

GIRLS' CRYSTAL ^{3^d}

Week
Ending
June 12th,
1940.

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"



THEIR SCHOOL ON CASTAWAY ISLE

She Thought Dave Was Her Enemy—But It Was Gerry Who Spied On Her!—

Written by RENEE FRAZER

GERRY TRAILS TANIA

TANIA, a jungle girl who had lived alone on Castaway Isle for many years, possessed an old book containing a map of the island. She knew that an unknown enemy among a party of castaways was interested in the map and was convinced that he must be either quiet Dave Cardew or cheery Gerry Royston.

Her map was stolen and one day, when entering the Grotto of Shells, she was startled to see Dave standing there, the missing map in his hand. It looked as if he was her enemy. She demanded him to give her the map, but he refused, so she made him a prisoner.

While she was leaving the camp with a basket of food she was questioned by the castaways. And to their amazement she admitted that she held Dave prisoner.

AN astounded silence followed the jungle girl's dramatic admission. Tania herself was a little frightened by the effect of her words on Mr. Barnard and the youthful castaways.

"What—what did you say, Tania?" demanded the master.

"Tania say"—the jungle girl clenched her hands, her dark eyes defiant, her heart beating quickly—"Tania say that Dave is her prisoner!"

A clamour of excited voices was checked by Mr. Barnard as he raised his hand.

"Your prisoner, Tania? I don't understand!"

Pluckily Tania returned his stern gaze. She realised that she had done something unheard of in the customs of these people who were her friends. Yet she had acted according to her instincts and by the right of jungle law.

"Dave stole Tania's map," she

declared simply, "so Tania take Dave prisoner! When Dave give back what he has stolen, then Tania let him go."

"She must be crazy!" exclaimed Moyra Curtis. "Of all the colossal sauce—"

"Fancy kidnapping old Dave!"

"And accusing him of stealing—"

"Silence!" cried Mr. Barnard

sharply. "Kindly let me deal with this in my own way. Now then, Tania—anger and perplexity

struggled in his expression as he

turned to the defiant young figure

standing in front of him—"let me

get this amazing business quite clear.

If you had reason to suspect Dave of

taking your map, why did you not

report the matter to me?"

Tania considered the question.

"In jungle," she said, "when enemy

come to steal, we catch him first—

and speak later. That is wisdom."

The master bit his lip.

"That may be jungle law, Tania,"

he said, "but it is not our way.

Whatever you suspected, you had no

right to take matters into your own

hands! I'm quite convinced that

Dave would have been the last person

to steal your map—"

"Hear, hear!" came a chorus of

voices, though Gerry remained silent,

a strange expression in his blue eyes.

"And, in any case," went on Mr.

Barnard, "I cannot permit you to

interfere with the freedom of my

pupils in this fashion, Tania! You

will release Dave at once and allow

him to come back to the camp, when

I promise you that I will look into

this question of your map. You

understand?"

The jungle girl stared at him, her

dark eyes troubled.

"You ask Tania to let Dave go—

before he gives back map?" she

countered. "But that would be folly.

When Bimbo steals Michi's meat,

which is often, Tania catches Bimbo

and punishes him. But first she takes

back meat, before Bimbo can hide it.

That is wisdom."

Mr. Barnard seemed to be

struggling with his feelings, and

among the youthful castaways there

were several hastily concealed grins as

well as indignant murmurs.

For, with the assurance that Dave

was safe, sympathy was sharply

divided between the absent boy and

his quaint, determined young captor,

who was so obviously convinced that

she had been wronged.

"Y'know, sir," cut in Gerry, coming

out boldly on Tania's side, "there's

something in that! Though I

wouldn't go so far as to say that Dave

took her map, he's been acting very

strangely recently, and she may have

some reason for what she says."

Tania glanced at the boy in swift

gratitude.

"Rot!" exclaimed Moyra, tossing

her head. "You boys are all the

same. Just because Tania's quaint

and appealing, you imagine that

butter won't melt in her mouth. It's

my belief that she's simply out to

make mischief—"

"Moyra, you can't say that!" pro-

tested Pat Saunders, mindful of her

recent narrow escape and Tania's

plucky intervention. "I'm sure there's

been some horrid mistake that could

be cleared up if Dave were here—"

"Exactly!" cut in Mr. Barnard, and

his crisp voice silenced the murmurs.

"And I mean to clear it up without

further delay! Tania, where have you

hidden Dave?"

"Tania not tell," replied the jungle

girl stubbornly.

Mr. Barnard frowned.

"You understand, Tania, that if

you continue to defy me I can punish

you severely—and send out a party to

search the island for Dave."

Tania threw back her head.

"If Mr. Barnard wish, let him

punish Tania! But he will not find

Dave. Where Dave is hidden none

can find him, for Tania alone knows the secret—

"Excuse me, sir," put in Gerry, noting the master's ominous frown, "may I make a suggestion?"

"Well, Gerry, what is it?"

The boy crossed to Tania's side, taking her hand reassuringly.

"It's just this, sir. Most of us are agreed that Tania genuinely believes that she has a grievance, and we're certain you could clear it up if you had a word with Dave. But Tania's afraid that if she lets Dave come back to the camp she might be done out of her map. I suggest that you arrange a meeting-place where she can bring Dave along to see you. The three of you can have a private interview, with no one else to interfere, and you'll be able to make Dave see reason."

Mr. Barnard was obviously impressed by the suggestion.

"Well, Tania?" he asked. "You understand what Gerry said? Do you agree?"

The jungle girl did not reply at once. Her dark eyes were wary as she turned the suggestion over in her mind. But the fact that it had come from Gerry stilled her first suspicions.

She looked up quickly to encounter the boy's reassuring smile.

"Tania understand," she replied simply. "And what Gerry says is good! Tania bring Dave to meet Mr. Barnard—alone—by the pool of laughing water where the two streams meet. But—"

"But what, Tania?" asked Mr. Barnard.

The jungle girl plucked up courage to meet his gaze.

"Tania go back now to tell Dave," she said. "But how does Tania know that she will not be followed?"

"Of all the cheek!" came in an undertone from Moyra. "Who does she think we are—"

She was checked by a swift glance from Mr. Barnard.

"So you don't trust me, Tania?" he asked.

"Tania trusts white master," replied the jungle girl quickly, "but others might follow to see where Tania goes."

Mr. Barnard's lips twitched slightly. "You certainly don't believe in taking chances, Tania! Well, I give you my word that no one here will follow you when you go. Does that satisfy you?"

The jungle girl nodded, with a little sigh of relief.

"Tania thank white master," she said, "and Tania go—now!" She hesitated, glancing at the basket of provisions. "Tania take food to Dave in case he is hungry?"

Mr. Barnard smiled grimly.

"Take it by all means! I'll meet you by the pool you mention in an hour's time. And I trust you on your honour to bring Dave with you, safe and sound!"

"Tania gives word of honour!" replied the jungle girl. And, snatching up the basket, she darted away among the bushes.

Moyra sniffed audibly.

"You can't expect a young savage like that to know the meaning of honour!" she muttered.

But few were paying attention. The youthful castaways had broken up into excited, chattering groups. Mr. Barnard drew Gerry aside.

"Better send a signal to the ship, Gerry. Tell Captain Rawlins that we've traced Dave, and not to worry. Ask him how things were during the storm."

"O.K., sir! Leave it to me!" said Gerry cheerfully as he hurried on his errand.

But the boy's easy manner changed as soon as he was out of sight of the camp. He turned quickly from the path that led to the beach and plunged into the shadow of the trees.

For he had no intention of delivering the message Mr. Barnard had given him yet. There was something much more important for him to accomplish first—something more vital to him.

With a hard, ruthless gleam in his eyes, Gerry Royston set out to dog Tania's footsteps.



THE SILENT WATCHER

Unsuspecting that she was being followed—trusting implicitly in Mr. Barnard's promise—Tania came within sight of the forest pool into which two streams poured their sparkling waters.

Here she paused for a moment, glancing round her warily before setting off at a tangent along the narrow path that led to the secret grotto.

She was confident that no one suspected the existence of that cave except herself and the boy she had imprisoned—the boy she believed to be her enemy!

Though the secluded glade in which it stood might be visited a score of times, no one would dream of searching behind the lush creeper that grew like a thick curtain over the cliff.

And even had curiosity prompted a searcher to look so far, his way would have been barred by the great stone that appeared to be part of the cliff itself.

Her heart beating quickly, Tania pulled aside the creeper and threw her weight against the precariously balanced rock in the exact place that would cause it to tilt back.

Her attention fully occupied with her task, her sharp ears failed to hear a stealthy rustle among the bushes, and she saw nothing of the figure that lurked in the shadow—the spying figure of the boy she thought to be her friend—Gerry Royston!

With a muffled rumble, the great boulder tilted, and Tania heard a low growl from within the cavern as Michi, the panther, bounded to meet her.

Tania stared round the cave. There came an exclamation from above.

"So you've come back, Tania!"

Dave, looking pale and dishevelled, scrambled down from the high ledge he had been exploring and strode grimly towards her.

Tania confronted him, her heart beating quickly. Even now, though she knew that Dave had her precious map, though she believed that he had tricked her—the jungle girl had to steel her feelings as she encountered the angry, reproachful look in the boy's grey eyes.

"A nice time I've had of it, trying to escape!" he said quickly. "And that panther of yours has been growling at my heels like a watch-dog. I hope you've changed your mind, Tania, and have come to talk sense!"

Tania clenched her hands.

She had come to make a final appeal for the return of her map, for, in spite of what Dave had done, she did not wish him to get into trouble with Mr. Barnard.

But her feminine intuition told her that Dave was in no mood to listen to her just now. He was angry—and hungry, no doubt!

Quickly she stepped back to the entrance, to return with the basket of provisions.

Dave stared at it in amazement. "Food for Dave," said Tania simply as she commenced to unpack the contents and spread them on a flat stone, while Michi looked on with considerable interest.

Dave was obviously taken aback. "You've brought that—for me?" he jerked. "But where did you get it?"

"Tania fetch it from camp."

Dave started. "From the camp? Then they know! They know that I'm"—the word seemed to stick in his throat—"that I'm your prisoner?"

The jungle girl glanced at him gravely.

"Tania tell Mr. Barnard the truth. Mr. Barnard say that Tania must let Dave go free. Tania say no!"

"What!" ejaculated Dave. "Look here, Tania—"

Tania pointed to the provisions. "Let Dave eat," she said, "for soon Tania must keep her promise to Mr. Barnard."

Dave eyed her sharply as he reached for some biscuits, not having eaten since early that morning.

"Promise to Mr. Barnard?" he repeated. "What are you getting at, Tania?"

The jungle girl countered with a question.

"Will Dave give Tania back her map?" she demanded.

"I'm dashed if I will! I'm going to hold this map till I've proved to you, and the others, that Gerry is a scoundrel!"

The jungle girl started to her feet, angry tears in her eyes.

"Tania will not listen!" she exclaimed unsteadily. "She will go now, but she will come back soon to take Dave to the pool of laughing water, where Mr. Barnard will make him tell the truth!"

Dave whistled, a grim smile on his lips.

"So that's the little scheme, is it? I'm to be confronted with Mr. Barnard. That's O.K. by me, Tania! I'll be ready when you are. But aren't you afraid I'll escape on the way?" he added dryly.

"Tania will bring Michi to guard Dave!" rejoined the jungle girl coldly. "Come, Michi!"

Leaving Dave to complete his meal, she hurried from the cave. She did not see the furtive figure of Gerry Royston steal away as she rolled the massive stone securely back into place, for another anxious thought had come to her. What damage had been wrought to her jungle home by the recent storm?

A scene of desolation greeted her when she arrived. The platform had been dislodged by the gale, her stores scattered, and many of her little treasures lost beyond recovery.

But though dismayed and upset, Tania did not lose heart. She would build a new house in some more sheltered spot, even though it might take many long days.

The time was drawing near now for the meeting they had arranged, and, calling to Michi, Tania hurried back to the forest glade.

As they came near to it, Michi began to show signs of restlessness, growling and peering suspiciously among the bushes.

Tania quickened her steps, running quickly towards the frowning cliff.

Then, as she pulled aside the curtain of creeper, a broken cry escaped her lips.

For the great stone that guarded the mouth of the grotto had been rolled back, and the cave gaped before her, dark and empty.

Dave had gone!



ON DAVE'S TRAIL

Angry dismay gripped the jungle girl. Her first thought was that Dave must have discovered a way of moving the rocking

stone and had escaped, taking with him her precious map!

How he had escaped she could not tell. The rocky floor of the cavern showed no trace of what had happened in her absence. Only in the softer ground outside Tania found a trail of blurred footprints.

Footprints that she believed to be Dave's!

For she had no reason to suspect that she had been followed to the grotto by a treacherous, smiling enemy—who had watched her movements in secret, biding his time till her back was turned.

By none other than Gerry Royston, the boy she thought to be her friend!

Believing that Dave must have tricked her, Tania called her panther to heel, her blood boiling indignantly, as she set out to follow the faintly marked trail.

Whatever happened, she must find Dave and recover her map! If she failed she might never learn its secret—and, worse still, Mr. Barnard and the other castaways would think that she had been lying to them!

The trail led deep into the forest.

(Please turn to the back page.)

The VALLEY of VANISHING HORSES



WITH THE NIGHT PATROL

"WELL, June, what do you think of ranch life?"

Noel Raymond patted the neck of his wiry mount as he looked across at his niece and partner.

June Gaynor, slim and attractive in riding garb, smiled.

"Wonderful, Nunky! All this is so new!"

And she looked from the open Californian range to the little group of lean, tanned horsemen grouped about the "chuck"—or food—wagon near by, drinking mugs of coffee.

"You're sure lookin' well on it, too, Miss Gaynor," broke in a drawling voice. "But I hope your uncle hasn't forgotten why he's come down to the Flying V Ranch!"

Noel and June turned their heads as, with a tinkle of spurs, a short, sturdy figure in check shirt and riding-breeches walked towards them from the chuck wagon.

This was Buck Nelson, the foreman of the horse ranch. His deeply tanned face showed signs of worry and anxiety.

"We haven't forgotten, Mr. Nelson," Noel replied, "and we're ready and as keen as you are to solve the mystery of the vanishing thoroughbreds. It sounds baffling enough to give any detective a headache!"

There was a thoughtful gleam in his blue eyes, for very strange things indeed had been happening on the Flying V, owned by Mr. Harman, the film magnate whom Noel and June had been assisting in Hollywood.

The ranch stock was excellent, and outstanding amongst it were the valuable thoroughbred blacks, kings amongst horses and the pride of the film magnate's eye. Recently three of the blacks had vanished one after the other without trace, and Mr. Harman had begged Noel to go down to the ranch and see if he could assist the worried foreman to solve the mystery and prevent fresh losses of his bloodstock.

And now, not long after their arrival at the ranch, Noel and June were moving out with the night patrol, for the thoroughbreds—seven of whom were left—had all vanished in the early evening.

"I'd like to run over the points with you, Mr. Nelson," said Noel quietly. "Perhaps we can do that as we move along?"

"Sure," drawled the foreman. He turned and called: "Mount, boys! Shorty, run the chuck wagon back to the ranch! We're headin' for High Gap!"

The little group by the canvas-covered wagon broke up. Shorty, the cook, collected his pots and pans—and June thrilled at the easy grace with which the tanned riders swung into the saddle.

Amid a soft jingle of spurs and harness the party moved off, Noel, June and the foreman in the rear.

"Guess this is the set-up," said Nelson. "The blacks are kept in a corral in a richly grassed valley just ahead o' what we call High Gap. It's

a blind valley, with only one entrance, and the walls are too steep for any horse to climb. The corral is guarded night an' day, and yet those horses vanish!"

Noel nodded thoughtfully. "What about your men?" he asked keenly. "All trustworthy?"

"Good men—know 'em all!" Buck grunted, then hesitated—"all except one, that is," he qualified. "Guess I don't know much about my new assistant foreman. He was sent down on the recommendation of a friend of the boss. But for a young feller Red Williams sure knows horses—"

"You mean the ginger-haired young man?" put in June interestedly. "He was showing me how to throw a lasso this afternoon. I liked him, Nunky."

"Detectives shouldn't be prejudiced, June!" Noel chuckled.

"Well, he seems a good man," admitted the foreman. "Matter of fact, I've got him on the highest point overlooking the valley to-night. But some of the men don't seem to trust him overmuch."

Noel and June nodded but made no comment. They all rode on, and soon they were trotting into the narrow mouth of a rocky valley, with almost sheer, towering walls on either side of them.

"There they are," said Buck Nelson suddenly, and pointed.

In the valley ahead was a high-fenced corral where the magnificent shapes of seven black horses could be seen contentedly cropping.

"Still seven, Mr. Nelson," Noel said quietly. "I suggest you post your men—in case something happens to-night. Might be a good idea to check on the men you already have posted."

The foreman nodded, and led the little group off. No sooner had the hoofbeats diminished than Noel swung like a flash from the saddle.

"Take my horse, June," he said quickly, "and wait for me over there in the trees. I'm going to have a look at those thoroughbreds."

He had sped forward, and a few moments later June saw him slipping through the corral rails.

With intense curiosity, she waited in the trees, holding their mounts' reins, until the detective returned. Eagerly she greeted him.

"Nunky, what were you doing? Have you some clue?" she asked.

"I visited the corral because I wanted to take a certain precaution," Noel replied. "In case," he added grimly, "there should be another amazing disappearance to-night."

They waited in the trees, while the short twilight came and went. At last it was almost too dark to see the corral. Suddenly Buck Nelson came panting through the trees.

"Every man posted," he drawled, "with horses to hand ready. The corral's surrounded on all sides—an' down on the high point overlooking the entrance to the valley I've got Red Williams. He can't miss anyone entering."

By PETER LANGLEY

Noel nodded, and Nelson went off into the darkness to his post.

Minutes passed. Then Noel's horse stiffened suddenly as from the gloom before them the thunder of racing hoofs abruptly burst out—immediately to be followed by a furious and incredulous shout in Buck Nelson's voice:

"Great thunder! One of them's out—quick—"

With an exclamation, Noel swung into the saddle and sent his wiry range pony leaping forward. June followed suit. The valley was ringing with shouts—and with the sound of clattering hoofs.

Racing towards the corral, Noel thumbed his powerful torch. The beam shot out—showing inside the high fence only six restive horses!

And the corral gate was still locked! June saw, and nearly lost her seat in staggered bewilderment. The next second she swerved her mount as Noel, with an amazed cry, turned in the direction of the mouth of the valley.

It was from there that hoofbeats were rolling thunderously. And now, down from all sides in the gloom on sure-footed range ponies came the riders, calling, searching.

Noel reached the rocky ground just beyond the bottle-neck entrance and slowed as June came breathlessly riding to his side. Horsemen were milling in front, shouting excitedly. They approached.

"Any sign of the missing horse?" asked Noel.

"None!" answered a big, burly man named Dug Lassiter who, until recently, had been the assistant foreman. "I heard th' hoss go—heard Buck shouting— Ah, here he is now!"

In from the open range cantered the foreman.

"I caught a glimpse of the black," he cried, "an' he was goin' hard for the mouth of the valley. By the time I'd mounted I'd lost trace of him. But there ain't no sign or sound of him on the range. He must still be in the valley—"

"Not a chance," rapped Lassiter. "We'd have seen or heard him—"

"Wait!" put in Noel quietly. "You've forgotten something!" He raised his head to the rocky heights above. "Hallo, Williams!" he shouted. "Did you see or hear one of the blacks leave the valley?"

Back came the reply, clear and decided: "No black left. I'm coming down!"

"I knew it," said Buck Nelson almost distractedly. "Th' black must still be in the valley somewhere. This proves it! In any case, I'd have seen or heard it out on the range—"

He snapped short, staring. Noel had swung to the ground and was shining

his torch on the smooth rocky surface.

"On the contrary," rapped the detective, "the thoroughbred did leave the valley! Look!"

They all stared down. On the rocky surface were black hoofprints.

"Tar!" explained Noel crisply. "A short while ago I smeared every one of the thoroughbreds' hoofs with tar!"

There was a startled silence, broken by Dug Lassiter's furious voice.

"Then Williams lied!" he declared. "He said the black didn't pass—an' this proves it did. That young coyote's behind this somehow!"

Noel made no comment. Already he was moving out towards the open range, following the tarred hoof tracks on the hard ground. Abruptly he stopped and turned.

"Whether or no Williams saw the black pass," he cried, "he couldn't have spirited the horse into thin air. And that's what appears to have happened. Look at this!"

The riders moved forward. Buck Nelson's jaw dropped. Hoarse exclamations of stupefied wonder rang out.

"Nunky," breathed June, "why—why, it can't be—"

For Noel's torch revealed that the trail of tarred hoofprints had abruptly ended on the ground, as if the thoroughbred had magically become possessed of wings and flown away!



THE FOUR BURNT CURRANTS

"It's absolutely baffling, Nunky! What is the explanation?"

Thoughtfully Noel filled his pipe. It was the following morning,

and they were standing before the ranchhouse in its shady setting of pine trees.

"You know as much as I do, June," he said slowly. "Last night we thoroughly searched the valley and the range, without sign of the black—without sign of a single hoofprint anywhere after the tarred marks ended."

June nodded, her pretty face perplexed.

"And yet, Nunky, you proved that the black must have passed out of the valley, despite"—she frowned slightly—"what Red Williams said."

Noel gave her a keen, quizzical glance.

"Still trusting to your feminine intuition about that young man, June?"

"I—I think so, Nunky," nodded June, "though no one else seems to!"

That was true. There was a decided undercurrent of suspicion on the ranch against Red Williams; but Noel, without expressing an opinion, had advised the desperately worried foreman to take no action as yet, pointing out that there was no conclusive evidence against the young rider, and also that such a move would not get back the missing blacks.

His eyes narrowed as from the men's bunkhouse Red Williams appeared.

Most of the rest of the night patrol were resting still, while a double day guard had been put on High Gap by Buck Nelson. Seeing them, the young rider hesitated, then turned away towards the home corral.

"June," said Noel softly, "I suggest you take another lesson in lasso throwing. Your feminine wits might be useful—while I go on a little ride of exploration on the range."

He turned to his horse, which was already saddled and bridled. June waved as he cantered away and then, her pretty face thoughtful and rather expectant, she made tracks for the corral.

Williams was apparently intent on examining his rope, but June sensed that he had been watching herself and Noel.

Before she could speak to him, however, he turned away, strolling towards the pines.

From the corner of her eye June watched him, wondering at his fre-

quent glances towards the bunkhouse; the furtive manner in which he moved. She saw him reach the cover of the pine trees, then vanish at a run.

In a flash June sped for the pines. The young rider was not in sight. She moved on silently through the trees—and abruptly halted.

She now had a view of the back of the ranchhouse, and there, creeping cautiously away, a canvas-wrapped bundle now under his arm, was Red Williams.

Taking advantage of every scrap of cover, she moved in pursuit, her heart pounding, sensing instinctively that Red Williams' strange actions were of importance in this case.

The chase was fairly long and ended at an old line-riders' hut far along the wooded slope behind the ranchhouse. From the cover of thick mesquite June saw Red Williams enter. He reappeared swiftly—minus the bundle!

June shrank flat. Once he was past, returning to the ranchhouse, she sprang up, sprinted and burst panting into the old cabin. At first it seemed empty until a pile of rotting wood in one corner attracted her.

She turned it over—and the canvas bundle lay revealed.

Her fingers trembled as she unrolled the canvas to reveal—a bundle of straw!

For a second it was baffling. And then she realised with a quiver of excitement that the straw was flattened here and there and caked together with something black and sticky.

"Tar!" she whispered. "This straw has been trampled with tarry hoofs. That's it! Then—" Her face paled a little; enlightenment came with a sense of disillusionment. "Then Red Williams did lie! This straw was used to muffle the stolen horses' hoofs and—"

A muscular arm abruptly whipped round her from behind; a hand clamped tightly across her mouth.

"You've learnt too late!" muttered a voice, and the vicious grip tightened, dragging her farther into the cabin.

IT was the flat report of a rifle that made Noel, thoughtfully trotting back to the ranchhouse, look up with a start.

Away to the right, in the wooded slopes above the pines, a cloud of black smoke was rising in the clear air.

A strange premonition assailed Noel. He clapped home his heels, whirling his stocky mount. Up the slope he raced, conscious of another distant shot and the faint rat-a-plan of hoofs.

Dense smoke was billowing from the small window of the line-riders' hut. Noel sprang from the saddle on the run, staggered, recovered and hurled his weight against the door.

He burst in through swirling smoke.

On the earthen floor lay June's limp form.

With a cry, Noel seized her up and plunged into the open.

"June!" he said hoarsely. "My dear—"

"Nunky!" June blinked open her eyes wonderingly. She saw his anxious face and managed a smile. "I'm—I'm all right! I was struggling, and banged my head against the cabin wall, Nunky," she gulped. "I—I'm afraid that it was Red Williams—"

A shout broke into her words. Up the slope ran Dug Lassiter, rifle in hand. Close behind was Buck Nelson, also armed.

"I saw the smoke!" cried Lassiter, hawk face dark. "Then I saw that young coyote Red Williams ridin' away—"

"So did I!" panted Buck Nelson, coming up and staring at June in wondering concern. "I yelled to stop him—then I fired in front of him. He kept goin'! By thunder, what's he been up to, Mr. Raymond?"

"No time for talk, Buck!" rapped Lassiter harshly. "Let's go get the scoundrel!"

He whirled as the stocky form of Shorty, the cook, came toiling up the slope.

"Shorty!" he yelled. "Rouse the boys for a man hunt!"

And Lassiter pounded off, Buck dashing after him.

Under Noel's expert ministrations, June was soon herself again. A little pale still, she told her story.

"I—I don't think the fire was meant to harm me, Nunky," she said, "but just to destroy that straw—and the evidence!"

Noel nodded grimly. Only when he was sure that June was recovered did he enter the log cabin, where the smoke had almost cleared.

For perhaps four minutes he was inside, and when he emerged there was a strange look on his face.

"The straw was completely burnt, June," he said quietly. "And although that tarry straw was important, it was not used to muffle hoofs, and it held another and far more vital clue! These were in the ashes of the straw!"

He held out four tiny blackened objects on the palm of his hand.

"Nunky, what on earth—" June stared curiously. "What are they?"

"Currants, June!" answered Noel gravely. "Four little currants! And they tell me—as they will tell you if you think hard enough—exactly half of the solution of how the thoroughbreds disappear so magically!"



ANOTHER HORSE VANISHES

The hunt for Red Williams was fruitless, and when the disappointed searchers returned to the ranch a council of war was

held in the foreman's little office. Noel, June and Buck Nelson were there, also Dug Lassiter, now reinstated in his previous position as assistant foreman.

"That young coyote was connected with these robberies—as I thought," Lassiter declared. "Though how it was worked beats me."

"I trusted the lad," Buck Nelson muttered. "I suppose, Mr. Raymond, this means there won't be any more robberies, but"—he thumped his desk explosively—"how in thunder was it done, and what about the blacks already stolen?"

Noel's cool reply to that anxious query was electrifying.

"Have you forgotten that Red Williams may come back?"

"Nunky!" exclaimed June. "You mean that—that another robbery—"

Nelson sat up in alarm. Lassiter had gone rigid.

"I suggest, Mr. Nelson," said Noel gravely, "that you arrange for a strong patrol to-night—just in case!"

"Great guns, mebbe you're right!" exclaimed the foreman hoarsely. "I'll do it now. Come on, Lassiter!"

The two men hurried out into the blazing sunlight.

June turned quickly to Noel once they were gone.

"Nunky, then you're really sure that Red Williams is behind the disappearance of the blacks? It—it was he who attacked me?"

"On the contrary, June," Noel said quietly, "I am very sure he did not attack you—and that he is absolutely innocent of any crime!"

Abruptly he rose, eyeing her quizzically.

"And now," he added, "I must find Red Williams—before to-night!"

IT was night in High Gap Valley. Voices called softly, and there was the stamp and neigh of horses as Buck Nelson posted his men, with Dug Lassiter on the high point near the valley mouth, as Noel had suggested.

(Please turn to the back page.)

Dolores Had Expressed Her Scorn Of Holiday Camps. Why Then Had She Come To Westonmouth?



DOLORES The Mischief-Maker

By HAZEL ARMITAGE

WHAT WAS DOLORES' GAME?

PAT ROCKWELL and her chum, Chris Caslon, who were staying at Westonmouth Holiday Camp, were helping to organise a regatta. Pat's idea was to turn an old ketch into a Roman galley.

Dolores Belgrave Bellamy, a beautiful, wealthy girl, seemed to be strangely interested in the ketch, and when she learnt that Pat and Chris had hired it, she made off with it.

The chums managed to regain possession of the old sailing-boat, but when they returned to the holiday camp they received a startling surprise.

For standing by the camp's refreshment van, surrounded by an admiring crowd of campers, was Dolores. She had declared that she hated and scorned all holiday camps, but now she calmly announced that she had decided to stay at the camp.

IN utter amazement, Pat and Chris stared at the laughing, golden-haired girl who was the centre of attention at the holiday camp refreshment van.

"You mean you've actually joined our holiday camp?" gasped Pat.

"Just that!" Dolores agreed cheerfully. "Wizard, isn't it? I never realised what fun it could be. They're all such grand people here."

"What-ho!" someone chuckled enthusiastically.

"And we're going to have a simply ripping time," Dolores went on gaily. "Especially, Pat, with this topping regatta idea of yours in the offing. But come along—please. And you, Chris. Give them an ice, somebody. The treat's all on me, you know—"

She beamed round. Her guests peamed back at her. It was easy to see that Dolores was already popular. But Pat, remembering the way in which she had tried to steal the ketch and how she had professed such an unutterable contempt for holiday camps, was not going to let her have things all her own way. She pressed forward.

"I thought," she said, "that you didn't like holiday camps, Dolores? I thought you said you wouldn't be found dead in one?"

"What's that?" cried a girl named Lucy Day. "Surely you're joking? I can't believe she said a thing like that."

"She certainly did," said Chris. "I was there and I heard her." She looked challengingly across at the newcomer, she had every reason to mistrust. "Go on, own up!" she ordered.

But Dolores, her beautiful blue eyes wide with innocent surprise, shook her head.

"There's nothing to own up to," she protested. "You must have misunderstood me. As if I'd dream of doing so insulting. And as if I'd join

a holiday camp after making such a remark. Fire on you and Pat for suggesting such a thing—unless," she added, with a laugh, "you're just trying to pull my leg."

"We're not pulling your leg and you know it," Pat retorted. "Any more than we were trying to pull your leg when you went off with the ketch and left us stranded."

"Pat!" cried Bruce Feltham, staring at her in consternation. "You mustn't say such a thing about a fellow-guest."

"But it's true!"

"It isn't." Sorrowfully Dolores again shook her head. "Oh, Pat, what a misunderstanding goose you are! I've just been telling Bruce about that—". And she beamed across at the popular young sports master. "I only tried to do you a good turn in the first place by towing the ketch back to camp for you."

"That's right," said Bruce. "Dolores has already explained everything."

"But—". And then, Dolores swept on, cutting short Pat's protest, "you came after me, under the mistaken impression that I was playing some joke. I'd told you already that something was wrong with the engine of my cabin cruiser—and I thought you understood, when I went off, that I was coming here to get help. Surely I made that plain?"

"Anything but!" Chris said contemptuously. "You know jolly well there was nothing wrong with your engine."

"But there was," Bruce Feltham broke in. "I was on the beach when Dolores came in, and when she asked me to look at the engine I found the carburettor loose. I fixed it up while Dolores went to book her chalet, and when you came along we were just arranging to go off and rescue you. I think you two girls must admit now that you have made a mistake."

"I'll say they have," Lucy Day snorted. "If you ask me, I think they ought to apologise."

But Dolores, looking very charming and sweet, shook her head.

"There's nothing to apologise about," she declared, with a smile. "I don't blame Pat and Chris. They made a natural mistake. But where is the ketch now? She turned to the chums. "Oh, goodness, you never left it."

"We did not," Pat cut in. "We borrowed Steve Conolly's launch and we've got it here." And at once her words caused a swift change of interest in the crowd; at once excitement became uppermost. "It's anchored outside the boathouse—ready to be floated in as soon as the tide is up—"

"Good work!" Bruce Feltham heartily approved. "Jolly good work, Pat. Congratulations on that. That's the first big regatta problem solved, anyway. Tide'll be about right after tea," he added. "I'll get the boathouse keys from the office and float

her in. And, talking about tea," he added as the loudspeaker near by began to announce that tea was now ready in the West Pavilion, "what about it?"

"But Pat hasn't had her ice," Dolores protested. "Pat—". "Never mind about ices," Pat said a little shortly. "Come along, Chris, let's go and wash."

And off, with a nod, they went, leaving Dolores' party in the act of breaking up. But when they reached their own chalet—

"Chris, what do you make of it?" Pat asked.

Chris shook her head. "The whole business baffles me," she declared, "but that girl is the trickiest person I've ever met. A real mischief-maker. And talk about being two-faced!" She frowned angrily as she thought of Dolores' amazing change of manner. "She's up to some queer game," she went on. "She didn't just come here for an innocent holiday."

Pat nodded. "You're right—she's got some underhand scheme in mind," she agreed. "And I'm pretty certain that scheme's connected with the ketch. Why she should be so interested in it beats me, but she is, and—". She paused, her face grim and determined. "From now on," she declared, "I'm going to keep a jolly close watch on her."



THE BOATHOUSE KEY

Chris was in complete agreement, and, full of that resolution, the chums hastily washed, then made their way towards the

West Pavilion. To reach it they had to pass the building that housed the camp's recreation-room and lounges, and suddenly Pat caught her chum by the arm and pulled her behind a clump of flowering bushes.

"Look!" she whispered.

Chris, peering round the bushes, gave a surprised start as she saw a furtive figure standing outside the entrance, peering through the glass panel of the door. It was Dolores, and suddenly she looked around, as if frightened lest she was under observation. Thanks to the screening bushes, she did not see the chums, so, apparently satisfied, she pushed open the door and vanished inside the building.

"Come on—let's see what she's up to!" Pat urged.

Running across to the door, they pushed it open and tiptoed into the outer lounge. It was to see Dolores standing beside a glass-doored case that was fastened to one wall, studying the labels that identified the various keys that hung there. Suddenly she reached out and unhooked one of them, and Pat and Chris gave a startled gasp, for they recognised that key. It was the one which fitted the boathouse where the ketch was to be housed!

Before they could get over the first

shock Dolores turned and saw them. For a brief moment she looked disconcerted, and then amazingly she laughed.

"Why, hallo! What are you two doing there?" she asked.

"Never mind about us," retorted Pat. "What's your game?"

"Yes—what are you doing with that key?" put in Chris.

"This?" Dolores looked at the key, and then dropped it into her handbag. "Now, wouldn't you like to know?" she teased.

"We would!" Pat eyed her levelly. "Why have you taken that key?"

"Supposing," Dolores asked lightly, "you come and find out?"

"But why—"

"Just come," Dolores invited. And, with a beckoning smile, stepped through the doorway and out on to the path. "You'll soon see!"

The two chums looked at each other. There was some trick in this, they felt. Dolores, as if oblivious to their suspicious looks, was strolling down the path. Wonderingly they followed. To their surprise, she led the way straight to the West Pavilion where tea was being served. At one of the tables near the flower-smothered orchestra pit sat Bruce Feltham. Dolores crossed over to him.

"Oh, Bruce, here you are!" she said. "Mind if we join you? By the way, I thought I'd save you the trouble of going to the office and getting the boathouse key," she said casually. "As I happened to be passing on my way here I popped in and got it for you. There!"

And, with a beam at Pat, she put the key down on the table in front of the young sports master.

Bruce looked very agreeably surprised.

"Thanks," he said. "Nice of you." He pocketed the key. "I hadn't forgotten it," he added. "But it will save a few minutes. You certainly are thoughtful, Dolores."

Dolores smiled again, while Pat and Chris exchanged wondering looks. Was this another example of Dolores' two-facedness? Had she only handed Bruce the key because she feared to keep it now that she had been seen taking it?

Puzzled and uneasy, the chums sat down. Dolores seemed to have forgotten the whole affair. She talked vivaciously and it was easy to see that the young sports master thought her delightful company.

Half-way through tea Bruce pushed back his chair and got to his feet.

"Tide'll be just about right now," he remarked. "I'll hop along and put the ketch away."

"Oh, let me come with you!" Dolores at once eagerly volunteered.

"No, thanks; I'd rather do it on my own. You finish your tea. I'll be back soon."

With a cheery smile at the three girls, he sauntered out. Dolores and the chums got on with their meal, and by the time they had finished Bruce was back, to announce that the ketch was safely locked up.

"And there it can stop for the time being," he said. "The first thing will be to give it a thorough clean up. To-morrow, Pat, we'll draw up some sort of a programme and get cracking. Meantime, as I may not be around when you want me, you'd better take charge of the key."

He handed it over, and Pat dropped it into her blazer pocket. Dolores frowned.

"Oh, Pat, will it be safe there? Wouldn't you like me to put it in my handbag for you?"

"Why?" Pat asked.

"Well, you might lose it, you know. It would be so awfully easy for it to drop out."

"Thanks; I'll chance that!" Pat retorted, and felt again a tingling surge of suspicion.

"O.K.!" Dolores laughed. "No offence, you know. That was only a suggestion, Pat. And—Whoopee!" she added as a loudspeaker near by began an announcement. "A dance, Pat—in the ball-room. I simply love dancing. Come on!"

SAVE WASTE PAPER

Every kind of waste paper—bus tickets, old newspapers, old books and magazines, catalogues, concert and theatre programmes, old bills and receipts—all can be recycled and made into goods for export, and thus help to hasten the return to prosperity.

So join in the National Paper Chase and collect all the bits and pieces you can.

She beckoned the chums, but they shook their heads.

"We're going to change first," said Pat, and she and Chris went along to the chalet they shared.

There they changed into party frocks, and Pat popped the boathouse key into her handbag. With the bag tucked under her arm, she led the way to the gaily decorated ball-room. The camp orchestra was playing a lively quickstep and the floor was crowded with happy holiday-makers.

Only one boy—a curly headed youth named Willis Greenly—was not dancing, and immediately he saw Chris he made a bee line for her.

"May I, Chris?" he asked.

Chris laughed. She and Willis were good friends. On to the floor they tripped, while Pat, smiling, sat down at one of the tables. Then suddenly a voice spoke:

"Not dancing, Pat! Gee, are you and I the only wallflowers? I took a leaf out of your book and went and changed, too. Like me?"

It was Dolores who stood there—Dolores, dazzlingly beautiful in a shimmering ankle-length dress of pale blue silk, a row of pearls round her slim white throat, a pearl bracelet on her wrist, and the smile she bestowed upon Pat was the most radiant Pat had ever seen.

"I think," Pat said, "you look wizard."

"Thank you! That's charming of you. Do sit down, old thing. I'd love to have a chat with you. Where's Bruce, by the way? Oh, there he is, dancing with that girl in red! What a fine fellow he is, Pat—and doesn't he think a lot of you?"

"Does he?" Pat asked, wondering why Dolores was being so friendly.

"We get along," she said casually.

"You all get along in this camp," Dolores enthusiastically declared.

"They're topping people, Pat. And—that reminds me. I meant to tell you before. Pat, I'm sorry about what happened when I left you high and dry on the old ketch. It was horrid of me. But—well, I was feeling a bit peeved."

Pat stared at her in astonishment. What did this new and unexpected attitude mean? She gazed sharply across at the newcomer to the camp.

"Was that why you fibbed about it when I tackled you in front of the others?" she asked.

Dolores bit her lip.

"Oh, I did feel mean about that! It was horrid to act like I did—I realise that now—but I was so anxious to make a good impression on everybody. Please don't feel too hard about me, Pat. I'm awfully sorry—really I am."

And she held out a pleading hand.



A VISIT TO THE KETCH

Pat did not know what to say. Dolores looked so utterly repentant, so charmingly beseeching, that, despite herself, she found her mistrust weakening.

Could it be possible that she had misjudged the girl?

Appealingly Dolores surveyed her. "Please be a sport and say you forgive me," she urged. "I do so want to be friends."

Pat sat there, nonplussed. She had never met a girl like Dolores before. She hardly knew how to handle her.

Before she could decide on her answer, Dolores had risen to her feet.

"But, come on, Pat!" she said gaily.

"I think I know what your answer will be—and anyway, this is my favourite tune. Let's dance, shall we?"

"Us?" asked Pat bewilderedly.

"Of course!" Dolores gave a trilling little laugh. "It'd save us sitting out and, you know, I love dancing with a girl now and again, Pat. Shall we?"

Pat did not reply for a moment, she was too taken aback. What an amazing girl Dolores was! How easily she took everything for granted.

Still a little dazed, Pat found herself accepting the invitation and a few seconds later she and Dolores were on the floor.

There was no denying Dolores was an excellent dancer. She seemed to glide over the floor, and never had Pat enjoyed dancing with a girl so much.

She said so, and Dolores laughed. "A compliment, Pat," she said. "And may I say the same for you. Gee, but this is lovely! Do you have dances here every evening?"

"Yes," Pat affirmed. "It's a custom." "Then we'll make it a custom that you always give me one dance," Dolores declared, with a charming smile.

As Pat bewilderedly tried to voice a reply, the dance finished and the dancers came off the floor. Immediately Dolores and Pat were surrounded by half a dozen boys. Then Bruce Feltham, looking very handsome and attractive in his dinner-jacket suit, stepped forward.

"Hallo, where were you two when this began?" he asked. "Can't have you dancing together, you know. Which of you will honour me by giving me the next number?"

Though he spoke to both of them, it was at Dolores he looked. Dolores, however, shook her head.

"Pat's the one," she declared.

"But, Dolores—" began the astonished Pat.

"Pat," reaffirmed Dolores. "No, I insist. Pat comes first. After all, she's been here at the camp longer than I have—and I know she's just dying to dance with you, Bruce," she added teasingly. "Now, ask her properly."

Bruce did so, and, after putting her handbag down on a table, Pat went whirling away in his arms, watched a little enviously by the rest of the girls, for everyone admired the young sports master. A rather awkward boy named Arthur Sanders promptly claimed Dolores and led her proudly on to the floor.

Pat thoroughly enjoyed that waltz. Bruce was an ideal partner, so perfectly in tune with herself that every step was a sheer pleasure, and his conversation was on a topic which filled her whole mind—the forthcoming regatta.

"Yes, Pat, it's going to be a great stunt—this one of yours," he said. "I should think it'll cause something of a stir when it comes off. We—Hallo," he added, with a grin, "what's happened to poor old Arthur there? Looks as if Dolores has run out on him!"

Pat glanced sideways. Of Dolores there was no sign, but sitting near by, was Arthur Sanders, her partner, looking utterly forlorn.

Pat smiled a little. She felt sorry for the boy, for though he was a very poor dancer, it seemed a shame to have deserted him in the middle of a dance. When the waltz was over she walked across to where he sat.

"Hallo, where's Dolores?" she asked. Gloomily Arthur shook his head.

"Don't know," he replied. "I'm not her style, I guess. She made an excuse in the middle of the waltz, grabbed up her handbag, and left me high and dry. I know I'm not much of a dancer, but—"

But, though sympathetic, Pat was not listening. Suddenly her gaze had

(Please turn to page 119.)



Her Holiday WITH LING MIN YO

By DORIS BROOKES

THE RETURN TO LUCHIN

WHILE staying at Puchow, in China, with her friend, Ling Min Yo, Maureen Carstairs learnt that an organisation known as the Scarlet Dragon, whose leader was Ku Yi Tso, was scheming against the House of Ling.

She befriended Wong, a young boatman whom the Lings believed was chief of the river pirates.

As a result of this friendship, and the cunning of Ku, Maureen was forced to disguise herself as a Chinese girl, and together with Min Yo, became a fugitive.

They hid in a cavern while Wong was away on a mission connected with a mysterious jade tablet.

Min Yo returned from a visit to near-by Luchin with the news that Wong had returned.

A WAVE of joy swept through Maureen. All her fears and anxieties of the past few hours were banished in a flash as she heard Min Yo's wonderful news.

"Wong had returned! You've seen him, Yo-Yo?" she asked eagerly. "Where is he? What did he say?"

"No, I have not seen him, Maureen. But I see the kite—"

"Kite?" Maureen stared wonderingly at her Chinese friend.

"It flies in Luchin—a kite shaped like a crescent moon," Min Yo explained, her eyes bright and animated. "That is the sign of Wong, is it not? It will be a signal to us, will it not?"

Again Maureen was thrilling, and gaily she caught at Min Yo's arm.

"You're right, Yo-Yo! Wong doesn't know where we are, and it's a signal telling us to go to him. You saw where it was flying from? You'll be able to find the place again?"

"Yes, Maureen. We go now?"

"Now—straight away. That is, if you're not feeling too tired?"

Smilingly Min Yo shook her head. She was as excited as Maureen. She it was who turned and started to lead the way back along the dusty path.

"Goodness, not so fast!" laughed Maureen. "I must get my handbag from the cave."

In her handbag were the two sections of the precious jade tablet—the clue to the whole mystery. Had Wong's mission been successful? Had he succeeded in getting a translation of the message on the tablet, and was he now awaiting them with momentous news? Soon they would know.

The two girls hurried back to the cavern which had been their hiding-place for so many days.

From under her rough bed of grass and reeds Maureen took out the handbag. Then, quickly and deftly, with Min Yo's assistance, she touched up her disguise, making sure that her arms and face were stained, that there were no betraying traces of her

natural, corn-coloured hair through the black dye.

"Right! Ready now!" Maureen announced. "Off we go! You bought some food, didn't you, Yo-Yo? Then leave it here—in case we have to come back."

And so, greatly excited, they set out, heading for Luchin in the oppressive heat of that late afternoon. As they went Min Yo told of what had happened during her first trip.

The hunt for them and Wong still continued. Ku Yi Tso himself was now personally organising it, and Min Yo had very nearly been seen by him—just as had Maureen.

She had not been able to trace the Chinese pastry-cook, from whom she had hoped to obtain news of Wong, and whom she had been going to ask to try to send a message to her parents in Puchow.

In fact, apart from buying fresh supplies of food, it had seemed to Min Yo that her expedition was a failure. And then she had seen the crescent-shaped kite, and had rushed back to tell her English friend.

"Good old Yo-Yo!" cried Maureen happily. "I say, we're nearly there. I'd better trip behind you in the true Chinese style."

The ancient wall of old Luchin loomed ahead of them along the dusty road. They came to the picturesque gateway. Maureen's heart missed a beat as she saw a uniformed guard standing there, but he made no move as the two girls shuffled through; in single file, into the main street beyond.

They mingled with the jostling crowds thronging around the shops and stalls. And then Min Yo paused.

"Look, Maureen! It still flies!" she whispered.

Maureen felt her pulses begin to race. Over the roofs ahead of her she saw the crescent-shaped kite swinging in the wind.

"Let's follow it up!" she whispered back.

They moved on again, and a few minutes later saw the building from which the kite was flying.

It was a single-story building, with a roof of bright red tiles. The main door stood open, but no one could be seen within as the two girls approached.

"Come on!" hissed Maureen excitedly. "It's going to be wonderful to see Wong again."

The two girls went through the open doorway, pushed aside a reed curtain, and found themselves in a square, sparsely furnished room.

There they paused, staring round. Still no one appeared. But through the rice-paper window Maureen saw the fluttering kite being drawn in.

And then, behind them, they heard footsteps—heard a sudden crash. Round they swung, to see that the door had been slammed shut, to see three men advancing upon them.

Maureen's heart seemed to freeze. From Min Yo came a frightened cry. For one of those men was Chang, the high steward from the House of Ku.

And on the bare light arms of the two men with him was tattooed in scarlet the shape of a dragon!

"It's a trap!" cried Maureen, in horror. "The Scarlet Dragon—"

"Yes, a trap, English girl!" hissed Chang. "The sign of Wong lured you here as we planned. Seize them!" he suddenly rapped in Chinese.

The two men sprang forward. Maureen felt almost stunned with the shock of this disaster. But her eyes blazed, and furiously she made to fight off her captor. Even as she lifted her arms, however, her handbag fell from under the Chinese blouse where it had been concealed.

Quickly Chang pounced on it, and a look of triumph crossed his face as, opening the bag, he took out the two pieces of jade.

At the same moment there came a loud hammering at the door. Swiftly hiding the pieces within the folds of his own blouse, Chang unbarred the door, and a party of uniformed figures streamed into the room.

The police!

"Here are your prisoners!" Chang cried in Chinese. "The two girls who are accomplices of Wong, the pirate! Lock them up—and it is the command of Ku Yi Tso, our exalted governor, that they stand trial tomorrow morning!"



KU'S TREACHERY

Never would Maureen forget the bitterness of that fateful afternoon as she and Min Yo, struggling in vain,

were dragged along to police headquarters in old Luchin, there to be locked in a grim-looking cell.

Wong had not returned. The flying of the crescent-shaped kite had been a trap planned by Ku Yi Tso, and they had walked right into it. Now they had been turned over to the police, and the precious jade tablet had been taken from Maureen.

Ever since her arrival in China the treacherous Ku and his minions of the Scarlet Dragon organisation had schemed to get possession of it. What secret the tablet held was as yet unknown. The girls had hoped that Wong would return with the answer to that. But now—

Maureen groaned. Beside her, sitting on the hard wooden bench in the cell, Min Yo laid a comforting arm about her shoulder. She had said little, had seemed to be in a daze, all the colour gone from her delicate features.

"Maureen, this is terrible! I—I do not know what to say—"

"Neither do I, Yo-Yo. There's only one hope now. As far as we know, Wong is still free."

But where was he? Nearly a week had passed since he had started out on his mission to find Li San, the learned professor who could translate the message on the jade tablet.

Food was brought to them. Min Yo pecked at it, but Maureen left hers.

Night fell—an eerie night, with lightning flashing continuously in the distance, accompanied by the rumble of thunder. The atmosphere

grew more and more oppressive, with not the faintest breeze to bring relief.

Somewhere the storm had broken, bringing the rains. Maureen, used to the monsoon of India, knew the signs.

Dawn broke—an ominous dawn, with black storm-clouds instead of blue skies.

More food was brought to the girls, but they hardly touched it. This morning, Chang had said, they were to stand trial for being accomplices of Wong, whose reputation as a pirate had made him the terror of the river.

"We—we shall have a fair trial, do you think, Yo-Yo?" asked Maureen. "I'm afraid I don't know how the law works in China."

Min Yo looked worried. "It is how the law works in Luchin that is important," she replied. "The traitor Ku is so powerful here, and that is what makes me much concerned."

She broke off. The gaoler's key had rattled in the lock, and the door of the cell swung open. He motioned the girls outside into the passage, where stood four police, waiting to escort them to the court.

Maureen took Min Yo's hand in hers, and together they marched out. In full view of the crowds thronging the streets they were taken to the court-house.

And now Min Yo's pale cheeks were flushed with shame and humiliation. That she, a daughter of the proud House of Ling, should have to suffer such an indignity was almost more than she could bear.

But Maureen went with head held high, no longer pretending to be a Chinese girl, though she was still disguised as one.

They reached the court-house—a square open to the sky and in full view of the populace.

One or two jeers and gibes greeted the arrival of the prisoners, for it was known that these were the girls who were supposed to have helped Wong in acts of piracy. But the police drove back the crowd, and Maureen and Min Yo were made to stand in front of a dais, on which sat the magistrate.

He was old and very scholarly, with a wrinkled face, a flowing beard, and watery eyes which peered short-sightedly through a pair of spectacles. He squatted on a low stool, with a big, heavy tome on his lap, and with brush and paints near by.

Around him sat various court officials, and one of them, also with a huge tome on his lap, read out the charges. He spoke in Chinese, and Maureen, listening carefully, soon realised that Min Yo's fears about the trial were likely to be fulfilled.

Again and again it was emphasised that the two prisoners were accomplices of Wong, the pirate. But the fact that Maureen was a British subject was carefully ignored, nor was Min Yo's name mentioned, though the Chinese girl had given these details the previous evening.

"What have the prisoners to say?" intoned the magistrate. He, too, spoke in Chinese, and seemed rather surprised when Maureen replied in the same language.

"First of all, I want to say that I am British," she said clearly.

Her face was pale, but very determined. Until now circumstances had forced her to play the role of a Chinese girl. But there was no need to keep it up after what had happened. Ku had struck, and she was going to fight back. She was a visitor here in China, and therefore entitled to certain privileges and the right of protection and fair treatment.

The magistrate stroked his chin and flicked open a fan, waving it slowly in front of him.

"The prisoner looks Chinese and talks Chinese," he said suspiciously. "But I'm British, and I'm talking in English now."

"This court does not understand English," the magistrate said in his

native tongue. "You admit associating with Wong the pirate?"

"Yes—"
"Then you will be charged under the law of the province of Kanloo, and you have admitted your guilt. We have heard much of you and your deeds from an honoured and reliable witness," he added sternly. "The fact alone that you have aided Wong, the pirate, condemns you!"

Maureen gazed at him in horror. She realised only too well that the honoured witness the magistrate referred to must be Ku Yi Tso, who was all-powerful and greatly feared and respected in the province.

"What has the other prisoner to say in her defence?" the magistrate went on before Maureen could speak again.

Min Yo's almond-shaped eyes gleamed with anger. Like Maureen, she had no reason for keeping back anything now.

"I say that I was kidnapped from Puchow many days ago, and I demand instant release, O magistrate!" she cried.

"Can the accused prove her statement?"

"I can prove it!" Maureen said promptly.

"I will provide proof," Min Yo retorted. "Know you the House of Ling in Puchow?"

The magistrate slowly waved his fan.

"The name is known to me."

"Then know you that the illustrious Ling Cho Yen is my honourable father. Know you that I am Ling Min Yo? Have a message sent to my honourable parent, so that he may come here to identify me—"

She broke off, aware that everybody in the vicinity had suddenly gone down on hands and knees, bowing low to the ground.

The two girls swung round, to see a resplendent figure stalking slowly, majestically, into the court-house—the richly costumed figure of Ku Yi Tso.

"Who is it that claims to be the daughter of my old and trusted friend, Ling Cho Yen?" he purred. "Happy will I be to greet little Min Yo, whom I have known from childhood. Where is she?"

"This is the girl, exalted one," replied the magistrate, pointing to Min Yo.

Ku's gaze turned upon her. "This is not Ling Min Yo!" he said in a harsh, rasping voice.

Min Yo faced up to him, appalled by his brazen treachery.

"You lie!" she cried passionately. "You know I am Min Yo, as I know now that you are my father's enemy and—"

"Enough! It is the girl who lies!" Ku interrupted, his voice thundering through the court-house. "Take heed, O magistrate. Would you accept the word of such a false witness against mine? Give your verdict!"

"The sentence of this court," intoned the magistrate, "is that the two prisoners be banished up-river, where, in solitude, they may repent of their sins!"



ONE SLIM CHANCE

To be banished up-river!

Those words rang frighteningly in Maureen's ears. And, as if to echo them, a rumbling, reverberating peal of thunder suddenly crashed out. Next moment the clouds opened and the rain flooded down.

Coolies rushed forward with a huge umbrella to protect the august person of Ku. The magistrate and his officials whipped open their umbrellas, which had been lying near at hand. Those in the streets without such protection rushed for shelter.

But Maureen and Min Yo stood there in the pouring rain, stunned by Ku's treachery and the sentence that had been passed on them.

Maureen could only guess what being banished up-river meant. But Min Yo's white face gave her warning.

"Away with the prisoners!" ordered the magistrate from under his umbrella. "The exalted governor is satisfied that justice has been done."

"I am satisfied, O magistrate!" said Ku.

He turned to go. Everyone went down on hands and knees again, in spite of the deluging rain which was already flooding the streets. Everyone except Maureen and Min Yo.

Min Yo, out of habit and because she was Chinese with an inborn respect for her elders and those of importance, would have done so; but when she saw Maureen standing there upright a sudden fierce defiance came to her.

"Pay homage! Pay homage to the exalted one!"

But Maureen stood proudly, defiantly upright, and Min Yo did the same, trembling though she was.

Ku's face darkened with fury. "Know you what the penalty could be for such behaviour?" he raged, and then turned to the guards, who were already coming forward to take away the two girls. "They will walk the first ten miles, and every other five miles, and see that they do not flag or falter!" he commanded.

And so began that awful, nightmare journey into the interior. Through the streaming streets of Luchin, Maureen and Min Yo were marched, escorted by men on horse-back.

"Oh, Maureen, this is the end!" sobbed Min Yo. "There is nothing we can do, and Wong has not come!"

Maureen placed an arm round her friend's shoulders, voicing a fear she had felt since the beginning of the journey.

"Yo-Yo, don't be afraid, but I—I don't believe these men are policemen—I believe they are members of the Scarlet Dragon!"

Min Yo shrank in horror. "Be brave, Yo-Yo!" Maureen whispered. "We must not show them that we're afraid!"

They marched on through the main gateway of Luchin.

Out into the flooding country, with the narrow road stretching endlessly before them. The screech of a motor-horn sounded from behind. The guards shepherded the girls into a channel of water swirling at the side of the road, and then a high-powered car raced past amid streams of spray. In it sat Ku Yi Tso.

It disappeared into the mist of rain.

On and on, the two girls plodding side by side for mile after mile.

And then, at last, the escort called a halt. In the lee of a rocky ledge which flanked the bank of the swiftly flowing, deepening river they paused to rest and prepare a meal.

Steaming horses were tethered. The two girls were roped together as, wearily, they sank down under a overhanging rock. Min Yo collapsed, lying limply against Maureen.

"I—I try to be brave, Maureen!" she faltered.

"You're feeling very brave, Yo-Yo. Soon they will give us some food, and then I think we will be allowed to ride. There are spare horses—"

She broke off, tensing suddenly.

The rain still swished down and the river raced close by. But above those sounds came another.

Faint at first, but growing louder and louder until it was a roar—a roar such as Maureen had heard once before.

The roar of motor-boats when Wong and his men had swooped down the river at Puchow.

Wildly she stared through the mist and the rain. She could see nothing as yet, but the roar came nearer and nearer. Her heart thumped, and a desperate hope surged through her.

Could it be Wong? Could it be that Wong and his men were swooping down the river now, looking for them, coming to their rescue?

This fine serial reaches heights of excitement in next week's chapters.

Knew Differently



THE MERRYMAKERS AFLOAT

By DAPHNE GRAYSON

WHAT SALLY OVERHEARD

"WHERE—oh, where can our Sparklet be?" asked Sally Warner, with a puzzled smile. "Maybe he's working?" suggested Fay Manners.

"Nope! He's off duty for the next few hours," said Johnny Briggs. "I know," he added rather injuredly. "I went along to the wireless cabin—only tapped on the door. Gosh," he added feelingly, "anyone would think I'd gone along there to pinch the transmitter, judging by the fuss old Buzz made!"

"Old Buzz" was the chums' irreverent way of referring to the senior wireless officer, a rather grim and forbidding individual who had very little time for the students aboard the Ocean Star. "Sparklet," otherwise Bob Sutton, was his very junior assistant, not much older than the chums and a very great friend of theirs.

"Serves you right!" said Don Weston unsympathetically. "You know that's forbidden territory. Just the same," he added, "Bob promised to be here immediately after lunch—"

"He's here," put in Sally, her voice suddenly constrained. "At least, over there by the rail."

Her chums looked in the direction she indicated, then groaned in unison.

"He's with that dizzy blonde again!" said Johnny disgustedly.

Sally looked frowningly at the tall figure of Bob Sutton standing by the rail, very handsome in his white tropical uniform, but with a slightly fatuous expression on his tanned face as he gazed down at the small figure clinging to his arm.

Sally's frown grew deeper as she looked at that figure. Marianne Brenham came from Carolina, and was accompanying her elderly aunt on a pleasure cruise to Australia. Very small, with a mass of almost white curls, vivid blue eyes, and a pouting rosebud of a mouth, she appeared to be very sweet and demure, but somehow Sally had taken an instinctive dislike to her—more so since she had taken to constantly hanging around Bob Sutton.

Bob had promised to help them with the lighting and the microphone for the club dance they were running to-night in the small ball-room on the promenade deck. The dance promised to be fun, as it was only for club members and for passengers and crew invited by the members.

"Fraid we'll have to butt in," Sally said. "After all, he did promise." And, with a firm look on her face, she marched over to the two figures who were now strolling along the deck and touched Bob lightly on the arm. "Hallo, there!" she said cordially. "Sorry if we kept you waiting."

Bob gave a jump. "Oh, Sally! Gosh!" His good-looking face suddenly flushed with remorse. "Of course, I promised to come along and give you a hand this afternoon."

"But, honey, you can't do that!" Marianne's voice was a plaintive wail. Two large, indignant blue eyes gazed up at Sally; the soft lips pouted even more. "You promised to take me to the movie show."

Bob turned even redder. He looked uncomfortably at the chums.

"Gee, I seem to have got my dates mixed a bit!" he said ruefully.

"Then please try to unmix them," said Fay. "Sorry to be a nuisance, but we do need your help rather badly."

Sally, glancing at Marianne, saw the small face suddenly harden. For all its baby-like softness, there was a grim determination in it. Marianne, it seemed, was used to having her own way.

But there was no trace of hardness when next she looked up at Bob, only melting sweetness, and tears were brimming in her wide-open eyes.

"I—I guess if you want to go and leave me, honey, it's up to you," she said in a small voice in her soft Southern drawl. "Of course, I did particularly want to see that movie, and it won't be showing again after this afternoon. But maybe I can find somebody else to take me."

Sally's lips tightened, sensing the underlying threat in her words.

"But, Marianne," Bob said gently, "of course I'll take you. Oh, gosh! Am I a sap! Look, Sally, I'm terribly sorry; but I clean forgot all about our appointment when Marianne asked me to take her to the movies just now—"

"Just now?" Sally repeated. "But she knew this morning that you were coming along with us—"

"Indeed, I didn't!" Marianne's voice was indignant. "You know sure enough, Sally, that I wouldn't want to upset your plans."

Bob ran an agitated hand through his hair, then suddenly his face brightened.

"Look, how would it be if I come along immediately after the movies are over? I'll soon have those lights and microphone fixed."

Sally hesitated, looking at her three chums. She could see that they, too, were feeling a little annoyed, but with Marianne, not with Bob. True, he had forgotten his promise to them, but he wouldn't have done had not Marianne put this new idea into his head. And she quite certainly had known that he was helping the Merry-makers that afternoon, because Sally herself had mentioned it to the girl that morning.

"All right," Sally said at last resignedly. "It's going to leave things a bit late, but we'll do as much as we can this afternoon, and you can

finish off the technical bits later. And don't worry, Bob," she added, with a warm smile.

Bob's worried face relaxed. He gave a sigh of relief.

"Thanks, Sally, you're a brick!" he said fervently. "See you later."

With brief nods, the four chums walked off. They had just reached the small ball-room when Sally gave an exclamation.

"Oh, bother! I forgot to ask Bob for that two-way switch for the lights. At least, we can fix that. I'll run and get it."

She darted off. But, as she approached the place where she had left Bob and Marianne, she hesitated. For Bob was no longer there. His place had been taken by Mrs. Brenham, Marianne's aunt. And Mrs. Brenham was looking a little stern.

"I shall have an answer to my cable this afternoon, Marianne," she was saying. "I sincerely hope I shall get the answer I want."

"Why, aunty"—Marianne's face was all melting sweetness—you've no reason to mistrust little me! Everything will be all right—you'll see."

Mrs. Brenham nodded briefly and walked off. But as Sally, unseen by Marianne, stepped forward to ask where Bob was, Marianne's face suddenly changed. She glared viciously at her aunt's back.

"Suspicious old cat!" she muttered bitterly. "All through her and her beastly cable I've got to hang around that boring idiot Bob—"

She gave a violent start as she heard Sally's astounded gasp behind her. Her face suddenly white, she swung round.

"Why, you little spy—" she began.

"I was not spying!" said Sally indignantly. "But I would like to know," she added, "why, if you find Bob such a boring idiot, you hang around him so much—why you never leave him alone?"

Marianne's eyes narrowed at those words, but there was a sneer on her face—a sneer which changed with amazing quickness to a little choking cry. Her soft face crumpled. She looked at Sally pathetically.

"Oh, Sally," she sobbed, "how can you say I'm always hanging around Bob—that I never leave him alone a—"

"Well, do you?" asked Sally contemptuously. "Oh, don't put on that weeping act, you little fraud—"

"Sally!" There was a shocked and horrified cry behind her. Looking up, Sally stared into the distressed face of Bob Sutton. "Sally, how could you speak to Marianne like that! It's not like you."

Very deliberately and contemptuously Sally looked at Marianne. So this was the reason for her sudden change of attitude. She had seen Bob approaching; had purposely led Sally into this trap. Well, Bob should know the truth.

"I think you've got the wrong idea, Bob," she began. "You see—"

Marianne gave a louder sob, turned, and buried her face in Bob's arm. Gently he stroked her hair. But his face was hard as he looked at Sally.

"I don't think I've got any wrong ideas," he said shortly. "But, in case

you have, Sally, I just want you to know that I will not have Marianne upset. You're just annoyed with her because I had to let you down this afternoon. I will not listen to anything against her," he added, as Sally made to speak. "I think you'd better go."



MARIANNE IS DETERMINED

Sally flinched at those words. To think that Bob, who had always been so friendly with the chums, could speak to her in such a way, hurt Sally deeply. And it was all the fault of this scheming girl.

She was clever, no doubt about that. And whatever her game was, she had certainly won the first round. It was, Sally realised, no good arguing, no good trying to explain at the moment. Infatuated as he was, Bob would not listen to a word against Marianne.

So very quietly Sally turned, walked off. And as she went she heard, with a sense of burning indignation, Bob's soothing, endearing words to Marianne. She heard, with indignation, the girl's choked words: "She's jealous, honey—that's what it is."

Sally stopped dead at that, her ears burning. Then she heard Bob laugh.

"You silly infant! Sally's only a bit upset about the work I promised to do for her. I feel a bit of a rotter myself, come to that, but I won't let them down. Look," he added indulgently, "I've brought you the book you asked for. Though why on earth you should bother your pretty head about the intricacies of cablegrams just beats me."

"It's just a subject that interests me, honey, because it's your job, I guess," came Marianne's cooling voice. "I want you to tell me all about it."

Sally smiled scornfully as she strode on. Marianne's one interest in life, as Sally well knew, was new clothes and a good-looking escort.

This sudden interest in Bob's work was just pretence on her part. Another trick. And there Sally gave a sudden start. For like a flash she remembered Mrs. Brenham's words—something about expecting a cablegram. And Marianne's muttered words about the "beastly cable." It was very queer. Add to that her words to Bob just now, and the whole thing began to take on an aspect of suspicion.

Sally was still puzzling things out when she returned to her chums. And, in answer to their queries, she told them what had happened.

"I can't quite work it out yet," she said worriedly, "but I've got the queerest feeling that she's likely to get Bob into some kind of bother."

"Well, never mind for the time being," said Don. "Bob's old enough to look after himself—or should be. Forget it, Sallykins. Look, I've got an ice here for you. Then we'll have a shot at stringing up the lights."

Sally smiled at her boy chums, but though she tried to enter with enthusiasm into decorating the ballroom, there was still a niggling worry at the back of her mind—a worry which she tried to conceal from her excited chums.

And just as they had finished Bob entered with Marianne, all smiles now, clinging to his arm.

"I sure hope you don't mind my coming along, she drawled in her soft voice. "But I guess you know I'm dead keen on anything to do with wireless."

"I didn't," replied Sally, with matching sweetness. "But, there, you're always having new crazes, aren't you?"

A rapier-like glance passed between the two girls. But Bob, blissfully unaware of the undercurrents, and feeling happily that the hatchet had been buried, smiled serenely.

"Imagine this little thing bothering herself with such matters!" he beamed. "And the questions she's

asking, too! All about the receiving apparatus, and about incoming cablegrams. How they're dealt with and so on. She even wants to come in and look round the cable-room—"

"But, honey," protested Marianne, "it's much better to see the whole thing than to read it up in an old book. You still haven't told me what happens when a cable comes in. Say one has come in this afternoon," she added, with a pensive glance at her polished nails, "what happens to it?"

Bob gave an exasperated groan. "It's taken by Sparks in the wireless cabin. He hands the message through to the cable-room next door. The chap on duty there writes it out, seals it in an envelope, and it's handed out this evening. Now, will you please stop asking questions," he laughed, "and let me fix this mike?"

"Sure, honey, go ahead!" said Marianne, with a languishing glance. "But why aren't the cables handed out straight away?"

"Suffering cats!" Bob rolled his eyes. "Because the cable bloke has a tea break from five-fifteen to six-fifteen. And, in case," he added, with pretended fierceness, "you're thinking of having a look round on your own while he's out, I'll just tell you that he locks his door and hands me the key. I'm on duty in the wireless cabin from six to eight. After that I'm coming along to the dance—that is, if you'll let me get the mike and the lights fixed."

Marianne subsided into silence. What was all this questioning leading to? Sally wondered. Marianne wasn't so artless as she sounded. She had some definite purpose behind all this probing. And more than ever now Sally felt that queer sense of danger for Bob.

"Well, that's that!" Bob's voice broke into Sally's musings. "All fixed. Now for a spot of tea, then back to work. Coming, Marianne? To tea, not to work," he added, with a laugh, as he saw her eager expression.

"Gee, you're an old meanie!" sighed Marianne. "If only I could have just a little peep—"

"And get me shot at dawn!" returned Bob. "No, no—a thousand times no!"

With a wink at the chums, and with Marianne still gazing pleadingly at him, he quitted the room.

"There!" said Sally explosively. "If that girl isn't up to something I'll eat my hat!"

"You're right, Sally," agreed Don. "Gosh, you don't think old Bob will let her in the cabin, do you?" he asked in dismay. "It'll mean terrific trouble for him if he does and he's caught."

"I think the best thing we can do," said Sally grimly, "is to hang around and make sure she doesn't get the chance to go along to the wireless cabin. Come on!"

She led the way out of the ballroom. Some way ahead they saw Bob and Marianne pause as they drew level with another man; saw something change hands.

"That's the cable bloke," said Johnny excitedly. "He's just handed over the key to Bob."

"Yes, and—Golly! Hide quickly!"

In sudden urgent excitement Sally pushed her chums behind some steamer chairs as she saw Marianne, who had left Bob's side as he entered the cafe, scurrying back along the deck. The cable officer was almost level with the concealed Sally & Co. when Marianne clutched his arm.

"Oh, Mr. Simmons," she said breathlessly, "I think there was a cable for my aunt this afternoon?"

"That's right," agreed the officer. "It will be delivered shortly."

"I just thought," said Marianne, flickering her eyelashes, "that, to save time, I could take it to her now. It's rather urgent!"

But Marianne's pretty gestures were wasted on the elderly and rather sour cable officer.

"Sorry, Miss Brenham, I'm off duty now. Besides," he added, "Mrs. Brenham gave strict instructions that

the cable was to be delivered to her personally. It must not be handed to anyone else."

And, with a curt nod, he strode off, leaving Marianne white-faced and angry looking. Then, with a bitter exclamation, she turned and hurried off to Bob, who was just emerging from the cafe with a loaded tea-tray.

While Sally & Co. still behind the chairs, looked at one another.

"So that's it!" said Sally. "Don't you see, it's that cable to her aunt that she's after. I'm a chump not to have thought of it before. I believe the cable is something about Marianne—it seemed to be from the conversation she had with her aunt."

"And she means to get hold of it!" put in Johnny excitedly. "Golly, that's why she's suddenly got so chummy with old Bob!"

"That's it," agreed Don. "And she means to get hold of that cable somehow—even if it means getting Bob in the soup."

For a moment they stared at one another, then Sally's chin squared.

"Well, she won't get away with it now!" she said grimly. "We've caught on to her little game, and we'll tell Bob. Come on!"

Resolutely she strode towards Bob and Marianne.

"Bob, you've got to listen to me," she said urgently. "It's terribly important—"

"Oh, honey," wailed Marianne, "she's trying to make trouble again—I know she is!"

"And I've good reason to!" snapped Sally. "You two-faced thing—"

"Sally!" Bob's face was red with anger. "How dare you—"

"Bob, don't listen to her!" cried Marianne, and there was real fear in her voice now. "She hates me—I know she does. Make her go away! Why should she keep annoying us like this—"

"I'll annoy you as much as I like!" snapped Sally.

"But indeed you won't!" put in the stern voice of Professor Willard, the headmaster. "Really, Sally, what is going on here? Quarrelling with a passenger—"

"She keeps on quarrelling with me!" cried Marianne hysterically.

"Sally, is this true?"

"In—in a way," said Sally defensively. "But, you see—"

"Professor," blurted Bob uncomfortably, "I guess it's all a mistake. Just—just a little private matter, you know—"

The headmaster of the College Ship hesitated. But in that instant there came a wild shriek from Marianne.

"Sally! Oh, Sally, my dress! How could you be so mean! Look!"

In utter bewilderment Sally looked at the spreading tea-stain down the skirt of Marianne's dress, at the upturned tea-cup by her own hand.

"But—my hat, I didn't—" she blurted, then stopped as Professor Willard looked at her disgustedly.

"I think this has gone on long enough!" he said grimly. "Obviously, I cannot allow my pupils to annoy passengers, whatever the provocation. In the circumstances, Sally, you will be barred from the promenade deck until such time as I say you can return. Now go!"



SECRET OF THE CABLEGRAM

For a moment Sally could not obey Professor Willard's orders. She was utterly and completely stunned.

Barred from the promenade deck! What about her determination now to keep an eye on Marianne and preventing her wheedling Bob into letting her into the cable office?

Marianne was desperate now—she must be to have played that last trick just to get Sally disgraced and banished. Fortunately, there was still Don, Johnny, and Fay—

But even as that thought crossed Sally's mind, Professor Willard glanced towards those three angrily indignant figures.

"You three come along with me!" he said curtly. "I have a little job that will keep you out of mischief for a while."

There was no arguing with the headmaster. Fuming but helpless, Don, Johnny, and Fay followed him as he strode off, while very slowly Sally made her way down the companion-way to D Deck. Her mind was in a seething turmoil. It was already quarter to six. In fifteen minutes Bob would be going on duty, taking over from the stern senior, Sparks. At a quarter-past six the cables officer would be returning. That left Marianne just fifteen minutes to get the cablegram.

She would talk Bob into letting her into the cabin. Sally felt sure of that. And she frowned as she thought of the disastrous consequences to Bob if Marianne was discovered there.

But how to stop her—how? Unseeningly she stared along the passage. Then suddenly her face flushed with excitement. For from the large cabin at the end of the passage one of the stewardesses appeared, minus her uniform of white cap and overall.

"That's it!" muttered Sally. She watched the woman out of sight, then like a flash nipped along the passage. Heart thudding, she peered cautiously into the room. It was empty, but all around on pegs hung white caps and overalls. It didn't take Sally a second to grab one, dart back up the passage, where, unseen, she donned it, pulling the cap well down over her forehead.

Then, heart thudding, head down, she started back towards the companion-way. A glance at her watch told her it had just gone six o'clock.

Sally darted up the stairs, and, hoping desperately that her disguise would pass muster, she walked past Professor Willard, who was talking with one of the passengers, and made her way to the passage that led to the wireless cabin. She reached the passage without mishap and stared along it. And then she stood rigid with dismay.

For outside the door of the cable office, in the act of relocking it, was Marianne. Her face was alight with triumph, and in one hand she held a buff-coloured cable envelope.

"Marianne, stop!" Sally shouted. But Marianne, after one frantic look round, did just the opposite. Like a whirlwind she sped up the passage, paused for a moment by the rail, and then charged down D Deck.

She would never catch her now, thought Sally distractedly. Why had she been such an idiot as to shout? She should have crept up behind Marianne, grabbed the cable, and returned it to the office. And somehow have got the key back to Bob. Now it—

In utter dismay, she glanced down to D Deck. Marianne was almost at

the foot of the stairs now. And then—

"Don! Johnny! Fay!" shrieked Sally. "Grab her! She's got the cable!"

She heard Marianne's shriek as her chums leapt into action, paused for a moment to pick something up from the deck, and then made to hurry on, only to find her way barred by Professor Willard.

While down below Marianne struggled furiously with the three chums.

"Let me go!" she panted. "Marianne!" cried an agitated voice. "What is it? What is happening?"

It was Mrs. Brenham with Mr. Simmons, the cable officer. While approaching from another direction, his face utterly bewildered, was the ship's captain.

"Oh, aunty," wailed Marianne. "I was just bringing your cablegram to—"

"What?" barked Mr. Simmons. "How did you get hold of it?"

"Bob let me have it," replied Marianne. "I told him how important it was, so he let me have the key to the office. Is that wrong?"

"Wrong!" exploded the captain. He turned to the cable officer. In a very few moments a red-faced, bewildered Bob appeared on the scene. He turned white as the captain spoke to him.

"But, gee, I didn't give her the key—really, I didn't!" he blurted out. "I didn't even know it had gone from my pocket."

"There you are!" cried Johnny triumphantly. "She wanted to get that cablegram—to destroy it or something!"

"Oh, aunty"—the tears started to Marianne's eyes—"that isn't true! You know I wouldn't try to make Bob do anything wrong. He just knew I wanted you to have that cablegram quickly. I—I told him about that missing money back home, and how you suddenly thought that I might have taken it instead of Miriam—"

"That is right," agreed Mrs. Brenham grimly. "I cabled for confirmation. If you were the guilty one I said you would be sent back home as soon as possible and Miriam, your sister, would take your place on this trip. Now—give me the cablegram."

She held out her hand. All quivering innocence, Marianne passed it over, watching her aunt's face narrowly as she read it.

"Marianne," cried Mrs. Brenham apologetically, "I have misjudged you. This cablegram clears you completely—"

"So if I knew I was innocent I wouldn't have stolen the cable-room key to get the cablegram, would I?" asked Marianne reasonably. "But, please, captain, don't punish Bob now—"

Bob turned a deathly white as the captain grimly eyed him.

"My officers know the punishment for disobeying rules—," he began.

"But this officer didn't disobey any rules," broke in a new voice. And on to the scene, with the headmaster beside her, came Sally. "I'm afraid, Mrs. Brenham, Marianne isn't the little innocent she's trying to make out—"

"You cat!" flamed Marianne. "You can't prove anything—"

"I'm glad to say I can," said Sally confidently. "You forgot the breeze, Marianne, when you threw the real cablegram over the rail. It blew right back at my feet. Here it is, Mrs. Brenham, time stamped and all, which is something Marianne forgot when she wrote out that phoney one you're holding."

In dazed silence, Mrs. Brenham took the cablegram Sally held out, read it, then turned contemptuously to the now cringing Marianne.

"You wicked girl!" she cried vehemently. "So you were the thief! And to stop me finding out you stole the cablegram. You have jeopardised this young man's career—"

"In the circumstances, madam," put in the captain, "I think we can believe that Mr. Sutton is not to blame. But he can thank his lucky stars everything's turned out as it has."

"I'd rather thank Miss Warner, sir!" blurted Bob, a look of overwhelming relief sweeping over his face. "When I think what a sap I've been—"

"Well, I won't argue with you about that," said the captain gruffly, though his twinkling eyes took the sting out of his words. "Now back to duty!"

"Yes, sir!" Bob saluted smartly. But, as he turned, he looked gratefully at Sally. "Thanks!" he muttered. "And save the first dance for me!"

But as he disappeared, Sally, with her three chums, demurely turned to the professor.

"There's just a little matter of being barred from the promenade deck—," she began, then smiled as the headmaster coloured uncomfortably.

"Ahem!" He looked at the chums. "It seems as though young Sutton was not the only man to be deceived. I apologise, Sally! Go and enjoy your dance—though I suggest, he added dryly, "you wear a more becoming outfit!"

"You bet!" chuckled Sally, looking down at the stewardess' uniform. "Come on, shipmates! Best bibs and tuckers!"

And, sparkling-eyed, they charged off along the deck.

(End of this week's story.)

Next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** will contain another enthralling story about Sally & Co.

DOLORES THE MISCHIEF-MAKER

(Continued from page 111.)

gone across to the table where lay her own handbag. To her surprise, she saw that it was open. But she was certain it had been closed when she had left it there.

Suddenly uneasy, she crossed to the table, pried up the bag, and looked through its contents. Instantly her suspicions were confirmed. Something was missing—the boathouse key! But who could have taken it? Instinctively one name leapt to her lips.

"Dolores!" she ejaculated. In a flash there came rushing back those old suspicions, and she went scarlet with anger as she realised how nearly she had allowed Dolores' false charm to win her over.

Undoubtedly Dolores, interested in the ketch which was now locked up in the boathouse, wanted that key, and Dolores had been honey sweet in

order to lure Pat into a false sense of confidence. Dolores had deliberately sacrificed the chance of dancing with the popular sports master in order to get Pat out of the way. Now—

"Oh, gosh, what a fool I was! Why didn't I think she was up to some game?" she asked herself. "But—Chris!" she cried, as her chum came hurrying across the floor.

"Pat, it's Dolores—," Chris whispered.

Instantly Pat tensed.

"What about Dolores?" "I've just seen her—sneaking off towards the boathouse. And—and she had the key in her hand—"

"I thought so!" Pat's lips came together. Swiftly she looked round. "She's after something on the ketch, and now, of course, is her chance! But she's not getting away with it! Come on!" she added swiftly. "This is where we nip her little game in the bud!"

Off they went. Once outside the ball-room, they hurried down the slope that led to the sea. The sky was darkening now. The tide was on

the turn, revealing a brown ribbon of sandy beach. And as they neared the boathouse—

"Look!" quivered Pat.

For the boathouse door was wide open. In another moment she had raced up to it. Inside floated the ketch, and on the deck of the ketch, near the hatchway, a light gleamed.

"Shush!" breathed Pat.

Tingling, she stepped on board, Chris behind her. And then she saw Dolores—Dolores kneeling on the floor. In one hand she clutched a torch, with the other she was pulling at a little knob set in the raised side of the hatch. In the torchlight her face was curiously taut and excited.

"Got it!" the chums heard her mutter. "Got it at last!"

And then, with a little laugh, she turned. Abruptly the laugh froze. For Pat and Chris were stepping towards her!

What is Dolores seeking on the ketch? And what will she say now that Pat and Chris have caught her red-handed? There are surprises and thrills in next Friday's enthralling instalment.

THEIR SCHOOL ON CASTAWAY ISLE

(Continued from page 110.)

skirting the stream and following a winding track towards the hills.

At length the jungle girl came to a halt, looking round with growing anxiety. The sun was getting low and the time for her appointment with Mr. Barnard was long past.

It was just then that the fading light reflected on something lying among the stones, and Tania gave a little cry as she bent to snatch it up.

It was the silvery object that Dave always wore on his wrist, the magic circle with strange figures that told him the time of day!

The jungle girl examined the watch, puzzled and apprehensive, awed by its faint ticking. The strap was broken and the glass face smashed, but it was proof that Dave had come this way!

Slipping it into the woven pouch she wore at her girdle, she set out once more to follow the almost invisible tracks.

And just then she heard footsteps approaching among the scattered rocks and bushes, the sound of excited voices.

Mr. Barnard and the castaways had come in search of her!

Even as she turned—

"Look there, one is!" came a chorus of indignant voices.

In a moment they had surrounded her, and Mr. Barnard's hand was on her arm.

"Tania," he exclaimed, his voice sternly reproachful, "why didn't you

keep your promise to bring Dave to me?"

Her lips trembling, Tania encountered the master's searching glance.

"Dave? Dave has gone!" she faltered. "Tania does not know where. She leave him in secret cave, but when she come back to fetch him he is not there. He has escaped."

"Escaped?" echoed Mr. Barnard, frowning, while an incredulous murmur rose from the youthful castaways. "But if that were true, Tania, Dave would have returned to the camp! No one has seen him—"

At that instant Tim Burchell came racing from the bushes, followed by Gerry, whose handsome face looked rather pale.

"I say, sir," gasped Tim, "something strange has been going on round here. The undergrowth's all trampled, some distance away, as though there had been a struggle!"

"A struggle!" exclaimed Mr. Barnard. "Are you certain?"

"It mightn't mean what we think, sir," put in Gerry, an expression of mock concern in his blue eyes as he glanced at Tania. "It's really getting too dim to be sure."

"I bet Tania knows something about it!" shrilled Moyra, Curtis accusingly.

"That will do, Moyra!" cut in Mr. Barnard. "Tania—he looked searchingly at the jungle girl—were you telling me the truth about Dave? Do you know anything about a struggle?"

Tania stared at him appealingly, bewildered and rather scared. She did not understand this talk of a struggle.

"Tania speak only what is true!" she said. "She finds footprints that

lead from cave and is following them when Mr. Barnard comes—"

Her breathless statement was interrupted in a startling manner. A dark, slinky shape had sprung from behind the rocks. Several of the girls scattered with cries of alarm as Michi, the faithful panther, crouched, with a protecting snarl, at his young mistress's feet.

Instinctively Tania bent to soothe her pet. The action caused something to fall from the pouch at her girdle. Glimming in the dusk, it rolled to Moyra's feet.

That girl snatched it up with an accusing cry.

"Look, it's Dave's watch!" she gasped. "Tania was hiding it! I bet that hateful panther of hers must have attacked him—"

With a startled ejaculation, Mr. Barnard examined the watch, while there came a horrified murmur from the castaways.

"It's Dave's watch right enough—and it's been broken in a struggle!" he exclaimed sternly. "Tania, you have been lying to me! You told me that you had no knowledge of what had happened to Dave, yet you were concealing this vital proof—"

"Tania not understand!" faltered the jungle girl, terrified by his tone.

Mr. Barnard gripped her arm.

"I'm compelled to think the worst, Tania!" he rapped. "You had no intention of keeping your promise to me. Instead, you have forcibly removed Dave to some other part of the island—with the aid of your panther! Where is he hidden, Tania? Answer me!"

What has really happened to Dave? Don't miss next Friday's instalment.

THE VALLEY OF VANISHING HORSES

(Continued from page 112.)

June watched Noel excitedly as they waited, on horseback, in the trees.

"Nunky, you think that something will—"

"I think, June," he put in with a faint smile, "that you may have a chance to see what you can do with a lasso to-night! Have it ready—"

The thunder of galloping hoofs burst startlingly into his words.

A distant, incredulous shout rang out—and Noel sent his horse leaping forward into the star-lit gloom.

June, heart thumping, was not far behind. She saw Noel's torch flash on, sweeping the corral with its dazzling beam.

The gate was still closed—but another black had gone!

It was incredible, baffling. Recovering, June whirled her mount, turning after Noel towards the distant mouth of the valley, whence came the rolling of hoofs. Mingled with it was sudden pandemonium from all sides as the ranch riders hurried from their posts.

Fast though Noel rode, he was not the first at the valley mouth. Other riders were ahead, streaming out on to the range, shouting.

Grim-faced, Noel checked and raised his head.

"Lassiter!" he called piercingly. "Did the black pass?"

From the heights came the reply. "No! Not a sign! What in thunder—"

Despite that answer, and to June's amazement, Noel instantly urged his mount on, clattering over the rocky ground to the open range.

"This way, everyone!" yelled Noel. "To the right—not the left!"

Bewildered but thrilled, June went in pursuit as Noel veered. Their mounts' hoofs echoed thunderously—and now other riders began to catch up, Dug Lassiter among them.

"Raymond, where in thunder are you going?" Nelson, roared, galloping up behind as the chase led into the foothills.

"To get the black!" Noel yelled back. "Ah—see! Quick—pull up!"

He reined in with an iron hand, at the same instant flashing his powerful torch in front—illuminating an incredible sight for all to see.

Immediately ahead stood the chuck wagon of Shorty the cook—and struggling with the cook by one of the wheels was—

"Red Williams!" Lassiter grated incredulously, and reared for his gun.

"No one must make a move!" rapped Noel, just as Shorty reeled unconscious under a fierce right hook. "I contacted Red earlier. I thought he would come back, and—he was here at my orders!"

Before anyone could speak he swung from his horse and leapt forward. With one sweep of his arm he dragged back the canvas cover of the rear of the wagon—

And in the torchlight was revealed the missing black, standing on a thin bed of straw!

June's thrilled voice broke the stupefied silence.

"Nunky—oh, of course! The currants in the straw—they linked the straw with the cook!"

"Exactly!" cut in Noel. He stared at the rigid horsemen. "Do you see how it was done? Each night Shorty did not take his wagon away immediately. He stayed on the hard ground until the black came—and put it in his wagon! That was how the tarred prints vanished so magically!"

Buck Nelson's face was a picture; Dug Lassiter found his voice.

"Wait—I don't see it!" he grated. "The black didn't pass me to-night—I swear it!"

Noel whirled on him.

"Red Williams swore the same thing—and you didn't believe!" he snapped. "But for all that the black did pass—and you saw it!"

"Raymond, what are you getting at?" demanded Buck Nelson hoarsely.

"I will tell you all!" Noel said grimly. "First—Shorty was not the master mind behind this! Secondly—the blacks got out of the corral because they were let out! Thirdly—

both Williams and Lassiter did not realise they had seen a thoroughbred pass, because you, Buck Nelson, were riding it!"

It hit the riders like a blow. The foreman was the first to move. With a choking cry he whirled his horse for a breakaway.

Noel's revolver came up—but a lasso snaked through the air first, settling around Nelson's shoulders. June had acted—and made her first successful cast!

"THE simple brilliance of Nelson's scheme, June," said Noel later, "lay in the fact that the look-outs were watching for a riderless horse—and certainly not for a horse that was ridden by their own foreman—as they could hear by his shouting."

"But, Nunky—how did he get back on to his own horse?" asked June.

"Simple, June," Noel smiled. "Mounted bareback on the thoroughbred, he galloped fast out of the valley to where the chuck wagon waited. His own horse was there, left by him after he had posted the guards."

June drew a deep breath.

"Now I see, Nunky! Then he rode away to the left to give the wagon time to get clear in case he was followed out of the valley! It—it was he who attacked me! He who fired deliberately at Red Williams—"

"Exactly, June. You will have guessed now that I saw traces of horse hair on his breeches, proving he had been riding bare-backed last night!"

He chuckled as June gave a rueful grimace.

"Never mind, June. I fancy we will discover that Nelson had incurred debts, and meant to sell the blacks later. Incidentally, I am quite certain we shall find the others hidden in the foothills near where your red-headed rider stopped the wagon."

And, later, Noel was proved correct.

(End of this week's story.)

Next Friday Noel and June encounter an old adversary—Rosina, the audacious girl crook with whom they have fought many battles of wits in the past.