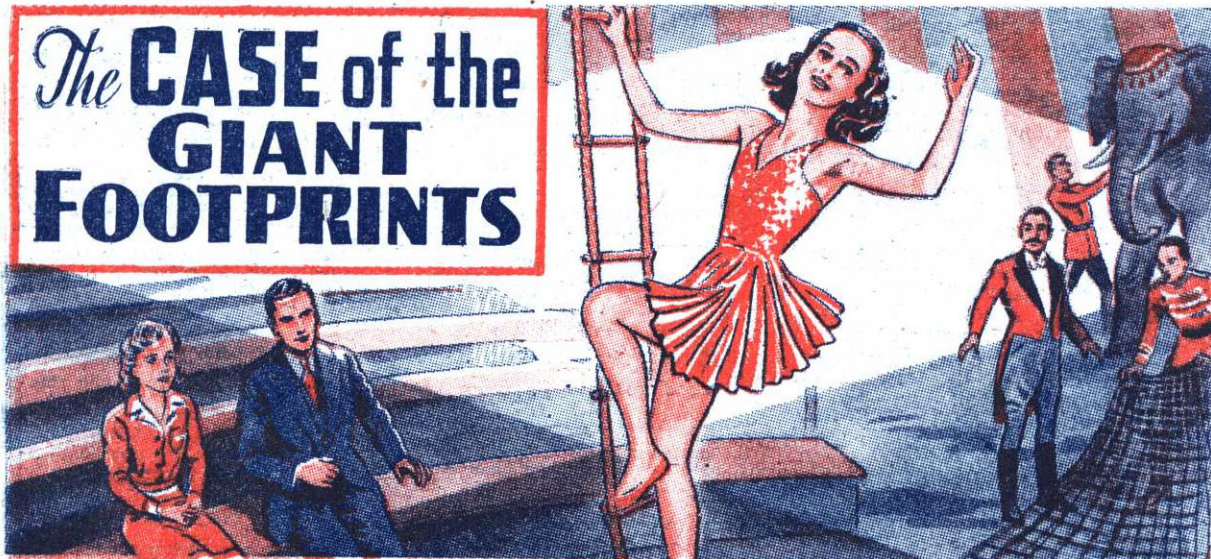


GIRLS' CRYSTAL ^{3^D}

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"

Week
Ending
Dec. 6th,
1947.

The CASE of the GIANT FOOTPRINTS



This Week June Gaynor And Noel Raymond Investigate A Strange Circus
Mystery—Written by PETER LANGLEY

THE THREATENED CIRCUS STAR

"THAT'S Lucille Wayne, nunky—the girl who's billed as the 'Flying Wonder!'" breathed June. "She was telling me just now that this is her first big engagement as a star trapeze artiste."

Noel Raymond glanced with interest at the lithe, dark-haired girl in shimmering spangles who had just stepped into the sawdust ring.

The famous detective and his young partner were the sole occupants of the ringside seats in the lofty circus tent. It was the evening prior to the opening performance, and Noel had been invited by the manager to watch the rehearsal of the new trapeze act.

"That girl looks nervous," he murmured. "Mr. Sanders was right, June. There's something in the wind—"

"S-sh!" breathed June, pressing his arm excitedly as the youthful trapeze artiste mounted a swaying rope-ladder, waving her hand to the imaginary audience.

There was a gay smile on her lips, but her face was pale in the glare of the arc lamps, and even from that distance her dark eyes looked tense, almost frightened.

Yet the speed and skill of her movements revealed her as a practised artiste, perfectly at ease on the swaying ropes.

Mr. Sanders, the bluff manager, was superintending the arrangements in the ring, where several men were fixing the safety-net.

"Hold on for a minute, Miss Wayne!" he called. "Don't make a start till I give the word."

The girl nodded, climbing on to the narrow platform that ran beneath the great canvas dome, her slim figure poised for her first daring leap.

June leaned forward, holding her breath, and Noel reached for his binoculars. Suddenly a scream of terror rang through the Big Top.

As Noel sprang to his feet, he saw two things in a flash.

The slight figure on the platform

pitched forward, making a frantic grab into the air; and far below her the unsecured safety-net still trailed one corner on the sawdust ring.

In a single bound Noel vaulted the low barrier into the ring, snatching up the corner of the trailing net and pulling it taut.

At the same instant a horrified shout arose from the attendants as the slender, spangled figure hurtled through the air, falling in a crumpled heap into the swaying net.

There were beads of perspiration on Noel's forehead as he was nearly jerked from his feet; but he held on grimly while June, deathly pale, climbed into the ring after him, joining the agitated manager and the scared attendants.

Gently Noel lowered the net and dropped to his knees beside the unconscious girl.

"Nunky, is she—" faltered June, hardly daring to look.

"Stunned—nothing worse, thank goodness!" declared Noel. "Take care of her, June, Sanders, did you see what happened?"

The circus manager shook his head as he mopped his face with a trembling hand.

"I—I don't understand it, Raymond," he jerked. "This happened once before. Miss Wayne lost her nerve suddenly—while she was up there. She swore that someone or something had grabbed her. That time she managed to catch at a rope, but—"

Tugging his moustache, he stared at the pallid features of the girl to whom June was giving skilful first aid.

"Poor kid!" he muttered. "This'll about break her nerve. She won't be fit for her turn to-morrow."

Noel had unslung his binoculars and was staring up into the shadows of the Big Top.

"No one there now," he muttered. "Would it be possible for anyone to climb on to that platform without being seen by the audience?"

"Practically impossible," replied Mr. Sanders emphatically, "unless the fellow could fly or make himself invisible."

Noel spun round on the startled group of circus-hands and artistes.

"Did any of you chaps notice anything unusual up there?" he demanded.

There was a general shaking of heads, but at that instant an agitated figure burst into the tent—a short, comical-looking little man, with grotesquely painted features and a tall hat on his head.

"Mr. Sanders—Mr. Sanders, sir!" he panted.

"Stumpy! What is it?" demanded Mr. Sanders, staring at the panting clown.

Stumpy gulped as he came to a halt. Through his bizarre grease-paint his expression was a tragic mask—a mask of terror.

"I—I've seen it!" he gasped. "It was making for the woods, an' it seemed to be as tall as the trees— unless it was floating in the air—"

"Pull yourself together!" rapped Noel, gripping the trembling clown by the shoulder. "What are you talking about?"

The detective's forceful tone had its effect. Stumpy gulped once or twice and spoke more logically.

He had been crossing over to the Big Top from his caravan when he had heard Lucille's scream. The next moment he had seen something striding for the woods away from the tent—something incredibly tall that made no sound as it walked.

Mr. Sanders gave an impatient grunt.

"Imagination!" he snorted. "Stumpy's been listening to the local tales of a creature supposed to have inhabited this district in prehistoric times."

Noel's eyes narrowed as there came an incredulous mutter from the listeners. He glanced at June, who was tending the now sobbing young trapeze artiste.

"Nunky," she breathed, her face rather white, "there's—there's a bruise on her arm! It looks almost like—"

Noel bent down, and a low whistle escaped his lips.

"Almost like the mark of a claw!" he muttered, half to himself. He spun round on the others. "I suggest we have a look outside, Sanders. One of your men might bring a lantern; the others had better wait here with the girls."

It was Stumpy, the clown, who overcame his fears sufficiently to grab a lantern and follow them out of the tent.

The main entrance was lit by an arc lamp, but there were two other openings—one used by the artistes and the other as an emergency exit.

The latter faced the woods where Stumpy had seen the sinister shape in the dark, and in front of it was a canvas curtain suspended almost from the roof of the Big Top to the floor.

High above—far out of the reach of any normal man—could be discerned the platform and ropes of the trapeze.

"Impossible to climb that," said Noel, flashing his torch on the canvas. "Unless Miss Wayne's assailant could fly, I don't see how— Great Scott!"

He broke off with a startled ejaculation as he turned the torch-light on to the ground.

"Look at that, Sanders!" he jerked. "Stumpy, bring your lantern here!"

The two men stared blankly in the direction of his pointing finger.

"A footprint!" muttered the manager. "But it must have been made by a giant. It's twice as big as any normal footprint!" "And here's another!" Noel announced, pointing again. "But look at the distance between them! Whatever made these had a two-yard stride."

There came a stifed gasp from behind them, and Lucille Wayne appeared in the doorway, clinging to June's arm.

"Nunky!" cried June, "if that is right it accounts for what Lucille told me. She—she saw a head and shoulders appear above the platform and a long arm was stretched out to grasp her, its hand covered—she gulped—covered in fur!"

PERIL ON THE TRAPEZE PLATFORM

A tense silence followed June's statement. The superstitious Stumpy's teeth were chattering, and Lucille was crying



softly. Mr. Sanders was fuming.

"Confound it!" burst out Mr. Sanders irritably. "This doesn't make sense! No one could have reached that trapeze except an acrobat, and he'd have been seen by someone—"

"You're forgetting those footprints, Sanders," put in Noel dryly, "and also Stumpy's story about seeing a strange being making for the woods."

The manager frowned, and for a few moments there was silence. Everyone was thinking about the legend of the prehistoric creature that at one time had been supposed to haunt the district. Then suddenly Lucille gave a gasp.

"Ralph!" she exclaimed. Everyone turned. A tall young man had joined the group, a frown on his good-looking face. Noel noticed that one of his feet was in plaster, and he was limping with the aid of a stick.

"What's going on here?" demanded the newcomer truculently. "No one tells me anything. Lucille, has something happened?"

The girl hesitated, and Noel glanced questioning at Mr. Sanders. "This is Ralph Lester," said the manager, frowning slightly. "He was Miss Wayne's partner, but was injured in a trapeze act some weeks ago. The doctor ordered you to keep to your caravan, Lester."

The young man shrugged impatiently.

"I don't see why I should be left out of things," he rejoined. "Lucille"—he turned to the girl with an appealing gesture—"can't you forget that we quarrelled, and let me help you? There's something funny going on round here and I'd like to get to the bottom of it."

The girl's lips trembled. "There's nothing—nothing you can do, Ralph," she replied, a trifle stiffly.

Noel was looking keenly from one to the other. Now he stepped forward.

"I think you might help us, Lester," he said, producing his card. "I feel certain Miss Wayne is being threatened!"

"Eh—what's that?" demanded the startled manager.

But Noel was looking at the girl. "Is it possible that you have any enemies, Miss Wayne—anyone who might wish you harm?" he asked gently.

"N-no," whispered the girl, shaking her head and averting her glance from her ex-partner. "I—I don't think so—"

"Well, I do!" interjected Ralph Lester unexpectedly. "Lucille's risen pretty rapidly to the position of star trapeze artiste—and it's possible that someone's jealous." He laughed shortly. "If it wasn't for my accident, I guess I'd come under suspicion."

And he stared at the group defiantly.

"Ralph!" gasped Lucille, her face paling.

Noel smiled grimly. "We're looking for someone considerably taller than you, Lester," he said, "and in full use of their agility. How long ago did you leave your caravan?"

"About five minutes ago—when I heard rumours of the accident," declared the young man shortly. "I came straight here."

"Did you see anyone come out of the tent?"

"No one."

Noel pointed to the lantern that Stumpy had placed on the ground.

"Just step over there, Lester, and tell me what you think of those footprints."

The young man complied, and Noel's eyes narrowed as he watched him limp across the turf, his large plaster boot barely touching the ground.

"Must have been a pretty big fellow," declared Lester, peering at the footprints.

"Unless," murmured Noel, "he had something over his boot."

"What are you trying to get at?" demanded the ex-trapeze artist.

"The truth," replied Noel calmly. "There's a cunning scoundrel at work, and we've all got to be on our guard. June"—he turned to his young partner—"will you take Miss Wayne to her caravan, and see that she locks the door after her? Lester—I suggest you keep watch for any suspicious figure loitering near the caravan."

"Trust me," said the young man grimly, as he grasped his stick.

Noel took a letter-card from his wallet, and scribbled a hasty note by the light of the lantern. He addressed it to a retired police officer who was a friend of his.

"Will you take this to the post, Stumpy?" he asked. "It's urgent! The little clown nodded, hurrying away on his errand, and Noel picked up the lantern.

"Look here, Raymond," burst out the anxious manager, "what are you going to do about this fantastic business?"

"I'm going to carry out a little experiment," said Noel gravely, "and I want you to order your men to keep away from the circus tent."

When June returned from Lucille's caravan five minutes later, she saw a light gleam from the emergency exit of the great tent. As she stepped through the opening, her heart beating quickly, she gave a little gasp.

A pair of steps had been placed on a big packing-case near the canvas curtain that stretched almost to the roof of the tent. On top of the steps stood Noel Raymond. He was engaged in a surprising task—stringing up a number of coloured balloons, about twelve feet from the ground.

"Nunky, what on earth are you doing?" gasped June.

"Putting up decorations," rejoined the detective dryly. "I found these balloons in the performers' tent—and they're gas-filled."

He refused to satisfy June's curiosity as he descended from his high perch and removed the steps, leaving the lantern on the packing-case.

"We've got more serious work on hand now," he declared, as he led the way into the ring.

The circus arena was in partial darkness, as all except one of the arc-lamps had been turned off, and eerie shadows lurked beneath the Big Top.

"Where—where are you going?" breathed June, her heart thumping uneasily as Noel crossed to one of the swinging rope ladders. "You're not—"

"I want to find out what a trapeze artiste can see from that platform," said Noel, "and how she could be taken unawares. Don't worry, June—as he saw her scared expression—"I'm prepared for anything."

With a reassuring grin he stepped on to the swaying ladder.

"Better keep watch from the ring-side seats," he added. "If you see or hear anything unusual, give me a shout—but don't take any risks."

Reluctantly June took the binoculars that Noel handed her, and, stepping into the first row of seats, watched her uncle as he climbed higher and higher beneath the great canvas dome.

Noel's nerves were tensed. Athlete though he was, this experience was new to him. And he had no idea what unlooked-for peril might be lurking in the shadows above.

Breathing quickly, he reached the narrow platform and climbed on to it—turning to wave to June, a minute figure in the arena far below.

Taking out his torch, Noel flashed it over the platform, and on to the motionless trapezes depending from the canvas roof.

He could see now that there was no possible access to the platform, except by the way he had come. Unless something came over the canvas curtains—something with wings, or amazingly tall.

Noel froze suddenly as a distant, horrified cry came from below. June was waving frantically, pointing, and her words came faintly to his ears.

"Nunky! Nunky, look out! The shadow!"

The detective swung round on the narrow platform. A stifed, incredulous ejaculation was torn from his lips.

Silhouetted on the canvas curtain was a grotesque shadow—a figure of fantastic height, with hunched shoulders, and long, spindly legs.

Even as Noel's hand flew to his pocket for his revolver, something like a crooked arm reached out over the curtain, seizing his shoulder in an agonising grip.



THE CLUE OF THE FUR GLOVE

Desperately the detective struggled on the edge of the narrow platform; but at that instant there came a sharp, deafening

report, followed by another—and another.

In a flash the crooked arm was withdrawn, and the sinister shadow vanished from the curtain.

Noel's ingenious trick had worked. Someone, or something, had snapped the fine wires attached to the gas-balloons twelve feet above the ground! And the balloons had ex-

(Please turn to the back page.)



HER STRANGE ROLE IN EGYPT

What A Thrilling Surprise It Was That Ray Received When She Reached Alexandria

By GAIL WESTERN

HER MASQUERADE DISCOVERED

IN order to help her sister Sybil, Ray Chilton assumed the name of Rene Claire, and travelled aboard an Egypt-bound steamer in disguise, taking with her a mysterious golden scarab that James Nolan and his daughter, Norah, were anxious to secure.

Ray made friends with a cheery boy named Mike and his aunt, Mrs. Van Croom. She learnt that her sister had been dismissed from Mrs. Van Croom's brother's employ for theft.

Ray was delighted when Mrs. Van Croom arranged for her to stay at the house she had rented outside Cairo. Little did she know that at that moment, in the Nolan's cabin, Norah was examining a photograph of her sister Sybil.

"I knew it," she cried. "Rene Claire is a fake! She and Sybil Chilton are sisters!"

"OH, it'll be lovely staying with your aunt! We'll have a grand time together, exploring."

With sparkling eyes, the disguised Ray looked at Mike, for it seemed now as if all her troubles were over. The house his aunt had taken was situated in a village very near to the mysterious House of Sounding Brass, so she should have no difficulty in delivering the golden scarab.

Mike seemed as delighted as Ray was by Mrs. Van Croom's invitation, and for a while they sat there in the state-room, discussing their plans.

When the Sandonia reached Alexandria to-morrow evening Mike and his aunt were going to a hotel, and it was agreed that Ray should stay with them, then all three could continue their journey to Cairo the following morning.

"I'd better see about booking you a room right away," Mike declared, jumping to his feet. "A radiogram will do the trick."

"And I must see about changing," Ray said. "The dinner gong will be sounding soon."

Happily they parted, but the smile did not remain for long on Ray's lips, for as she hurried along to her cabin she received a startling shock.

It was Norah Nolan's voice, shrill with excitement, which brought her to a sudden stop in the corridor. It came through the open door of Mr. Nolan's cabin.

"I tell you, dad, there can't be any mistake! That girl's a fraud. She's Sybil Chilton's sister right enough."

In horror Ray stood there. Her secret had been discovered! Her enemies had guessed the truth about her masquerade.

But worse was to follow. From the near-by cabin came Norah's voice again, maliciously eager.

"Come on, dad! Let's expose her right away! Let's tell Mrs. Van Croom what we've discovered!"

Ray clutched at the brass handrail for support. She felt like fainting. This looked like the end of all her hopes. Instead of disembarking as Mrs. Van Croom's guest, it seemed that she was fated to be marched off the ship as a fraud—as a stowaway!

And then, as she fought desperately

to smother the feeling of despair in her heart, James Nolan spoke, his voice, as usual, smooth and strangely unemotional.

"Calm yourself, my dear. We must not act rashly."

"But, dad—"

"Please be quiet and listen to me. What you say may well be true, but we have little proof and we must not act hastily. This discovery needs careful consideration. Too much is at stake to risk losing all by a false move. There is the golden scarab to secure, remember."

"I know the scarab's vital to our plans," agreed Norah rather sulkily, "but surely it's just as important to deal with that girl who calls herself Rene Claire."

Through the cabin door floated a dry chuckle.

"Do not worry, my dear. Miss Claire will be dealt with. Already I have the glimmerings of a plan. I will tell you about it later, but first I want to send off a radiogram."

Next moment footsteps sounded on the cabin floor, and, scared lest she should be discovered there, eavesdropping, Ray darted round the bend in the corridor and slipped into her own cabin. Once inside, she closed the door, then sank down on to the edge of the bed.

What exactly did the Nolans mean to do?

She could not guess, but she knew that she should be cautious, smooth-spoken James Nolan was a dangerous enemy. He was ten times more to be feared than his spiteful, impulsive daughter.

Ray sat there, staring unseeingly through the porthole at the blue Mediterranean through which the liner was ploughing its way. She shook her head helplessly. There was nothing she could do except to wait for the blow to fall.

With an effort she forced herself to change. She donned a spare pair of spectacles to replace those that had been broken by Norah and carefully checked over her disguise.

Though she had never felt less like dinner, she dared not stay away. If she failed to put in an appearance awkward questions would be asked.

It was white-faced and silent that she sat through the meal. Fortunately Mike and his aunt, enthusiastically discussing their plans to explore the ancient wonders of Egypt, did not notice it. But the Nolans did. That was clear from the mocking glances they kept flashing her, and when dinner was over Mr. Nolan came across to Mrs. Van Croom's table and smiled genially around.

"Looking forward to landing to-morrow, eh?" he said.

"You bet," agreed Mike.

"And what about you, Miss Claire?" With an air of polite inquiry, Norah's father turned to Ray. "If you don't mind my saying so, you seem very quiet. I trust there is nothing wrong?"

"No, no—of course not!" stammered Ray.

"That is good. It would be most unfortunate if anything happened to mar the rest of our voyage, wouldn't it? It's been such a pleasant trip."

He smiled again, and Ray had the feeling that he was playing with her, like a cat does a mouse. She had that feeling many times during the next twenty-four hours. In all kinds of subtle ways James Nolan seemed to hint at the possibility of something unpleasant happening, and as the Sandonia drew nearer and nearer Alexandria, Ray found the suspense almost unbearable.

When was the Nolans' plan going to be put into action? On tenterhooks of apprehension she waited, but, to her surprise, nothing happened at all. Incredible though it seemed, her enemies made no attempt to expose her, and as an excited shout from Mike announced that the ship was drawing into port, she felt new hope stealing through her veins.

"Perhaps he found his plan, whatever it was, wouldn't work," she told herself. "Perhaps he's decided to hold his hand until—"

She broke off, for Mike, leaning over the rails beside his aunt, was waving eagerly.

"Come and have your first dekkko of Egypt!" he cried.

She ran across, and as she stared shorewards she felt her fears slipping away, to be replaced by a feeling of exhilaration. For before her stretched the colourful port of Alexandria.

Away in the distance she glimpsed the gilded minarets of a palace. On the hilltops were waving palm-trees. Amongst the modern cars gathered on the quayside were groups of long-necked camels. On every side was something strange and novel.

As she stood there, feasting her eyes on the exciting, colourful scene, the liner slowly berthed. At last the gangways were lowered and a host of native porters came plunging aboard, shouting and gesticulating.

There were red-fezed Egyptians; white-robed Arabs; men wearing a fantastic mixture of garments. In a moment they swarmed across the deck, jostling and fighting each other for possession of the piles of luggage.

Mike turned, with a grin, to Ray. "Excuse me, old thing, but I'd better see to our bags, or they'll be torn to bits," he declared, and dived into the whirling melee.

Mrs. Van Croom was talking to the Nolans, so Ray was left alone, and as she stood there, confused by the hubbub, she felt her arm touched.

"Excuse, plis. Is missy's name Claire?"

Ray turned with a start of surprise. Standing before her was a tall, white-robed Arab, his dark, glowing eyes regarding her with strange intensity. As she nodded he salaamed with satisfaction.

"That is good. Then, plis, I have a letter for you," he said.

"A—a letter! For me?"

She opened her eyes wide with astonishment.

"Yes, plis."

He looked swiftly around as if frightened lest they were under observation, then pushed a coffee-coloured hand into his robes.

"A letter from your sister," was his startling announcement.



DIFFICULT FOR RAY

Ray could hardly believe her own ears. A letter from Sybil? Why, it was impossible. Her sister was hundreds of miles away—besides, she did not even know that Ray had taken her place, Claire.

Incredulously she regarded the Arab messenger.

"There must be some mistake!" she gasped. "How could Sybil possibly get in touch with me?"

He shook his head. "All not know, but strange are the ways of Kismet. All things are possible if Fate wills it. Read what is written here, missy, then perhaps all will be explained."

And he thrust an envelope into her hands. Her heart thumping, Ray looked at it. There was typed the name she had assumed. With quivering fingers she ripped it open, to see that the letter inside had also been typed, but at the foot, in the bold, flowing writing she knew so well, was the signature, "Sybil."

"Golly, then it really is from her!" she exclaimed, and eagerly she scanned the message.

"Dear Ray—This will come as a terrific shock to you, and you'll naturally be wondering how on earth I got to Egypt and how I discovered that you had taken my place on board the Sandonia. The first is easily explained. I flew here by the second, a radiogram to the ship told me that a Miss Rene Claire was a passenger aboard, so I guessed you had donned my disguise.

"Sorry I couldn't get in touch with you, but it is vital that no one should know we are sisters. There is something tremendous at stake; will explain when I see you. Come at once—but not a word to any one. All will escort you to the house where I am staying, and don't forget to bring the scarab."

"Love, 'SYBIL'."

Ray's pulses began to race. Soon the mystery which had intrigued her ever since she had embarked upon her strange masquerade would be solved. Soon she would know the secret of the golden scarab!

Eyes aglow, she turned to the tall Arab.

"You are to take me to my sister!" she cried.

He inclined his head solemnly. "So it is written. A carriage awaits on the quay. When missy is ready she will find Ali beside it."

And with another salaam he turned and disappeared amongst the jostling crowd. Wonderingly, Ray stared after him. She found something very elusive and mysterious about his personality. A few seconds later she felt another touch on her arm, and, swinging round, she found Mike confronting her with a grin.

"It's O.K.," the boy announced. "I've fixed up about our luggage. Two of those desert sheiks are going to cart it to the hotel, so come along, old thing. We'll collect aunt and get ashore."

As he spoke he slipped his arm through hers and made to lead her. But Ray resisted his cheery pull. There was an expression of dismay on her face, for suddenly she had realised that it was not going to be easy to explain the change in her plans.

"I'm sorry," she gasped, "but I'm afraid I'll have to join you later."

"Join us later!" He stared at her in bewilderment. "What's this, old thing—a legpull? Why can't you come along with us?"

"Because—" Ray swallowed and strove desperately to appear cool and nonchalant. "Well, the fact is," she blurted out uncomfortably, "I have just received a letter asking me to meet someone ashore."

Mike made no attempt to hide his

astonishment, but before he could speak again a new voice cut in.

"That is surely very strange, Miss Claire. I understood that you had no friends in Egypt."

And there stood not only James Nolan, but his daughter and Mrs. Van Croom. Ray felt her cheeks going scarlet, for it was very obvious that they had overheard what she had said to Mike.

"That—that is true," Ray stammered. "This—this friend has flown over. The letter came as a complete surprise. Mrs. Van Croom, I'm sure you will understand, I simply must keep this appointment!"

To her relief, Mike's aunt nodded. "Of course, my dear, but I take it you will be joining us in an hour or so?"

Ray hesitated, for until she and Sybil had exchanged confidences her plans were uncertain. Mike, his face a picture of dismay, gazed at her anxiously.

"You're not backing out, are you?" he asked.

Hurriedly Ray shook her head. "No, no, of course not, but I don't know how long this friend will want me to stay. I may not be able to get away until morning."

"But we're leaving for Cairo by the nine o'clock train in the morning!" protested Mike. "Look here, you'll be back by then, won't you? Don't forget all the plans we've made, old thing. You can't let me down now."

Ray forced herself to smile. "Of course I won't let you down," she promised. "Don't worry, Mike."

Mike heaved a sigh of relief, and Ray, still conscious of the queer way the Nolans were regarding her, turned to Mrs. Van Croom again.

"May I have my scarab?" she asked.

"I—I would like to show it to my friend."

"Certainly, Rene. I have just got it back from the purser."

And, opening her handbag, Mike's aunt produced the gleaming, golden Egyptian beetle. Quickly Ray slipped it into her pocket, but not before she noticed the envious gleam that had come into the Nolans' eyes.

"Now I am afraid I must rush," she declared. "Au revoir, everyone! I'll see you in the morning at the latest."

And, with a cheery wave of the hand, she pushed her way through the crowd of porters and passengers and headed for the nearest gangway. As they watched her go Mr. Nolan shook his head gravely.

"A very extraordinary girl," he commented, "and a very extraordinary way of leaving us."

Norah gave a sniff.

"It's more than extraordinary—it's downright fishy!" she declared.

Mike, his face red, glared across at her.

"Look here, we don't want any more of your insinuations against Rene," he cried. "You've no right to say anything against her."

"Quite right, my boy." Smoothly Mr. Nolan intervened. "Norah should learn to keep her feelings to herself. Nevertheless, I have a feeling that we have seen the last of Miss Claire."

"Seen the—the last of her!" echoed Mike in horror.

Mr. Nolan nodded.

"I rather fancy that she only made you that promise in order to avoid an embarrassing situation, my boy. I do not wish to misjudge her, but I have the conviction that this—er—mysterious letter she received has caused her to change her mind. Time will show whether I am right or not, but I shall certainly not be surprised if she fails to show up to-morrow."

SOMETHING WAS WRONG

"Oh, this is grand! Just as romantic as I always dreamt it would be! Won't we have some wizard times together; once all this mystery is cleared up!"



Ray, seated in the back of the horse-driven coach, gazed at her with sparkling eyes.

She had had no difficulty in finding

All, and now, with him seated on the high driving-seat in front of her, she was being drawn through the narrow, winding streets of the Arab quarter.

The short evening twilight had quickly vanished. To replace it had come a huge moon, rising like a silver circle above the flat roofs of the whitewashed houses.

Flickering oil-lamps threw splashes of light through the arched doorways. Here and there stood coke braziers on which street vendors were cooking strangely aromatic food. Silent, veiled women pattered by. From the distance came the low rhythmic beating of a drum.

As the carriage swept on, clattering over the cobblestones, Ray found her heart beating faster than ever. Every moment there was some fresh sight to see and wonder at. She sat staring about her, fascinated by this new experience.

It was only when the carriage came to an abrupt halt and she saw Ali rise from his seat that she roused herself.

"Missy, plis descend. We have reached the place ordained."

As, with a salaam, the tall Arab messenger held open the door, she jumped down to the ground and eagerly looked about her. The carriage had passed through a stone archway and had pulled up in a dark courtyard, bounded on all sides by high walls. It was dark and cold, and somehow Ray felt herself shiver. A little uneasily, she gazed about her.

"Are you sure that this is where my sister is staying?" she asked.

All inclined his head.

"Soon you will be with her. This way, plis."

And he led the way across the courtyard to a massive door decorated with copper nails and Egyptian hieroglyphics. Pushing it open, he stood aside for Ray to enter.

Her eyes glowing again at the thought of seeing Sybil, she stepped inside what appeared to be a long hall, empty save for a great cedar-wood chest, on which candles burnt in tall, twisted holders.

The great door slammed behind her, then, to her astonishment, Ali bent and pushed home an iron bolt. Seeing her look of surprise, he smiled.

"It is the custom. Robbers are as audacious as jackals in this part of the city," he explained.

Ray nodded, but, despite her excitement, she felt that vague sense of uneasiness again. Nevertheless, it was eagerly that she followed the Arab down the hall and up a flight of marble steps. At the top was another massive door. Opening it, All salaamed again.

"Plis enter. Plis make yourself comfortable. Sister will soon come," he said.

Ray stepped through the doorway, to find herself in a luxurious room, furnished in Eastern style, with low, carved tables and cushions instead of chairs. From the arched ceiling hung gleaming oil-lamps. Vases of flowers were stacked against the shuttered windows, and on the big centre table were bowls of luscious fruit.

The scent of incense in her nostrils. Ray sank down on a pile of cushions and, her mind still whirling by the strangeness of it all, she waited impatiently.

Slowly the time passed. Five minutes—ten minutes. Still there was no sign of Sybil. What could have delayed her? Yet what reason was there to worry? Any moment now her sister would join her, and then—

She thrilled as she felt the mystery scarab tucked in her pocket, yet she could not entirely smother the vague fear that possessed her. Jumping to her feet, she crossed to the door. She would inquire what had delayed Sybil.

Her hand closed over the heavy, ornate latch, and she pulled. The door remained closed. She pulled again. Still it refused to budge, and suddenly she knew the truth.

It was locked. Her face slowly paled. Ali had bolted it behind him. Why?

Another exciting instalment next Friday.



Gloria - The Sensation of The School



A SHOCK FOR VICKY

JILL HASTINGS, captain of the Fourth Form, had to win a scholarship if she was to remain at Towershill School. Her staunch chum was Vicky Clayton, the junior games captain, and also snaring their study was Gloria Beverleigh-Browne, a spoilt, rich, and dazlingly pretty new girl, who quickly proved to be a disturbing influence.

Jill asked Gloria to write an important letter absolving her brother Dick from blame for damaging a valuable sextant belonging to his employer. But Vicky believed that Gloria, annoyed because Jill refused to nominate her for junior sports captain, had written a second letter which threw all the blame on Dick.

At the swimming pool Gloria discovered that her letter was missing, and Lottie Midland, one of the Fourth, accused Vicky of stealing it.

"VICKY has stolen a letter belonging to Gloria?" Miss Wren's voice was incredulous. "Vicky, surely this can't be right?"

Anxiously Jill stared across at her chum. She knew Vicky's one concern had been to help her, but she thought the sports captain had made a big mistake, and hoped against hope that Vicky would now realise it and make amends. But, to her dismay, her chum faced the mistress defiantly.

"It's right enough," she said. "I had to take the letter. It was the only way of preventing Gloria from doing Jill's brother a bad turn."

Instantly every eye turned to Gloria, and that girl laughed.

"It's too absurd!" she declared. "As if I would want to harm Jill's brother!"

Fiercely Vicky eyed her. "You do—you know you do!" she gasped. "You know that you wrote that letter out of spite—because you couldn't blackmail Jill into nominating you for the games captaincy!"

A startled gasp went up at this. Gloria wanting to become games captain? This was sensational news, indeed, and in astonishment most of the girls regarded her. What an amazing person she was! She had hardly been at Towershill a week, and yet, if what Vicky said was true, she was calmly considering putting up for one of the most coveted positions in the Fourth. But Miss Wren was not interested in that part of Vicky's statement. "It was the word 'blackmail' which had attracted her attention, and she frowned in horror. "Blackmail!" she repeated. "Surely this cannot possibly be true? Gloria—she turned to where that girl stood—do you deny that there is any-

thing harmful to Jill's brother in this letter?"

Gloria nodded. "Absolutely!" she replied. "You can read it for yourself, if you like, Miss Wren. I do not usually like my private correspondence gose through, but in the circumstances I will not object."

"Thank you," said Miss Wren; and there was a breathless hush in the swimming pool as Vicky handed her the letter and she opened it.

Some of the girls were looking angrily at Vicky. They could not believe that her accusation could be justified. But most of them were still regarding Gloria in amazement.

Fancy a new girl aspiring to the games captaincy! The thought took their breath away.

But Jill was regarding her chum anxiously. She also felt that Vicky had unwittingly done Gloria an injustice, and she feared the consequences of Vicky's headstrong action.

Silently Miss Wren read the letter, and then, with an expression of angry bewilderment, she looked up.

"I see nothing—nothing whatever—to take objection to," she announced. "On the contrary, the writer of this letter is to be congratulated."

"Wh-what!" stuttered Vicky, staring incredulously.

Miss Wren frowned across at her. "This is one of the most pleasing letters I have ever read," she declared. "In it Gloria has not only had the courage to confess to some thoughtless mistake she made, but she has gone out of her way to explain that mistake so that Jill's brother should not suffer."

From Alpha, Lottie, and a few other girls who had completely fallen under Gloria's dazzling spell there came an angry shout, but Vicky hardly heard it. She stood as if petrified.

What did it mean? Had she misjudged Gloria, after all?

For a moment she wondered, then like a lightning flash she guessed the truth. This, of course, must be the original letter which Gloria had written in Jill's presence. Cleverly Gloria had tricked her into making this mistake. The thought made Vicky burn with indignation.

Disapprovingly Miss Wren regarded her.

"I am surprised that you should make such a reckless accusation, Vicky," she declared, "and, in order to teach you not to make such slanderous statements in future, you will do me two hundred lines! I also suggest you would be well advised to make amends by making a suitable apology."

"Apology!" With an effort Vicky

By HAZEL ARMITAGE

found her voice. "I won't apologise!" she gasped, ignoring the warning nudge Jill gave her. "There hasn't been any mistake. We've been fooled. There were two letters—"

Most of the girls stared at her blankly, but Lottie Midland and her cronies began to shout angrily:

"Be quiet!"

"Don't be so spiteful!"

"I tell you—," cried Vicky, but Miss Wren intervened.

"No more! Not another word, Vicky, or I shall detain you for your next half-holiday! Really, I don't know what's come over you. Your behaviour is disgraceful!" She turned to Gloria, the letter in her hand. "You had better post this," she suggested.

Gloria took the letter, then calmly handed it to Jill.

"You had better post it yourself," she said, "then there can be no further argument."

Gratefully Jill took the letter. This would clear Dick, and would enable him to secure the wonderful chance that had been offered him. Oh, if only Vicky hadn't been so hasty, she thought. If only her chum could understand Gloria better!

She looked around for Vicky, but that girl, quivering with angry humiliation, had left the swimming pool, and Jill did not see her again for some time, for Vicky did not show up at breakfast.

After the meal was over, Jill posted Gloria's letter, and then, wondering where Vicky was, went in search of her. Thinking she might be in their study, she went there, but the room was empty. She was about to leave when the door opened and Gloria came in.

"Ah!" she said, and smiled brightly. "Lucky me to get you alone, Jill! Have you posted your letter?"

"Yes. And—and thank you, Gloria—"

"Don't mench. I told you I'd do you the good turn, didn't I? Glad to have been able to do it, and only sorry that Vicky made such a silly shindy about it. Still, that's all over now—"

"You mean?" Jill breathed, "you've forgiven Vicky?"

"Forgiven?" Gloria shrugged. "Haven't thought about it," she said. "Too much else on my mind." She came nearer, and now her beautiful face was very earnest. "Jill, I'm sure you can't be feeling so keen now on nominating Vicky. And anyway she won't stand a chance after all that's happened. So—"

She placed a nomination form face upwards on the table. "So," she repeated softly, "here's your chance to do me a good turn, Jill. And the Form a good turn, too, for I'd make a much better sports captain than Vicky. So come on, Jill! Nominate me!"



JILL'S EYES ARE OPENED

In utter amazement, Jill stared at Gloria, wondering for the moment if she were being serious. But she saw at once that Gloria was absolutely in earnest. Though she had only been at Towershill little more than a week, she really felt justified in putting up for the captaincy—in asking Jill to nominate her instead of Vicky. Slowly Jill shook her head.

"I'm sorry, Gloria, but I haven't changed my mind."

Incredulously Gloria stared. "You mean—you'll still nominate Vicky—after all that's happened?"

"I still nominate Vicky," Jill affirmed. "Vicky made a mistake, but Vicky was only considering me. She's still my chum—my very best chum—and not for worlds would I let her down."

Again Gloria stared, obviously non-plexed. Plainly she had never expected this refusal, and plainly she was bewildered by it. Her pretty lips pouted.

"Oh!" she said disappointedly. "I never imagined you'd still feel that way. I congratulate Vicky on having such a loyal friend, even if she hasn't done all that I've done for you. But—and suddenly a swift look of alarm seemed to spring into her eyes—Jill, you don't believe that I did write the horrid letter which Vicky's been talking about?"

"No," Jill smiled. "Of course not." "Thank you!" Gloria smiled. "Oh, well, what do I do now? Get somebody else to nominate me, I suppose. I'm sorry, Jill—for you as well as me. Naturally, seeing that your word carries so much weight in the Form, I'd rather have had you. Still, it doesn't matter. Plenty of girls will be glad to sign this form."

She leaned forward to pick up the nomination form from the table. As she did so her handbag, which she had slid beneath her arm, slipped and shot to the floor, spilling its contents at Jill's feet. Jill bent to help to retrieve Gloria's belongings, but suddenly she froze, staring in horror.

For among the dropped contents of the bag was a letter—a letter written to Mr. Stanton! It had fluttered open beneath Jill's eyes, and Jill read several of the lines before she even realised the significance of them. And those lines said:

"Of course Dick Hastings was to blame. I am deeply resentful that my name should have got mixed up with the damage to your sextant, Mr. Stanton. If Dick says otherwise, then I can only say that he is lying to save his own skin—"

"Gloria—" Jill cried in a strangled voice.

She picked the letter up, quivering as she realised that Vicky had been right. But Gloria, snatching the letter from her, hurriedly placed it in her bag.

"So—you did write another letter!" Jill cried. "Vicky was right! She made no mistake—except," she added, with sudden bitterness, "to be fooled by you!"

Only for an instant was Gloria taken aback. Then she shook her golden head.

"Oh, Jill, don't be a goopy goose!" she protested.

"Gloria, I saw that letter—"

"Well, what of it?" Gloria impatiently shrugged. "I never sent it, did I? Really, Jill, what is there to make a fuss about? You've had the real letter and sent it off. Why worry about this one?"

Helplessly Jill gazed at her. How

typical of Gloria—to sweep the whole incident aside as though it had never been! Accustomed to her amazing ways as she was, she still felt astounded at such behaviour. But she knew she would never trust Gloria again.

"You are sure you won't nominate me?" Gloria asked calmly, apparently in no way upset that her falsehood to Jill had been discovered.

"Of course not—especially after this!" Jill gasped.

"Right-ho!" Gloria gave a careless nod. "Then I won't waste any more time." She turned to the door, but with her hand on the knob, she looked back. "Oh, by the way, Jill, you won't mind, will you, but I may be leaving this study. Got an idea I'd like to be on my own for a change. Nothing like a change," she added brightly. "I believe the whole Form will believe that soon. Bye!"

She swept out, leaving Jill still simmering, but completely undeceived. She felt she knew Gloria now—Gloria, spoilt, vainglorious, and capable of any ruthlessness when it came to getting her own way. That one act of treachery against Vicky had completely opened Jill's eyes.

"And Gloria's really after Vicky's captaincy; she means to get it," she told herself. "Jill, you've got to stand by Vicky. You've got to help Vicky win through. And the sooner her nomination goes up now the better."

Fired by that spirit of resolve, she went to her bureau. She took out a nomination form; there and then she filled it in. No sooner had she blotted it than she had whisked out of the study, almost running full-tilt into Vicky, who was coming up the corridor.

"Jill," she cried, "I want— But where the dickens are you going?"

"To pin this up," Jill said; and Vicky's eyes lit up as she showed her the form. "Come on!"

"But why—"

"Come on!" Jill repeated. And determinedly she swept along the corridor, the wondering Vicky at her heels. She reached the main hall, where an unusually large crowd of Junior School girls were clustered round the notice-board, Gloria among them.

There was a murmur as Jill thrust through them, the form in her hand. She reached the board. She stretched up to pin on it her own form. And then she halted.

For on the board was already pinned a nomination form, signed by Alpha Ainsworth, the vice-captain of games. And that form nominated Gloria Beverleigh-Browne!



GLORIA SPRINGS ANOTHER SURPRISE

Jill compressed her lips as she saw that notice. So the fight was on—and Gloria was first in the field. But it made no difference. Firmly she pressed her own nomination into position.

There was a surge of girls towards it; a sway of excitement in the crowd as Jill turned away to meet the calmly smiling eyes of her chum's rival. And then a cry.

"Jill, you're never nominating Vicky after what she's done!"

Jill's eyes flashed.

"What Vicky did she did for me," she declared.

"But—"

"And I'm not only nominating her," went on Jill; "I'm backing her for all I'm worth. She's made a jolly good sports captain, and I don't see any reason why we should look for a new one."

"Hear, hear!" put in Clarissa Brentford.

"If Jill's backing Vicky, then that's good enough for me!" put in Phyllis Adams, echoed by half a dozen of Jill's other fervent supporters.

"If you ask me," added one of them, "I think it's cheek for a new girl like Gloria to put up for election!"

"Rats!" cried Lottie Midland.

"If Gloria will make a good captain it doesn't matter tuppence how long

she's been here!" declared Alpha Ainsworth.

In a moment a heated argument had broken out, and anxiously Jill listened to the rival voices. It was grand to know that, despite all that had happened, most of her own supporters seemed to be willing to follow her lead. Nevertheless, it was obvious that Gloria had a lot of support—a rather disturbing lot, seeing that the election campaign had only this minute commenced. Feelings were beginning to run high, when suddenly there was an interruption.

A procession of four Third Formers, led by Nancy Farrow, came weaving its way through the crowd, each of the girls carrying an expensive-looking case, boldly monogrammed with the initials "G. B. B."

"Good!" Gloria beamed on them. "So here you are—all ready for action. Excuse us for a few minutes, girls. I happen to be moving to Study No. 11."

"Study what?" Clarissa gasped.

"Prefects' Study," they call it, I believe," Gloria shrugged, apparently oblivious of the staring eyes which regarded her, for until now Study No. 11 had only been used on those very rare occasions when it was necessary for a prefect to occupy a room in the Middle School quarters. "Nice room!" she said calmly. "I rather fancy it, you know, especially as I want to be alone to think out my election campaign."

"But how did you get hold of it?" stuttered Coralie Jason.

"Oh, just asked!" Gloria shrugged again. "Never mind who. Anyway, why all the fuss over an empty study? You must come along to my study warming party, you know, when I've organised it. And that—she beamed "also goes for you, Jill. And Vicky, too, if she cares. Quick march, party!"

And at the head of Nancy & Co. she swept off, leaving the hall in a buzz. But that definitely broke up the gathering, and, talking and murmuring, the crowd split up, to leave Jill and Vicky on their own. There was a misty gratitude in Vicky's eyes as she touched her chum's hand.

"Jill, you're a brick!" she said huskily. "But—but what on earth's so suddenly put your back up against Gloria?"

"Come along to the study. I'll tell you on the way," Jill said.

She did so, and the contempt for her rival deepened on Vicky's face, while in her eyes gleamed a new joy. It was grand to know that now she and Jill thought alike about the new girl, whose arrival at Towershill had caused one sensation after another. As they entered the study, they found Gloria and her removal party had packed up, and were just on the point of taking their departure.

Gloria greeted the chums as if they were all the best of friends.

"Hallo! You're just in time to see me flit," she said, smiling at them both. "I've chucked that old work-box of yours, Vicky, into the cupboard. It got mixed up with my things. Oh, and I've left you the ormolu clock, Jill! You would like it, wouldn't you, just as something to remember me by? And don't forget to come to my study party, both of you. It would be dreadful if you weren't there."

She flashed them another radiant smile, the recent unpleasantness between them apparently forgotten, and then sauntered away, followed by her Third Form helpers.

"What an extraordinary girl!" exclaimed Jill, as the door closed. "You never know what she's going to say—or do—next. But never mind her. Let's talk about the election, Vicky. Providing we put our backs into it, I think you've got a splendid chance."

"Honestly?" asked Vicky. Jill nodded.

"Honestly," she said. "But we mustn't take chances. We'd better organise our first meeting to-morrow."

They did. They had the meeting in the recreation-room. Gloria also

(Please turn to page 153.)



The Merry-makers Afloat

Only Sally Suspected That Dolores Was Not So Sweet And Charming As She Seemed

By DAPHNE GRAYSON

SALLY IS SUSPICIOUS

"If you two want a whacking at table tennis," challenged Sally Warner gaily, "I'll go and rout out Don to partner me."

"Good-o!" approved Johnny Briggs with a grin. "It's time he had a break from that gadget of his. All work and no play, you know—"

"We'll see you both in the game-room, Sally," put in Fay Manners.

Sally nodded, and, with a cheery wave, swung down the companion-way from the boat deck of the Ocean Star, the ship that was taking selected students from many countries to the International College in Australia.

"Wonder how Don's idea is getting on," murmured Sally, as she made her way to the Merry-makers' club-room on C deck. "Golly, I'll be so proud if he does well in the competition!"

A fond little smile played round her lips; for good-looking, ever-reliable Don Weston was her especial chum.

The competition—breezily styled "The Useful Gadget Contest"—had been organized by an American scientist, Arno Doane, who had joined the college ship at Bahia: Mr. Doane was an old acquaintance of Professor Willard, the headmaster, and he had put up the test primarily for the students, although it was open to anyone under seventeen aboard.

Don, as the one with the engineering bent, had eagerly entered, and had been working for some days now on an idea connected with typewriters, the principle of which was a constant feed of paper, doing away with the necessity of inserting fresh sheets by hand.

"I believe Don's really got something, too," murmured Sally happily, as she approached the club room. "I do hope—"

"Oh, Don-ee, please show how eet works!"

At that rather attractive, excitable voice from inside the club-room, Sally paused and glanced through one of the windows in surprise.

She saw Don instantly. He was seated at a table, a smile on his good-looking face, with sheets of blue paper containing his drawings and notes in front of him. It was the girl at his side who held Sally's gaze, a girl who was paying rapt attention to all Don did and said.

She must have been about Sally's own age, but her small stature, her little, olive-skinned face and hands made her seem younger. Soft, brown hair framed a delicate, oval face. Big eyes glowed excitedly; small, red mouth was slightly parted, showing pearly teeth.

"Don-ee, you are so clever!" the girl exclaimed, her soft hair brushing Don's cheek. "One day you weel be a great inventor—I, Dolores Amito,

know it! You weel be world famous! Now show me some more—please—"

Don looked up at her radiant face and laughed.

"Dolores, you'll give me a swelled head!" he protested, smiling. "But here goes. Now, you see, the tray will be attached to the typewriter here, and the arm feeding in the paper—"

With a lift of her eyebrows, Sally passed on towards the door.

"Don seems to have made an impression," she murmured, smiling. "Dolores Amito? She must have joined the ship at Bahia."

The door of the club-room was slightly ajar, and she was about to enter when she saw something that made her pause, startled.

The new expression on Dolores' face! The excitable little features had momentarily gone blank; the eyes watching Don as he turned to reach for one of his drawings had become narrowed, calculating. And then—

It happened so quickly that Sally was left breathless.

Dolores' slim hand flashed out, and Sally was sure that she saw a sheet of Don's blue drawing-paper disappear into the girl's handbag!

It staggered her; startled her.

"Now, Dolores," said Don, turning, and then broke off as Sally stepped inside. "Sally, old thing!" He rose, beaming a welcome. "Come and meet one of the new students—Dolores Amito. Dolores, meet my best friend and leader, of the Merry-makers, Sally Warner!"

Dolores faced Sally. The big, brown eyes were glowing softly again.

"Sallee Warner!" she exclaimed delightedly, and caught Sally's hands in her slim fingers. "I have heard of you; how clever you are—how pretty you are! And now I meet you. Eet ees wonderful!"

Don grinned, obviously amused and attracted by her quaint, impulsive speech; but Sally, uneasy, gazed searchingly into the brown eyes.

"Hallo, Dolores," she said quietly. "I see you're interested in Don's work. Do you invent things yourself?"

A flicker of caution flashed across Dolores' animated features. Then she made a pretty little gesture of mock horror and despair.

"Me—invent?" She laughed musically. "No—no, I have not the brain for eet. I am the dunderhead. That ees why I so admire Don-ee here! He ees so breeliant, so kind to explain theengs to stupid me—"

"Oh, nonsense," said Don, laughing. "Anyway, I thought you were showing a jolly good grasp of my gadget—"

He broke off, for Dolores, with a delighted cry, had raised herself on tiptoe and brushed past his cheek with her lips, an action that made Sally flush a little.

"That ees for saying the so nice

theengs, Don-ee," Dolores cried gaily. "Some other time you must show me more. Now I leave you with your chum."

She turned with a whirl to the door, leaving Don rather red and smiling.

But Sally stepped quickly before her.

"One moment, Dolores. Before you go—I think you picked up something of Don's—by mistake, perhaps?"

Dolores stilled. For a second Sally caught again that hard, calculating glimpse in the big, brown eyes—then they widened wonderingly.

"Something of Don-ee's?" she repeated. "I do not understand."

"Hey, what's this, Sallykins?" Don laughed, staring at Sally. "You—"

The smile slowly went from his lips; for one glance at Sally's expression had shown him that she was really serious.

"Or perhaps," Sally added steadily. "Don is lending you that page of his typewriter idea you put in your bag!"

Don gasped. There followed an electric silence. Dolores' eyes began to mist. Her small mouth quivered.

"Sally, old thing," said Don uncomfortably, "you're joking! Dolores hasn't the faintest reason for taking one of my drawings."

"Please check them, Don," said Sally, pale, but determined. She turned again to Dolores. Tears were welling into the big eyes. If they were false—it was superb acting. Yet Sally could not forget what she had seen. "Dolores," she added quietly, "would you mind very much showing what you have in your bag?"

Dolores gave a sad little gesture. She opened her bag.

"Sally"—Don's voice was horribly uncomfortable—"all my drawings and notes are here."

"And thees," gulped Dolores, producing a blue handkerchief from her bag, "thees ees all I have that ees blue in my bag. I—I theenk," she went on with a trembly smile, dabbing at her misty, brown eyes, "that I need eet. Oh, Sallee, eet grieve me so that you—that you—"

She broke off, turned and slowly, sadly left the room.

Sally made no move to stop her. She felt dazed and badly shaken. And yet surely she hadn't been mistaken? Surely she had seen Dolores—

She looked at Don. He bit his lip. There was an awkward pause.

"Don—I—" Flushing, Sally hardly knew what to say. "Don, I'm—I'm sorry. I really thought—I'll speak to her—explain—"

He nodded.

"Of course, Sally. It's easy enough to make mistakes, old thing. Er— Another awkward pause which he bridged by adding: "Were you coming to rout me out for something, Sally?"

"I—I was. Fay and Johnny want to play us at table tennis."

"Good-o!" he cried in relief. "I'll tuck my drawings and things away and meet you in the games-room. Shan't be long, old thing!"

And, gathering up his papers, he hurried out. Sally watched him go with unhappy eyes. She and Don were too fast friends to let the incident come between them, but it was obvious that Don was surprised and rather dismayed by what Sally had done.

"And yet," muttered Sally. "I'm sure it wasn't her blue handkerchief I saw her put in her bag. But if none of Don's things are gone—"

She stopped. Her gaze had fallen on something blue on the floor. She picked it up. It was a fragment from a sheet of carbon paper.

Sally suddenly caught in her breath.

Carbon paper! Was this the explanation?

"Supposing," she breathed, "that when Dolores was asking Don to explain the workings of part of his idea she slipped a carbon and a sheet of paper under his paper! And that it was the blue carbon sheet and a copy of Don's diagram that I saw her put in her bag!"

It was a thought that startled. But why should Dolores, who professed herself a dunderhead about such matters, try to get away with part of Don's idea? It was pointless. Unless—

"My-my golly!" exclaimed Sally, struck by inspiration. "I wonder—"

She sped from the club-room. In Professor Willard's cabin—the Head was absent—she found pinned up a copy of the list of the entries for the Arno Doane competition. Breath held, she ran her eyes down the list. And there, two-thirds of the way down, was the name—

"Dolores Amato!" she whispered. "She's entered!"

Her eyes blazed angrily. She had been right. So this was it! The little Brazilian girl was a trickster.

She was no dunderhead! On the contrary, everything pointed to the fact that Dolores was out to crib Don's idea—with the object of winning the competition herself!

DOLORES

SPRINGS A SURPRISE

"I must warn Don!"

That was Sally's first impulse, but before she could act on it a rustle at the door made her glance up.

She saw the slight figure of Dolores hurrying away.

"She was watching me!" Sally murmured. "That settles it. The sooner I tell Don what I've discovered the better."

She made her way to the games-room, but, to her surprise, Don was not there. Fay and Johnny were playing a singles, watched by other students. They broke off play as Sally appeared.

"Hey, Sally, what's cooking?" demanded Johnny. "Don bobbed up a minute ago, and the three of us were waiting for you, when in rushed a little Brazilian girl and simply whisked him off."

"Said she'd got to see him urgently," nodded Fay. "Jolly pretty girl."

Sally started, an anxious little frown appearing on her brow, a frown that was immediately noticed and misinterpreted by Alec Burt.

"Whoa-ho, Sally doesn't like that, eh?" he said unpleasantly. "Can it be that Sally Warner is jealous?"

"Can it be that you're talking out of the back of your silly neck, Alec Burt!" snorted Johnny indignantly. "Sally—"

But Sally, to their surprise, turned away, and, with a low-voiced, "Shan't be long," hurried out. She was suddenly apprehensive.

"Sally, you've got to find Don quickly," she told herself. "Dolores is up to something—whisking him off like that."

But finding Don wasn't so easy. He wasn't in the cabin he shared with Johnny; he was not visible on deck. She entered the club-room—no, Don. And then, as she was turning to leave, Don himself passed the door.

"Oh, Don!" called Sally in relief. "I've been looking for you—"

He halted and turned. He gave his old cheery smile.

"Sorry if I held you up, old thing," he said. "I went to the games-room, but Dolores came along and rushed me off. You know, old Sallykins," he added gently, "she really is a wizard little person—so quaint, and the soul of honesty, too—"

Sally bit her lip. Don seemed to be more enthusiastic about the Brazilian girl than ever. But for his sake she had to speak her mind.

"Don," she said hesitantly, "I—I don't like saying this, but I've made a discovery about Dolores which convinces me I was right about her in the first place."

A look of dismay and concern spread over Don's cheery face.

"Oh, gosh, Sally, you're making an awful mistake! Please don't—"

"No, Don, I'm not! I wish I were. Listen! She pretended she was hopeless about things like inventions, didn't she? In that case, Don, why has she entered for the competition? She has—because I've checked it!"

Sally paused. To her blank amazement, Don showed no surprise.

"I know, Sally," he said quietly, almost reproachfully.

"Don!" Sally gasped. "You know! Then—then—"

"She told me herself, Sally—when she came to collect me from the games-room just now. You see," he added, while Sally stared, "apparently she entered in the first place without realising exactly what the competition was. When she'd talked with me, heard something of my idea, she saw that it wasn't in her line at all."

In bewilderment, Sally listened. "Beyond that," continued Don quietly, "she's such an honest kid that she felt it wouldn't be fair to be in the competition after having heard my idea. So she insisted on taking me along personally to Mr. Doane to have her name removed from the entry list. That's where I've just been. So, you see, old thing—"

He paused with a smile, in which was a touch of pleading, obviously expecting Sally to admit her mistake.

Painfully flushing, Sally realised that this seemed completely to put her in the wrong and upset her ideas about Dolores. But, wait—

Suddenly there came to her a very significant fact.

Dolores had seen her examining a copy of the list in Professor Willard's cabin—and immediately after that Dolores had rushed Don off to cancel her name!

The truth burst on Sally. Dolores had done it as an alibi, fearing that Sally suspected! Oh, the cunning of the girl!

"Don," she blurted out. "I'd hate you to think I'm being unfair, but even so I've reason to distrust Dolores after—"

She was cut short by a broken little sob from the corridor. Don turned in dismay, and over his shoulder Sally saw the face of Dolores Amato, those quick tears already welling to her soft eyes.

"Dolores!" cried Don. "Oh, go-h! Dolores, don't be upset. Sally didn't mean—I say, please wait!" he added anxiously, for the Brazilian girl, her shoulders shaking, had abruptly turned and fled. "Oh, Sally," muttered Don unhappily, "you really shouldn't have said that. Dolores—wait!"

And he hurried after her.

Sally felt a strange little pang. It was almost as if Don was putting the Brazilian girl's feelings before hers.

Not that she condemned his action. Don hated to see anyone deeply upset, but—

Sally distrusted those quick tears! "I'm still certain," she told herself fiercely, "that Dolores is playing a deep game—planning to trick Don. But if she's resigned from the competition, what can she hope to gain by play-acting now?"

The question baffled Sally—but could she have been with Dolores some twenty minutes later she would have understood only too well.

Dolores, having parted with a trembly smile from a pacifying and worried Don, had turned her footsteps towards the first-class cabins. She entered one without knocking, and with no trace of tears now on her attractive little face, tripped across to a comfortable armchair.

Watched by a swarthy-faced young fellow standing by the porthole, she sat in the chair and shook with inward laughter.

"Oh, my cousin," she said softly, "boys are so very, very stupid! I can tweek them round my finger with a few tears—so!"

She twirled a slender little hand in the air. Her cousin, Manuel Pranita, who was making the journey to the next port, eyed her admiringly.

"What now, Dolores?" he asked.

"You want to win thees competition because you have discovered that the man organising eet is putting up a beeg prize. You cleverly got hold of a carbon copy of part of the Breetish boy's idea, which we decide is very good. But because of thees Sally girl, you have had to withdraw from the competition. So what now?"

"Now, my cousin," said Dolores dreamily, "you weel enter the competition, and when you win it, you weel give me the prize!"

"When I win it?" He started.

"How can I win eet?"

Dolores smiled like a contented cat. "I weel tell you," she said coolly.

"The stupid Don trust me. Tomorrow morning he es to put in hees entry. Now thees ees my plan—"

FOR the rest of that day, Sally was on the alert, and although she, Don, Fay and Johnny were together until early evening, although she and Don deliberately refrained from mentioning Dolores—as if by common consent—yet there was an awkwardness in the air that could not be mistaken.

Fay and Johnny felt it, too, but wisely said nothing, and any sly remark by students like Alec Burt or Carmenita Pascali were ignored.

Later in the evening, Sally disappeared during a ship's concert and was not seen again until bedtime. She said nothing of her absence, but there was a resolute gleam in her eyes. For although Dolores had not put in another appearance, Sally was taking no chances, and her plans were made.

Thus it was that in the morning she was early astrir. Dressing, she hurried along to the cabin Don shared with Johnny. Johnny opened the door with his usual cheery grin.

"Just missed Don, Sally," he said. "He's gone to hand in his entry." He hesitated. "Matter of fact that Brazilian girl, Dolores, called for him. She said she'd go with him to bring him luck. Don didn't seem too keen, but he couldn't very well refuse."

Johnny paused, staring, for Sally, with a startled gasp, had turned and rushed away. On flying feet she headed for B deck.

"I might have guessed," she muttered fiercely.

She shot up the companionway. In the distance she saw Don and Dolores walking along the deck. Dolores had tucked her arm in Don's and with her other hand she was gaily waving a fat envelope in the air.

Sally saw something else—some-



thing that made her give an alarmed cry and sprint desperately forward. And then it happened.

Dolores seemed to slip. She fell against the rail. The envelope jerked from her hand.

"Dolores—steady!" gasped Don. "My entry—"

Too late he leapt. Too late Sally rushed up. The envelope fluttered down over the side, hit the water and was swirled away by the ship's wake!



MR. DOANE'S ANNOUNCEMENT

"Oh, Don-ee, I am heartbroke! I could keeck myself! Your so wonderful idea—eet ees lost. And you have no time to draw eet

all over again—"

Thus Dolores broke the silence. Her eyes were misty and one little hand fluttered agitatedly on Don's sleeve, as in blank dismay he watched the precious envelope dancing away on the waves.

It was a bitter blow and only by a great effort did he conceal his chagrin.

"It—it can't be helped, Dolores," he muttered. "Accidents will happen—"

"Accident!" rang out Sally's voice, biting in its anger and indignation. "An accident that puts you out of the competition, Don!"

The expression on her face startled Don, despite his loss.

"Sally, old thing," he said uneasily, "you musn't suggest—I mean, it was obviously an accident."

For a second Sally said nothing. Her gaze, full of scorn, held the brown eyes of Dolores, and it seemed to her that there was a mocking challenge in their depths, a look that said: "I've beaten you, Sally. Even now you don't quite know my scheme—but I've beaten you!"

Sally clenched her hands.

"Don," she said suddenly, "I'm terribly sorry about this." She turned, lips set. "I've one thing to say to you, Dolores! It's this: the game isn't finished yet!"

And with a fierce gleam in her eyes she hurried away along the deck.

Don did not see Sally again until long after breakfast.

His eyes lit up as he saw her. "Sally!" he exclaimed gladly.

"I've been wondering where you were—"

"Well, Don, here I am," cut in Sally lightly. "Just in time to take you all off to hear Mr. Arno Doane give the result of the competition."

They stared. And there was just the hint of reproach in Don's eyes; for after all Sally knew what that competition had meant to him, and now that he was out of it—

It was almost as if Sally read his mind. She smiled strangely.

"No, I'm not being mean, Don," she said. "Come on—just to please me. I've an idea something surprising is going to happen."

She would say no more, but piloted the three of them off to the first-class lounge, where Mr. Doane was to announce the result. The lounge was full, students and passengers mingling. On a small platform stood Mr. Doane, a sheaf of papers on a table in front of him.

"There have been some very interesting entries," he was saying as Sally & Co. entered, and added with a smile: "Most of them are, I fear, rather impracticable, but there is one really excellently thought out suggestion concerning an improvement to typewriters—"

put in by Manuel Pranata—"

Don gave a start. He gasped and went rigid when there was a stir in the crowd and a young Brazilian was pushed forward—by the radiantly smiling little figure of Dolores Amito!

"Dolores!" he exclaimed dazedly. "Dolores—typewriter idea—"

"Yes—Dolores," said Sally rather grimly. "She has pinched your idea, Don—and got that fellow to put it in as his own."

"But, Sally," protested Fay, "Don's idea went overboard!"

Sally shook her head.

"It didn't! Dolores switched the envelopes. A dummy went overboard! I thought I spotted it as I ran up on deck. Look at Dolores now! She's seen us!"

Their gazes jerked round. Manuel and Dolores were by the table. Dolores had turned. With brazen coolness, she waved mockingly towards Sally & Co., an act that made Don grit his teeth.

"Oh, Sally," he breathed. "The awful little trickster. To think I fell—"

Sally touched his arm for silence. Mr. Doane was speaking again.

"And now," he said slowly, "I have to introduce an unpleasant note. Here"—he raised a sheaf of papers—"is another entry. It was put in by Don Weston—and it is exactly the same—to the last detail—as Manuel Pranata's!"

There was a sudden hush, then excited murmurs broke out.

"Sally," gasped Don, "what does it mean? I didn't put in that entry!"

"But I did!" said Sally, and gave him a warm smile. "You see, I was afraid of what Dolores might do, so the night of the concert—remember I slipped away—I roughly copied out your drawings. And then this morning, after that envelope went overboard, I spent my time neatly copying out my rough. I got the entry in just in time in your name—"

Mr. Doane's voice broke in.

"Fortunately," he said clearly, "a certain young lady has suggested a very simple way of immediately discovering who really conceived this clever idea!"

He glanced towards Sally, and Sally, flushing, smiled back.

"Therefore," continued Mr. Doane, amid a breathless hush, "I invite Don Weston or Manuel Pranata to come forward here and now, and on this blackboard—without the use of notes, mark you!—explain in detail the workings of the typewriter idea."

The shrewdness of Sally's idea was immediately apparent.

But there was no need for Don to move. Manuel Pranata was at that moment heartily wishing he had never been dragged into this.

Abruptly, head down, he stamped from the lounge, and Dolores, with a white-faced glance at Sally, followed.

A murmur of indignation followed, then a murmur that turned to a burst of handclapping as Mr. Doane smilingly beckoned Don forward.

"I think," he said warmly, "that there remains no doubt about the winner. I have great pleasure in presenting the prize to Don Weston, and wish to congratulate him—not only on a very clever idea, but upon having a very sterling friend."

To which Fay and Johnny gave a rousing cheer; to which Don, pressing Sally's hand, murmured a fervent "Hear, hear!"

(End of this week's story.)

Sally & Co. will be featured in another entertaining story next Friday.

GLORIA The Sensation of the School

(Continued from page 150.)

had a meeting, but hers was in the tuckshop, with lavish refreshments free of charge for all who cared to attend. They had another meeting on Wednesday. Gloria, meantime, had been to the local printers, and flooded Common-room, dormitory, and class-room with handbills, urging all to vote for herself.

On all sides the forthcoming election was the topic of the day. Fever in the Fourth was running high. Lavishly Gloria spent her money, and Study No. 11, though it had not yet had its official study warming, became an open house for anyone who liked to drop in.

"She's going strong," Jill reported to Vicky on the following Friday. "I suppose she doesn't realise she's practically trying to buy her vote, but she's tremendously popular, Vicky. She's got a meeting on now at the tuckshop, so goodness knows what fresh bait she's throwing out. It—it's going to be a near thing, Vicky."

Vicky compressed her lips. "You mean—we might lose?"

"I don't think so, but the margin's going to be closer than I thought at first. Gloria's made great headway, and I can't help feeling that she has still got some more surprises up her sleeve, and—"

She paused. "Vicky," she added suddenly, "you remember that sports badge you were designing?"

Vicky smiled, and threw a look at

the cupboard where Gloria had carelessly tossed her work-box the day she had left.

The sports badge, worked out with infinite pains and patience by Vicky herself, was her own idea—a badge to be worn by all girls who did well in the Fourth's various sporting activities.

"I finished it just before Gloria came. I was saving it up until after the election."

"But why not show it now?" Jill asked. "Why not put it on view? It's a good idea; it would please the Form and would help the cause no end. Dig it out, Vicky."

And Vicky, seeing the wisdom of that advice, nodded. Eagerly she lifted down the box and opened the lid. Then she gave a dismayed flush, and her cheeks reddened angrily.

"What's the matter?" asked Jill.

By way of answer, her chum took from the box a broken bottle of black Indian ink and a sheet of designs, all hopelessly smothered and obliterated.

"My designs!" she choked. "They're ruined!"

Her face flamed as a memory suddenly burned in her brain. "Jill, this is Gloria's work! Gloria did this—on the day she left the study! She—she's ruined my designs! And she must have done it deliberately, for I didn't put this bottle of ink in the work-box. Gloria must have done that, and, by the look of it, she deliberately smashed it all over my designs!"

Jill caught in her breath. Could Gloria have been responsible for this spiteful trick?

"But why should she do it?" she asked suddenly. "It's such a senseless thing to do, Vicky. What could have been Gloria's idea?"

"I don't know. But I do know," Vicky added angrily, "what mine will be next time I see her! And she had some good reason, you can bet. That girl doesn't do these sort of things without a motive, and— I say, Jill, what's that?"

But Jill was standing, still and tense, listening. For from the direction of the tuckshop had suddenly come a great roar of applause, mingled with cries of "Gloria! Good old Gloria!"

In the passage was a sudden running of feet; there came a breathless cry of "Gloria's at it again!" And Jill, peering out of the window, saw a crowd of other girls all streaking for the tuckshop.

She turned. She looked at her chum standing there, breathing heavily. Then she whisked into urgent action.

"Gloria's up to something—something big," she said. "And this time she seems to have captured the interest of the whole Form. Vicky, come on! We're going to be in on this."

"You mean?" Vicky breathed.

"We're going to the tuckshop to find out what's happening," Jill declared, and led the way out of the study.

What is Gloria up to now? See next Friday's enthralling instalment of this grand serial.



KAYE'S FEUD with the SKATING STAR

By RENEE FRAZER

THE ONLY WAY

KAYE LAWRENCE knew that Trevor Gayford, the popular skating star staying at Mr. Sharman's Canadian house, was really an outlaw called the Cloaked Rider.

José Revelle, who had been Kaye's closest chum until they had quarrelled, and the rest of the party of girl skaters who were Mr. Sharman's guests, idolised Trevor and were convinced that the Cloaked Rider was Rex Foster, a fugitive Mountie, who was secretly Kaye's friend.

Rex Foster was caught, and Kaye exposed as his helper, and ordered to leave the house.

But refusing to be beaten, she caught the coach to Martinsville, where José and the rest of the team were to appear in a big skating tournament.

"MARTINSVILLE! All a light, please!"

Kaye was jerked out of her tumultuous thoughts, as the stage-coach driver, giving a cheery shout, pulled up outside the picturesque lakeside hotel.

She climbed from her seat on top and picked up her luggage. During the journey by the winding mountain road she had had ample time to sort out her plans.

Not for a moment did she regret her reckless decision, made on the spur of the moment after her encounter with Trevor Gayford.

She was not beaten—yet!

Pausing only for one quick glance at the entrancing scenery—the quaint white hotel silhouetted against dark fir trees, and the frozen lake glimmering like a frosted mirror in the circle of the snow-capped hills—Kaye made her way boldly up to the hotel.

To-morrow the team would arrive, in charge of Miss Quentin—with Trevor Gayford in his role of coach.

It was Kaye's daring intention to book a small room at the hotel and to keep watch over José by stealth. By using her wits she might yet foil the scoundrel who menaced her chum's happiness!

Eagerly she inquired after a vacant room, and the booking clerk's pen hovered over a list as he regarded her questioningly.

"You are taking part in the skating tournament, miss?"

"Not—not exactly," rejoined Kaye, flushing slightly. "I—"

The clerk laid down his pen.

"I'm sorry, miss—but accommodation here is strictly reserved for competitors," he announced.

Kaye's heart sank.

"But—but I have come specially to see the tournament," she burst out. "Couldn't you—"

"I'm sorry—the clerk's manner was politely firm—"it's quite impossible, miss. The tournament promoters have an arrangement with the management for priority booking. If

you're not taking part, miss, there's nothing I can do about it."

Kaye thanked him unsteadily and turned away. This totally unexpected setback came as a crushing blow to her hopes.

How could she keep watch over her chum—protect her from Gayford's plotting—if she were not even under the same roof?

Everything would have been plain sailing if she had been a competitor.

Kaye suddenly paused and stared at a wooden building adjoining the hotel, upon the door of which was a painted inscription:

"ICE TOURNAMENT. Promoter's Office—Franklin K. Harker."

If she had been a competitor! A breath-taking thought flashed into her mind. Why not? It was an open contest for solo competitors as well as teams; and even now it might not be too late to enter her name!

She hurried up the steps of the office and pushed open the door. A burly man smoking an outside cigar was seated at a littered table. Obviously this was the promoter, Franklin K. Harker.

He looked up as Kaye entered, removing his cigar.

"Yes?" he inquired briefly. "I guess I'm busy just now—"

Kaye blurted out her request.

Mr. Harker regarded her keenly, noting her tense, anxious expression—her obvious eagerness.

"Got any credentials?" he asked.

"We only want first-class skaters."

Kaye had been prepared for this. She opened her case, producing several diplomas and certificates she had received from time to time. But she was careful not to mention her connection with the Silver Lake team, fearing awkward questions.

Mr. Harker nodded approvingly as he glanced through the papers.

"Waal," he said, "I guess you're O.K., Miss—er—Lawrence. Afraid

there are no vacancies at the moment, but I'll put you down on my reserve list, in case a competitor falls out."

The eager expectancy faded from Kaye's eyes and her lips trembled.

"You mean—you can't tell me for certain—"

"That's about the shape of it," came the brisk reply. "Maybe you'd like to look in to-morrow? Can't say fairer. You're staying round here?"

"I—I want to, if I can find a place."

Mr. Harker pursed his lips.

"Try the post office," he suggested, jerking his head towards a row of wooden houses near the lake. "Maybe they'll be able to help. Good morning!"

Kaye made her way out into the brilliant sunshine, trying pluckily to hide her bitter disappointment.

Fate seemed set against her. Picking up her luggage, she made her way to the building that was the combined village post office and general stores.

The motherly woman behind the counter proved helpful. She had a list of possible addresses she could recommend for a night's lodging.

Kaye thanked her gratefully, and took the list to a desk near the telephone-booth, to copy out the names.

There was a swarthy-faced man in the phone-box, and Kaye could hear his voice raised impatiently. Suddenly she started, as a few disjointed words reached her ears:

"I wanna get this clear, Gayford! You say we're to hold up plans till after the tournament? Who? José Revelle?"

The pencil fell from Kaye's nerveless fingers, and she strained her ears. She had not intended to eavesdrop, but this was something vital—something concerning her chum!

The speaker gave a sudden, meaningful laugh.

"I get you! We can't do anything till this Revelle girl has won the challenge cup. Then we just step in, an—"

The remaining words, spoken with an unpleasant chuckle, were inaudible to Kaye; but her heart was pounding, and she hastily averted her face when the speaker came out of the booth.

Kaye contrived to steal a glance at him as he strode away: a villainous-looking individual, his swarthy face shadowed by a stetson, and a livid scar on one cheek.

So Trevor Gayford's plot was not only aimed at José, but it depended for some reason on her chum being the victor in the skating contest!

A desperate gleam flashed into Kaye's eyes. More than ever, it was vital that she should take part in the ice tournament!

With conflicting emotions of excitement and suspense, she turned up early the next morning at Mr. Harker's office. The big man greeted her with a friendly nod.

"You're sure keen, Miss Lawrence," he remarked, pushing a sheet of paper towards her. "Jest sign here—on the dotted line."

Kaye looked at him in joyful incredulity.

"You—you mean—"

"I mean there's a vacancy—an' you're stepping in," came the brisk rejoinder. "All I need is your signature, and I'll give you a chit for your room at the hotel."

Her eyes shining, her fingers trembling, Kaye picked up the pen and drew the precious paper towards her.

Boldly she commenced to write her name, when there came a startling interruption. Behind her, the door was thrown open suddenly—and a strong, masterful voice rang out:

"I protest! Mr. Harker—that girl is a fraud!"

Kaye whirled in dismay. The speaker was Trevor Gayford—and behind him stood José and the other girls from the Silver Lake team!

THE MESSAGE ON THE ARROW

For a moment Kaye was conscious only of Trevor Gayford's menacing stare—the bewildered, incredulous looks on the faces of the girls of the team.

She heard José's stifled gasp: "Kaye! You—here!"

Then Mr. Harker was on his feet thumping his desk, an angry frown on his face.

"Say—what's the meaning of this



interruption?" he thundered, glaring at Gayford. "Is this my office—or a public meeting?"

Gayford stepped forward, completely composed, producing his card with a flourish.

"I must ask your forgiveness for this intrusion, Mr. Harker," he said suavely. "I am acting as coach to the Silver Lake team, who are competing in the tournament. Miss Lawrence was till recently a member of our team."

The skating promoter raised his eyebrows over the card.

"I've heard of you, of course, Mr. Gayford—who hasn't? But I still fail to understand your protest—"

"Miss Lawrence," cut in Trevor accusingly, "is signing under false pretences! She is not a reputable skater. She was turned out of our team as an accomplice of the notorious highwayman, the Cloaked Rider!"

The blood drained from Kaye's face as she heard the murmurs of the girls and encountered Mr. Harker's questioning glance.

"Is this true, Miss Lawrence?" he demanded.

Kaye started forward appealingly.

"It's true that I was a friend of Rex Foster, the young Mountie arrested as the Cloaked Rider," she gulped, "but he was innocent—and I've done nothing of which I need be ashamed!"

The promoter looked at her searchingly for a moment; then he turned to Gayford.

"Is Miss Lawrence actually wanted by the police?" he demanded.

Trevor waved his hand airily. "Not exactly," he admitted. "She escaped arrest by the skin of her teeth. But it's clear that she must have come here for some ulterior motive—"

"That's not true!" exclaimed Kaye, flushing. "I came here because"—her hands clenched—"because I want to win the tournament challenge cup!"

As she spoke she stared directly at her accuser, and was rewarded by the startled gleam that flashed into Trevor Gayford's blue eyes.

Mr. Harker leaned back, biting on his cigar, his shrewd gaze darting from one to the other. For a moment he rapped his fingers thoughtfully on the desk, while Kaye waited in cold suspense. At length he looked up.

"Miss Lawrence," he said deliberately, "I'm still waiting for your signature on this document—and my time's precious!"

Almost unbelievably, Kaye reached for the pen as a low murmur arose from the girls and an angry frown crossed Gayford's handsome face.

"Look here, Mr. Harker—" he protested.

The skating promoter raised his hand.

"Say—just a minute, Mr. Gayford. I guess I'm boss around here. The private affairs of the competitors are no concern of mine—so long as they're dealing straight with me. I'm interested in skating, see—not scandal."

He took the document from Kaye's trembling fingers, blotted it and slipped it in a drawer.

"An' now, if you'll excuse me," he said bluntly, "I guess I'm busy."

Gayford bit his lip, obviously controlling his chagrin with an effort.

"You'll be sorry for this—" he began, rather threateningly, and then, quickly realising his mistake, he added more suavely: "I trust, Mr. Harker, that you won't have cause to regret your decision. Come along, girls!"

Ignoring Kaye, he strode out of the office, followed by the whispering team. Kaye stared appealingly after José, but her old chum, after that first amazed cry, had not glanced once in her direction.

The door closed after them, and impulsively Kaye turned to the promoter. He checked her thanks with a kindly gesture.

"Say—that's all right. I guess I liked your spirit, an' I don't care to be bully-ragged in my own office by any skating star!" He eyed her

shrewdly. "I guess it's no concern of mine—but I'm sure curious to know why you're so keen to win the Dupont Trophy."

Kaye's heart gave a sudden jump as she stared at him.

"The—the Dupont Trophy?" she whispered, wondering why that name struck a chord in her memory. "Why is it called that?"

The promoter smiled. "Because it was won for two years in succession by a brilliant young French-Canadian—way back in the 1920s. Lucille Dupont was her name before she was married—and only her death prevented her from winning it for keeps—"

Kaye drew a sharp breath, her eyes shining. Now she knew! Lucille Dupont had been José's mother—and the skating trophy that bore her name was the prize that for some sinister reason Trevor Gayford had schemed and plotted for!

Now he was banking on José winning the trophy—believing that, with his influence, he would have no difficulty in obtaining it from her!

Kaye met the promoter's quizzical smile.

"And—and the trophy itself?" she asked.

"Is safely locked in the bank till the day of the prize-giving," rejoined Mr. Harker dryly. "We're taking no chances, with so many lawless characters known to be around. Waal—I wish you luck, Miss Lawrence! You've as good a chance of winning it as anyone else, if enthusiasm's anything to go by."

With a friendly nod he closed the interview, and Kaye stepped out into the open, her mind in a whirl.

If her amazing suspicion was correct, this was her chance! She must go all out to win the contest—and the trophy—for her chum's sake!

Flushed with determination, Kaye made her way up to the hotel.

Only the thought of her estrangement from José clouded her excitement—that, and the memory of her loyal helper, the young Mountie who had been thrown into prison on a trumped-up charge.

The production of Mr. Harker's signed authority acted like a charm at the hotel. In a few minutes Kaye was shown to a delightful little room overlooking the lake. Changing into her skating attire and carrying her boots, Kaye made her way downstairs.

She paused, strangely tensed, as in the hall a slim figure confronted her.

"Kaye!"

"José!"

The erstwhile chums stood face to face in a strained, awkward silence. José's attractive face was flushed—while Kaye had turned pale.

It was José who broke the silence, her voice unsteady.

"Kaye," she said simply, "because—because we are not friends it does not mean that I bear hard feelings. You are my rival in ze tournament and—I wish you all ze luck. May ze best girl win!"

Impulsively, her eyes misted, Kaye held out her hand—but José merely touched it; then, with a little gulp, she turned quickly and ran upstairs.

IN the days that followed, Kaye and José rarely met on their own. Neither did she see Miss Quentin or the other girls, except at meal-times, when they made a point of ignoring her.

Kaye was rather relieved, for frequent meetings would have meant a strain on all concerned. And for her part she was careful to avoid Trevor Gayford, though she frequently saw him watching her sardonically when she went for her daily skating practice on the lake.

The need for rehearsing was imperative, in the short time that remained, if she were to beat her brilliant young chum in the contest.

And win she must—for José's sake! Late one afternoon—on the day prior to the great event—Kaye returned from her skating and noticed a group of girls surrounding Valda

Travers, who was reading aloud from a newspaper.

With a scornful remark, Valda tossed the paper aside and went in to tea with the others. Relieved that she had not been observed, Kaye picked up the crumpled paper—to stiffen suddenly, her face paling.

The headlines seemed to leap out to meet her.

DARING ESCAPE OF CLOAKED RIDER!

Notorious Young Outlaw Makes Reckless Bid for Freedom.

The print wavered in front of her eyes as she read. Rex had escaped! The hue-and-cry had been raised, but so far he had eluded pursuit.

Kaye's first excitement was followed by sharp anxiety for her Mountie friend.

She took the crumpled newspaper to read in the privacy of her own room. The window was open, giving a magnificent view of the distant lake and the wooded grounds of the hotel. Even as Kaye entered, and turned to secure the door, she heard a strange whistling sound, followed by a muffled thud.

Startled, she turned. Quivering in the wall opposite the window was—an arrow!

She saw that a scrap of paper was bound to the shaft.

With trembling fingers she removed it, smoothing it out in the fading light. A message had been scrawled on it, in a wavering hand:

Kaye gasped as she read:

"Must see you—in pine-wood by lake—friendly Redskin will meet you at seven—desperately need help. Rex."



GAYFORD'S TRAP

Kaye did not pause to question the strangeness of the note, or its mysterious arrival. Neither did she spare a thought for the consequences of discovery.

For the moment, everything was swept from her mind but the urgency of Rex's need; the plight of the loyal friend who had risked everything for José and herself!

It was nearly dark when she slipped quietly out of the hotel, a light coat over her skating attire.

Reaching the woods that bordered the frozen lake she paused, staring round her anxiously.

Then her heart gave a jump as a tall figure emerged from the trees and beckoned her—a powerfully built Redskin.

As Kaye hurried up he peered at her searchingly. Then he nodded, apparently satisfied.

"This way, missy," he said gruffly. "Paleface lies in cave near here."

"Is—is he ill?" demanded Kaye anxiously.

"Very bad!" came the grim reply.

Her heart sinking, Kaye hurried after her guide. He led the way to a cluster of massive rocks near the lake, and pulled aside a trailing creeper, motioning her to precede him.

Kaye stepped into the dark cave.

"Rex!" she called softly. "Rex—"

Her words ended in a stifled scream as something dark and muffled was thrown over her head. Dimly to her ears came a hateful, mocking laugh.

Kaye struggled helplessly in the powerful grasp of her captor as she realised, too late, that she had walked blindly into a trap set by Trevor Gayford!

Though she struggled frantically, her arms and legs were bound by her Redskin captor—evidently a hireling of the skating star—and she was carried across to a waiting dog-sleigh and dumped down on it. Next moment she was being whirled away—away from Martinsville, away from José, and away from the tournament that it was vital she should win!

The concluding chapters of this grand serial will thrill you next week.

THE CASE OF THE GIANT FOOTPRINTS

(Continued from page 130)

ploded, alarming his strange attacker and sounding the alarm.

There came a distant sound of shouts and running footsteps as Noel clambered on to the rope ladder, descending swiftly into the ring. June ran to meet him.

"Nunky, what happened?" she gasped, catching at his arm. "Are you hurt?"

"Nothing but a bruise," jerked the detective, rubbing his injured shoulder. "But those balloons went off only in the nick of time."

"You—you mean—" faltered June.

"I mean that the monster intended to take no chances!" snapped Noel. "He was afraid I might find out too much—and he's right. Let's have a look at those balloons, June."

They raced out beyond the awning, where the lantern was still burning on the packing-case. Noel climbed on to the case, flashing his torch on the deflated balloons and the broken wires.

A grim smile curved his lips as he passed a length of wire between his fingers, and examined them by the light of his torch.

"I guessed as much," he muttered. "He's clever—extremely clever! We haven't got him yet." He sprang to the ground. "Was Miss Wayne locked securely in her caravan, June?" he demanded anxiously.

June nodded, her face very pale. "She—she promised she wouldn't unlock the door till I came back."

"We'd better make certain," jerked Noel. "Come on!"

He hurried from the tent, June at his heels. Outside they were met by Mr. Sanders, who had been alarmed by the explosions—and a few moments later they were joined by Stumpy, the clown, and several others.

Tersely Noel explained what had happened, and a low, uneasy murmur arose.

"Raymond, what on earth does it mean?" demanded Mr. Sanders, his voice shaking.

"It means that there's danger for Miss Wayne!" snapped Noel. "Is anyone guarding her caravan?"

"I saw young Lester outside ten minutes ago," said one of the men.

Noel nodded grimly as he led the way towards the scattered caravans, followed by the others.

There was a light behind the curtained window at Lucille Wayne's caravan, but no sound came from within. June knocked anxiously on the door.

"Lucille!" she called. "Lucille!"

There was no reply.

"Stand back!" jerked Noel. He sprang up the steps, throwing his full weight against the door. The flimsy lock gave, and the door crashed open. June, close at her uncle's heels, gave a cry.

"Lucille!"

Lucille was crouched in a corner of the caravan, her face deathly pale, her gaze fastened on the window. It was several moments before she could recover sufficiently to speak.

"I—I was afraid it was at the door," she whispered. "I saw its face at the window—a furry face, with glaring eyes. It was trying to get in—"

Her voice trailed away in a sob, and, leaving her with June, Noel raced out of the caravan and round to the side.

As he flashed his torch, there came a shout from Mr. Sanders.

Kneeling on the ground, obviously dazed from a fall, was the ex-trapeze artiste, Ralph Lester. Noel bent swiftly, to snatch up something that lay beside the young man—a torn fur glove!

"Lester!" exclaimed Mr. Sanders grimly. "So he's the trickster!" Noel shook his head as he held out

the torn glove. There was a strange look in his eyes.

"This glove was never made to fit a human hand, Sanders," he declared. "It has only four narrow fingers—and would fit nothing except a claw!"

He bent to assist the dazed young man to his feet. Ralph Lester's story was simple. He had been mounting guard on the caravan, when he had heard the grass rustle behind him. Something had struck his head as he turned, and he remembered nothing else.

He stuck rigidly to his tale, and Noel was inclined to believe him, though Mr. Sanders obviously had his doubts.

"The question is," said the anxious manager, "what am I to do about Miss Wayne? We open to-morrow—and she's billed as the star act. It's her biggest chance yet—but dare I let her go on?"

"I suggest," said Noel gravely, "that we put the question to Miss Wayne herself."

The young trapeze artiste nodded pluckily as Noel questioned her.

"I'm terrified," she admitted, "but—but I want to go on—I must! If only I could be certain that—"

"You're a plucky girl, Miss Wayne," said Noel gravely, "and you have my word that no harm will come to you to-morrow night."

A few minutes later the detective and his young partner left the caravan, and Noel led the way back to the circus tent, now deserted and in darkness.

He examined the ground carefully in the vicinity of the high canvas curtain, and raised the lid of the packing-case, but there was only stray and paper wrappings inside.

"Nunky, who or what is this dreadful thing?" burst out June, unable to keep silent any longer. "And where did it come from?"

Noel smiled grimly as he rose to his feet.

"Your first question must wait, June," he replied gravely. "But I can give you an answer to your second query. The thing that scared Miss Wayne and created this seemingly fantastic mystery came out of that box! But to-morrow its fate will be sealed."

NOEL was very busy on the following day—and so was June. Amid all the bustle and excitement of the circus preparations, June became Lucille Wayne's shadow, accompanying the young trapeze artiste wherever she went, and helping to keep up the girl's spirits by her friendly chatter.

Meanwhile Noel scrutinised the advance-booking lists, and made several mysterious phone calls.

With Mr. Sanders' assistance a corps of circus-hands was formed to keep watch outside the tent during the show. No unauthorised person would be allowed to approach once the performance had started.

June helped Lucille to dress. The girl was nervous, though she tried pluckily to hide the fact. Together they stood in the shadows of the arena watching the performing horses—and the laughable antics of Stumpy and his fellow clowns.

Finally the clowns ran off, amid roars of laughter, and a crashing chord from the band announced the evening's most spectacular act.

The ringmaster's voice boomed through the megaphone:

"I have the honour to present Miss Lucille Wayne, the Flying Wonder!"

There was a loud burst of applause, followed by expectant silence. June gripped Lucille's hand.

"Don't worry—everything will be all right," she whispered.

Lucille nodded, her lips trembling, as, waving to the spectators, she

stepped on to the swaying rope-ladder.

Anxiously June watched the slender figure ascend and step on to the dizzy platform. Then she turned quickly to look for Noel. But the detective was not in sight.

High above, shimmering in the spotlight, Lucille was performing her daring turn on the trapeze. The rest of the great tent was in shadow—and June's blood ran cold as she imagined she heard a strange rustling sound.

She was standing close to the high curtain in front of the emergency exit, and plucking up her courage she lifted the corner and stepped into a dark corridor behind.

Then a stifled scream was torn from her lips as something seemed to rise from the ground in front of her, towering unsteadily on two spindly legs—swaying grotesquely as it reached a long arm towards the top of the curtain.

At the same instant the lid of the packing-case fell back with a crash, and a figure leaped out, seizing the "monster" by its legs, and bringing it to the ground with a dull, sickening thud.

The brilliant gleam of a torch stabbed the darkness as Noel Raymond straightened himself breathlessly, his face grim.

Other men appeared: Mr. Sanders, carrying a lantern, and several of the circus-hands.

They all stared at the grotesque figure sprawled motionless on the ground in front of them—a short, stocky man, wearing a hideous animal mask, and clutching a pair of expanding tongs.

But it was at his feet that June was staring, her eyes wide with amazement. Attached to each was a long pole fitted with a giant-sized wooden boot.

"Stilts!" shouted Mr. Sanders. "Collapsible stilts! But who is the scoundrel?"

Noel stepped forward, snatching off the furry mask, and revealing the painted, twisted features of Stumpy the circus clown!

"IT was a dastardly trick!" said Noel grimly, when the scowling prisoner had been led away to his caravan to await the police. "Stumpy has a daughter who is a trapeze artiste. He knew that talent-spotters would be here to-night from a famous London circus, and he was determined to ruin Miss Wayne's chances, because he knew that if the talent-spotters did not make her a splendid offer, his daughter would receive a contract that would make her famous."

"The stilts, which he kept in that packing-case, were part of an old act of his. Needless to say, he was an expert. And to make his story of a monster more credible, he fixed those giant wooden boots to his stilts."

"But how did you suspect him, nunky—in the first place?" gasped June.

Noel smiled grimly.

"He over-acted his part with his story of a long-legged attacker. Then, on the wire attached to those balloons, I found a trace of white greasepaint—greasepaint that is only used by clowns. Finally, to confirm my suspicions, I searched that packing-case, and found the paper in which the stilts had been wrapped with a label of the firm that supplied them."

Just then there came a roar of applause from beyond the canvas curtain, and the band struck up a rollicking air.

"I think," added Noel, his eyes twinkling, "that we're just in time to congratulate Lucille Wayne on the performance of her life!"

(End of this week's story.)

THE MYSTERY OF THE MAGIC CABINET—that is the title of next Friday's exciting detective story, featuring Noel and June.