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GIRLS' CRYSTAL³

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"

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The Gipsy Violinist's WARNING

Why Was The Gipsy Girl So Desperately Anxious That Beryl And Her Chums
Should Not Visit The Witch's Grotto?—By RHODA FLEMING

A DANGEROUS EXCURSION

"THE Witch's Grotto!", exclaimed Shirley Gaye. "It sounds thrilling!"

Beryl Dexter smiled affectionately at her chum across a table in the mountain hostel.

"Don't forget the legend!" she said jokingly.

"Poof! Who's scared of an old legend?" retorted Shirley, with a toss of her auburn hair.

"I'm not—neither's Pat," she added, referring to her young cousin, who was intent on sampling the delicious cakes. "Besides, Ralph says that no one bothers about the legend these days—didn't you, Ralph?"

The boy addressed stirred his coffee thoughtfully as he encountered their questioning glance. It seemed to Beryl that he hesitated a fraction of a second before replying to her chum's question.

"Well—yes and no," he rejoined, with his cool, deliberate smile. "Most people ignore it, but there are still a few"—he shrugged—"superstitious villagers, gypsies, and others who won't forget the old story of its being haunted."

Pat Gaye choked as she swallowed a cake-crumb the wrong way, and Shirley had to tump her cousin's back, causing a general laugh.

Beryl smiled happily round the cosy table in the alcove of the picturesque, oak-beamed room. She was conscious of a pleasant sense of anticipation, enhanced by the haunting melody played by a small gipsy orchestra.

She, Shirley, and Pat had arrived at the mountain hostel only that morning, agog with exciting plans for exploring the romantic neighbourhood.

The Vale of Glengoy, in the Cumbrian Hills, was one of the lesser-known beauty spots—and a veritable treasure-trove of fascinating legends.

As luck would have it, they had chummed up with Ralph Masters, who was staying at the hostel on his own, and the boy had volunteered to act as their guide. Good-natured and imperturbable, Ralph was an offset to Shirley's lively exuberance and made up a cheery foursome.

"Well, when do we start?" demanded Shirley eagerly. "There'll be just time before tea; it doesn't get really dark till seven."

"Let's go now!" exclaimed Pat excitedly.

"What does Beryl say?" inquired Ralph, glancing across at her with his pleasant smile.

"I'm entirely in your hands."

Beryl's eyes sparkled as she glanced at her watch, for her naturally quiet temperament had been kindled by her chums' excitement.

"The Witch's Grotto!" she repeated softly. "I love the sound of it—and, so long as we're not trespassing on the preserves of the old witch, I'm all for it!"

The strains of the orchestra grew louder, more wild in tone, and Beryl noticed that the young violinist—a raven-haired, dark-eyed girl in gipsy costume—was moving among the tables.

"Then that's settled!" laughed Shirley, pushing aside her cup. "All ready?"

"Wait!" breathed a voice, low and vibrant, from just behind Beryl's chair.

The young gipsy violinist stood close to their table, a strange, almost frightened gleam in her dark eyes. The bow was poised above her violin as she had broken off in the middle of the tune. Her gaze was fixed on the chums.

"Don't go to the Witch's Grotto!" she urged unsteadily. "There is danger! Be warned in time!"

Beryl was conscious of a curious gripping at her heart—a premonition she could not explain. But Shirley laughed outright.

"I say, is this a joke?" she asked.

The gipsy girl's eyes glittered, and a flush mantled beneath her dusky skin.

"Do not make light of my warning," she breathed. "I beg of you—pay heed—all of you! I cannot—dare not say more."

She stepped back, with a quick sweep of the bow across the strings, picking up the tune where it had broken and, moving on to the next table without a backward glance.

Beryl half-rose to her feet with an impulsive intention of following; then, encountering Ralph's restraining smile, she sat down.

"What ever did she mean by that?" she breathed. "Who is she?"

"Whoever she is, I think she's got awful cheek to butt in!" remarked Shirley. "What are our plans to do with her?"

"She's Fenella Gilroy, one of the gipsy Gilroys," said Ralph, as though that explained everything.

"You know her?" asked Beryl, in surprise. The boy shrugged.

"Not to speak to, but everyone round here knows her family. They're wealthy gipsies—or they used to be before Seth Gilroy, her father, got mixed up in some shady business and cleared out of the district. They used to camp in the Glengoy valley, near the Witch's Grotto, and I guess they spread most of the legends round here."

"But why—why did she come back to the district?" whispered Beryl, staring after the slender figure as she moved over to rejoin the orchestra.

"Goodness knows," rejoined Ralph. "Maybe she needed a job; but she knows her own business best. Do you girls still want this trip to the grotto?"

"Of course!" exclaimed Shirley, springing to her feet with a laugh. "Do you think we're going to be scared by a gipsy girl's warning? Come on, Pat—and you, Beryl!" she added. "We'll just titivate up, and Ralph can meet us outside. O.K."

"O.K. by me," said the boy, grinning, as he reached for his cap.

Beryl hesitated, her heart beating rather quickly. Somehow she could not forget the gipsy girl's strange warning, the frightened look in her dark eyes.

"Shirley, do you think it's wise—" she began. But her chum was already hurrying up the wide staircase with her young cousin, and Ralph was strolling towards the door.

On the spur of the moment Beryl made her way quickly between the scattered tables to the orchestra platform. The mysterious young violinist had intrigued her strangely, and she could not shake off the impression that there was more behind her warning than mere gipsy superstition—or jealousy.

But the girl was not on the platform, neither was the orchestra leader, a heavy-browed man, with gold ear-rings and sullen dark eyes.

A woman pianist was playing a lively dance tune, and Beryl hesitated, momentarily thwarted in her purpose. But not for long. From behind a curtain at the side of the platform she heard voices—muffled, agitated voices, one raised in anger.

On a sudden impulse Beryl pulled aside the curtain and stepped into the little room beyond.

The gipsy girl confronted the swarthy leader of the orchestra, and her dark eyes flashed as angrily as his.

"I will do as I please, Arturo! You cannot stop me!" she cried.

"You are crazy, girl!" growled the other. "Your meddling will bring new trouble on all of us—"

"Hist!" breathed the girl, with a warning gesture, as she caught sight of Beryl.

Startled, the man turned and backed quickly through the curtains on to the platform. The gipsy girl made a dive for a side door leading to the grounds, but Beryl moved even more quickly, barring the other's way.

"Fenella, I want to speak to you," she said firmly, catching the girl by the arm.

The other shrank back, her dark eyes half-suspicious, half-defiant.

"What do you want?" she asked. "What have you to do with a Romany—like me?"

"I want to know what you meant by your warning, Fenella," urged Beryl, surprised, but not deterred, by the strange girl's unfriendliness. "Surely you were joking? There can't really be danger in our little excursion to the grotto?"

Fenella's dark eyes smouldered.

"Why should I waste words in warning you if there is no danger? You will go because you are foolish and headstrong—you and your friends. So what more can I say? But one thing I will add: The tune I played to-night—we gipsies call it the 'Melody of Danger'—you may hear it again when you least expect. Take heed! Wherever you go—whatever you do—when you hear that tune, turn back while there is time!"

And, with a half-fearful glance over her shoulder, she darted through the door and was lost to sight.

Completely baffled, and more worried than she would admit even to herself, Beryl hurried to rejoin her chums.

Shirley and Pat were waiting for her impatiently at the foot of the stairs.

"Come on, Beryl!" exclaimed Shirley. "We thought we'd lost you. Ralph'll be calling us all the names under the sun! Let's hurry!"

Beryl checked an impulse to mention her encounter with the gipsy girl. She knew her chum's lively, headstrong nature well enough to feel certain that she'd be wasting her time.

Shirley was absolutely fearless and scoffed at superstition. And perhaps, Beryl told herself doubtfully, her chum was right. Perhaps she was making mountains out of molehills in paying attention to a gipsy girl's idle words.

"Pat wants to take some snaps of the Glengoy Falls while it's still daylight," rattled on Shirley. "Ralph says we go that way."

Pat nodded eagerly as she fondled her new camera in its smart leather case.

"I'm going in for a prize for holiday snaps at school," she explained. "I ought to get some gorgeous ones of the valley and the grotto—"

"Hi! Come on, you girls!" called an impatient voice. Ralph was leaning over the gate. "A girl's idea of ten minutes—" he began.

"No rudeness from you!" exclaimed Shirley gaily. "You promised to show us the way to the grotto. Is it far?"

"About half a mile," said Ralph, opening the gate with a gallant gesture. "Over the mountain bridge and through the spinney. Step it out!"

It seemed to Beryl that the boy was slightly out of breath, as though he had been hurrying, and she suspected he had not been waiting as long as he hinted. Ralph Masters, to her mind, was a bit of a spoofer, though Shirley obviously liked him very much.

"So you chose to ignore the gipsy's warning!" he chuckled, as he led the way by a winding path that wound through fascinating mountain scenery.

"What do you think?" said Shirley lightly.

They walked on a little farther, and then Pat stopped.

"Hark!" she exclaimed. "A waterfall!"

They had reached a fork in the path, and as they halted they could hear the sound of rushing water.

"The Glengoy Falls!" exclaimed Shirley, her eyes sparkling. "Which way, Ralph?"

The boy hesitated, with a slightly wry grimace, as he met Beryl's glance.

"I know, I'm not certain," he admitted. "First time I've come by this route. Look here, I'll slip down this path, and you girls carry straight on. First to spot the falls gives a yell. O.K."

"Well, if that's not just like a boy!" laughed

Shirley. "Come on, Beryl! We'll show him that girls make better guides!"

But Beryl hung back as Ralph departed. A sense of uneasiness had been growing on her, due partly to the wild and awesome scenery and the memory of the gipsy girl's warning.

"We'd better wait here till he comes back, Shirley," she said.

"Oh, goodness, no!" exclaimed Shirley impatiently. "Let's beat him to it. Pat's dying to take those snaps."

"Please!" exclaimed young Pat, dancing in her excitement. "Let's hurry; it'll soon be sunset."

Hating to be a spoil-sport, Beryl went with them, though half against her will. Pat unstrapped her precious camera and ran ahead, eager to be the first to spot the falls.

The noise of the rushing water grew louder, and a haunting, wailing sound was mingled with its majestic thunder—almost like the haunting wail of a violin.

Impulsively Beryl caught at her chum's arm, her face paling slightly. It couldn't be. And yet—

"Shirley, listen!" she gasped. "What is it?" Her chum stared at her in perplexity, and then she, too, started. "Why, it sounds like a violin!"

"It is a violin!" gasped Beryl, white as paper. "It's the gipsy warning—of danger! Shirley, where's Pat?"

"Gone ahead," said Shirley, changing colour. "But, Beryl—"

Beryl did not stop to explain. She was racing for dear life down the winding path, her own fears forgotten as she thought of young Pat.

As she reached a bend in the path she saw the young girl poised with her precious camera, taking a snap of the picturesque bridge that spanned the falls.

No hint of danger, but the wailing tune of the violin could not be ignored.

"Pat—wait!" she exclaimed, as she darted forward and caught the young girl by the arm. "Come away!"

"Oh, you've spoilt my snap!" exclaimed Pat reproachfully, trying to free herself. "Look, now I've dropped my camera!"

The precious camera rolled on to the grassy verge close to the bridge, and as Beryl sprang to retrieve it she stepped back on to the boards.

There was an ominous cracking sound, a horrified scream from Pat, and Beryl felt the bridge shudder and lurch beneath her feet. Her heart turning cold, she tried desperately to jump for safety; but her foot slipped on the bank, and the next moment she would have been dragged with the crashing timbers of the bridge into the cauldron of water below.

But a slim hand caught at her outflung arm, pulling her back desperately from the precipice. Beryl caught a dazed glimpse of something crimson against the dark green of the bushes as she sank, half-fainting, to the ground.

Shirley was bending over her tearfully when she opened her eyes, and Pat, very pale, was hugging her precious camera.

"Beryl, thank goodness you're safe!" gulped Shirley. "The bridge"—she pointed a trembling hand towards the chasm—"it's gone!"

Beryl shivered slightly, her thoughts in a whirl. What had happened? She remembered dragging young Pat from the bridge and darting back for the camera. The rest was like a dream—a nightmare.

"Shirley, was it you who pulled me to safety?" she asked, with a memory of a slim, firm hand that had rescued her from a dreadful fate.

Shirley shook her head, with a puzzled glance.

"I didn't get here in time. I ran when I heard Pat scream, and Ralph got here just in front of me. Pat, did you see what happened?"

The younger girl shuddered. "I don't know what happened, Shirley. I was scared, and covered my face. It was all so dreadfully sudden—"

"Of course!" exclaimed Shirley, with conviction. "It must have been Ralph."

The boy, who had been examining the shattered framework of the bridge, came over to them as he heard his name. He glanced at Beryl with a twisted smile.

"Feel'n' better?" he asked.

Beryl held out her hand impulsively, regretting her uncomplimentary opinion of the boy.

"Ralph, you saved my life!" she said. "Thanks!"

The boy stared at her strangely, and shrugged, with a careless laugh.

"Forget it," he replied lightly. "I just happened to be on the spot. Look," he added, hurriedly changing the subject, "there's something you girls ought to know. This wasn't an ordinary accident. Someone's monkeyed with the 'DANGER' sign that the council had put there to warn off sightseers. I found it dumped in the bushes. And here's something else I found with it."

He took out something bunched in his hand—something that fluttered a bright crimson in the sunset.

Beryl caught in her breath sharply as she stared at the crimson scarf, and Shirley gave an accusing cry.

"I know that scarf! It belongs to Fenella, the gipsy violinist at the hostel!"

THE BROKEN APPOINTMENT



WITH a sharp stab of dismay, Beryl reached out for the incriminating scarf. She recognised its vivid pattern and quaint embroidery without a shadow of doubt. She had noticed it particularly when the gipsy girl was playing and, later, in their strange interview behind the stage.

But instinctively she recoiled from the guilty interpretation put by the chums on the discovery. That was unthinkable.

"Supposing it is Fenella's scarf?" she breathed. "What of it?"

"It's plain as a pikestaff!" said Ralph grimly. "Fenella's a gipsy—with a dangerous grudge. She's madly jealous of the supposed rights of her family who made this valley their home. She warned us to keep away, and, as we ignored her warning, she determined to pay us out in her own fashion."

"But—but would she do anything so—so dangerous?" gasped Shirley, pale with horror.

"I don't suppose she guessed that the bridge was quite so rotten," said Ralph, with a shrug. "She probably imagined that we'd get a bad scare when we felt it shaking—enough to keep us away from the valley. As it turned out—his eyes hardened—"it's a case for the police."

"No!" gasped Beryl involuntarily. "We can't accuse Fenella without more proof. I don't believe that she's guilty."

They all stared at her.

"What more do you want than this?" demanded Ralph, pointing to the scarf. "That's proof enough."

"Of course it is!" exclaimed Shirley indignantly. "Beryl, what's come over you? If you hadn't acted so quickly Pat—Pat might be down there now!"

And she pointed shudderingly to the foaming waters below.

Beryl clenched her hands, unshaken in her conviction. Less excitable than her chum, she possessed a natural intuition not easily swayed.

Fenella was innocent—she had tried to warn them! The wild gipsy music was proof in itself. Had the Romany girl herself followed them, hoping to dissuade them from their

venture by that heart-chilling music? If so, where was she hiding? And who was really responsible for the dastardly trick?

There was a mystery here that Beryl was determined to unravel.

"Oh, let's go back to the hostel!" shrugged Ralph, somewhat impatiently.

"Beryl, let me help you!" exclaimed Shirley, whose rather quick temper was equally swift to remorse. "Are you hurt?"

"It's nothing," said Beryl, wincing slightly as a pain stabbed her ankle when she stood up. "I expect I twisted my foot when I jumped. I'll be all right when I've rested it."

As they made their way back to the hostel, her chum's arm linked in hers, Beryl wondered if she had been foolish to allow her instinctive liking for the young Romany girl to sway her conviction.

Could she have been mistaken in Fenella? Quickly she dismissed the thought, remembering the earnest appeal in the gipsy girl's eyes at their last encounter.

Fenella had tried to warn them, and had failed. Only a miracle had averted a tragic outcome to their excursion.

The disaster had thrown a cloud over their holiday spirits, and young Pat looked particularly down in the dumps.

"We'll never see the Witch's Grotto now," she sighed, "and I shan't get my snaps, after all!"

"Too bad, young 'un!" said Ralph dryly. "But you've only the gipsy girl to thank for that."

Shirley looked up with a quick toss of her head.

"Isn't there another way to the grotto, Ralph?"

"Um—there is," admitted the boy dubiously. "By way of the ravine. But there's scarcely any daylight left."

"I wasn't thinking of daylight," murmured Shirley; and Beryl, glancing at her quickly, saw a reckless gleam in her chum's eyes that caused her a moment's uneasiness.

But just then they reached the hostel, to be greeted by an excited crowd of young people who had heard rumours of the collapse of the bridge.

Shirley was in her element as she vividly described the disaster, and both Beryl and Ralph came in for much praise for the way that they had helped to avert a bigger tragedy.

Ralph took it all as a matter of course, but Beryl's thoughts were all of Fenella.

At tea Ralph insisted on sitting next to Beryl. He was as cool and friendly as ever, in spite of their recent difference of opinion; and Beryl could not understand what it was about him that repelled her somewhat. She felt a twinge of ingratitude when she remembered that he had saved her life.

With a dry smile, Ralph took the gipsy scarf from his pocket.

"I'm keeping this as a reminder," he said—"just in case."

He was as good as his word, and Beryl noticed that he kept the scarf by his elbow during tea. But no further mention was made of the disaster, for they had joined up with the merry crowd of new arrivals, and the talk was all of future excursions.

Shirley was her old self, bubbling with gaiety, and in her company Beryl found it impossible to remain uneasy. She was soon laughing and talking with the others as they discussed their plans.

Half-way through the lively meal the gipsy orchestra commenced to play, and Beryl looked up quickly, anxiously, her gaze seeking Fenella.

But the Romany girl was not with the orchestra—her place on the dais was vacant. And just then Beryl encountered Ralph's sardonic glance.

"Scared to show up," he commented. "I'm not surprised."

With a grin, he turned gallantly to pass a plate of cakes to one of the girls.

As he did so Beryl saw the curtains at the window behind her chair flutter slightly, as though in the breeze.

But there was no wind that evening. It was still and sultry, with a silvery moon creeping up over the trees. Idly watching the swaying curtains, her thoughts grappling with the mystery of the young Romany, Beryl stiffened suddenly, an involuntary cry torn from her lips.

She saw a dusky hand slide between the curtains and snatch the gipsy scarf, vanishing with snake-like rapidity.

Beryl's faint cry brought Ralph to his feet, overturning his chair. He, too, saw the fluttering curtains and the crimson scarf vanishing between them. His good-looking face darkened with sudden anger.

"Stop thief!" he shouted.

In a moment there was pandemonium. Everyone was on his feet, chattering, asking questions. Occupants of other tables turned to stare, and the startled manager hurried up.

"The gipsy girl!" snapped Ralph, in reply to the questions. "She's stolen my wallet! It was under that scarf on the table. Beryl, you saw her!"

"I—I saw a hand—that was all!" breathed Beryl, her heart thumping madly.

"Come on!" exclaimed Ralph. "She can't have gone far. We'll catch her."

He made for the door, followed by an excited crowd.

Beryl started to her feet, a determined gleam in her grey eyes. Her mind was working coolly, clearly; she knew what she meant to do. Fenella had the right to retrieve her own scarf, and Ralph had lied deliberately about the wallet.

They should not hound the gipsy girl if she could prevent it.

For the moment the table in the alcove was deserted, and no one saw Beryl as she climbed quickly on to a chair and slid over the window-sill.

Her ankle was still painful, but the pain did not deter her. She found herself in the moonlit shrubbery, and she could hear the excited voices of the searchers approaching.

Then she heard a rustle in the bushes close to her—a quick, panting breath.

"Fenella!" she breathed.

The rustling ceased, and she stepped forward quickly, parting the foliage.

A scared face peered at her from the shadows, and there was a gleam of desperation in the gipsy girl's eyes as she clutched the crimson scarf.

"Stay where you are!" breathed Beryl softly. "I'm your friend. Leave this to me."

She turned quickly as running footsteps approached, and Ralph Masters burst into view, followed by Shirley and several others.

"Beryl!" exclaimed Shirley in surprise. "Have you seen her?" panted Ralph.

Beryl nodded excitedly.

"Just this minute." She pointed across the lawn. "I couldn't chase her because of my ankle."

Her voice held conviction, for Beryl was a good actress, and she felt justified in her deception.

"Come on! This way!" shouted Ralph.

He raced away, followed by the others, and Beryl drew a quick breath. She turned in time to see the gipsy girl slip out from the bushes.

The young Romany confronted her, still clutching the crimson scarf, her dark eyes very wide.

"Why—why did you do that—for me?" she breathed.

"Because I'm your friend, Fenella," returned Beryl gently, "and because—you saved our lives by your music."

The girl stared at her strangely, her lips trembling.

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The Boy Who Bossed The Castaways



LARRY TO THE RESCUE

JULIE WALLACE and her chums, Elsie and Roly Maynard and Dick Mardle, and a party of other passengers from the s.s. Daffodil, found themselves marooned on the island of the Golden Palm—upon which Julie's father had been castaway for two years.

On the island was a strange pillar in the form of a gigantic palm-tree. Upon it were hieroglyphics which resembled those on a locket which Julie's father had given her.

Also on the island was a lawless boy named Larry Woodstock, who had escaped from the Daffodil and whom Julie & Co. believed had been responsible for their being marooned. He seemed to be familiar with the island, and offered to help the castaways on the condition that they recognised him as boss. The offer was indignantly refused.

The castaways spent the night in a large three-chambered cave which Julie had found. Next morning Julie and the professor, out early, were horrified to see the cliff above the mouth of the cave fall in, completely blocking the entrance.

Julie realised that they must get Larry's help in order to rescue her friends, even though it meant their surrender to the boy outlaw. Reluctantly the professor gave her permission to hoist a signal for Larry Woodstock.

JULIE was almost out of breath when she reached the lone tree on top of the cliff. But she was hardly conscious of that fact in her desperate anxiety to save her friends.

"It's the one chance—the only chance!" she gasped. "Only Larry Woodstock can help now! But will he come, after the way we've all treated him?"

That was her uppermost thought as she found herself swarming up the tree, her white jacket gripped between her teeth. Convenient branches made it an easy climb. At the top, she tied the sleeves of the garment securely round the thin trunk of the tree, then scrambled breathlessly to the ground again.

Would Larry see her signal? Would he respond to it if he did? And could he get here in time to rescue her friends?

"Julie!" a voice called. "Wheeling round, her heart bounded as she

By HAZEL ARMITAGE

saw the boy she was thinking of, the outcast of the island, swiftly running towards her through the trees, a long staff in his hand. His eyes, grimly satisfied, were on the jacket that fluttered from the treetop.

"So you had to fly the flag, after all!" he said. "You want me!"

"Larry, yes."

"What's gone wrong?"

She told him of the landslide that had blocked the entrance to the cave. He looked at her. Then without a word he stepped to the edge of the cliff, looked over and nodded.

"O.K.! I think I can fix it," he said quietly. And, without another glance or word, swung himself over and disappeared from her view.

Almost in dread, Julie found herself moving forward to the edge of the cliff and peered over. And then her heart glowed.

"Good!" she breathed in relief.

For there was Larry, standing on top of the rocks which blocked the mouth of the cave. He had slithered down the slope from the cliff-top. His staff was still in his hand, and as Julie watched he was in the act of rising to his feet. He looked up once and saw her. There was again that grim smile of satisfaction on his face as he set to work.

Fascinated, Julie watched. Then she began to wonder why hadn't she and the professor thought of doing what Larry was doing now? For now she saw that he was leveraging at the largest and heaviest rock which formed the summit of the mound piled outside the cave entrance. And it was moving—moving! Julie held her breath, spellbound.

"He's doing it! He'll save them!" she breathed.

She saw that Larry was putting every ounce of his energy into the task. She saw Larry's muscles swelling and rolling beneath his shirt; saw the perspiration beginning to stand out on his forehead. She heard him grunt.

And then—there was a crash. Larry flattened himself back against the cliff-face, clinging there as the topmost rock rolled forward. It tilted dizzily on the edge of the mound for a moment, and then, with a roar and crash that seemed to set the whole landslide in motion

again, went thundering down the hill of debris to crash on to the beach below. From the amazed professor who stood on the beach, hopping on his uninjured foot, there went up a great cry.

"Oh, well done, Woodstock! Well done, lad!" Larry did not heed. Already he was attacking the next great rock.

Julie, radiant with joy, straightened up. She was tempted to go sliding down the slope to Larry's assistance. But she didn't.

A moment's reflection told her that such a course might very well lead to catastrophe, for Larry's foothold on the mound was slight. He required every inch of the available space for his work. Instead, with heart racing, she went running back down the cliff path.

She heard another crash as she sped—another, and then another. When she reached the beach and immediately looked upwards there was a great, gaping hole once more in the cliff-face. Larry was almost exhausted then. But already the head and shoulders of Dick had appeared in the opening.

"Larry!" she cried, and hurried towards him up the short path. "Larry—oh, thank you!" she cried.

The professor, blowing and gasping, came scrambling up beside her.

Larry just stood there, resting against the cliff, his breath coming and going in huge gasps as he strove to recover himself. And then frantically Julie and the professor began to push the stones away, and first Dick and Roly came scrambling out, in turn to lend a hand in rescuing the others.

Finally, in a rather dazed group, the whole party stood blinking in the brilliant sunshine on the golden beach.

"Gosh!" Dick said. "What a squeak. I thought—" He became aware then of Larry. "I say—" he muttered, staring.

"Howdy?" Larry said lazily, lifting himself from the cliff.

They all turned and stared at him. For a moment they did not seem able to believe their eyes as they saw the cool, self-possessed outlaw regarding them. Then Gilson stepped forward.

"You! And just what do you think you're doing here?" he raspingly challenged.

"I was invited here," Larry retorted.

"Invited? You—"

For answer Larry turned. He pointed upwards at the tree on the cliff-top from which Julie's jacket still fluttered.

"Doesn't that explain it?" he asked. "I guess you've surrendered to my terms."

There was an instant's stupefied silence. An instant of bewilderment, and then, as they all realised the significance of his remark, there came the dawning horror of alarmed anger.

"You—you don't mean—" Ada Henshaw breathed.

"I do," the boy said easily. "Perhaps you remember the talk we had the other day. I offered to look after you—on the condition, of course, that I should be the leader—the boss. You refused, but I gave you a chance. I said if you changed your minds you could send for me by running up a rag on that tree. And—well, there it is. I've kept my part of the bargain. Now—he stared at them all—"now I expect you to keep yours!"

In stunned dismay they stared at him. Mrs. Fry blinked.

"Do—do you mean to tell us that—that it was you who got us out of that awful cave?"

"It was," Julie said. "And I think it—"

"We're not asking what you think!" Gilson snapped. "You keep quiet, Julie. We all know you don't mind knuckling under, but this is to be thrashed out by us all now. Let's get this straight," he added, once again assuming command. "Who fixed that flag up there?"

"I did," Julie said.

"I might have guessed—"

"The professor approved!" Julie flashed.

That took the wind out of Gilson's sails for a moment. His jaw dropped. It took the wind out of the sails of the others, too—they all stared questioningly at the professor. He, realising that he must make the situation clear, drew himself up.

"That's right," he confessed. "I gave Julie the instructions, because only Woodstock could help. And he did help—splendidly. If he hadn't—well, you know what your fate in the cave might have been."

"And you did that, sir, knowing what it would mean?" Dick asked.

"Yes," the professor replied.

There was a moment more of silence. The castaways looked uncertain, bewildered, but, nevertheless, realising that the decision had been taken for them, Julie saw a sudden tension in their faces. It was Larry who broke the silence that ensued.

"Well, there we are," he said casually. "That's settled."

"Meaning that you're now boss?" Elsie said.

"Meaning," Larry said significantly, "that, though I'm no gentleman myself, I expect people who call themselves such to stand by their agreement."

Another pause. But Julie saw the professor and Dick and Roly stiffen.

She saw Mr. Fry frown and then flash a look of pride at his wife. She saw Hitchcock shaking his head; saw Gilson and Ada move together and draw away. She heard the sniff which Mrs. Fry gave, and marked the look of intrigued interest in the face of Aunt Martha. She sensed at once a dozen conflicting emotions. Mr. Fry took up the challenge. He looked straight at Larry.

"You insist on keeping us to the bargain?" he asked.

"I insist," Larry replied quietly. And that, whether the castaways liked it or not, seemed to settle the question.

There was another silence, grim and uneasy, while Julie stared from the glowering Neil Gilson to the cool, cynically smiling figure of the boy outlaw. Obviously Neil Gilson was fighting to control his temper, his lips pursed, his hands clenched at his sides.

Then he found the words he had evidently been seeking, and took a grim, determined step forward.

"Look here, sir," he said passionately, addressing the professor, "I'm talking common sense. We've all been tricked! And I want to know what this rogue's game is? Why has he marooned us here? Why does he want to dominate us? Remember he is a criminal in the eyes of the law," he added.

There was a murmur of uneasiness as Gilson's words struck home. Like the others, Julie realised that all Gilson's accusations were right, and she wondered for a moment if she herself had done the right thing, after all, in helping to bring about this situation.

But while they all looked dubious, uncertain, and uncomfortable, it was the professor who spoke.

His face was grave, his voice steady. "I gave my word," he said. "I cannot go back on it."

"And these others?" Larry asked.

"Well, I stand by the professor," Dick said quietly. "At the same time I don't see why you can't join us, Woodstock, without wanting to boss the show—"

"Larry, yes," Julie's eyes lit up. She caught upon the suggestion gladly. "Larry, that's it! Let's all be friends!"

She was chilled and dismayed by the look he gave her.

"I don't think there can be any question of friendship just yet," he said slowly. "You've shown me pretty plainly in the past what you all think of me, and I guess you can't suddenly change. Half-measures won't suit me. I'm not playing second fiddle to Mr. Gilson. I'm boss—and from this moment what I say goes!"

NO CHOICE



THERE was another silence. Julie bit her lip; the hope that had flamed so eagerly in her heart was completely extinguished now. But there was no help for it. Larry inexorably had made up his mind, determined to keep them to the contract the professor had entered into for them.

"O.K.," Dick said. "That settles it."

Roly said the same. So did the professor, of course. Hitchcock, after a hesitant glance at Gilson, nodded; so did Mr. Fry. With eyes that smoldered, Gilson watched the surrender. He stared scornfully at last the Australian boy looked questioningly at him.

"You can count me out," he said shortly. "I don't knuckle under to your kind."

"No! Nor do I!" Ada Henshaw supported defiantly.

"O.K.," Larry nodded unoffensively. "What about you, Aunt Martha?"

"Oh, for goodness' sake get on with your silly leadership!" Aunt Martha said impatiently. "What does it matter who leads us as long as we're dry and fed? I'm not worried about your reputation, young man, but I certainly am worried about food. What about some breakfast?"

"Exactly what I was thinking; I know you're hungry," Larry said. He looked around. "Mardie, you'd better take Hitchcock and go into the woods and collect breadfruit. Roly, take Mr. Fry and find some eggs along the beach."

"E-eggs," stuttered Roly. "On the beach?"

"Turtles' eggs," Larry said impatiently. "You'll find dozens of them if you look. Now let's get moving. Julie, take charge of the fire. Elsie, you and Miss Henshaw can help her—"

"Not me!" Ada defied. "I've told you I stick by Mr. Gilson."

"O.K.," Larry said carelessly. "Professor, will you come with me to the cave and see what wants doing?"

The professor nodded without enthusiasm. He still looked worried; still looked as though he felt he had played some unhappy trick on his party.

Gilson, standing some little distance apart, his hands in his pockets, looked on with a sneering smile, and then, as Ada joined him and muttered something in his ear, they strolled away.

And so, with Julie in charge of the fire and the preparation of breakfast, the first day's rule of Larry Woodstock began.

Certainly, up to a point, things went smoothly. The fire trench was cleared out, a new fire was soon blazing merrily. In the stone oven which Julie had copied from Larry's own fire, she thrust the cold remains of the pork, covered it over, as she had seen Larry cover, with thick leaves so that the meat should gradually heat through and retain its moisture.

While that was going on, Aunt Martha prepared the picnic tin for tea, and Julie set out the scallop shells and the small green coconut shells on the sand as if they were plates and cups. While they were doing that, Julie heard Larry and the professor approaching.

Both of them had picked up a branch of tree on their way. Both of them were carrying the branches back to help out the fire. Larry's was the heavier by far, yet he swung along with it easily on his shoulder as though it had been a walking-stick. But the professor, handicapped by both age and his injured foot, was staggering badly.

"All right," Julie heard Larry say, "take it easy, professor." And then, as Roly and Mr. Fry, both looking baffled, bewildered, and with empty hands, hove into view, he called to them. "Hi, come along here! Give the professor a hand with this."

And, much to the professor's relief, Julie guessed, Roly and Mr. Fry did carry the branch

back to the fire. By that time Dick and Hitchcock had also turned up. And they, too, were looking baffled, and were also empty handed.

"Well," Larry looked at them, "where's the breadfruit?"

"We—we can't find any," Dick blurted.

"You mean you don't know what it is."

"Well—yes, that is what we mean."

"And the eggs, Maynard?"

"Well, blow it!" Roly protested offensively. "We looked everywhere. We never even saw a sign of an egg—"

"Why didn't you admit you were such gumps in the first place?" Larry eyed them, and again Julie saw a flicker of amusement in his eyes. "And you protest you don't want a leader! How on earth were you going to live? You'd better come with me."

"But I tell you there are no eggs," Roly protested.

"Come on," Larry briefly instructed.

With a jerk of his head, he led the way. The four, after a hesitant glance from one to the other, followed him. And Julie, tending the fire, had to smile as she watched the party disappear.

Ten minutes later they returned—not empty handed this time, but fairly staggering under their loads. Both Dick and Hitchcock had had to turn their coats into "baskets" so as to carry breadfruit, and Roly, his face abeam, was carrying not only a hatful of large eggs, but had every pocket crammed full.

"Gosh!" Roly said as he unloaded these treasures. "I'd never have known there was so much grub on the island. I thought there wasn't an egg for miles, but Woodstock turned out a nest every five yards or so. And not only the nest—but the turtles—gosh, if you'd seen how they scooted—"

"We'll have some for dinner later on," Larry said. "Here you are, Julie. See what you can do with 'em."

Julie knew just what to do with them. In the small coconut shells she poached each one. And presently, to the hungry-eyed castaways' delight, a sumptuous breakfast was arranged on the sand—hot pork chops, deliciously steamed in palm leaves, tea made by Aunt Martha—Mrs. Fry had done nothing but give unwanted advice—crisp brown breadfruit, and ships' biscuits. It was a meal that made the castaways' mouths water.

"Tuck in," Larry said.

At that moment Gilson and Ada came strolling back on to the scene. They looked at the tempting food laid out, and their eyes began to glisten. With a little grunt of approval, Gilson dropped into a place on the sand. Ada followed suit.

And then Larry loomed behind him. Larry put a hand on his shoulder.

"Excuse me, Gilson, that's my place," he said.

"Oh!" Gilson looked up at him. He wanted to argue, but hunger fought down his hostility. "Oh, all right!" he grudgingly admitted. "I'll move."

"You will." Larry's nod was grim. "And Miss Henshaw will move, too," he said. "Both of you will move—right away from this feed. You haven't done anything to provide this breakfast, so you don't eat it!" he added. "Now—scram, the pair of you!"

LARRY HAS HIS WAY



THE agreeable atmosphere that had surrounded the party at the prospect of the excellent meal vanished like a flash. Suddenly the silence was grim. But there was no doubt that Larry meant what he said—and no doubt that Gilson was taken aback, and furiously angry. Julie

felt her heart jump as, blazing eyed, he jumped to his feet.

But he did not turn on Larry as she half expected. He turned to the professor, now looking profoundly uncomfortable.

"Professor, is this your wish?"

"Eh? No, certainly not, begad!" the professor spluttered.

"Then you will kindly inform this—this upstart. He seems to overlook the fact that you are here."

"Er—" the professor blinked. Then he thought over the problem. "Yes, dash it, that's so! Woodstock," he said aggrievedly, "Gilson is my secretary. It's only right that he and Miss Henshaw should be fed."

There was electricity in the air now. But Larry surveyed them all, seeming to be the only one it did not touch.

"For the time being things have changed. There's no question of employee and employer here. You can start all that business over again when the Daffodil comes back. Meantime, I'm boss. If Gilson and Miss Henshaw want to eat, they must work for it and be like the rest. No work, no food. That's fair."

"I insist," Gilson quivered.

"Go ahead. But you don't eat. Push off." "Just a minute." Gilson seemed to be controlling himself with an effort. "It's fair, is it? You dare use that word—you who tricked us here, who are the cause of all our miseries! Who planned to maroon us here just so that you could set yourself up as our boss! Don't talk about fairness, Larry Woodstock, when it is you who have cheated us—"

Larry stiffened. His eyes glinted. His fist bunched.

"Gilson, I don't want to have to lay hands on you—"

"And you needn't try," Gilson said fiercely. "I'm not afraid of you, Woodstock, but unlike you, I can't bring myself to behave like a hooligan in the presence of ladies! We'll meet some other time—some other place—on our own," he added significantly. "And now—" he shrugged. "Well, get on with your food. Come along, Ada. I'll promise you don't starve!"

And with a frigid glance at Larry, he took Ada Henshaw by the arm; with a queer, silent sort of dignity led her away, leaving a more profound atmosphere of discomfort and hostility in the air than before. Larry, with a little nod, just sank down at his place.

Gilson vanished with his companion into the wood, but he left an unhappy atmosphere behind him. The breakfast, excellent though it was, and eaten hungrily as it was, cheered nobody up. They were all conscious of Larry's domination, and all wondering uneasily where this state of affairs was eventually going to lead them. They were all glad when at last the meal was finished.

Then Larry, still apparently unmoved, stood up.

"The next thing to do is to get that cave of yours shipshape again," he said. "Mardie, and you, professor—you'd better shift some of the stones from the entry. I'll go along and get tools for digging away the loose earth. Julie, you'd better come with me—we'll collect some sweet potatoes while we're about it, for dinner. Aunt Martha, I leave you in charge of the domestic arrangements."

"Thank you," Aunt Martha retorted. "There's no need to order me. I'll see that everything gets done."

Larry nodded, then turned to Julie.

"Follow me, Julie," he instructed.

And he made to move away, only to pull up abruptly as he caught sight of Hitchcock, the sailor, settling down for a nap on the sand.

"Hey, Hitchcock, what do you think you're doing?" he demanded, striding forward.

"Taking a snooze," was the surly reply.

"Oh, no, you're not! You're going to work along with the rest. There're going to be no slackers while I'm boss."

"But—"

The sailor finished with a startled gasp, for the boy boss, reaching down, had grabbed him by the scruff of the neck and with amazing ease had hoisted him to his feet.

"Hands off!" the man growled. "Who do you think you are?"

"Your boss," was the quiet answer. "Get off to work, will you?"

For a few moments Hitchcock glowered defiantly at Larry, but something about that boy's magnetic personality and about the determined way he stood there with clenched fists made the rebellious glare die from his eyes.

"Oh, all right!" he muttered sullenly.

Larry and Julie left then. Julie was biting her lip, hardly knowing again what to make of it all. Secretly she sympathized with the stand Larry had taken against Gilson and Ada. She agreed with him that they, too, should work for the rations so hard to obtain. But she still felt miles and miles away from understanding Larry, though she was still overawed by him.

Almost running at his side, she felt she had to ask him a question—a question which had been nagging on and off in her mind ever since the castaways had found themselves stranded. "Larry, did—did you plan to get us marooned here? Did you send that fake wireless message?"

Sideways he looked at her. His reply chilled her.

"That's what you all believe, isn't it?"

"But—but you haven't denied it?"

"Why should I?" he asked. "I shouldn't be believed if I did."

That was all—until they reached his camp again. There he briefly ordered her to remain outside while he disappeared into his cave. In a moment he was back, carrying two shovels and two picks. He had also slipped a business-like looking telescope in his belt.

"Larry, but where—where did you get these?" Julie cried, eyeing the tools.

"Where do you think? The motor-boat, of course."

"But—but the motor-boat wasn't carrying such things," she protested.

"It was—because I put 'em there." He looked at her. "You forget, Julie, that I prepared for this trip from the moment I found what course the Daffodil was taking."

She stared at him in wonder, again amazed at his skill in planning: the difficulties he apparently foresaw. A sudden wave of respect swept over her—a sudden feeling that she would like to know him better, would like to feel more sincerely friendly towards him, because she was sure, in her own inmost mind, that he felt like that about her. She challenged him boldly.

"Larry, why did you come to this island?"

He eyed her for a moment. She felt a little disturbed at the seriousness she saw in his eyes, as though he was weighing her up, as though he was asking himself frankly if she was his friend.

"Why do you ask?" he said slowly.

"Because I'm interested."

"Just curiosity, eh?" He laughed shortly, conveying at once that if that was her reason the curiosity would never be satisfied. "That all?"

"Larry, you know it isn't. I—I don't know, but—but you've some purpose here, haven't you? Some mission?"

He nodded grimly.

"Yes, I have a purpose."

"Larry, can't I help?"

"You can—yes." He paused, as if considering something. "You'd like to help—truly?"

"Yes."

"Then," he said bluntly, "give me the locket you're wearing round your neck!"

What can the connection be between Larry's purpose on the island and Julie's locket? And surely she will not give it to him! Be sure you don't miss next Friday's enthralling chapters of this serial.

The Merry-makers at College



By

DAPHNE GRAYSON

SALLY HAS HER DOUBTS

"GRAB up that hamper, Johnny!" laughed Sally Warner in breathless haste.

"This is where we do the vanishing trick!" grinned Don Weston, ducking down to grasp the other end of the hamper.

"Too bad if Gritty spotted us now," breathed Fay Manners, scrambling out of sight down the rocks.

"Yeah, we don't want one of his dreary lectures to spoil things," chuckled Johnny Briggs.

The chums had been picnicking on the cliffs of Barnacle Cove. It was a favourite haunt for the students of Roxburgh Co-ed College; and it was by sheer luck that Sally had spotted Mr. Grittal, the pompous head of J House, taking a walk in their direction this afternoon.

"I believe Gritty saw us!" gurgled Sally, skipping down the rocks as nimbly as though they were stepping stones.

"As long as he doesn't follow us, I don't mind!" chirped Johnny.

"Don't you worry, Gritty doesn't like exercise," chuckled Don. "He's not the build for it, anyhow. These rocks are mighty unsafe if you don't know—". He broke off with a start, on hearing a sudden cry from Sally.

"Quick! There's someone hurt!" She was leaping down the slope to the rocky beach below. A girl was lying flimsily at the foot of the cove, her rucksack crumpled as by a severe fall, her hands clasped dazedly to her head.

"Oh, my dear, what happened? Are you hurt?" And Sally dropped to her knees beside her, thankful to find that the girl was not unconscious. "Is anyone with you, or are you on your own?"

The girl gazed at her with big, violet eyes that were curiously bright and luminous, yet her expression was quite blank.

"I don't remember," she said faintly.

"Don't remember?" Sally flashed an anxious glance at her chums, who had now hurried to her side. "Take it easy," she urged softly. "Tell me, where do you live? What is your name?"

The girl pressed her hand wanly to her forehead.

"I don't remember—anything," she whispered. Then a word came vaguely to her lips. "Texas!" And she kept repeating it feverishly. "Texas!"

The chums were alarmed now. Had she come all the way from Texas? Was that all she remembered? Sally and Fay, both skilled in first-aid, gave her a hurried examination, but could find no sign of injury. The shock alone had affected her. It had affected her memory.

"Better carry her up to the cliffs and get a doctor to her," Sally murmured to the boys. "It's quite safe to move her, I think."

Very gently she helped the boys carry the girl up the slope, Fay following with the girl's soaked and battered rucksack.

It was a relief to them all now to find Mr. Grittal on the cliff above. He came hurrying to see what was amiss. In his own fussy, self-important way he instantly took charge, gleaming from the girl herself what little she could tell him. He seemed to give her confidence. Sally noticed. Her big, violet eyes gazed up at him gratefully, trustingly. It plainly pleased Mr. Grittal.

"You'll be all right, my dear, quite all right now that I am here," he told her, patting her hand, and he turned to Sally & Co. with a slightly condescending air. "It is a case of concussion. Lost memory. She is a stranger—she comes from Texas—and the strange surroundings do not help her to remember. She must have immediate rest somewhere." And his gaze went to a lone cottage standing some little way back from the cove. "What is that place? Who lives there?"

"Grey Cottage, sir. There's no one living there now," said Don.

"The owner was an old scientist—Professor Fenway," Sally added, as Mr. Grittal looked unconvinced. "The cottage has been shut up ever since he died six months ago."

"A pity," muttered Mr. Grittal; then made up his mind as the girl's hand clung tightly to his, just as if she feared he might leave her. "Come! We will take her to the college—to the sanatorium. Rest is the essential thing, and skilled nursing. She will be in excellent hands there." And he beamed down into the

girl's softly appealing face. "Be sure I know what is best for you, Miss—er—Miss Texas."

Sally ran eagerly to the road and hailed the first student's car that came along, and in a very few minutes the mystery girl from Texas—Violet, as the chums named her on account of her vivid eyes—was carried into the college sanatorium, and put snugly to bed by Nurse Rowlands. After cheery reassurances from Nurse Rowlands, whom Sally & Co. regarded as an oracle in such matters, it was decided by Mr. Grittal that no doctor need yet be called, so long as the patient showed no signs of relapse.

"Let us know instantly if there is anything you require, Miss Texas," Mr. Grittal said to her, quite enjoying his own rôle of doctor; and to Sally he added gravely: "Warn everybody that there must be absolute quiet in this vicinity. It is a good thing the sanatorium is near the tutors' wing, and nowhere near the students' quarters."

"We'll pop along and see you later, Violet," Sally said to her softly. "Have a good sleep now, dear."

The chums tiptoed out, and there was no need whatever for them to enjoin silence upon the others. Everyone in J House and K House alike was warm-heartedly concerned for the sick stranger in their midst. The girl from Texas who had lost her memory was not only an invalid, she was a romantic guest.

Sally and Fay took the girl's rucksack along to their chalet and opened it, hoping that its contents might furnish a clue. But there were no letters or papers in it—nothing to reveal even the stranger's name. Just a spare pair of hiking shoes, a towel, and a change of underclothes, newly laundered, but all wet now with sea-water.

Sally sighed with disappointment, and hung up the garments to dry—much to the delight of her pet parrot Abdul.

"Hoist the mainsails!" he squawked, jiggling gleefully in his cage by the window. "String 'em up high—string 'em up high!"

It was late in the evening, nearly bedtime, when Sally took the clothes down from the line. They were dry now, and she was about to run over them with her little electric iron when she hit upon an exciting discovery.

"Fay, I'm on a clue!" she cried. "Look at these laundry marks!"

She was pointing to the familiar "R X" stamped on each of the garments. Fay recognised them with a gasp of amazement. They were the marks of the local Roxburgh laundry.

"Violet's from Roxburgh! She's a local girl after all!" Sally said breathlessly.

"But she said she came from Texas—"

"That was her memory wandering; she was rambling," Sally rushed on. "She couldn't live anywhere but in Roxburgh to get her laundry done here. Gee, what a good thing we spotted it! Her people must be frantic about her. I'll go and talk to her. I dare say it'll all come back to her now."

She stopped only to get some delicacies from her latest parcel—a box of crystallised peaches that would tempt any invalid's palate. Then eagerly she hurried across to the college buildings, to the sanatorium next door to the tutors' wing. Nurse Rowlands had retired to her own room for the night, and gave Sally ready permission to go and see the patient.

Softly Sally tapped and went into the ward. "Hallo, Vi, how are you feeling now?" she asked, sitting down by her bedside. "I've brought you some candies."

"Some what?" The girl stirred listlessly, then sat up brightly when she saw what was in the box. "Sugared peaches! Oh, goody!"

She took one eagerly, then another, eating them rapidly, while her violet eyes smiled up at Sally.

"Have you remembered anything more, dear?" Sally began gently. "Where you come from?"

"I told you"—the answer was a little terse—"I'm from Texas!"

"Just try to think, Vi, and perhaps I can help you," Sally said softly. "You're in Roxburgh College now, Roxburgh! Doesn't that recall anything? Do you remember where you live—in Roxburgh?"

The girl was starting on her third peach; now she dropped it.

"I live in Texas, I tell you," she said tartly. "I never set foot in Roxburgh till to-day. Then I fell. I fell down a cliff—that's all I remember."

"But—" Sally stared. "But you arrived before to-day?"

"I arrived to-day, and I've never been here before," the girl repeated peevishly. "My memory's quite clear about that. I only came to Roxburgh for the day—" She broke off in sudden confusion, as if she realised too late that she was talking impossibilities. "I—I mean, I don't remember," she stuttered. "I don't remember anything."

Yet she seemed to have remembered one thing, Sally thought amazedly. That Texas was more than a day's journey from Roxburgh.

"It's your people I'm thinking about, Vi," Sally tried again gently. "I've got a feeling that you live here in Roxburgh, and if only you could help me—"

She was interrupted by a tap at the door. Mr. Grittal came in wearing a bedside smile.

"Oh!" Sally was staggered by a gulping cry from Violet. It was like a sob. "Oh, Mr. Grittal, I'm so glad you've come! This g-girl's upsetting me," she wept. "I can't stand it!"

"Upsetting you, my dear?" Mr. Grittal came forward in horror. "Miss Warner!"

"She k-keeps pestering me with questions. She doesn't believe me. She's b-bullying me!" sobbed Violet, and clung pathetically to Mr. Grittal's hand. "Oh, do please send her away, Mr. Grittal! My head's bursting, I can't stand any more!"

Sally was too overcome to speak. Mr. Grittal recoiled from her in pained horror.

"Miss Warner, how could you be so heartless?" he whispered hollowly. He pointed to the door with a trembling hand, while Violet still clung piteously to the other. "Go at once! Do not ever come here again disturbing this poor sick girl!"

Sally groped her way across the dark campus in a kind of trance. Violet had turned on those tears, created that scene, just for all the world as though she were concocting an escape from awkward questions! Had it not been for her fall, her frail state of health, it would have looked as if she were putting on an act before Mr. Grittal.

It left Sally so amazed and bewildered that she got into bed quite forgetting to wish Fay good-night in the next cubicle, and even forgetting to put the cover over Abdul's cage.

That last omission was fatal, for nothing would prevent Abdul chattering at night if his cage wasn't covered.

Sally had been asleep about two hours when his squawky voice awakened her.

"Starboard lights, ahoy!" And he gave a piercing whistle. "Starboard lights!"

Sally tumbled drowsily out of bed, remembering his cover, and hastily reached for it. His shrill voice rang out again as she made for the window where his cage was perched.

"Lights, ahoy! Starboard lights—"

"Ssshhh! Pipe down, Abdul—you'll wake everybody!" gasped Sally, whisking the cover over his cage.

Then something attracted her gaze to the window, and with a start she realised what it was that had excited the parrot.

There was a light flickering strangely in the tutors' quarters across the campus—in the tutors' library. It startled Sally. All the college buildings were in darkness except for that queer glow flickering bright and then dull. Everybody had long since gone to bed. What was it? Was it a torch? Burglars?

Her heart jumping, Sally dragged on her slacks and jumper, and without a sound she sped across the campus to the tutors' quarters.

The library was on the ground floor. Creeping close, she peered in through the window.

The sight within held her transfixed. A girl's figure was moving furtively amongst the bookshelves, a lighted torch in her hand. She was examining the books one by one, examining them feverishly, searching for something. It was the girl they called Violet Texas—the girl who had lost her memory!

VIOLET GETS TO WORK



SALLY gazed electrified. What was the girl doing? What was her object here at this time of night? In the tutors' library of all places! Was she delirious? Sleepwalking? But there was nothing delirious in the girl's swift, stealthy movements. She was

seizing one book after another from the shelves, opening the covers, examining them excitedly by the light of the torch.

Sally stirred herself. Suspicious leapt upon her. That girl was not what she pretended. She was going to tax her, demand what it was she was up to.

Darting noiselessly from the window, she sped round the side of the building to the door in the cloisters. It was the only entrance from outside. It was unlocked. But it led into the main corridor of the tutors' wing, and the corridor was in darkness.

Judging the direction of the library, Sally crept forward blindly in the twisting corridor. Her foot suddenly struck against some hard object. There was a startling crash, and a metal flower vase went toppling from its pedestal.

Sally pulled up with a gasp, the shock making her go hot and then cold. The noise echoed alarmingly in the still corridor.

Next thing she knew a door burst open and the light flooded on.

"Who's there? Who is it?" a startled voice cried.

Sally swung round to see Mr. Grittal bursting from his room in dressing-gown and slippers.

"There was a light—someone in the library, Mr. Grittal. It was the girl from the sanatorium," Sally blurted.

Mr. Grittal almost exploded.

"Are you out of your senses, Miss Warner? That poor girl is ill. How could she—"

"I saw her in the library. I saw her—"

But Sally could get no further.

Mr. Grittal went storming round the bend of the passage, switched on the next light, ran to the library door, and flung it open. One glance inside, and his voice choked with exasperation.

"There's nobody here! Of course there's nobody here!"

"Then she's hiding!" panted Sally, darting inside and snapping on all the lights.

A deserted room met her gaze. Books, chairs, tables, were all in their place and undisturbed. No intruder was hiding—no sign that any intruder had ever been here.

"She was here, Mr. Grittal!" Sally burst in tensely. "I tell you I saw her not a moment ago—prying through these books—searching for something. You've got to believe me!"

Her tone impressed Mr. Grittal in spite of himself. He turned abruptly and went hurrying up the staircase that led to the sanatorium, Sally hurrying after him. He paused at the door of the ward, and opened it noiselessly.

A single night-light was burning within, beside the only bed that was occupied.

A sharp intake of breath came from Mr. Grittal.

The girl they called Violet was lying curled up in that bed, her breathing gentle and steady, apparently soundly sleeping.

"You see?" Mr. Grittal said in a harsh

whisper, and soundlessly closed the door upon her.

Sally didn't trust herself to answer. She had seen more than enough. What was behind the sham? What was this girl's real design in malingering as an invalid and pretending to have lost her memory?

"You have shown nothing but spite towards that poor girl, and I am convinced that you have trumped up this story to-night out of sheer malice, Miss Warner!" Mr. Grittal said in trembling tones. "You will hear more about this!"

Sally had no doubt about that, knowing Mr. Grittal as she did. It was all round the college next morning.

But she ignored the spiteful remarks that were made, comforting herself in the understanding of her own chums.

"Funny," muttered Johnny, "that she could have fallen down those cliffs without even getting a scratch."

"If she did fall," Sally said slowly.

"Gee, you don't think the whole story was a fake?" gasped Don.

"It might have been a ruse to get herself taken into the coll.—just supposing there's something here that she particularly wants," murmured Sally, who had been doing a lot of hard thinking since last night. "Something so important that she even prowls round in the middle of the night to search for it. Anyway, I'm going to have a straight talk with her."

And Sally went quietly across to the sanatorium immediately after breakfast.

She was at the door of the ward, just about to open it, when she heard Mr. Grittal's voice speaking in loud, hearty tones within.

"Well, well, my dear, this is splendid news! So your memory has come back, and you feel truly yourself again."

Sally paused alertly outside the door, her eyes glistening with interest.

"Yes, I'm quite better, Mr. Grittal, and I owe it all to your kindness," came Violet's voice. "I remember all about myself and my home in Texas, and everything now, and my real name is Joyce Mainwaring."

"I don't believe her," thought Sally grimly.

"And you really feel well enough to get up, my dear, and go home to-day?" Mr. Grittal was asking anxiously.

"Oh, I must, please—my people will be worrying about me," answered Violet; and now Sally heard an eagerness come into her voice.

"But first, Mr. Grittal, you have all been so wonderful to me, and I should so love to do some little thing to repay it. I was wondering if I could give a nice tea-party this afternoon—"

"Capital!" cried Mr. Grittal.

"And I was wondering if I could hold it in your room," wheedled Violet, "because you've been kindest of all, Mr. Grittal, and my party is really meant for you."

"A most charming thought!" beamed Mr. Grittal. "Certainly my room shall be at your disposal, Miss Mainwaring, and my own best silver and china to make your party the success it deserves to be."

Sally crept away from the door, her pulses tingling with excitement.

Why had Violet's memory returned so miraculously? Why was she so eager to hold her farewell party in Mr. Grittal's room, which was almost next door to the library? Was it because she had been balked in her object last night, and intended pursuing her search this afternoon, under cover of the party, so that she could grab what she wanted, and then make a quick getaway?

Sally more than suspected. She set out to forestall her.

That afternoon, under the fond congratulations of all, Violet Texas, as she was still called, emerged demurely from the sanatorium, armed with the many flowers that had been given her, and tripped across to Mr. Grittal's quarters to prepare her party.

Sally hid herself outside the tutors' wing.

watching the library window. Sure enough, the moment came when Violet stole alone into the library. She was searching the books again, searching them feverishly. From shelf to shelf she went, scanning a volume here, another there, while Sally peeped unseen through the window.

Suddenly the girl gave a perceptible start. She had seized a brown, faded-looking book from the second shelf. Sally saw the excited colour flood into her face, and she knew as plainly as if she had been told that this was the book Violet wanted.

Next second Mr. Grittall's voice was calling her. Violet slipped the book swiftly back on its shelf, but Sally noticed that she left it slightly protruding before she hurried away, as if to be able to find it readily again.

No sooner was she gone than Sally slipped unseen into the library. Her hands were trembling as she seized that book from the second shelf. Then her excitement changed to blank stupor.

No rare or valuable book this, but just a tattered old work on philosophy! Sally gazed at its shabby binding, unstruck with awe.

Blankly she opened its loose cover. Then her gaze fell upon an illegible signature written in the flyleaf, and the address: Grey Cottage, The Cove, Roxburgh.

Grey Cottage? Sally gave a start. Why, that was the old cottage that had been shut up six months ago, near Barnacle Cove, near the spot where they had found the girl Violet.

And then Sally's thoughts broke off. She heard steps in the corridor. Violet was coming back!

She had just time to push the book back on to its shelf and get to the door, then the door opened and Violet saw her.

"Wh-what"—Violet's colour drained, and she almost jumped out of her skin—"what are you doing here, Sally Warner?"

"I came to help you with the party," Sally said brightly.

"In the library? The party's not in the library!" hissed Violet.

"Doesn't matter where!" And Sally smilingly took her arm, steering her straight out of the library. "You can't be very strong yet, Vi. I'll stick by and help you."

She saw fear as well as fury in Violet's face as she steered her into the sitting-room next door, where all Mr. Grittall's fine silver and crockery were spread out in readiness for the party.

"Tell me where you want everything, Vi. I've got tons of time," she assured her.

Violet's eyes blazed at her in helpless fury, then darted to the sideboard, where a tray stood bearing Mr. Grittall's handsome Turkish tea-service.

"You can hand me that tray," she grated. "I'll have it over here."

"On the table?"

"Yes."

Sally lifted the tray from the sideboard, utterly unsuspecting. Out shot Violet's hand, giving her a vicious push.

Crash! went the tray—and the beautiful Turkish teapot and jug smashed in smithereens on the floor.

"Oh! Oh, Sally Warner, how could you!" came a heartrending cry from Violet. "They're Mr. Grittall's! He'll hold me responsible!"

Mr. Grittall came rushing in from his study, his face livid as he saw his prized china lying at Sally's feet. Violet was in tears now—real tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Oh, Mr. Grittall, I was taking such care of your beautiful tea service, and look what S-Sally Warner's done!" she sobbed. "She only came here to upset me. I didn't want her. I didn't ask her to my party. Oh, just look, oh—"

"There, there, my dear!" Mr. Grittall caught her as she swayed, fearing that she was going to faint.

He turned his stern gaze upon Sally.

"Go, you disgraceful girl!" he gasped. "You

owe this poor child a greater apology even than you owe me! Go—and don't you dare show your face at the party!"

AT THE DESERTED COTTAGE



SALLY found herself outside the room before she had spoken a word in her defence. Her head was whirling. She was clear about one thing only.

Violet had had no scruples in getting rid of her. Violet's game was something infinitely deeper than the learned philosophy contained in that stodgy old book.

What was she after? What was to be done? "Anything to report, Sally?" came Johnny's voice, with a chuckle, as she drifted out into the open. "You look as if you've lost your own memory all of a sudden."

"Something upset the party?" asked Don. "Something's going to, I'm thinking—but I shan't be there to stop it," came Sally's answer. She then told them what had happened.

"I don't like the sound of this," muttered Don when she had finished. "That girl wants watching, or we may find out what her little game is too late—after she's gone."

"Gone where?" Johnny said shrewdly. "I've got an idea she won't be going to Texas."

Sally was thinking deeply. Now she looked up with a sudden start.

"Listen, boys!" she said in queer excitement. "The place where we found our so-called Violet was near the Grey Cottage by the cove. And the address written in the flyleaf of that old book was the Grey Cottage. If there's any connection at all, the secret's connected with that cottage."

"But there's no one living there, Sally; it's closed up!" exclaimed Don.

"Been closed ever since old Professor Fenway died six months ago!" echoed Johnny.

"Th-t makes it all the stranger," Sally said, her excitement warming. "Why should Violet so desperately want a book that just happened to belong there once? I'm certain the secret is in that cottage, boys. Will you do what I say? Will you go along there now and give the place a thorough search?"

"I'm game!" exclaimed Johnny, who always jumped at any investigation of this kind.

"I don't think anything'll come of it, Sally," doubted Don. "But I'll go."

Sally hustled them both off on their errand with an eagerness which Don, at any rate, didn't share.

She was watching from her chalet window a little later, when Violet left Mr. Grittall's quarters to go to the caféteria in quest of doughnuts and hot waffles for her party.

Eagerly Sally made to the telephone. It was Mr. Grittall she spoke to—but her voice sounded exactly like the voice of the dean's secretary, telling him sweetly that the dean would like to speak to him.

There was a bright gleam in Sally's eyes as she watched Mr. Grittall depart on his bogus errand. Swiftly she sped out of the chalet to make the best of her golden opportunity.

"DON'T see what we can find in here—even if we can get in," muttered Don, rattling impatiently at the locked door of Grey Cottage. "Better if we'd stayed with Sally and kept an eye on that girl Violet."

"Only way in is to break in," said Johnny, who was enjoying himself.

The cottage stood derelict on the cliff, its garden overgrown now with weeds, its windows as securely locked as the door. Johnny thrust his penknife eagerly into the jamb of the door to see if he could force the lock. Don moved listlessly to the window, convinced that they were both wasting their time.

It was Don who gave a sudden shout of excitement.

"Johnny! Come and look here!"

He was pointing breathlessly to a picture, propped up on the mantelpiece inside the cottage. It was the photo of a girl, and that girl was unmistakably the mysterious Violet Texas.

"Golly, Sally was right! We're on a clue here!" Johnny cried, and dashed back to the door. "Give me a jiff, Don—I can manage this lock."

There was a click, and the lock yielded under the pressure of his knife. The boys burst inside, and Don made a rush for that photo. The name signed upon it was not Joyce Mainwaring, as Violet had romantically called herself.

"Doris Higgins!" Don read out. "That's her real name, and, I say!" He gave a shout. "She was in service here! See what she's written across this photo: 'To my dear employer, Mrs. Fenway—'"

But Johnny wasn't listening. He was piecing together the scraps of a torn note which had been flung into the hearth. That note was addressed in hurried scribble to Doris Higgins, and its fragmentary message told volumes.

"Book gone . . . Bought secondhand by one of college tutors. No time to lose . . . Take any risk . . . get into college. Get book . . . or we lose everything.—Dab."

Don was reading the words electrified, as Johnny feverishly put the scraps together.

"This is crookery all right!" he gasped. "Doris and her father in the conspiracy together—"

"To steal something that belonged to the old professor!" rushed on Johnny. "That book must have been sold with the rest of his effects, and it had some value that only they knew—"

Slam! The door closed upon them with a thud. A key rasped in the outer lock.

With a shout the boys whirled round—just in time to see a man's shadow flit past the window.

They flung themselves upon the door. Don wrenched fiercely at the lock. Johnny plunged his penknife again into the jamb. All was in vain. That stout door would yield no more. The unseen watcher had sealed them fast in the cottage.

"Higgins!" gasped Don. "Doris' precious dad, I'll be bound!"

"Spying on us all the time, you can bet on it!" raged Johnny.

For a furious half-hour they struggled with door and windows, too. But the windows were leaded. No power would open them, and not even a cat could have crawled through their narrow lead meshing. They were helpless prisoners. It was some grim consolation to find new bread and fresh cheese in the larder. It refreshed them in their exhaustion, but it brought their escape no nearer.

Disconsolate and completely fed up, it was two hours later, just as they were wondering if there was any escape by the chimney, that a taxi came racing along the path to the cottage.

A frail old lady in widow's mourning, looking nervous and agitated, alighted from the vehicle.

"Mrs. Fenway!" the boys gasped, and rushed to the door.

They recognised Professor Fenway's widow at once, and were ready to swing back the door even as she turned the key in the lock. In hurried words they told her all that had happened.

Another minute and the taxi was whirling them all along to Roxburgh College—to Mr. Grittal's quarters.

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Grittal was alone in his sitting-room, putting the remains of his china away in the cabinet, when Don and Johnny burst in.

"Is the party over—has that girl gone, sir?" they panted.

"Briggs! Weston!" Mr. Grittal snapped. "Is that the way to enter a master's room? And is that the way to attend a young lady's party?"

He glared at their dishevelled appearance. A frail little figure came hurrying in behind the boys at that moment.

"The girl you are speaking of is a thief—her father is a thief!" she said tremblingly. "They were my servants. I am Professor Fenway's widow. The girl came here pretending that she had lost her memory. But her real object was to steal the only thing of value that my dear husband left to me. It was the fruits of his life's work—a scientific formula worth much to the world's chemists."

"My dear madam, I feel sure there is some mistake," put in Mr. Grittal. "The young lady who was here belongs to the wealthiest family in Texas. She has gone now, but—"

"Gone?" panted Johnny.

"Did you buy a book on philosophy, sir, at the secondhand shop on East Street?" cried Don.

"I did pick up such a book while I was browsing there the other day," snapped Mr. Grittal. "Why?"

"That book fell by accident into the hands of the dealers when my husband's effects were sold," Mrs. Fenway said tremulously. "It contained the key, the clue to where he has hidden the formula."

"Where is the book, sir?" cried Don and Johnny.

"In the library—" began Mr. Grittal, and then suddenly his face drained. He remembered Sally's accusation against that girl last night. He turned shakily, and at a rush he made for the library, Mrs. Fenway and the boys following him.

One dash Mr. Grittal made to the second shelf by the window. Then with his hand to his head he lurched back. He was gazing thunderstruck at an empty space between the books.

"I was there," he said through parched lips. "It has gone!"

"Stolen," Mrs. Fenway whispered, "by that girl whom you trusted. And she has gone, too."

"Don't worry, Mrs. Fenway," said a bright voice at the window, and Sally vaulted in over the sill. "She's gone, and a good job, but she's taken the wrong book with her. Here's the one you want."

She pressed a volume into the widow's trembling hand, and she looked up with twinkling eyes at Mr. Grittal, whose face was the colour of paper.

"I was the one who phoned you that spoof message to go to the dean, Mr. Grittal," she confided softly. "You see," she explained, "I wanted to get hold of that book before Violet did, and so—"

"You mean to say that—that girl has not got the book after all?" Mr. Grittal asked dazedly.

Sally gave a chuckle.

"Quite right, sir—"

"But—but how—"

"I took the cover off that book and put it on another while you were gone. So she had all her trouble for nothing!"

There was another tea-party next day, held by grateful Mrs. Fenway, especially for Sally and her chums at Grey Cottage. Mr. Grittal also was invited, but he asked earnestly to be excused. As Sally said, it was only natural that he should want to forget all about Barnacle Cove and the violet-eyed girl who was supposed to have lost her memory.

(End of this week's story.)

Sally Warner and her chums will be having more fun and adventure in next Friday's complete story in the **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.

The CASE OF THE Frightened Girl



MR. HENLEY'S DECISION

JUNE GAYNOR, niece and partner of Noel Raymond, the famous young detective, went to Glen Hall as the guest of Mr. Henley, to solve the mystery of a spectral figure known as the Green Rajah, who was out to find the Lost Secret of the Purple Mountains. The clue to this was a crystal goblet hidden by the former owner of Glen Hall, Colonel Raikes.

June discovered the Green Rajah to be Roger Standish, one of the guests at Glen Hall, but she was unable to prove it. Everyone else believed the trickster was Jack Linton, a boy who had disappeared from Glen Hall and was hiding in a cave.

He told June that he was out to prove the innocence of his friend, Ronnie Baring, who had once been secretary to the colonel, and who was now a fugitive from the police.

June decided to visit Jack and tell him of her exciting discovery of the identity of the Green Rajah, but when she reached the cave it was empty. Lying on a rock was a piece of paper, a message from Jack. She bent to pick it up, then whirled, finding herself confronted not only by Roger Standish, but by Mr. Henley!

IN startled surprise June stared at the two men who stood in the entrance of the cave. "What—what brought you here?" she gasped. Roger Standish grinned sardonically.

"I persuaded my friend to help me search for Jack Linton," he said. "While we were looking around, we saw you approaching the cave, so at my suggestion we followed you—with the result I expected." He turned to the elderly solicitor. "You can't have any doubt about the truth now," he declared.

Mr. Henley made a distressed gesture. He was looking at June in horrified amazement.

"Did you come here in order to meet that young scoundrel, Linton?" he asked gravely.

Before June could even attempt to reply, Standish pointed to the package of groceries which the girl detective had put down on the floor.

"Surely that's the answer to your question," he said. "And if you read that note she's clutching, I think you'll find it's from Jack

By PETER LANGLEY

Linton. She's been conspiring with him ever since she first came to Glen Hall. A fine detective she is—to ally herself with a crook!"

June flushed indignantly. "That's not true!" she exclaimed. "Jack isn't a crook! As for—"

But Mr. Henley was not listening. His kindly face unusually grim, he advanced into the cave and held out his hand.

"Let me have that, please," he said, pointing to the sheet of paper.

Reluctantly June handed it over, and the elderly solicitor gave a startled gasp as he read what was written on it:

"Dear June,—Have gone to get the clue, but will be back by midday. Can you meet me here then? Important that we have a long talk about our next plan of action.

"Yours,

"JACK."

As Mr. Henley read the brief message aloud, Roger Standish gave another sardonic laugh. "There, that settles it!" he declared. "I knew all along the pair of them were nothing but plotters. You see what a traitor you have been harbouring, Henley. This wretched girl has been betraying you all along. While pretending to hunt down the Green Rajah, she's actually been helping him in his nefarious work."

This astounding assertion for a moment left June speechless. And that it should be made by the man she knew was himself the Green Rajah made her blood boil. As she stood there gasping with anger and surprise, she saw Mr. Henley slowly nod.

"It looks as if you're right, Standish," he said, a note of bitterness in his voice. "I can see now how foolish I was ever to trust this girl. It is clear that she came here with the deliberate intention of meeting the Green Rajah."

But Jack isn't the Green Rajah!" burst out June desperately. "It's true you've been deceived, but not by him. He's the person you ought to be angry with!" Accusingly she pointed to Roger Standish. "He's the cause of

all the trouble. He's the Green Rajah, Mr. Henley, not Jack!"

"Girl, how dare you suggest such a thing?" gasped Mr. Henley. "After the evidence of this note"—angrily the solicitor brandished the sheet of paper—"I wonder you have the impudence to persist in this outrageous accusation of my old friend. But I will see you do not get another chance to do so!"

Realising that her outburst had done more harm than good, the girl detective surveyed the flustered, irate solicitor in dismay.

"You mean—" she whispered.

"I mean that you have outstayed your welcome. Indeed, I bitterly regret that I ever invited you to my home. You will return and pack your bags at once. There is a train back to London at ten-thirty."

Mr. Standish, a glint of malevolent satisfaction in his dark eyes, nodded approvingly.

"Yes, it would be wise to see that she leaves the district at once," he commented. "Then there will be no risk of her interfering with our plans to capture Jack Linton when he returns here. I'll make that my very first job."

Mr. Henley nodded approvingly, and took June's arm firmly.

There being nothing else to do, June allowed herself to be escorted out of the cave and down the steep, winding path to the road. There was both anger and despair in her heart as, with one of the men on either side of her, she walked back to Glen Hall.

Anger because of Roger Standish's barefaced treachery. Despair because it seemed that all hope of her outwitting him had now gone.

With her out of the way, Standish would be able to lay a trap for the unsuspecting Jack when he returned to the cave, and once Jack had been captured it would not be difficult to find Ronald and Eva Baring and secure their arrest. Then, at his leisure, Standish could search for the hidden crystal goblet and, unsuspected, could steal the Lost Secret of the Purple Mountains.

Engulfed in her thoughts, June hardly realised that they had regained the house until suddenly she heard herself hailed.

"June! Just the girl we were looking for! I say, we want you to join us on our jaunt this afternoon."

And there, in the porch of Glen Hall, were Mildred, Ted, Billie, and all the other youthful guests.

Roger Standish gave a sardonic laugh.

"I'm afraid June Gaynor will have to deprive herself of the pleasure of accompanying you," he said.

The boys and girls stared at him blankly, puzzled by the grim, emphatic way he had spoken.

"What do you mean?" asked Mildred.

Standish laughed again.

"That Miss Gaynor is leaving," he said.

"Now!"

JUNE MUST GO!



WHEN June, a suitcase in either hand, returned to the porch, she found a four-seater car drawn up in the drive, with Mr. Henley behind the wheel.

Gathered around were Mildred, Ted, Billie and all the others, and as the girl detective came down the steps, Mildred impulsively darted forward and put her arm around her.

"I want you to know that I don't believe all the horrid things Mr. Standish has been saying about you," she whispered.

"Same here," muttered the boys.

June's eyes glowed. It was grand to know that the young guests still retained their faith in her.

"That's awfully sweet of you—" she began, then broke off as Mr. Henley, looking

more uncomfortable than grim, waved an impatient hand.

"Hurry, or we shall miss the train," he ordered gruffly.

June placed her luggage in the back of the car, seated herself beside her erstwhile host, and, to the accompaniment of a chorus of good wishes from the onlookers, the car went whirling down the drive.

The journey to the station was made in silence. Mr. Henley seemed too embarrassed to speak, while June was wrapped up in her thoughts.

What a humiliating position this was—to be packed off home in disgrace! But though she felt her own indignity keenly, it was of Jack Linton she thought chiefly.

Wasn't there even at this late hour some way of warning the fugitive boy of his danger?

As the car swept past the lakeside, June turned and looked longingly up the steep mountain on the other side. There Roger Standish and his men would be gathering—very soon now—preparing their ambush for Jack.

Oh, but she couldn't let him be captured! With her dismissed from the case there was only Jack now left to tackle the crafty Green Rajah.

As desperately June racked her brains, the car reached the tiny town and sped on to the station. As it rolled to a stop in the yard there came the whistle of an approaching train.

"That'll be the London express!" exclaimed Mr. Henley. "Hurry and get your ticket. I'll see to your luggage."

For a moment rebellion flashed in June's eyes, then silently she got out of the car and obeyed. When she passed through the barrier with her ticket, the train had already drawn up at the platform. Mr. Henley jerked open the door of the nearest compartment, pushed in her two suitcases, then stood aside for her to enter.

The compartment was empty, and hardly had she climbed up into it than the door slammed and the guard's whistle shrilled out. Mr. Henley stood back, and June gave a stifled sob as the train began to move.

This was the end! There was nothing she could do about Jack now!

But wasn't there?

Suddenly there came a jolt which nearly threw her off her feet. The long train, after proceeding a few yards, had stopped again to allow the end coaches to pull up on to the short platform.

As she realised that she was out of observation, June drew in an excited breath.

"Here goes!" she gasped. "The Green Rajah doesn't get rid of me so easily as this!"

And, regardless of her two suitcases, she swung open the further door and leapt down on to the line.

Whether anyone saw her or not, June didn't know, and didn't much care. She cast one quick look around her, then darted across to the deserted platform on the other side.

There was not even a porter on duty. Everyone's attention was concentrated on the express. In a flash June had raced through the barrier and out into the street beyond.

She laughed shakily.

"Done it!" she panted, and, trying hard to look cool and nonchalant, she calmly walked on down the road into the village.

At the first teashop she halted, and going in, ordered a cup of coffee. It would not do to risk encountering Mr. Henley. Until she was sure he had driven away she would be wise to linger. Ten minutes she waited, then, leaving the café, she set off on foot in the direction of Glen Hall.

It was a long walk back, and it was nearly half-past eleven before she reached the spot where the road split, one fork going on to the hall, the other curving round between the lake and the foot of the mountain.

Anxiously she glanced up the rocky slope.

Would she be in time to stop Jack from returning to his cavern refuge?

Leaving the road, she clambered up the mountainside, keeping clear of all paths, and taking advantage of every scrap of cover. Up—up she battled her way, then abruptly halted, dropping behind a fallen boulder.

Her sharp ears had caught the murmur of voices, and on peering across to the right she saw the cavern; saw something else, too.

Masculine figures crouching behind rocks and bushes. Roger Standish and his men! She was too late! The trap had already been laid.

For a moment June was in despair, then, as she remembered Jack had told her he had hidden the copy of the vital clue to the crystal goblet near the top of the mountainside, she took new heart. If only she could elude the ambushers, she might still be able to warn him in time.

Hardly daring to breathe, she stole from boulder to boulder, working her way up the steep slope and making a wide detour so as to escape discovery.

Presently she heaved a sigh of relief. The cavern was now below her, and there, not fifty yards away, she saw a narrow path leading up to the summit.

Slipping and stumbling, she clambered towards it, loose earth and stones sliding from under her feet. Suddenly she gave a gasp, for there, striding down the path, apparently feeling no pain from his injured ankle, was Jack Linton.

Wildly she waved; wildly she shouted:

"Jack! Jack!"

Her voice awoke the echoes. The boy on the path pulled up, stared, and then gave a gasp, as from the cavern below came furious shouts and angrily gesticulating figures leapt up from behind the scattered rocks.

"Quick—this way—it's an ambush!" panted June, her heart thudding with anxiety.

Instantly the boy sized up the position, and came scrambling across to where she stood.

"June!" he exclaimed. "Gosh, that was splendid of you! I'd have blundered right into that trap. But what—"

Crack!

A reverberating explosion cut into his words. Roger Standish had armed himself with a shotgun, and as he saw the boy and girl standing there high above him he had loosed off a shot.

Jack glared as leaden pellets thudded and ricocheted off the rocks, and instantly his arm went around the girl detective.

"The villain! Shooting when there's a girl about!" he gasped. "Get in front of me, June—and let's get out of here."

With his tall figure partially shielding her, he led the way back up the mountainside, but from below came more shots and more furious yells as the pursuit was taken up.

THE TRAP CLOSES



JUNE had completely burnt her boats behind her now.

Grimly she realised that as she battled her way up the steep slope which led to the mountain's peak.

For a few moments they toiled upwards in silence, then, as they paused for a breather, June gave

a dismayed gasp.

"Golly, look—there are a score or more of them! Standish must have enlisted every gamekeeper for miles around. I'm afraid it's no use, Jack. We'll never get away."

Their plight certainly seemed to be hopeless.

Their pursuers were strung right across the mountainside, and slowly but surely the distance between them and their quarry was lessening.

Jack, however, gave a laugh.

"Don't worry, they aren't going to get us—

not until we've finished our case," he declared. "Don't forget, June—we're partners now—and between us we're going to get the better of that slippery Green Rajah."

Despite herself, June felt her fears slipping away. There was something very inspiring about the calm, confident boy at her side.

"But what can we do?" she asked.

He grinned.

"We'll go and see Ronnie and Eva Baring. There's only one place where they could have found refuge—at Waterfall Cottage over at High Tor. My old nurse lives there. She'll look after them—and after us, too. At Granny Benton's place we'll be safe—safe to plan and scheme. Come on, let's get a move on. If only we can reach the peak before the others, I know how to get away."

Again his strong, confident arm went around her waist, and on they clambered. The wind tore at their clothes; the loose shale made them slip and slide. But on they scrambled, and soon the flat, bare peak loomed before them.

There, built in the lee of a huge cairn of rocks, was an old shepherd's hut, and there also was something which made June gasp with surprise. It was an iron tower, and from the top of it two wire cables ran across the peak, disappearing across the valley on the opposite side of the mountain.

"What's that?" she gasped.

Jack chuckled.

"An aerial railway—used for transporting rock down to the road," he answered. "See that little bucket affair?" He pointed. "Well, that's going to provide our getaway."

June's heart leapt.

"You mean we're going to travel in it?" she gulped. "Go whizzing along those wires?"

Calmly he nodded.

"Not scared, are you?" he asked.

She was, but she wasn't going to admit it.

"Of course not," she said stoutly.

They were on the level now, and as they went running across to the tower their figures were silhouetted against the cold blue sky.

From the slope came another furious yell:

"There they are! We've got 'em now! It's too steep for them to scramble down the other side!"

It was Roger Standish shouting, and, panting but exultant, he and his men went battling upward more energetically than ever.

Jack waved a derisive hand.

"That's all you know!" he called back. "Just let us—"

And then, as Jack reached the foot of the iron tower, his voice trailed away, and in startled dismay he stared.

"What's the matter?" June asked, as she saw the white, horrified look which had suddenly come to his face.

"The ladder!" he cried, pointing with an agitated hand. "It's padlocked up!"

It was true enough.

The long ladder which gave access to the top of the iron tower had been removed from its position, and now lay along the ground, secured by a rusty chain to the foot of one of the girders. Possibly the owners of the aerial railway had done it in order to prevent unauthorised persons riding on the tubs.

"There's only one thing for it—we've got to bust it free—and the quicker the better!" gasped the boy.

Picking up a heavy stone, he bent over the ladder, hammering frantically at the padlock, striving to smash it open.

Helplessly June watched him, then as she heard more shouts, she turned to stare in blank dismay.

Roger Standish was less than fifty yards from the summit of the peak. Hand over hand he was climbing the slope, and behind him came half a dozen of his followers.

Can June and Jack possibly elude Mr. Standish and the others? Be certain not to miss a word of next Friday's exciting chapters of this serial in the **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.



The GIPSY Violinist's Warning

(Continued
from
page 444.)

"Your other friends do not think so. They believe that I—that I played that hateful trick at the bridge." She shuddered, her slender hands clenching. "Why—why do you trust me?" she demanded almost fiercely.

"Because"—Beryl hesitated, half-smiling—"because I can read the truth in your eyes. You're unhappy, and perhaps there's someone you hate; but you'd never betray a friend. Tell me what's troubling you, Fenella. Let me help you—please!"

The girl drew back and for a moment it seemed that tears glistened in the dark, wild eyes. Then, quickly, she brushed a hand across her face.

"No!" she whispered. "You wouldn't understand—no one can understand."

"Try me," urged Beryl, taking her hand. "Who is your enemy, Fenella?"

The girl started, catching in her breath. The footsteps of the pursuers were returning.

"Meet me in the summer-house in half an hour!" she breathed. "There is something I must tell you. There is danger for you and your friends. Now—let me go."

She twisted from Beryl's grasp and darted into the shrubbery as the breathless party burst into view.

Ralph, dishevelled and angry, called a halt. "She's given us the slip this time," he panted. "But she won't get away with it! I'll put the police wise to her little game—" He broke off with a short laugh, as though recollecting himself. "No use crying over spilt milk," he added wryly. "Sorry the party's been spoilt, girls!"

"Never mind," put in Shirley, with a quick smile. Flushed and breathless, there was a gay sparkle in her eyes. "We'll have our fun, in spite of her. Beryl"—she turned impulsively to her chum—"you'll never guess what Pat and I have planned with the others, and Ralph thinks it's a good idea."

"Topping!" agreed Ralph, with his old, careless smile.

Beryl caught in her breath, gripped by an uneasy premonition. She knew that reckless gleam in Shirley's eyes.

"Shirley, what have you planned?" she asked quickly.

Shirley laughed breathlessly.

"An excursion through the ravine to the Witch's Grotto—by moonlight!" she exclaimed.

A cold hand seemed to clutch at Beryl's heart as her fears were confirmed.

"The Witch's Grotto—by moonlight!" she gasped. "But, Shirley—after what happened this afternoon—"

Shirley smiled impatiently.

"Goodness, we're not scared by that!" she rejoined. "There aren't any bridges this way; and, besides, there'll be a whole crowd of us. Ralph's promised to act as guide—Oh, I'd forgotten!" She looked at her chum in quick remorse. "Your ankle—will you be able to come with us?"

Beryl hesitated, wondering desperately how best to play for time. She must find out from Fenella what lay behind the mystery—what

exactly was the peril at which the young Romany had hinted.

"I—I'm not certain yet," she replied evasively. "I'll be able to tell you in about half an hour, Shirley, when I've rested. But promise me you won't go till I've decided."

"Goodness," laughed Shirley, "aren't we mysterious! Ralph thinks we should start off about eight—to see the ravine at its best—so do make up your mind by then!"

If Shirley was perplexed by Beryl's manner, the impression was quickly banished by her natural gay spirits. The party of youthful sightseers adjourned to the lounge, to pass the time pleasantly till it was time for their novel excursion.

Beryl was drawn into the gaiety, but she seized the first chance to slip away unnoticed during a lively, noisy game, and made her way across the grounds to the summer-house—a stoutly built, wooden structure, with rustic work on the outside and small lattice windows.

The door stood ajar, but there was no sign of the gipsy girl. Beryl glanced at her watch. Perhaps the young Romany had been delayed for some reason. She pushed open the door, deciding to await Fenella's arrival.

But her heart missed a beat as she stared round her in the pale moonlight that filtered through the windows. There was something wrong here!

The summer-house showed signs of a struggle. A garden table had been overturned, and a broken fern-pot lay on the floor, the mould it had contained scattered and trampled underfoot.

Then Beryl saw something gleaming faintly in the moonlight, and she snatched it up, with a sharp intake of breath. It was a gipsy bangle she had last seen on the young Romany's slender wrist, and the discovery confirmed her worst fears.

Something had happened to Fenella!

The gipsy girl must have been waiting here for her when someone had crept on her unawares—an enemy who had discovered their secret trust.

Beryl's heart was pounding as she knelt there in the moonlight, clutching the broken bangle. She remembered Fenella's agitation, her insistence on danger, the fear that had lurked in her dark eyes.

She had spoken of peril to the chums—and Shirley and the others had planned to visit the grotto by moonlight!

Beryl's hands clenched as she heard a distant clock chiming the hour. Shirley would be waiting for her. At all costs she must dissuade her chum from starting on that reckless outing!

She started to her feet and turned to make for the door; then chill fingers seemed to grip her heart. For the door was shut, though she felt convinced she had left it open. And there was no breeze that could have closed it so softly.

Impatiently shaking off her uneasiness, she twisted the handle, but the door refused to open. Again she tried, and pulled at the door with all her might, but to no avail.

A wave of panic swept over her: she thought of Fenella—what had happened to her? She thought of her chums—of the danger that even now might be threatening them!

She threw her whole weight against the door, but the massive bolt on the outside resisted her efforts.

She had been trapped!

PERIL BY MOONLIGHT



FRANTICALLY Beryl hammered on the door, calling for help.

She was not afraid for herself. She was thinking of Shirley and young Pat—and the excursion they had planned.

Beryl's shouts brought no response, and the door defied all her efforts to burst it open.

Her hands bruised and scratched, she desisted at length and turned to one of the narrow lattice windows.

She was desperate by now. Her one thought was to escape—to warn her chums.

Snatching up the broken fern-pot, she flung it at the window, shattering the glass. The lead supports still held, and Beryl hacked at them with a spade she found in a corner.

But ten minutes or more elapsed before she was able to squeeze through the narrow casement and scramble down a mossy bank on to the lawn.

Breathless and dishevelled, her frock torn by splinters of glass, Beryl raced across the grounds to the hostel.

A startled waiter almost dropped the tray he was carrying as she burst into the dining-hall.

"Your party, miss?" he echoed, eyeing her askance. "They've gone out—about ten minutes ago. I heard one of the young ladies say they couldn't wait any longer."

Beryl clenched her hands, her face paling. A half-formed, almost incredible suspicion had taken shape in her mind.

She took out her little pocket diary and scribbled something on one of the pages, folding it and handing it to the waiter.

"Please—will you give that to the leader of the gipsy orchestra when he comes in?" she asked. "It's very important."

"I'll see to that, miss," promised the man, obviously impressed by her agitation. "Perhaps, if you hurry, you'll catch up with your friends. There's a short cut to the grotto, but it's a bit hard-going—"

"I don't mind that," exclaimed Beryl eagerly. "Please tell me!"

The man described the path as best he could and made a rough sketch in her diary. Beryl thanked him breathlessly and ran from the hostel, trying to ignore the dull throbbing of her ankle.

But soon she found herself limping, and the steep, treacherous path she was following did not make matters any easier.

Only her burning anxiety prevented her from turning back or collapsing on to the nearest bank.

Feverish determination urged her on, careless of the pain in her ankle or of lurking danger—a peril that she knew was very real.

She paused to study the little sketch-map by the pale light that filtered through the branches. She could not be far from the ravine now. The path she was following emerged near the mouth of the grotto. Straining her ears, she imagined she heard distant, laughing voices.

Beryl broke into an unsteady run, stumbling up a sharp incline, and sprawling to her hands and knees as her foot became entangled in a trailing root.

As she knelt there dazedly, trying to recover her breath, her groping fingers came in contact with something lying among the trampled undergrowth—something with a smooth, polished surface that sent a curious chill through her veins as she brought it to light.

A broken violin! Its glossy woodwork was splintered, but its strings were still intact, and lying near to it was the unbroken bow.

The gipsy girl's violin! Her hand trembling, Beryl ran her fingers over her strange find—strange and sinister. How came it to be here, tossed aside like worthless rubbish on the mountain path.

Where was Fenella?

Beryl stumbled to her feet, staring round her in the moonlight. She could see the gorge ahead of her at the foot of a steep drop, and the dark, forbidding entrance of a cave in the mountainside.

The Witch's Grotto!

Her mind was endeavouring to piece together the tangled threads of the mystery. Fenella must have escaped from the summer-house from whoever attacked her and hidden here on the mountainside with her precious violin, watching and waiting.

She had come here in a last desperate attempt to warn the chums; but someone had been lying in wait among the trampled undergrowth, and—

Beryl shivered. She could not, dared not, pursue the imaginary scene any further. There was still that steep slope to tackle before she could reach the ravine, and the distant, lively voices were growing nearer.

Even as she started on the dangerous descent a gay laugh announced the arrival of the party of sightseers.

Shirley was leading them. Beryl could see her chum's slim figure, her auburn hair gleaming in the moonlight, and Pat following closely. Shirley was beckoning and pointing excitedly to the mouth of the cavern. Among the lively echoes of a score of voices her words were indistinguishable.

Beryl's heart turned cold. She could not hope to get down in time to stop her reckless chum. She shouted frantically, but her voice was lost in the echoes. Shirley was heading for the dark grotto, waving the others to follow.

Beryl's fingers clutched convulsively on the gipsy violin, and a sudden, desperate gleam flashed into her eyes.

Raising the bow, she drew it swiftly across the strings—again, and again. The wailing, discordant note shattered the echoes, sounding high above the clamour of voices.

She saw Shirley halt and stare up, her face white in the moonlight. A dozen other faces looked up, and the clamour of voices was suddenly hushed.

Shirley was pointing at Beryl's figure, silhouetted darkly against the skyline, and the others clustered in a small, rather scared group some distance from the cave.

With a sob of relief, Beryl lowered the violin and commenced to scramble down the steep path. An excited group awaited her at the foot of the slope, Shirley to the fore.

As yet they had not recognised the mystery violinist, and it was only as she stumbled into the road that Shirley gave a cry of amazement:

"Beryl!"

Beryl halted in front of them, pale and breathless.

"Thank goodness I was in time!" she panted. "Keep away from the grotto, Shirley—everyone! There's danger!"

A murmur of bewilderment went up, and there were some angry faces.

"I say, what's the idea of this trick?" demanded Ralph, frowning.

Shirley's attractive face was flushed as she confronted her chum, and her blue eyes were reproachful.

"If this is supposed to be a joke, Beryl," she said hotly, "I don't think much of it! You deliberately kept out of our way—pretended your ankle was too bad to come with us—then you play a trick on us like this!"

"Shirley!" Beryl's face was very pale; she felt almost as though her chum had struck her. "Shirley, you don't understand. This isn't a joke. There's danger in the grotto, and I came to warn you—"

Ralph laughed shortly.

"Someone's been listening to gipsy tales!" he remarked lightly.

"Let's go on to the grotto! Never mind her!" exclaimed a boy.

Shirley tossed her head.
"Yes, let's! Come on!"
"You shan't go, Shirley!" gasped Beryl, barring her chum's way.

But Shirley impetuously brushed aside her hand and started for the cave. Beryl raced after her, catching her by the arm.

"Shirley, wait!"
"Let me go!" panted Shirley, struggling to free herself. "Don't be a spoil-sport!"

A sudden, terrified shriek rose from the onlookers, and Beryl caught her chum round the waist as she heard an ominous rumbling overhead.

With a strength born of desperation, she dragged her chum behind a rock, flinging herself on top of her as, with a roar like thunder, a huge boulder toppled from the cliff and crashed into the road where they had been standing.

THE SECRET OF THE GROTTO



SHIRLEY clung to Beryl, white-faced and trembling, as the thunderous echoes crashed and rumbled among the cliffs. The stunned silence that had fallen on the huddled group of young sightseers was broken as they recovered from the shock.

"Phew! Talk about a narrow shave!" said one of the boys.

"Is anyone hurt?"
"Shirley—Beryl—are you all right?"
"O.K.," called Beryl breathlessly, as she assisted her chum to her feet. She was badly shaken, but managed to retain her composure.

For once Shirley, the vivacious, had nothing to say for herself. Her natural buoyancy had received a stunning blow. She held tightly to her chum's arm, a dazed look in her eyes.

"Beryl, what does it mean?" she whispered.
"You were right! If you hadn't warned us we might all—"

She shuddered, staring towards the fallen boulder.

"It's all right," said Beryl, smiling unsteadily. "No harm's done. But it's not me you have to thank, Shirley—it's Fenella!"

Shirley stared at her quickly, questioning, as the others gathered round. The dust was clearing, and in the moonlight the group of youthful faces looked pale and excited.

"The gipsy girl tried to warn us," went on Beryl breathlessly, "but someone prevented her. Thank goodness I was able to get here in time. Is everyone all right?"

She glanced round at the huddled group as Ralph Masters strolled from the shadows.

"Just been looking round," he explained. "It's my opinion that the gipsies are behind this."

Beryl clenched her hands, biting back a swift, angry retort; but she kept her thoughts to herself. And just then there came a cry from Shirley:

"Pat! Where—where's Pat?"
Beryl's heart missed a beat as she looked round with the others. Young Pat was nowhere in sight.

"She was here a minute ago," said one of the boys. "She was standing close to me, taking a snap of the cave in the moonlight, when that rock fell. I grabbed her arm and pulled her back—"

"Pat!" called Shirley, her voice sharp with anxiety. "Pat!"

"Pat!" shouted Beryl; and the others joined in the chorus.

Their voices echoed through the ravine, but there was no reply.

Beryl's mind was working swiftly as she gripped her chum's arm.

"Don't worry, Shirley," she urged. "Pat wasn't anywhere near the cave. She must have wandered off somewhere. We'll organise a search-party."

"Good idea!" said Ralph briskly. "She can't

have gone far. I suggest we spread out. The first to find her will give a yell."

The party broke up into little, excited groups, following the boy's suggestion. Beryl alone was conscious of a premonition that she concealed from her chum.

"Wait here, Shirley!" she breathed. "Leave this to me—and don't worry!"

She hurried after Ralph as he made for a dark opening in the cliff. She was determined not to let the boy out of her sight.

Once or twice he glanced over his shoulder, as though suspecting that he was being followed; but Beryl kept close in the shadow of the cliff, her heart beating quickly.

It was a wild suspicion she was following— with nothing to back it except intuition.

From the first she had vaguely distrusted Ralph, in spite of his apparent friendliness and easy manner. Her mistrust had increased owing to his attitude to the gipsy girl—and for another, more curious reason that had dawned on her while watching him at the table.

Ralph, she was convinced, was a plausible trickster. But what lay behind his treachery she had no inkling—as yet.

With a sudden start, she realised that she had lost sight of the boy, though she could still hear his footsteps. Breaking into a noiseless run, she found herself at the entrance of a narrow cave—little more than a fissure in the cliff.

And her pulses quickened as she heard voices—Ralph's guarded tones and a man's deeper voice:

"Did you find it, dad?"
"Not yet. The gipsy girl's stubborn—refuses to speak. But I'll get the truth out of her before I've finished!"

Beryl's hands clenched, and an angry gleam flashed into her eyes. But with an effort she retained her silence, crouching in the shadows.

"I'm certain she's hiding it," went on the man, "and those prying young sightseers don't make things easier for us. Did you get hold of their camera?"

Beryl caught in her breath sharply as she heard Ralph chuckle.

"Trust me, dad! I've got it here now. I enticed the kid away in the general confusion and shut her in the store-cave to prevent her giving the alarm. She didn't see me clearly, and I'll say it was one of the gipsies."

Beryl felt her blood boiling as she crouched farther back against the cliff. A heavily built man emerged from the cave and disappeared among the scattered rocks.

A moment later Beryl ventured into the dark opening in time to see the boy, torch in hand, unlocking a massive wooden door painted to resemble the sandstone rock.

As he entered she sprang after him, taking him completely by surprise as she snatched his torch.

With a startled ejaculation, Ralph turned, blinking in the torchlight.

"Beryl!" he gasped.

"Where's Pat?" demanded Beryl, her voice shaking as she stood with her back to the door, barring his way.

The boy's eyes narrowed, but he forced a careless laugh.

"How should I know?" he countered. "I came to look for her—and found this door in the cliff. If you ask me, it's a gipsy hideout."

Just then Beryl heard her name called brokenly, and young Pat, tearful and dishevelled, threw herself into her arms.

"Someone stole my camera—and locked me in here!" she sobbed.

"That was Ralph!" accused Beryl hotly.

"Look here," stuttered the boy, changing colour, "what should I want with the kid's camera?"

"Probably you were afraid of the snaps she might have taken," said Beryl, watching him.

"There was something queer about that broken bridge and the sign-board—and about

the boulder that fell just now. Someone's been trying to keep us away from the Witch's Grotto—

"That was Fenella!" snapped Ralph. "I found her scarf by the sign-board—"

"Fenella was there," put in Beryl quickly, "and it was she who saved my life—not you. You fibbed when you told me that to gain our confidence. It only struck me afterwards when I was watching you at the table. You're left-handed. The person who saved me caught at my left arm, so they must have been right-handed. And you told a fib when you accused Fenella of stealing your wallet—because it was in your pocket all the time. You're scared of her and want her arrested—"

"You're crazy!" exclaimed Ralph, scowling. "Who's going to believe that ridiculous story?"

Beryl's hands clenched, her thoughts working swiftly.

"Are you willing to help me search this cave?" she challenged.

The boy's eyes narrowed.

"I'm dashed if I am!" he rejoined, rattling the bunch of keys. "We've wasted enough time here as it is. Give me back my torch, and let's get out of here."

Beryl hesitated, and with surprising meekness held out the torch. But as the boy reached out for it, she hit him sharply across the knuckles, causing him to drop the keys with a yell of pain.

In a flash Beryl had snatched them up.

"Come on, Pat!" she gasped, grabbing the younger girl's hand. "This way!"

They sped across the cave, and Ralph, recovering himself, pelted in pursuit.

Dodging mysterious bales and packing-cases, the girls found themselves in a narrow passage cut in the thickness of the rock. There was a door at the far end, and Beryl heard the sound of a stifled sob.

"Fenella!" she called.

"Come back!" shouted Ralph furiously. "You'll be sorry for this!"

But Beryl and Pat, not heeding, tore on down that dim passage, making for the door at the far end.

The boy's footsteps echoed not far behind, and Beryl realised that he was fast gaining on them.

"Come on, Pat!" she panted.

She made a desperate spurt, reached the door, and, pulling a key from the bunch, pushed it into the lock at random. Before she had a chance to turn it, however, a hand gripped her shoulder viciously, and she was twisted round to confront the blazing-eyed Ralph.

"Pat—the key!" she cried, as Pat raced up.

"Oh, no, you don't!" And Ralph, in a swift movement, had withdrawn the key from the lock. "Now—" And giving Beryl a push which sent her staggering back against the locked door, he made to tear back down the passage. But he had reckoned without Pat.

Pat, halting dead in her tracks, thrust out a foot as the boy would have flashed past her.

With a yell, Ralph Masters went crashing to the ground. A second later the keys were in Pat's grasp.

Now, from inside the room, both girls could plainly hear Fenella's voice, calling wildly for help.

Beryl, taking the key from Pat, gave a reassuring cry.

"Don't worry, Fenella—we'll soon have you out! Hold him, Pat!" she broke off to shout next moment, as Ralph, recovering his wits, scrambled to his feet.

In a moment Pat had leapt upon him, dragging him aside. A second later Beryl thrust a key into the lock, turned it, and then, as the door burst open, jumped back hastily, as the gipsy girl, her eyes blazing, launched herself on Ralph Masters like a wildcat!

She and Pat clung to him, in spite of his struggles and shouts, and Pat's camera fell with a clatter from his pocket.

Just then there came the sound of heavy footsteps, and a cunning gleam flashed into the boy's eyes.

"Dad—quickly!" he shouted.

But Beryl gave a cry of relief as the newcomers appeared—Shirley with the leader of the gipsy band, and accompanying them was the local police inspector.

Beryl's little note, written in desperation, had succeeded in its purpose.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the inspector, flashing his torch round the cave. "A smuggler's hide-out, eh? We've suspected something like this. What do you know about it, young man?"

"Better ask her!" snapped Ralph, pointing to the gipsy girl. "She's Fenella Gilroy, daughter of Seth Gilroy, who was arrested for smuggling."

Fenella clenched her hands, her dark eyes flashing.

"And I came back to prove my father's innocence!" she exclaimed brokenly. "He's ill in hospital, unable to clear himself."

"Where's your proof?" sneered Ralph.

For reply Fenella snatched off her crimson scarf and ripped the hemstitched border, producing a narrow, tightly folded slip of paper.

The boy's face turned white as he saw it, and he struggled in the grip of the Romyan leader.

"My father told me to keep this till I was able to find more proof," she breathed. "I was looking for the concealed passage that led from the Witch's Grotto to the beach, and to-night I found it before they trapped me."

"Phew!" The inspector whistled as he examined the paper. "A receipt for silks and tobacco, made out to James Masters. That's clear enough. Your father will pay for this, my lad, and so will you. I always had my doubts about Seth Gilroy's guilt. I congratulate you, young lady—and your friends here—for your pluck and enterprise!"

Shirley started forward, grasping Fenella's hand.

"I'm sorry," she said simply. "Beryl was right, and I was wrong. Is it too late to say—thank you?"

Fenella smiled, and her dark eyes were shining as she looked at Beryl.

"I, too, wish to say 'thank you,' she breathed, "to my new friends!"

THE END.

THE INVISIBLE JAPER OF ABBEY SCHOOL

By JENNIFER DAY

Who was the mystery practical joker and what was the reason for his sensational exploits? That is what the heroine of next Friday's grand long complete story sets out to discover. It is a story which will both thrill and intrigue you.