm sorry," she stammered. "I did my best."

"Best! Pah! And a very poor best it was! But don't stand gaping there, you boys!" he snapped, swinging round on Ted and Billie. "Start searching around. Those two can't have got far. I expect they're hiding on the mountainside."

As he spoke he led the way forward, but June, who had been surveying the flat, muddy

stretch of ground between the other side of the road and the edge of the lake, raised a detaining hand.

"Just a minute!" she called. "By the look of it a boat has been launched here. They may have taken to the water."

Mr. Standish, however, dismissed this suggestion with a wave of the hand.

"Most unlikely. These mountains would provide them with the most likely hiding-place. I tell you we'll find them skulking in some cave. The place is honeycombed with them. Come on, you boys, scatter, and keep your eyes open."

Reluctantly June followed the others up the steep, rocky slope. She had a feeling that they were setting off on a wild-goose chase.

For nearly an hour they explored the mountainous slope, peering behind stunted rocks and bushes, looking into dark caves which burrowed into the rock. But they found no trace of their quarry, and June was becoming more and more certain that they had escaped by the lake when, abruptly, she paused.

The ground ahead of her was soft and muddy, and there, plainly to be seen, were a number of footprints. Of course, they might have been left by any chance wanderer; nevertheless, they were worth following up.

On glancing around, June saw that Mr. Standish and the boys were investigating a cave over to the right, so she decided to trail the footprints on her own. They led to a flat, narrow ledge which curved round a great rocky bulge.

June made her way along the ledge, and then her heart leapt. For on the other side of the bulge was the mouth of yet another cave, and from it came the sound of heavy breathing.

Could it be that Mr. Standish had been right, after all?

Every nerve on the alert, she tiptoed forward and peeped into the big, gloomy cavern, and her heart leapt again as she saw sitting on a rock a single figure—a white-faced, exhausted-looking figure running fingers down one outstretched leg.

June took one look at him, then her lips set with fierce satisfaction.

For it was the boy she had known as Jack Linton—the boy who had tricked her—the boy she believed to be Eva Baring's brother!

## TOO LATE TO EXPLAIN



"SO you're here, after all!"

June made no attempt to hide the triumph she felt as she strode into the cave. At the sound of her voice the boy looked up, staring at her as if she were a ghost.

"J-June!" he stammered.

"Yes—me! I don't wonder you're not very pleased to see me," she added, as he continued to stare speechlessly at her. "After the way you have tricked—and lied to me. But now—where's your sister?"

"My sister?"

He still seemed too bewildered to comprehend—or was he just trying to gain time?

"Yes—Eva," June persisted. "Where's she hiding? I'm sure she hasn't deserted you—especially after the way she helped you to escape from the cottage."

"The cottage?" he echoed, and got unsteadily to his feet, that dazed, ill look still in his dark eyes. "Escape?" he stammered.

"Don't keep repeating what I say!" she ordered. "And don't try to pretend any more. I'm wise to all your tricks now."

He winced, and dropped back on to the rock again, one hand going to his leg.

"I'm sorry if I seem a bit dense," he muttered, "but I'm not not quite myself. Had a bit of an accident. Fell halfway down the mountainside. Strained a muscle in my leg, and it—it's hurting quite a bit."

As he spoke another spasm of pain crossed his face, and, despite herself, June felt her indignation beginning to fade. But resolutely she forced herself to look at him coldly.

"You haven't answered my question," she reminded him. "Where's Eva?"

He shook his head.

"I don't know. I haven't set eyes on her for a couple of days."

"Well—" June drew in an outraged breath. "How can you sit there and say such things?" she exclaimed. "Why, it was only a few hours ago that you were in the cottage with your sister!"

"But I wasn't! And Eva Baring isn't my sister. She's no relation at all."

"Wh-aa-t!"

June gave a flabbergasted breath. Gravely he nodded, regarding her earnestly.

"No relation at all," he declared. "I'm just a friend. If you saw Eva with someone to-day, it must have been her real brother—Ronnie. Not me."

For a moment or two June just stood there gaping. To know that Ronnie Baring and Jack Linton were not one and the same person left her speechless. And yet, mingled with her surprise, was a feeling of relief.

Ronnie Baring was wanted by the police for theft, and not content with robbing Colonel Raikes during that man's lifetime, he was trying to rob his estate now that he was dead—trying to steal the Lost Secret of the Purple Mountains which Colonel Raikes had spent a lifetime in trying to discover.

The realisation that Jack was at least not the heartless scoundrel whom Roger Standish had vowed to capture brought a glow to June's heart, but her feeling of relief was only momentary.

If Jack was not the outlaw himself, he was at least his friend and helper.

The angry flush returned to her cheeks as she remembered how Jack had tricked her into giving him possession of that cryptic clue to the hiding-place of the crystal goblet—which was the key to the Lost Secret.

She grew angrier still as she remembered the Indian costume and disguise she had found in Jack's attache-case—proof that he was the villainous Green Rajah.

She took a step forward, forcing herself to ignore his obvious pain.

"Whatever your name is, you won't be able to get up to any more tricks," she declared. "Mr. Standish and the boys are outside, so you can't escape. But before I call them I want something from you—that paper I was stupid enough to entrust to you."

"I'm afraid I can't give it to you," he mumbled huskily. "I—I haven't got it."

"You mean, you've passed it on to the Barings?"

"No. It's been stolen."

"Stolen?" She gave an angry laugh. "Do you expect me to believe that? I suppose," she added sarcastically, "you'll be telling me next that it was the Green Rajah who stole it."

To her amazement he nodded once more. "Yes—he ambushed me on my way to Lone Cottage this morning, and knocked me over the head. That's why I never kept my appointment with you. When I regained consciousness I was lying trussed-up in an old shepherd's hut on the top of the mountain, and the paper had gone. It took me hours to get free, and then when I did manage to escape, I fell down and strained my leg. That's why you found me in here. I came in to rest."

"But I can't believe you," she protested. "I know you're the Green Rajah. Why, I found the proof of it only this morning—hidden away on Temple Isle in your attache-case. And the fact that you sent for your luggage, and left Glen Hall so hurriedly is additional proof!"

"But I haven't left Glen Hall! I didn't

send for my luggage," he declared. "That must be another trick on the part of the real Green Rajah. As for my attache-case—"

He paused, then, as if making up his mind all at once, he staggered to his feet and leaned back against the wall of the cave.

"It's obviously time I told you everything, June," he said steadily. "Things have gone too far to keep silent any longer. You've simply got to know the whole truth. And when you do, you'll realise that I was in earnest this morning when I said I'd help you to hunt down the real Green Rajah! He's my enemy as well as yours, and he's the Barings' enemy, too. It was the Green Rajah who's responsible for all this dreadful mix-up. It was he who committed the robberies for which Ronnie was blamed! He who attacked you the other night—who stole those curios from Mr. Henley's study."

There was a deep note of sincerity in his voice. It was impossible not to be impressed by his vehemence, and again June felt her heart warming towards him.

"I am your friend, June," he insisted earnestly. "And we've just got to be partners. That's our only hope of catching the Green Rajah. Though he got away with the piece of paper you gave me, he didn't get away with the copy."

"Copy?"

"Yes—before I left I copied that Sanskrit writing on the paper and tucked it in an inside pocket. But the Green Rajah didn't know that, and fortunately he never bothered to look in that pocket."

"You mean, you've still got it?" she asked.

"Not on me. When I escaped I hid it under a rock. I felt a bit weak from that blow on the napper, you know, so I decided it would be too risky to carry it on me. But I can soon get it, and when I do—" He gave a glad little cry, and momentarily that old cheery smile which June knew and liked so much returned to his face. "June, will you trust me?" he asked. "I know it's asking a lot, but please let me explain about those disguises of mine you found—about the Barings—about everything. Once you know—"

He broke off, and they both stiffened, as from the distance they heard voices.

"That sounds like the others," breathed June, and, running to the mouth of the cavern, she listened intently.

Clearly she could hear Brandish and Billie Murdoch shouting to Mr. Standish.

"Look! Footprints, sir!"

And then came an eager bellow from Roger Standish.

"Don't stand staring. We'll follow up this trail."

And then came the sound of footsteps along the ledge on the other side of the bulge.

Jack Linton, hobbling to June's side, smiled wryly.

"Well, it looks as if you were right," he said. "My career is at an end. Once Standish spots me, I'll be finished. And with this wretched leg, I can't even try to make a bolt for it. I'm afraid it's too late for me to confide in you—even if you did believe me, you couldn't do anything now. It's too late."

And, limping back to the rock, he flopped down resignedly on it, leaving the girl detective still standing there, listening to the approaching footsteps which every moment were getting nearer and nearer.

What should she do?

Common sense told her to shout out—to bring Mr. Standish and the boys hurrying to her side.

And yet she hesitated.

She could not forget all that Jack had told her: could not shut out the sight of his white, despairing face.

What decision will June come to? And will she have a chance to save Jack even if she wants to? Don't miss next Friday's grand chapters of this serial in the **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.

Johnny Liked Being Regarded As A Hero, But Sally Suspected That Esme Randolph Had An Ulterior Motive For Her Flattery



JOHNNY THE HERO

By DAPHNE GRAYSON

"JOHNNY, I'm beginning to wish you hadn't won that swimming cup!" laughed Sally Warner.

"Hadn't won it, eh?" And Johnny Briggs chortled with pride as he flaunted the silver cup he was carrying along the luxuriously fashionable seaside boulevard. "Let me tell you that's all I came here for—"

"But the question is, how are we going to get back to Roxburgh?" protested Fay Manners and Don Weston.

"We know you carried off a marvellous win, Johnny, and we know we couldn't be stranded in a more marvellous place than this," groaned Sally. "but—"

They were stranded, and there it was! They had come with a coachload of co-eds all the way from Roxburgh College. They had seen their chum Johnny win a spectacular victory in the Silver Cup Swimming Race. They had waited, in growing apprehension, while Johnny posed proudly for a ceaseless stream of photographers. And—they had lost the coach home! The coach had gone without them—back to Roxburgh, fifty miles down the coast—leaving them marooned here in the sumptuous splendour of California's seaside resort, Bel Lido.

"Of course," murmured Johnny, whose head was still whirling with triumph, cheers, admiration, and the flattering click of the cameras, "we might hire a taxi—"

"Hire a taxi? Here?" His chums gazed upon the gorgeous blue-and-gold taxis parading amongst the millionaires' cars. "We might," gasped Sally, "if you've got five hundred dollars in your pocket."

"We'll be lucky if we can rake up the train fare between us," began Don.

"There isn't a train till to-morrow!" pointed out Fay.

The chums paused, helplessly, on the glistening parade. Behind them rolled the callous blue sea. Before them rolled the callous blue-gold taxis, set against a background of marble hotels that looked more like palaces. What were they to do? And then—

"Oh, Mr. Briggs, I did so admire your swimming!" a girl's voice gushed excitedly, and a magnificent car pulled up right at Johnny's feet. "I did so want to meet you!"

"My daughter Esme has taken the very words out of my mouth, Mr. Briggs!" echoed

the immaculate gentleman beside her at the wheel. "You were terrific! Proud to meet you!"

Sally, Fay and Don were a little taken back, but Johnny fairly swelled with pride as he flourished the cup in one hand and extended the other to these impressive admirers.

"Oh, it was nothing," he beamed. "Pleased to meet you, Mr. and Miss—er—"

"Randolph's the name—Chester Randolph, you know!" said the gentleman.

"And I'm Esme!" fluttered his daughter. "Are you in a hurry, Mr. Briggs? Couldn't we drive you home with us, for tea and a little chat?" And for the first time her wide, blue eyes flickered to the others. "You and your friends?"

"Thank you—rather! Jolly glad to!" And Johnny gave his chums an excited prod.

Before Sally could get her breath, she was sitting with Fay and Don in the luxurious back seat, and Johnny was sitting in state between Esme Randolph and her father in the front seat.

Sally could see Esme's face reflected in the dashboard mirror. It was a bewitching little face, wreathed now in sweet, smiling flattery—but it struck her as a very wide-awake face, too. Johnny, reflected beside her, was beaming from ear to ear.

"Too bad, the way these photographers pester chaps!" he said, and laughed as if it were an everyday matter. "Fact is, they lost me the coach home. Left myself and my friends stranded here!"

"Stranded?" cried Esme and her father. "You mean you can't get back to Roxburgh?" "Not unless I swim it!" laughed Johnny. "And I can't see Sally and the others doing that!"

Sally winked at Fay and Don as the car pulled up in the drive of a stately house named "San Maurice." A manservant bowed them in. Esme, in her excitement, actually introduced Johnny to him.

"Pawkins, this is Mr. Briggs—he won the silver cup in the Swimming Gala!" she said breathlessly. "We'd like some tea."

"Do the best you can, Pawkins, we are very highly honoured!" said her father, and

Johnny he added with a proud pat on the shoulder: "I will telephone the dean of your college at once, Mr. Briggs. Leave it to me!"

Johnny could scarcely contain himself till Esme had shown them into the imposing dining-room, and darted off to help Pawkins.

"What about this for luck? We're staying for the week-end!" he announced.

"Wh-what?" gasped Sally.  
"Esme insisted on it, absolutely begged me not to refuse," beamed Johnny. "Her father's ringing the dean now!"

"But—" Sally groped to put into words what her chums were thinking. "But they don't know any of us, Johnny! Why on earth should they want to put up with us for the week-end?"

"They know me!" Johnny said. "And they seem to like me. Specially Esme. You know what girls are over sports stars. Call it hero worship, if you like, but—"

"But why pick on you, Johnny?" blurted Sally. "I mean to say—there are hundreds of famous people around. Why should they select someone who's won a swimming cup?"

A freezing look from Johnny silenced her. Esme came hurrying in eagerly with a tray of fragile china, followed by Pawkins wheeling a sumptuously laden tea wagon.

"You'll excuse us being rather at sixes and sevens, Johnny—I may call you Johnny, mayn't I?—but we've only got one servant at present," she laughed, not even looking at Johnny's chums. "I do hope you're going to enjoy your stay. I know I shall. I shall never stop talking about it."

Johnny fingered his tie and gallantly took the tray from her.

"Jolly nice of you to say so, Esme," he told her. "You must come swimming with me to-morrow."

"Oh!" Esme raised her blue eyes to the ceiling. "Oh, won't my friends envy me!"

Sally took a cool scrutiny of Esme. There was a false look on her face, just as there was a false note in her honeyed words. Was she playing a part—was she leading Johnny up the garden for some extraordinary reason?

Before Sally could ponder that puzzle, Mr. Randolph came smiling into the room.

"It is all settled, Mr. Briggs," he said. "The dean asks me to congratulate you on your great swimming triumph, and he hopes that you will have a happy week-end with me—you and your friends!"

"Thank you, Mr. Randolph!" spoke up Sally, echoed by Fay and Don.

He smiled at them quickly—and then ushered Johnny to the chair next his own, at the head of the table. Esme seated herself on the other side of Johnny. Neither of them included his chums in their conversation during the meal. They were too busy pouring their flattery upon Johnny.

And Sally & Co were too busy eating to bother in the least—sweet and savoury salad, cold chicken, lemon pie and apple soufflé, hot waffles.

At the end of the meal Esme and her father shepherded Johnny away to another room, to get him to inscribe something in their autograph albums.

"Say, what do you make of it, Sally?" asked Don, his face wrinkled. "What are they lushing old Johnny up like this for?"

"Something phoney somewhere," murmured Sally, equally baffled.

She got up and went browsing about the room, as if doubting the genuineness of what she saw around her—then suddenly she gave a jump. She snatched up a photograph lying carelessly on the settee.

"It's Johnny!" she gasped, as Don and Fay came hurrying across to her. "A photo of Johnny!"

The scene was a fashionable swimming pool—but the figure in the foreground, about to

dive from the spring-board, was Johnny! How did his photo come to be in the Randolphs' house? Sally and her chums were gazing at it incredulously, when Esme came back into the room to get her fountain pen.

"I didn't know you'd met Johnny before—"

Sally began blankly.  
Esme gave quite a start as she saw that photo in her hand. Then instantly she recovered herself and answered glibly:

"I haven't met him before, but I've always heard about him, always admired his swimming!" And she laughed. "I got that photo from one of the agencies that specialises in college sports."

She sailed out again, taking her pen with her, and Sally stared closer at that photo. It wasn't a college snap. It had been taken in a public swimming pool. And suddenly Sally's eyes glinted as she saw the name of that pool, faintly discernible in the background.

"Atlantic!" she exclaimed. "It's the world-famous Atlantic Pool at Palm Bay! But, I say"—she gave a gasp—"Johnny's never been there!"

They gazed hypnotised at that photo, till slowly but surely Sally made a sensational discovery.

"It's not Johnny!" she said in a daze. "This boy in the photo is the very double of Johnny—but it's not Johnny! Why did Esme say it was?"

### SOMETHING FISHY!



"BUT, Sally—" Don began incredulously, then his voice trailed off. "Gee, you're right!"

"It's not Johnny—I can see now it isn't!" Fay echoed him. "Johnny hasn't got that dent in his chin—look!"

"But who is it?" And Sally gazed from one to the other.

"Who is this boy in the photo, and why is Esme pretending that—"

She broke off; she dropped the photo hurriedly on to the settee. Her face was expressionless as Esme and her father came back into the room with Johnny.

"To-morrow I'll draw a cartoon for your autograph album, Esme," Johnny was saying.

"Shall we move to the games-room, while Pawkins clears away?" cooed Esme, dropping a cushion carelessly over that photo on the settee. "What about playing bagatelle, Johnny? I'm sure you're wizard!"

On the way to the games-room Sally contrived to get a word in Johnny's ear.

"Something fishy here, Johnny!" she whispered rapidly. "Don't trust these two—they're up to something!"

"So that's what you think!" And Johnny's voice was a protesting hiss. "I'm ashamed of you, Sally! I refuse to listen—" And he swept away from her to join Esme.

Sally realised that she had made things only worse. She had to watch Esme chalking Johnny's bagatelle cue for him; rhapsodising over every simple shot he made; whilst both she and her father were obviously playing a poor game, in order to give Johnny an easy win. Why? Why were they doing it? It struck Sally that she might learn something from Pawkins, and now was her chance.

She slipped out of the room, not even noticed by Esme or her father.

From the basement came the rattle of crockery. Pawkins was the only servant, so he would welcome a hand with the washing-up, mused Sally.

Her eyes brightened as she descended the steep basement stairs. Yes, Pawkins would also welcome having someone to talk to, for she could hear him now talking to himself. His voice drifted up from below, its murmur droning plainly upon her ears.

"I know my orders," Sally heard him say, then there was a thud, as if he had slammed something down.

It was echoed by a muffled hammering—muffled, but furious.

Sounded as if Pawkins were in a temper, thought Sally. Probably due to the extra work their arrival had given him. All the more reason for helping him.

She coughed discreetly, tapped at the kitchen door and pushed it open.

Funny! Her gaze went blank. The kitchen was deserted. Pawkins wasn't here! It was an explosive voice from the top of the stairs which made her turn with a jump.

"Sally Warner, how dare you! What are you doing?"

She saw Esme storming down the stairs two at a time, her face furious.

"What do you want—what do you mean by prying down here?" Esme blazed, and there was something in her flushed face that might have been fear.

"I—I only came to see if I could give a hand with the dishes," Sally said at once. "You told me Pawkins hadn't any help, so I—"

"We don't let our guests help the servant!" Esme burst in. "He isn't here, anyhow. He's upstairs! Pawkins!"

She raised her voice and Pawkins appeared on the upper landing. Sally looked at him queerly. She hadn't the slightest doubt that he'd hurried up the service stairs.

"Yes, miss?" he asked, a little out of breath.

"Show Miss Sally her room, will you, Pawkins? She got lost in the basement," Esme said, calmer now.

It was a charming room that Sally was to share with Fay—but what she noticed most was the significant look that passed between Esme and Pawkins as they ushered her into it. Were they alarmed because she had ventured into the basement? Why?

Certainly Esme had taken it strangely to heart, for when Sally rejoined the party, she was drawn aside indignantly by Johnny.

"I say, Sally," he said in a shocked whisper. "What's this about your snooping downstairs in the servants' quarters?"

"Did Esme make a song about it to you, Johnny?" Sally asked with intense interest.

"What do you mean—make a song?" quivered Johnny. "Really, Sally, that's no way to talk about Esme!"

Before Sally could answer, the radio struck up a rumba, and Esme came simpering across to them, monopolising Johnny as her partner.

All next day she and her father kept close to Johnny. His chums had a good time tagging on behind them—swimming, boating, driving—but always they had to take a back seat. And from this back seat they watched Johnny being pampered and applauded and flattered till his hat would scarcely fit him.

"It doesn't make sense," gasped Don. "Old Johnny isn't all that good!"

"Esme knows he's not, and so does her father—anyone can see it in their faces except Johnny," groaned Fay. "What are they up to?"

"I don't know—yet. But I'm going to find out!" breathed Sally.

It was the basement that intrigued her, mainly because her own intrusion there had been the one thing that had made Esme—for a moment—drop her mask. Was Esme's rage caused by alarm? Was there something in that basement she wished to hide? Sally was filled with curiosity, but all she could hear from those lower regions was the clatter of Pawkins' crockery, and from time to time that queer, muffled hammering again.

If only she could take another peep down there!

The chance came next morning, which was Monday, the day of their return to Roxburgh. Pawkins tapped on Sally's door, bringing breakfast for three.

"Mr. Randolph's had a phone call from your college, miss, and the dean wants you to catch the nine o'clock train back," he explained. "Thought you'd like your breakfast up here as you haven't much time."

"Thank you, Pawkins!" And then Sally paused as she glanced at the tray. "But there are four of us, you know."

"Mr. Briggs," Pawkins said impressively, "is breakfasting with Miss Esme and the master!"

Sally could hardly conceal her delight. This was just the chance she'd wanted. She called Fay and Don into her room, and they made quick work of the excellent buttered eggs and coffee. Then Sally picked up the tray, and with the others following a little way behind her, to keep cave, she crept down the basement stairs to the kitchen.

"I think it's all clear, Sally," came Don's whisper. "I'm sure I can hear Pawkins up in the hall!"

Stealthily Sally crept to the kitchen door and opened it. Yes, it was all clear. Pawkins' empty chair was pushed back from the table, where the remains of his breakfast lay. Beside it lay the tray he had carried down from Mr. Randolph's room. Sally deposited her own tray with them, and was about to begin a rapid exploring—when suddenly her gaze became riveted upon the table.

There was yet another tray—the remains of another breakfast—standing there!

Sally gazed electrified. She made a swift count of the cups and plates, but there was no mistaking it. The household numbered seven, including themselves and Pawkins. This tray was laid for an extra person—it made an eighth! Someone else had breakfasted in the house to-day! Who?

Tap, tap—tap, tap, tap! Sally's heart gave a jump as she heard that muffled hammering again.

Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap—  
It was like a signal—like a call for help! Her eyes flashed to the farther wall, to a low arched door in the back of the kitchen.

One breathless rush Sally made towards that door—then a low, warning whistle from Don stopped her. She darted out of the kitchen just in time to meet Pawkins coming down the stairs.

"You'll have to hurry, you and your friends, miss, or you'll lose the train," he called to her. "Taxi's waiting now!"

Sally threw a look to the top of the stairs, and saw only Fay and Don there, beckoning her to hurry.

"Where's Johnny?" she jerked out.

"He's not going back with you, to-day, miss!" came Pawkins' glib answer. "Your college dean's given him an extra day off, an' he's gone out driving with Miss Esme and the master. Better hurry for that train, the rest of you—time's short!"

## JOHNNY WAKES UP!



SALLY hurried down the steps with Fay and Don, waving a disarming farewell to Pawkins. She jumped into the taxi with them, and it went gliding out through the gates on the road to the station.

Sally gazed tensely before her, waiting till the taxi turned round the first bend, out of sight of the house. Then swiftly she called through the window:

"Stop, driver! Pull in under those trees!"

A gasp came from Fay and Don.

"Sally, what-are you doing? We haven't time—"

"Blow the time! We're not going yet!" breathed Sally. "I don't know where Johnny is, and I don't know whether the Randolphs have taken him on a drive or whether they haven't. But I know now why Esme was s—"

rattled when I went near the basement. There's someone shut up down there!"

"Wh-what?" cried Fay.  
"But it couldn't have anything to do with Johnny—" began Don.

"That's what we're going to find out!" said Sally, scrambling swiftly out of the taxi. "You stay here, Fay! Wait till we come back!"

She made hurried tracks towards the rear of the house, to the grounds backing on to the kitchen. Then suddenly she stopped, clutching at Don's arm.

"Look! Who's there—at that window?" Sally's eyes were riveted on a barred window deep down in the basement area. A hand was showing at those bars! That hand was beckoning now—frantically beckoning and signalling!

She started forward in a breathless rush—and in that instant a face appeared behind those bars. A boy's face.

"Johnny!" Don said wildly. "It's Johnny!"  
"No! It's not Johnny!" Sally gasped out. "It's his double—it's the boy we saw in the photo!"

Feverishly she scrambled down the area steps, speaking in a whisper through the bars of the window.

"What's happened? Who are you?" The boy's face was pale and unbelievably bitter—yet it seemed to soften as he beheld Sally and heard the warm sympathy in her voice.

"Ellington's my name—Dick Ellington," he answered her in a gulping whisper. "That hypocrite, Randolph, is my guardian. He's the swindler who's in charge of me. In charge of my money, I should say. That's why he's shut me down here. So that he can swindle me again!" And his eyes flashed from Sally to Don. "You've got a friend, haven't you, who looks like me?"

"Your very double!" gasped Don. "Johnny Briggs!"

"D'you mean that Randolph's making use of Johnny in the—in the swindle?" Sally burst out.

"Just that!" Dick Ellington whispered. "Randolph's gone to see the lawyer to-day. It's a question of renewing his term as guardian for another three years. It means ten thousand dollars in his pocket! He dared not take me with him. He knows I'd give him away to the lawyer—because I've found out the way he's swindled me in the past. He was supposed to send me to college, put me in for a degree, pay for my first-class education and sports and everything. He was given the money to do it. Instead, he's cheated me—he's done nothing for me. He sent me to the cheapest school he could find—and pocketed the money himself! That's why he dared not take me before the lawyer to-day! He's taken your friend instead!"

"You mean—" The truth crashed upon Sally. "You mean he's passing Johnny off as you?"

"J-Johnny would never fall for such a thing!" gasped Don.

"Your friend Johnny wouldn't know anything about it," Dick Ellington said bleakly. "He'll meet the lawyer, believing he's meeting just a friend of Randolph's, and all he'll have to do is to talk about his college, his sports, and how he's getting on. The lawyer won't dream he isn't me. Then he'll renew Randolph's guardianship for three years—and another ten thousand dollars of my money will go into his pocket!"

"Not if we know it!" blazed Don.  
"We'll stop the game!" Sally found breath to say. "Where have they gone—where are they meeting the lawyer?"

"At the Spa Hotel, over at Port Sandra!" muttered Dick. "There's nothing you can do! It's too late! It would be all over before you could get there. All over long before I could get out of the clutches of this gaoler Pawkins!"

Too late! Sally and Don gazed mutely at Dick behind those iron bars, but they could guess now how desperately he had tried to escape from this prison—in vain.

"The door's six inches thick, and Pawkins has the key!" he said lifelessly.

What was to be done? Sally gazed fiercely about her. She wasn't beaten yet. Her gaze lit suddenly upon an empty sack lying in the corner of the area.

"Pick up that sack, Don, and come and hide with me on the front porch!" she whispered recklessly. "I'll ring—I'll bring Pawkins to the door. If you can smother that sack over him before he spots you—"

It was a chance. One chance in a million. But it was the only chance!

**I**N a sumptuous room in the Spa Hotel, Port Sandra, Johnny Briggs was enjoying the success of his life. Not only did he have the admiring Esme and her father for an audience, but also their extremely courteous friend, Mr. Curzon, who looked to Johnny like a distinguished judge or lawyer. He was that type.

True, Mr. Curzon seemed to have mixed his name up with somebody else's and kept calling him Dick, and even Mr. Ellington. But what did that matter? Mr. Curzon was asking him how he was getting on at college, asking him to tell him all about himself, and never was Johnny happier to oblige.

"I think I can say, without boasting, that I've done pretty well at languages!" he declared proudly.

"Languages? Splendid!" And Mr. Curzon glanced approvingly at Esme's father. "That is an extra subject the boy has taken?"

"I take all the extra subjects!" exclaimed Johnny, warming up. "Same with sports, too. Blow the expense. If there's a new game going, I put in for it. That's how I won my football colours last month!"

"It's grand to hear your enthusiasm!" beamed Mr. Curzon, and he turned his lawyer-like spectacles upon Johnny again. "I understand that you are, indeed, a very happy young man, Dick?"

"Top o' the world, sir!" said Johnny, chuckling to hear his name misused again. "Who wouldn't be—after the topping week-end I've had, to say nothing of winning the swimming cup!"

"Do you often have these week-ends—?" Mr. Curzon was beginning.

"They're going to be much more often in future, aren't they, daddy?" put in Esme brightly, her eyes sparkling at Johnny. "It's so lovely for me to have our champion swimmer giving me lessons."

"Very charming of you to say so, Esme," Johnny said with ready gallantry. "I know I shall never be able to repay you and your father for all your kindness to me!"

Mr. Curzon smiled with pleased finality and reached for his brief-case.

"That settles matters without any further question, Randolph," he said, drawing Esme's father aside. "There is no need to ask the lad if he wishes you to remain his guardian. It is obvious he does. I will appoint you for a further term of three years, entrusting you with the necessary funds for his education and sports and so on."

He opened his case and drew out a fat wad of brand-new notes from the bank.

"I have brought the money in cash, as you asked me, Randolph," he went on. "I think you will find it is all correct!"

Mr. Randolph's eyes glistened at the mere sight of the money. Esme's eyes glistened, and she forgot to listen to what Johnny was telling her about his new overarm stroke.

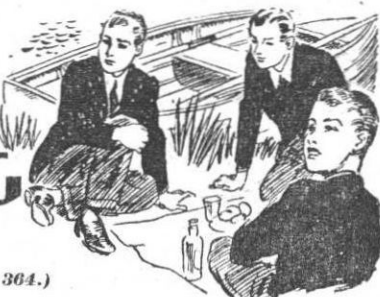
"Thank you, Mr. Curzon!" her father said. He reached out his hand for the notes, and

(Please turn to the back page.)





# Denise KEPT THEM GUESSING



(Continued from page 364.)

Steve bit his lip, eyeing her narrowly. She saw the hurried glance he stole towards the marked trees, but apparently he noticed nothing amiss.

"I—I went farther than I intended," he said shortly, hiding his annoyance. "But it was a wild-goose chase. We're on the wrong track; maybe Frank has been luckier." He glanced at the darkening sky. "Let's get back to the others before the rain starts," he suggested.

But Denise was not prepared to be hurried. Steve intended to turn her over to Frank and Bob while he carried on with his schemes.

Denise had other ideas. So long as Steve held the key to the chart, she was unwilling to let him out of her sight.

But she made a pretence of complying as she scrambled to her feet. Then a little cry of dismay escaped her lips.

"My knitting—it's all tangled!" she exclaimed. "Steve—do help!"

The boy glared exasperatedly, but controlled his feelings with an obvious effort as he strolled towards her.

"That's all right. Just shove it in your satchel till we join the others," he said.

"But it's not all right!" protested Denise. "It's tangled in the bushes. I'll lose all the stitches if you don't help me. Steve, and—"

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" exclaimed Steve. "Here, what do you want me to do?"

"Just—just hold the ball, please!" Denise smiled gratefully. "Like that—no, higher. Now take this piece and put it through here. We'll have it disentangled in no time."

But the disentangling process took a surprising time, and Steve's good-looking face began to grow red with exasperation as the wool became caught on the buttons of his blazer, under the clip of his fountain-pen, and round his coat collar.

Denise smiled winningly. "Take off your blazer, and we'll soon get it disentangled," she said.

"What? I—I'm bothered if I will!" exclaimed the boy.

But just then there came a sound of hurried footsteps and a shout of laughter from the direction of the bushes.

"What's the idea?" called Bob Harvey, a broad grin suffusing his rugged face. "Is this a treasure-hunt—or knitting-bee?"

Steve looked round with a glare, and Denise seized her chance. With a deft movement she disentangled the wool, at the same time slipping something neatly from the pocket of Steve's blazer.

A crumpled parchment envelope containing the key to the chart!

She dropped it quickly into the long grass as the boy jerked himself away from her.

Frank hurried forward concernedly.

"Denise, I thought you were staying with the boat!" he exclaimed.

"Your precious cousin got scared of water-rats," drawled Steve, regaining his composure with an effort. "Insisted on following me—"

"And Steve was such a dear!" murmured

Denise, now on her knees, calmly folding her knitting. "He let me join in the search, and helped me wind my wool, didn't you, Steve?"

Frank glared at his grinning cousin as he readjusted his tie.

With a swift movement, Denise extracted the folded paper from the envelope, replacing it with something from her satchel. And just then Steve slapped his pocket, his face paling slightly as he stared round him.

"I—I've dropped something—" he muttered.

"Is that it," asked Bob, catching sight of the envelope, "by your feet?"

Steve gave a gulp of relief as he snatched the envelope up and thrust it into an inner pocket.

"Some business papers of dad's," he explained hastily. "Meant to have posted 'em. Well, have you chaps discovered anything?"

"Have we!" Bob grinned. "We've not been playing games, Steve. We've found the old shack, and it's no end of a creepy place!"

Denise's eyes sparkled as she started to her feet.

"May I see it?" she asked eagerly.

"Sure you won't be scared?" taunted Bob.

"It's supposed to be haunted—"

"That's just a tale," put in Frank, with a warning frown. "Don't listen to him, Denise. We may have to take shelter there till this storm passes." He hurried to her side as a distant rumble echoed his words, and a few heavy spots of rain pattered among the foliage.

"Come on!" he said, grabbing her arm protectively. "Can't have you getting wet through on your first outing. Lead the way, Bob."

The boys set off down the path, and Denise followed, her eyes dancing with excitement.

## THE TABLES TURNED!



"HERE we are!" panted Bob, halting at the entrance of a tumbledown wooden building and kicking open the door.

"In you go!" A gleam of lightning lit up the interior of the shack as they entered.

It was a bare, dismal-looking place, Denise saw, as Bob flashed his torch round the single living-room, disclosing a few rough wooden chairs and a table. On the table stood a rusty oil-lamp. Frank shook it.

"It's got some oil in it," he said. "Probably left here last time the island was searched. Let's have a little light on the scene."

The dim yellow glow made the shack look even more deserted and cheerless. Boards creaked eerily as they moved about exploring the room, and the ancient shutters rattled at the windows.

The old miser had taken no chances. The shutters were strengthened with iron bars, rusted in their sockets from long disuse. The heavy door was studded with nails and secured by a massive lock.

Denise was burning with impatience to examine the intriguing paper she had obtained at such pains, and her ready wits seized on the first chance offered her.

"Nothing much here—except cobwebs!" muttered Bob disgustedly, as he emerged from exploring a dusty cupboard and shook himself like a terrier. "What I could do with now would be a nice cup of tea!"

"Well, why not?" asked Denise quickly. "If one of you boys would fetch up the provisions from the boat, and another of you chop some wood—look, there's an axe in the corner—I'd get the fire lit in the old grate and make some tea."

"Home from home," drawled Steve sardonically, "with a few spiders and spooks thrown in— Sorry, Frank, I forgot!" he added, as that boy glared at him. "Ladies present!" He strolled over to the axe and weighed it thoughtfully in his hand. "Bags I chop the wood," he said.

Denise stared; she had hardly expected the elegant Steve to make the offer. His chums looked equally taken aback, and Frank laughed.

"What's come over you, Steve?" he bantered. "Maybe it's the air," drawled Steve, as he strolled to the door.

The door banged after him, and Frank laughed.

"Steve's a good sort," he said, "though a bit of an ass at times."

"One of the best!" agreed Bob staunchly.

"Well, ready, Frank?"

"Sure you'll be all right, Denise?" asked Frank anxiously.

"Of course!" laughed Denise, concealing her impatience. "There's lots I can do here; you needn't hurry."

With a quick sigh of relief, she shut the heavy door after them and darted to the table.

The boys would be back again in ten minutes—even less. There was not a moment to lose.

Her hands trembling eagerly, she took the folded parchment from her satchel and spread it on the table in the yellow glare of the lamp. She could see that one edge was rough where it had been torn from the original chart. On one side was a hurried tracing of the map of the island; on the other, in faded ink, were drawn a number of symbols, obviously providing a clue to the chart.

There were pencilled comments beside them, probably made by Steve. Denise's heart thumped excitedly as she studied them.

The old shack seemed eerily quiet, except for the moaning of the wind and an occasional distant growl of thunder. The lowering clouds outside the closed shutters made it almost like night. Denise fancied she heard the floorboards creaking, as though under a stealthy tread.

This wouldn't do. Denise pulled herself up sharply and forced her wandering attention back to the chart.

Queerly enough, one of the symbols resembled a dog—a dog squatting on its haunches. There was a pencilled question-mark beside it, as though Steve had been puzzled by its significance.

Then her heart missed a beat, and a cold shiver ran down her spine. She had not imagined those stealthy footsteps. She could hear them again, close outside the door. The chart held behind her, she backed against the fireplace as the door was suddenly flung open and Steve, a dangerous gleam in his eyes, a crumpled paper in his hand, strode in.

Denise's tensed muscles relaxed.

Though she knew the game was now up, she forced a smile.

"You haven't been long, Steve," she said lightly. "I'll have the fire lit in no time now." And quickly she bent over the grate, concealing the precious chart among the rubbish lying there.

In a couple of swift strides Steve was at

her side, and his hand caught her arm in a painful grip.

"So our artless young cousin is not so simple as she appears!" he taunted. "What's her little game—eh? Ever seen this before, Miss Innocent?"

And he thrust the crumpled paper into her hand.

"Oh!" she breathed, trying to look innocent. "My—my knitting instructions!"

"And perhaps," drawled Steve, watching her, "our charming cousin could explain how this came to be in my pocket—and something more valuable missing!"

"Perhaps you picked this up by mistake," Denise suggested.

"Perhaps I did!" mocked Steve. "You wouldn't know anything about that, would you?" His suave manner slipped from him like a cloak. "Drop this play-acting, Denise!" he grated. "What have you done with it?"

"I—I don't understand!" faltered Denise, pleading desperately for time.

If only Frank or Bob would come back!

"You don't?" breathed Steve, in seething anger. "I'll make you understand—before I've finished."

He strode to the table and snatched up her satchel, tossing out its contents over the floor. At the same instant the door burst open to admit Frank and Bob, out of breath and dishevelled.

With a gasp of relief, Denise ran towards them, but the two boys scarcely glanced at her.

"Steve," exclaimed Frank agitatedly, "some blighter's cut our boat loose! No sign of it anywhere—she's probably drifting downstream. We'll be stranded if we don't get her back!"

Denise caught in her breath sharply as she saw Steve's eyes narrow.

"Maybe she broke away," he said carelessly. "The chances are she'll get caught up in the rushes somewhere. Better form a search-party."

"Good idea!" declared Frank breathlessly. "We'll take the west of the island; you start on the other side and meet us. Denise, you wait here—"

"Stop!" exclaimed Denise, as they made for the door. Her face was pale and determined. "Don't listen to him, Frank! It's a trick!"

The two boys stared at her in blank amazement. Steve gave an amused laugh.

"If that's not like a girl!" he drawled.

"Frank, it's a trick, I tell you!" declared Denise, ignoring him and appealing to her cousin. "I know now why Steve was so anxious to take that axe. He cut the boat loose to keep you and Bob out of the way—"

"Denise!" gasped Frank, his good-natured face utterly bewildered. "What on earth are you babbling about?"

Steve laughed carelessly as he strolled from the fireplace.

"It's my fault," he drawled. "I annoyed her—and you know what girls are! Because I teased her about the ghost, and accidentally upset her knitting on the floor, she started to imagine things—accused me of trying to double-cross you chaps—her idea of getting her own back."

"Oh, what a horrid fib!" gasped Denise, almost stunned with amazement at his cool effrontery. "I can prove what I say, Frank. Steve had been hiding something from you—a key to your chart! Look, I'll show you!"

She darted to the fireplace and dropped to her knees, groping hurriedly beneath the shavings. The pencilled writing on the chart would prove—

"Well," drawled Steve, as the boys crowded forward, "what little surprise have you got for me, Denise?"

Her hands shaking, Denise pulled aside the wood-shavings, disclosing an empty grate. During the few minutes in which her back

had been turned the precious paper had vanished.

"It—it was there!" she gasped, with a sinking heart. "Steve must have taken it!"

There came an indignant snort from Bob Harvey.

"Look here, Denise, you can't expect us to stand for this! Either you've gone crazy, or it's just sheer spite on your part because you and Steve have had a tiff! All over some knitting!" he added scornfully.

"There was a choking lump in Denise's throat as she stared from one to the other.

"Come on, Frank!" said Bob gruffly, "or we'll lose our boat!"

Frank hesitated, embarrassment written on his good-natured face.

"Come on, Denise!" he said firmly. "You can't stay in this place on your own—enough to give a girl the creeps! You'll find some of our stores on the bank. Wait for us there, and we'll pick you up in the boat. We won't be long!"

Denise made a pretence of complying, but as soon as the boys' backs were turned she darted back to the shack, determined to have a last search for the missing paper.

There was a chance—just a slender chance—that she had overlooked it in her agitation.

The boys had turned out the lamp, and the room was lit only by the grey light that filtered through the door. As Denise dropped to her knees to search the grate she heard a low chuckle behind her.

Spinning round, her heart in her mouth, she saw Steve's tall figure silhouetted in the doorway.

"You can save your time, my charming Denise!" he called mockingly. "The chart's in my pocket—and you're staying here, young lady, out of mischief! By the time the others find you I'll be well away—in the boat!"

"Steve—"  
The door slammed with a dull thud as Denise stumbled across the room. She heard a key grate in the massive lock, the rattle of a chain.

### THE MISER'S SECRET



"HE shan't beat me—he shan't!"

Denise's slender hands were clenched as she stared from the locked door to the barred shutters.

The old hermit had built his shack like a prison, and Denise was the luckless prisoner.

She groped round the room in the dark, beating desperately at the shutters and calling for help. But she had little hope that Frank or Bob would hear her. They were searching for the boat they imagined to have been cut adrift—the boat that Steve had cunningly hidden for his own ends.

It might be ages before they discovered her in the shack, and by then Steve would have found the treasure and got away, leaving them stranded.

She groped on the table, and gave a sigh of relief as she found the matches and relit the lamp.

If only she could light a fire in the old grate! The smoke might attract the boys' notice.

She was staring at the rusty grate, and for some reason her heart beat more quickly.

Her gaze was fastened on the carved iron rests at each side of the grate—dogs intended for supporting the poker and tongs.

Dogs? Now that Denise looked at them more closely, she could see that they were squatting on their haunches, as though begging.

Vaguely they reminded her of something, and, with a start, she remembered.

The cryptic symbol on the chart! Could there possibly be any connection?

Her pulses racing, she snatched up the lamp and darted to the grate and dropped to her knees. She tried to pick up one of the "dogs," but found it was riveted securely to the iron hearth. But, as she tugged at it, something seemed to give. She tried again, throwing all her weight into the effort, and this time she realised what was happening.

She was actually lifting one end of the hearth like a trapdoor, and, as it fell back with a dull crash on its hinges, she saw a square, dark opening and the top of a rusty ladder.

With wild excitement, Denise held the lamp into the opening and peered down. This was the miser's secret means of escape!

Cautiously she tried the rungs of the ladder. It seemed safe enough, and she could dimly see the bottom of the well, and a brick tunnel beyond.

It needed some courage to make the descent, and Denise hurriedly stifled the uneasy fancies that rose unbidden to her thoughts. It was a way of escape, and that was all that mattered at the moment—a way to beat Steve, too!

The brick tunnel was cold and dank; moisture gleamed on the roof and formed pools of water on the slippery floor.

Denise hurried forward, excitement helping her to master her fears. The air was surprisingly fresh, suggesting that there was another outlet somewhere.

Then she saw a pale gleam of daylight a short distance ahead, and instinctively she quickened her walk to a run. Not looking where she was going, she tripped over something that lay in her path and sprawled to her hands and knees.

Dazed and shaken, Denise struggled up. Luckily, the storm-lamp was unbroken, though it lay on one side, belching yellow flame and smoke.

Quickly she righted it and rose unsteadily to her feet. Then she saw the object that had tripped her.

She caught in her breath sharply and bent closer. It was a small, iron-bound box! Rusted, covered with moss, it lay near a flight of rough brick steps, at the top of which a gleam of daylight filtered through an aperture almost choked by weeds and foliage.

She had found the other entrance of the tunnel!

With hands that trembled in excitement, Denise picked up the box. It was not as heavy as its appearance had suggested, and she wondered for a moment if it could be empty. But the lid was securely locked, and there was no means of finding out.

Wrapping her scarf round the intriguing box, Denise climbed the steps and pushed her way through the tangled weeds and creeper, to find herself in a clearing among the trees.

The spot looked familiar—and then, her eyes sparkling, she remembered.

This was the place that Steve had explored, carefully marking the trees. Some lucky chance had prevented him from discovering the opening before she reached it. Or—was it chance?

As she listened she heard a distant crashing and splintering sound, as though someone was hacking at the undergrowth.

"Oh, goodness!" breathed Denise, her eyes dancing. "It's Steve! He's been misled by the altered chalk-marks!"

She stifled a laugh as the explanation dawned on her. Steve, determined to double-cross his chums, had hurried back to the clearing to search for the hidden entrance to the tunnel. The chalk-marks had deceived him, as she had hoped. He was working furiously in the wrong place!

With pulses racing, Denise crept forward, her precious find tucked under her arm. Swiftly she decided on the shortest cut to the river, and broke into a run.

She had almost reached the trees when she heard a hoarse shout behind her, and, glance-

ing swiftly over her shoulder, saw Steve, his face dark with fury, chasing her across the clearing.

"Come back!" he shouted hoarsely. Denise turned and ran for dear life, tripping and stumbling over the uneven ground. Slowly Steve was overtaking her. She could hear the boy's panting breath, the thud of his footsteps coming closer.

The river still seemed a long way distant, and Denise's breath was coming in choking sobs. Then abruptly, through the bushes, she saw a gleam of water.

It couldn't be the river; it was too narrow and hemmed in by the trees. Then, as she burst into the open, she saw that it was a sluggish backwater, a dark inlet invisible from the bank.

And moored to an overhanging bough was the missing boat!

Denise gave a little excited gasp as she slid down the bank and dropped her burden into the boat. She heard Steve crashing through the bushes behind her as she fumbled frantically with the mooring-rope.

The next moment the boy charged into sight. Dishevelled, his face white with fury, he made to charge into the boat as Denise seized an oar and swung the craft away from the bank.

With a loud splash the boy landed in the stream, floundering and gasping as the water rose to his waist.

With quick remorse, Denise brought the boat round, intending to help him; but just then there came a sound of running footsteps, a loud shout from the bank.

Bob Harvey, his eyes wide with amazement, gave an incredulous yell.

"Frank—quickly! Here's the boat—and Steve in the water!"

"My—my giddy aunt!" gasped Frank, halting beside his chum. "Steve—you chump—what are you playing at? Denise—what happened?"

Denise smiled as the wretched boy squelched through the mud towards the bank.

"Steve's taking a little bath," she said brightly. "If you'll grab him you'll find he's got the key to your chart, Frank. He hid the boat here, intending to make a getaway in the excitement."

Frank's expression changed as he hurried along the bank, in time to grab Steve as he struggled out. The boy attempted to thrust him aside, but Bob came to his chum's aid.

In the struggle the incriminating paper fell to the ground and Frank snatched it up. His good-natured face darkened.

"Why, you—unspeakable blighter!" he exclaimed. "So you've been holding out on us all the time—and only Denise tumbled to your game."

"And—where's the miser's treasure?" demanded Bob, glaring.

"It's here!" called Denise, lifting the box with a gay smile. "Let him go, Frank—he's learnt his lesson, I hope. See if one of you can open this box. A mere girl isn't nearly strong enough."

"DIAMONDS!" breathed Bob, ten minutes later, as he, Frank and Denise gazed awestruck at the gleaming contents of the miser's box. "Gosh, they must be worth a fortune."

"I'll get dad to value them," said Frank. "He's an expert. Gosh, what a break for the start of the holidays! And—it's all thanks to Denise!"

"To think," muttered Bob, grinning a trifle shamefacedly, "that the pair of us were beaten—by a girl!"

"Not beaten!" smiled Denise, as she linked a hand in each of their arms, "just helped.

There are some things we girls can do, you know, even if we're not as strong as boys. And now—let's have some tea."

THE END.

THE SECRET OF THE WRECKER'S LANTERN—that is the title of next Friday's grand long complete story.

## THE MERRYMAKERS AT COLLEGE

(Continued from page 376.)

he was just on the point of clutching them, when—

Rap, rap! And the door opened with a brisk double knock.

"Excuse me, I'm looking for Johnny Briggs!" a girl's voice said brightly. "Oh, there you are, Johnny!"

It was Sally Warner! And she walked straight across to the astounded Johnny.

But he wasn't more astounded than the lawyer, Mr. Curzon.

"What name did you call him, young lady? Briggs?" he rapped out, while Esme and her father gaped in sudden panic. "This boy isn't named Briggs! He is Dick Ellington!"

"Then there must be two of them," said Sally, in pretended amazement. "Here's Dick Ellington!"

The door swung wider, and into the room stepped Johnny's double—the real Dick Ellington!

There was a soft thud as the wad of notes fell from Mr. Randolph's nerveless hand. A cry from Esme as she collapsed in sheer fright on to the settee. The lawyer was looking at them both with a stern light in his shrewd eyes.

SALLY was waiting with Fay and Don in the taxi, which had brought them on their furious race here instead of to the station, when Johnny at last emerged from the hotel.

"Dick Ellington wants us to wait for him—he'll see us on our train to Roxburgh!" he said in a flat, strained voice.

There was a long silence. Sally drew up closer to him. No one spoke. They were afraid of saying the wrong thing and hurting Johnny's wounded feelings still more. He lifted his eyes wanly to Sally at last.

"To think," he muttered, "to think I could be such a fool, Sally!"

"How were you to know who was locked in the basement, old boy?" she comforted him.

"Not to see through Esme, I mean!" went on Johnny. "There I was, listening to her praise, letting her make a laughing-stock of me—"

"Esme hasn't got much to laugh at now!" Sally cheered him.

"I don't care, two hoots what Esme thinks of me!" Johnny said shakily. "It's you, Sally—and Fay, and Don. Are you all thinking I've been a swelled-headed ass?"

"Not a bit!" they all cried loyally, and Johnny brightened a lot.

"It's all turned out for the best, Johnny. You helped to bowl those Randolphs out!" Fay assured him warmly.

"And you gave us all a corking week-end!" echoed Don.

"And after all"—and here Sally struck just the right note to restore his fallen pride—"you did win the silver swimming cup, Johnny!"

(End of this Week's Story.)

Look out for another complete story featuring the gay and lighthearted merry-making chums in next Friday's GIRLS' CRYSTAL.