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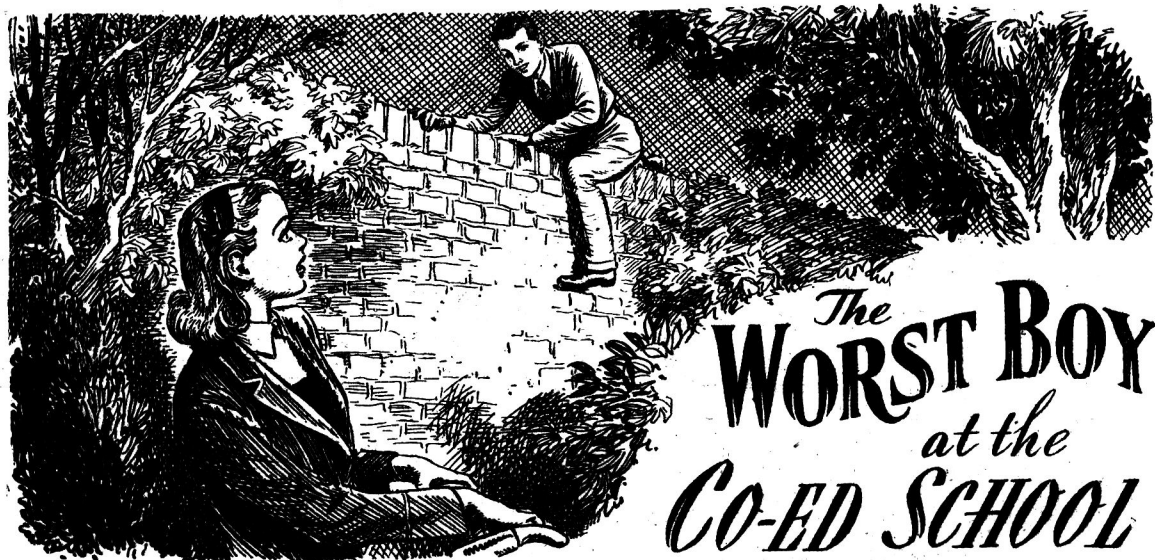
# GIRLS' CRYSTAL <sup>3<sup>D</sup></sup>

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"



"THAT DUTCH HOLIDAY OF SURPRISES"





# The Worst Boy at the CO-ED SCHOOL

By DOROTHY PAGE

## THE NEW BOY'S FOLLY

**PADDY DARE**, leader of the riding team at Mallington Co-Ed. College, was grateful to Vincent Conrad, a new boy, for having saved her horse from bolting, and she promised to put him in the team.

But the school regarded him as an outsider. He was blamed for an accident to Jo Winters, Paddy's chum, though there was no definite proof.

Vincent unjustly accused Paddy of sneaking on him to Mr. Voster, one of the masters. Mr. Voster vowed he would tame the Outsider, and Paddy sensed the hostility between boy and master. Later she saw Vincent, smarting from a caning, about to throw a lump of turf through Mr. Voster's window.

"Vincent—stop!" she cried, and rushed forward.

"OH, my goodness!" Paddy gasped. "Vincent, you ass—"

Aghast, she sprinted through the shrubbery towards the bent figure of Vincent Conrad.

His right hand was swung back, clutching the earthy piece of turf. His face bitter and reckless, he was taking aim at the open window of Mr. Voster's study above him.

There could be no doubt of his intention.

"No! Stop!" Paddy hissed, running hard.

With a desperate rush she came up and made a grab at his arm, checking him in the nick of time.

"Vincent Conrad," she panted, "what on earth do you think you're doing?"

"Doing?" he repeated. "Just going to bung this turf into Voster's window! With any luck I ought to score a bulls-eye on the rotter!"

"Are you crazy?" Paddy panted. "You can't do a thing like that!"

"Can't I?" he mocked fiercely. "Just watch me!"

"No!" She held his right arm. "I jolly well won't let you!"

The red-haired boy looked down at her hand, breathing heavily. To free his arm he would have to prise free her fingers. He hesitated.

"Why the dickens are you interfering, Paddy Dare?" he demanded. "Are you setting up as Mr. Voster's protector, or something?"

"Of course I'm not! But don't you see—"

He interrupted her. "Listen to me! Voster lined me unfairly to-day. Even so, I did the lines in the time stipulated. But think he'd believe me?" he added bitterly. "Not he! What happens? I get six with a cane. Think I'm going to stand for that rotten injustice?"

Paddy heard him out, then spoke quietly.

"Vincent, I know he's a bit of a tartar; I believe he has it in for you—but you can't do a thing like this. For one thing, it would get you into awful trouble—"

"So what? Who cares?"

"I do, for one."

He stared for a moment, then laughed sardonically.

"You! Well, by Jupiter, if that isn't rich! You go and sneak to Voster, get me into a scrape, and then say you'd be sorry if I hit trouble. How like a girl!"

A little sparkle came into her blue eyes. Her chin tilted.

"I didn't sneak!"

He grinned twistedly.

"Draw it mild, Paddy Dare. It was you who told Voster I was in the village, wasn't it? Well then—"

"Now you jolly well listen to me!" cut in Paddy firmly. "I suppose you imagine that when I arrived this afternoon everyone immediately dashed up and told me about you, and that I then went and sneaked to Mr. Voster."

"Well, didn't you?"

"No!" she flashed. "Do you think I'm the type that would do that after you'd done me a good turn—that I'd think you were an—outsider just because some other people said you were?"

A pause. He kicked at the grass. "I didn't think so—then," he said abruptly. "But now—"

Paddy looked at him and shook his head. How this boy believed that everyone was dead against him!

"This is what happened," she said. "Before I'd even met any of the crowd, Mr. Voster appeared and asked me if I'd seen a red-haired boy in the village. Naturally, I said yes. How was I to know that you shouldn't have been there? I was going on to tell Mr. Voster that the red-haired boy had done me a jolly fine turn, but he just ignored me and walked off. That's what happened, Vincent."

"Oh!" he muttered. "I—I see." A slight flush came into his lean cheeks.

"Sorry I flared out, Paddy Dare. I might have guessed. I—I—"

He shrugged. "Doesn't that just show you I'm the outsider they call me!"

"You're not!" she flashed. "You've just got a bee in your bonnet because—"

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**What A Surprise—When  
Paddy Learnt Why The  
Outsider Was Breaking  
Bounds!**

.....

you had a bad start, especially with Mr. Voster."

"Well, how would you feel if most of the coll. thought you an outsider, if you had a master like Voster always picking at you?" he demanded, the defiant glint back in his eyes.

Paddy somehow sensed that this was not the time to voice the understanding she possessed. She had to jolt him out of his mood, and jolt him hard.

"O.K.," she said calmly. "I'd feel rotten, but I hope I'd have enough courage to make a fight of it. I hope I'd have enough honesty to tell myself that a lot of it was my own fault. I'd try to meet things half-way and not get on my high horse and be sorry for myself!"

He went a dull crimson. His lips set hard, and Paddy wondered if she had been too forthright, even a little unfair.

"Easy to talk," he retorted. "You seem to forget about that accident to your chum, Jo Winter—that Voster thinks I caused it; that a lot of the school think so—"

"Well, I don't," cut in Paddy. "No, Mr. Voster must have made a mistake. I think, Vincent," she went on frankly, "that you've done some pretty foolish things, but nothing really rotten. I think you only want a good fair chance to prove yourself!"

He straightened, watching her rather strangely. The lump of turf slipped unheeded from his fingers to the ground. Paddy saw it go and smiled.

"Good!" she said. "Fine! Now forget about Mr. Voster. He doesn't like you, I know, so don't do anything fatheaded and reckless—please!" She looked at him straightly. "Vincent, I'd like to be friends. I'd like you to be in the junior riding team. Will you?"

Momentarily he seemed to lose his cynical self-assurance.

"Friends? In the riding team?" he repeated half-wonderingly. "You mean that?"

"Of course."

"But the others? They don't want me. And—"

His lips twisted. "It wouldn't do you any good to be friends with the Outsider!"

"Outsider, my foot!" Paddy said cheerfully. "Do stop thinking about yourself like that, Vincent. As to the others in the team—well, I'll be frank. Most of them are doubtful about you. Only a few are really hostile. So isn't it up to you to prove yourself? I'll help all I can—promise."

A long pause. It was getting dusk now and Paddy could not see the boy's face very clearly.

"You're different," he said sud-



denly. "You're willing to give a chap a chance. I wonder why?"

Paddy smiled cheerily. "Because I'm a girl, I suppose, and girls are more understanding than boys. Vincent, give me a promise, will you?"

"What sort of promise?" "Promise not to do anything silly or reckless," she said. "Promise to try not to get into more trouble with Mr. Voster. Promise you'll do your best to make good with the riding team. I know things may not be easy, but will you promise?"

Again he kicked at the grass, then suddenly jerked up his head.

"Thanks," he said very quietly. "And for what it may be worth—I give you my promise! I only wish

He stopped. It was almost as if he was feeling he had said too much, for, with an abrupt "So-long!" he turned and strode away.

Paddy did not mind his curt retreat. She was getting used to his oddness. Her smile was happy.

Then she remembered the meeting now in progress in the school stables. No sense in trying to get Vincent back to that meeting. It would soon be over as supper-bell was nearly due.

"I must tell them that Vincent's in the team," she decided. "H'm, may be a spot of trouble about that from Ron Bullton and one or two others. But Vincent's going to have his chance."

She turned away, meaning to hurry to the stables. But a voice called softly from somewhere in the shrubbery.

"Paddy Dare!"

She checked, staring round. She saw no movement in the dusk, but the whispering voice came again.

"Paddy Dare, don't be a fool!" said the soft murmur. "The riding team's important to you. Vincent Conrad will ruin it! He's an outsider—he always will be. His promise means nothing."

Paddy's jaw dropped. Amazed, she took a few steps into the shrubbery, staring round, trying to locate the owner of the voice.

"Who's there?" she called sharply. "Paddy Dare, be warned!" The whisper grew fainter. "With Vincent in the team there'll be nothing but trouble. The leopard can't change his spots. He's an outsider. He'll never change."

The voice died away. There was silence.

#### JO'S NEWS

"WELL, of all the—"  
Paddy halted, breathing hard. She was bewildered and annoyed. Who on earth was the owner of that rather hollow, whispering voice? Boy? Girl?

"Some ass who doesn't like Vincent trying to be funny!" she decided, still looking round. "What a footling thing to do—mean, too! Well, if anyone thinks some comic whispering is going to make me change my mind

She paused. On the fringe of the shrubbery she had seen a figure. But as she ran forward and burst into the open her frown relaxed.

It was Jo Winter who stood there, staring round. Her rather sweet face was flushed. She had obviously been running.

"Paddy! So there you are—"  
"Have you seen anyone snooping round, Jo?" cut in Paddy quickly. Jo's eyes widened.

"Snooping, dear?" she repeated. "No! But never mind that, Paddy," she continued with unusual excitement. "I left the meeting and came in search of you because something awfully important has arisen—about the riding team! About Mr. Milroy!"

It was Paddy's turn to start, and the unknown whisperer was instantly driven from her mind.

Mr. Milroy was a wealthy horse-owner who lived at Mallington Park.

He had a wonderful stretch of jumps—gate, stile, wall, brushwood—laid out in the park, and Paddy had expected to get permission from him

for the college team to use those jumps and thus get in all-important practice for the big event against Critchley.

There was no other place like it for miles around.

"What's happened, Jo?" she asked. "What about Mr. Milroy? I'm dead sure he'll give me permission—"

"If you get the chance to ask him before he goes abroad, Paddy!"

That shook Paddy.

"Goes abroad! Golly! Jo—when? How do you learn this?"

Jo caught her arm and hurried her along as she explained.

"Bette Grindle heard this afternoon, Paddy, that Mr. Milroy was going, and that he was catching the seven-thirty train from the junction. You know what an old duffer Bette is. She didn't remember it until just now. You see the fix we're in, Paddy?"

Paddy did. She looked anxious. The park jumps were really important for practice; they would make a world of difference to the team she so wanted to succeed. If they couldn't get Mr. Milroy's permission in time

"Wow! This needs quick action!" she exclaimed. "Seven-thirty train, eh? Only one thing for it, Jo. I'll

"Dash!" she murmured. "Have to wait a sec."

"You'd better use that sec to tidy yourself up, Paddy," suggested Jo. "Your slide is nearly out again, and your girdle isn't tied very neatly. You know what Choo-Choo is about neatness."

"Thanks, Jo," Paddy grinned, and hastily remedied the defects. "How right you are. Hallo, there goes Mr. Voster! Good! Now for it, kids!"

She brushed down her gym tunic and, with a whispered "Good luck!" from her companions, walked primly across to the notice-board.

"Excuse me, please, Miss Chuffleigh," she said politely. "Could I have a pass-out for an hour? It's awfully important."

Miss Chuffleigh turned. The group in the doorway waited eagerly.

"A pass?" repeated Miss Chuffleigh, and frowned. "Most certainly not! I could not dream of it! In the circumstances, Paddy, it is most impudent of you to ask for such a favour!"

Paddy's jaw dropped in surprise. She heard a smothered gasp of dismay from behind her.

"Impudent, Miss Chuffleigh? I—I don't understand—"

"Really, Paddy," cut in the mistress



Paddy knew that Vincent Conrad had broken bounds; and now, overhearing Mr. Voster, she realised that the master was suspicious. It seemed there was going to be more trouble for the boy everyone called the Outsider.

have to get a pass-out from Choo-Choo and cycle over to the junction and catch Mr. Milroy."

"That's what we all thought you'd say!" Jo smiled. "Ah, there are the others! We scattered in search of you."

A group of figures stood on Main Drive. They were chattering excitedly, peering around. Jo and Paddy were seen.

"Cheers! Jo's found her!" came Jimmy Court's relieved shout. "Good work! Paddy, where on earth did you get to?"

"She went after Vincent Conrad," grunted Ron Bullton.

Paddy ignored the rather grumpy note in Ron's voice.

"I was with Vincent—yes," she said cheerily. "But never mind that now, kids. I've got to get that pass-out quick!"

"And how!" agreed slangy Dot Nelson. "Get weaving! Choo-Choo will be in Central Hall by now as duty mistress, and it's nearly supper-time! Paddy, 'tis up to you, me child!"

They streamed off, Vincent forgotten. On the need to get the pass the whole riding team was unanimous and anxious.

Lights blazed in Central Hall, where the dining-rooms for boys and girls were situated, and, as Dot had prophesied, Miss Chuffleigh was just inside the entrance by the notice-board.

She was speaking to Mr. Voster. The party paused. Paddy grimaced.

crossly, "It should be quite clear that after your rudeness to Mr. Voster a little while ago I could not allow you a favour to-day!"

"Rude—rudeness to Mr. Voster?" stammered Paddy blankly.

"Certainly!" said Miss Chuffleigh. "To tell Mr. Voster so rudely that he did not know how to handle that boy, Vincent Conrad!"

Paddy went crimson. Her eyes sparkled indignantly.

"Miss Chuffleigh, I did speak to Mr. Voster about Vincent Conrad—yes," she said. "But, on my honour, I wasn't a bit rude."

Miss Chuffleigh sniffed irritably.

"Really, Paddy, I cannot suppose that Mr. Voster would misrepresent what happened. He is annoyed. So am I. Thus I would not dream of allowing a pass. That is all."

She turned fustily away.

Paddy stood stunned and righteously indignant. In that moment her first dislike for the cold Mr. Voster increased. How unfair he had been! He had given Miss Chuffleigh a false impression, whether deliberately so or not hardly mattered.

And because of it—gone was the chance of getting that all-important practice ground in Mallington Park.

She turned. The little group in the doorway had obviously overheard everything. They were looking startled and dismayed. Ron Bullton wore an aggressive expression. He burst out:

"Dash it all, Paddy!" he growled.



"For the sake of that outsider you go and upset Voster—and now we're in a fix!"

"Ah, yes!" sighed the darkly beautiful Isabella Rocco. "Such a pity—yes?—that Paddy believes in Vincent Conrad."

Paddy parted her lips to speak, then closed them again. No sense in starting an argument now, she told herself.

Curly haired Jimmy, anxious to prevent unpleasantness, cut in with:

"Oh, forget about Conrad, Ron, for once! This is far more important, Paddy"—he looked at her anxiously—"what do we do now?"

Paddy drew a deep breath; thought quickly.

"Don't worry, kids!" she said abruptly and cheerfully. "I think I can see a ray of light! Leave it to me!"

Hope came into faces; curiosity, too—but, to Paddy's relief, supper-bell went at that moment.

"Come on, Jo!" she cried. "I'll let you all know the result of my wheeze later!"

She whirled Jo off before anyone could ask questions.

But in the passage Jo side-glanced at her rather anxiously.

"Paddy, what's in your mind? I know that reckless look!"

Paddy grinned ruefully.

"You know me too well, old thing," she said. "You're right! Jo, there's one answer to this problem. I'm going to cut out now—break bounds and cycle to the junction."

Jo's dark brows came together in alarm.

"Paddy, no! You mustn't risk it! If Miss Chuffleigh found out she'd be furious! She might even hit at your riding; you know she's not keen on it. You know how much it means to you—"

"That's a whizzing good reason for going!" pointed out Paddy. "If I don't—hang goes our practice ground!"

"Oh, but, Paddy, we might be able to find another way—"

"Not a chance, Jo, and you know it! I must go."

"Well, you've made up your mind, Paddy," Jo sighed. "I'll cover up for you at supper in case you're missed. But—please be careful!"

Paddy impulsively hugged her.

"Bless you, Jo! I'll be back in no time. Bye for now!"

With a radiant smile, she darted off and left Central Hall. She shot in Girls' Side, fetched a thick school scarf from her study, then came out again, more cautiously.

Supper-bell had stopped ringing. There was still movement at the entrance to Central Hall, but all was quiet and dim in the tree-shrouded area where lay the bicycle-sheds.

Paddy reckoned on the shed door being unlocked as yet; some of the seniors were almost certainly out. She could take her machine out through a side entrance, giving her nice time to get to the junction before seven-thirty.

The cycle-shed was unlocked. She found her bike and wheeled it out, steering towards the shelter of the bushes under the school wall.

Suddenly she froze, alert and alarmed.

Someone was moving stealthily in the bushes.

For no known reason Paddy suddenly thought of the unknown whisperer in the shrubbery. At the same moment a figure came into view, and she gave a gasp of surprise, for it was Vincent. He had placed an old box against the wall and was now standing on it. Before she could get over the first shock he had hauled himself up on to the top of the wall.

"Vincent!" she cried.

The worst boy in the school, now astride the wall, paused and looked down. Paddy hurried forward, wheeling her cycle.

"What on earth are you up to, Vincent?" she asked.

A pause. She tried in vain to make out his expression.

"Just going to break bounds," he said calmly.

Paddy caught her breath; knew a sense of deep disappointment.

"Vincent—and you promised me!"

she flashed. "You—"

"I didn't promise you not to break bounds," he cut in. "And speaking of breaking bounds, where are you going with that bike?"

"That's different!" she flashed. "I have a vital reason for getting to the junction—"

"I think not!"

And, to her blank stupefaction, he dropped from the wall, calmly took the cycle from her hands, and began to wheel it back towards the cycle-shed. She was so taken aback that by the time she had darted in pursuit he had entered the shed with the bike.

"Look here, Vincent!" she cried, half amazed, half angry. "What on earth are you up to?"

"Quite simple," he said. "I know why you want to get out—and I'm stopping you. And just to make sure—"

He stepped swiftly past her through the doorway and pulled the door shut. Too late, Paddy heard him turn the key in the lock outside.

He had shut her in.

### WHAT PADDY OVERHEARD

FOR a full three seconds Paddy stood speechless.

Vincent Conrad was preventing her from going on her all-important mission. He was spoiling the chances of the riding team he had promised to help!

Paddy sprang to the door. Unbidden, there had leapt to her mind so many things she had been told about Vincent—how he could never be trusted; how he played cunning tricks; how he broke bounds, visiting some shady friends in the village.

It seemed dreadfully clear that, after all, she had been wrong about him!

Her fists banged on the door.

"Vincent, you dare!" she cried.

"Let me out!"

"Not a chance!" came his cool voice. "You'll be able to get yourself out in time—but I'll be gone by then. Incidentally, I'll have to use your name. It'll carry more weight than the Outsider's!"

His footsteps swiftly receded in the darkness outside.

Paddy wrenched at the door—in vain. Her gaze flashed round. There was a skylight in the shed. By propping up cycles she might be able to get to the skylight. But, as Vincent had said, it would take time—too much time to allow her to get to the junction by seven-thirty.

She relaxed a little, hands clenched.

"Oh, why?" she muttered. "I—I can't believe he's deliberately trying to wreck our chances! He—he meant that promise. But why lock me in? Why break bounds himself? Why—"

She paused. In the gloom of the shed her expression changed. She was suddenly thinking of his last words: "I'll have to use your name. It'll carry more weight than the Outsider's!"

"Oh!" she whispered. "Could it be—" She stood very still, her brain racing. "Suppose he'd decided to break out and go to the junction to ask Mr. Milroy for permission for the team? Suppose he stopped me because he didn't want me to take the risk?"

Her eyes began to glow. She thought quickly and logically. When the boys had gone into supper it was almost certain that aggressive Ron Bullton had accused Vincent to his face of spoiling the team's chances. Other boys would have shown their scorn.

And this is how Vincent reacted!" she told herself. "He decided he'd try to put matters right."

Paddy was convinced now.

"Vincent, you're O.K.," she exclaimed. "It was a jolly fine thing—"

She stopped there. She thought: Fine, yes—but what if Vincent was caught? It had been risky for her, but how more risky for Vincent after

his recent trouble with Mr. Voster. Paddy thought of what Mr. Voster had said and grimaced anxiously.

That anxiety spurred her to action.

It took her nearly twenty minutes to get out of the shed, by propping bikes together and working her way up to the skylight and through. She dropped to the ground outside, then glanced at her wrist-watch.

"Can't do anything now!" she muttered.

In two minutes' time all scholars were supposed to be inside college, and although Paddy was anxious for Vincent, she could not help him by loitering here and risking punishment herself.

She broke into a run, and was passing Boys' Side when she heard Jimmy Court's voice. In the lighted doorway her curly headed chum was speaking to Mr. Voster.

"I can't find him, Mr. Voster," Jimmy was saying.

The master gave a cold half-smile. "It is as I thought," he said. "You need search no farther, Court. I am convinced that young scoundrel has broken out of the school area!"

Paddy heard. She stopped dead, there in the dusk.

"I wouldn't say that, sir," said Jimmy uncomfortably. Jimmy was always scrupulously fair. "I haven't searched everywhere. Perhaps—"

"I am not interested in your conjectures, Court," snapped Mr. Voster. "I heard a rumour that Conrad has actually ridden his horse out of the school. Your failure to find him convinces me. An inspection of the stables will be complete proof. And then—"

He nodded in a slow way that made Paddy dislike him intensely.

"Oh, my gosh!" she breathed, aghast. Was it true? Had Vincent actually ridden to the junction?

The sheer audacity of the thing, the recklessness of it, staggered Paddy. And yet—it was not out of keeping with Vincent's character.

And if he had—

Then once Mr. Voster had inspected the stables Vincent had no chance!

Paddy whirled on the impulse of the moment. She sprinted, dislodging gravel in her haste. Mr. Voster must have heard the noise.

"Who's out there?" he cried sharply. "Stop!"

Paddy went harder, diving into the gloom.

The stables were her goal. She had to find out if it were true.

She arrived there, panting. The door was unlocked, but that was not proof, as probably Jock, the groom, had not yet done his nightly round. She pushed open the door, closed it, and then clicked on the light.

She had to do that, for she had no idea of Vincent's loose-box.

Down the stone floor she went, looking to right and left.

"Ah!"

She paused. There, pinned on the top door of a loose-box, was the name "WHITEY." She crossed, heart pumping.

One glance inside told her the truth.

The loose-box was empty.

"He—he did take Whitey! Oh goodness!"

Here was evidence that would condemn Vincent Conrad completely.

Paddy knew that Mr. Voster might arrive at any moment; she knew that he would report her for not being inside school. But she did not move.

"Vincent did it for—for me—for us!" she muttered. "It was crazy—but it was fine! If he's caught now—"

She drew a deep breath and her mind was made up. She was not going to bolt and save her own skin. She meant to stay here and somehow—goodness knows how—try to save Vincent.

How? How?

She heard Mr. Voster's sharp footsteps in the distance.

Can Paddy prevent Vincent Conrad's absence being discovered? More chapters of this grand serial in next Friday's

**GIRLS' CRYSTAL.**





# The WARNING of the SAND DIVINER



## THE SYMBOL IN THE SAND

"THIS is the place, Gwen!" Avril Harding waved an excited hand, "her grey eyes sparkling. 'The Street of a Thousand Delights.' What a gorgeous name—and what a clamour!"

Gwen Layton gazed enthralled at the scene that greeted them in the busy native quarters of Algiers.

"It's wonderful!" she declared. "You were a dear to ask me to come with you on this trip, Avril!"

"Wait till we reach Marakand, dear!" said Avril gaily. "By the professor's letter, there's something really exciting in store for us, though it's all wrapped in mystery at the moment. It has something to do with—with daddy's last journey into the desert."

For an instant her merry smile faltered, and there was the slightest tremor on her lips as she encountered her chum's understanding glance.

For Gwen knew that behind Avril's vivacious, seemingly carefree temperament was the memory of her explorer father who had met his death in the sun-baked desert several years ago—the victim of a band of nomad robbers.

Professor Farnfield, his staunch colleague, had been severely injured in an attempt to rescue his companion. And it was at the invitation of the professor, now an invalid, that Avril and her chum were on their way to visit him at his house at Marakand, on the fringe of the Sahara Desert.

"Gwen—look!" suddenly exclaimed Avril, pointing across the market-place. "That bearded man who looks like something from 'All Baba'—I do declare he's beckoning us!"

Gwen glanced in the direction her chum indicated, to stare in considerable fascination at the swarthy-faced figure, in ragged blue robes, squatting cobbler-fashion beside a tray of sand.

"Why, I believe he's a sand-diviner!" she breathed.

"What fun!" Avril's eyes twinkled. "We've half an hour to spare before the professor's carriage meets us. Let's have our fortunes told!"

They made their way across the crowded market-place to the shady spot under a tall palm-tree where the bearded seer squatted beside his tray of sand.

"The young Engleesh ladies wish to learn their destiny from the desert sand?" he croaked.

"Does it really tell the future?" Avril laughed, dropping a coin into his wooden bowl.

"To the believer much shall be revealed," came the guarded reply. "Watch!"

Fascinated, they looked on as the soothsayer commenced to trace a pattern in the sand with a piece of stick—a wriggly line that at first bore no likeness to anything they could recognize.

"The young ladies are going on a journey," he intoned.

"Anyone could guess that!" whispered Avril.

"To a white house set among the trees," went on the droning voice. "I see, too, a place of red rocks where danger lurks, and there is a sign—a sign of ill-omen!"

He pointed dramatically to the queer tracing in the sand, and Gwen drew in her breath sharply as she bent forward with her chum.

"Why, it's a snake!" she breathed. "A coiled snake, with its tail in its mouth!"

Avril hastily bit back an amused laugh.

"What does that sign mean?" she asked boldly.

"I know not," came the husky response, "save that it spells disaster for those who have dealings with it. I say to you—beware!"

Gwen plucked nervously at her chum's sleeve.

"Come away!" she whispered. "It gives me the creeps!"

"It's all rot!" breathed Avril, smiling reassuringly. "We're not likely to have any dealings with a coiled serpent—"

The sand-diviner looked up suddenly, his eyes glittering.

"It pleases the young lady to mock at the voice of Fate," he said gruffly. "I warn you"—he pointed a shaking finger—"woe may come to you if you disregard the message in the sand. A dark stranger will cross your path, and will rob you even of the shoes on your feet!"

"My shoes?" echoed Avril, with an incredulous glance at her serviceable strapped sandals.

"Ay, of your shoes," came the stern retort. "Your way shall be fraught with perils, and an enemy will lay a snare for you from which there may be no escape!"

At that moment there came a clatter of hoofs as an old-fashioned carriage drew up in the market-place. The swarthy coachman climbed from his seat, touching his crimson fez and salaaming deeply.

"M'selles—you are the expected guests of Professor Farnfield?" he asked, revealing a flash of white teeth. "I am Suleiman, and I come to fetch you."

Deftly he transferred their light luggage into the carriage, almost before the chums had time to reply.

By RENEE FRAZER

"I say," breathed Avril, snuggling into the cushioned seat, "thank goodness to get away from that old scarer! I'm sorry now that I asked him to tell our fortunes, but I thought it would be fun."

Gwen shivered slightly, her hand tightening on her chum's arm as she caught a glimpse of the sand-diviner, kneeling beside his tray, both arms stretched towards them in a gesture of warning.

But the uneasy impression left by his weird prophecy was quickly banished by that exhilarating drive—through narrow, cobbled streets, between tall, decrepit houses—and finally out on to the desert road, with its date palms and scattered vineyards.

It was almost dusk when they reached Professor Farnfield's picturesque white house on the very fringe of the desert, having been held up by some trouble with the carriage axle.

They were greeted by the professor's secretary. He was an efficient, bespectacled young man, who introduced himself as Herbert Baxter, and he departed to inform his employer of their arrival.

Avril's eyes twinkled as the door closed.

"I wonder," she murmured, "if he could be the scatter-brain nephew the professor mentioned in his letter?"

"He—he doesn't look like that kind of person!" smiled Gwen.

Just then a beaded curtain, screening another doorway, was pulled back cautiously, and a cheery, freckled face appeared—the face of a boy in his late teens.

"Hallo!" said the newcomer, with a friendly nod. "I'm Hal Gayford—staying here with uncle for the hols. You're Avril Harding and Gwen Layton?"

Avril smiled as she nodded and shook hands.

"And you'll be the—er—lively nephew?" she asked tactfully.

The boy chuckled.

"Uncle's got his own name for me! Though, between you and me," he

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confided, with a wink, "the old man's a bit prejudiced by that weed, Herbert Baxter. Have you met him; by the way?"

"A few minutes ago," Avril admitted. "He seemed very polite."  
"Polite!" The boy snorted. "That's his smarmy way! He blotted my copy-book with uncle because I took a few hours off from my holiday studies to explore the bazaars. That's where I've been this afternoon," he added frankly.

That mention of the bazaars turned Avril's thoughts into a more serious channel. A sudden recollection of the sand-diviner's warning prompted her to inquire tentatively whether Hal knew anything about the exciting "project" hinted at in the professor's letter.

The boy grinned at the question. "It's all very hush-hush," he said. "Uncle's dropped a few hints, but he doesn't think I'm to be trusted with important secrets. Baxter would give his long nose to find out more about it, but uncle can be as mum as an oyster when it pleased him. 'Sh-sh!'"

He raised a warning finger as the door opened, to admit the efficient Baxter. The secretary regarded Hal with cold suspicion, and informed the girls that the professor was waiting to see them in his study.

A few minutes later Avril was being greeted by her father's old friend. After his firm warm welcome his manner changed.

"My dear," he said, "would you oblige me by locking the door?"

Surprised, Avril obeyed, and then the professor led her and Gwen across the study, its shelves and tables filled with curios and antiques collected during the professor's travels.

Unlocking a cabinet, he took out a square cedarwood box and placed it carefully on the table in front of them.

"Your father, Avril," he said unsteadily, "was on the brink of a great discovery when he met his untimely death. This talisman was among his private possessions that came into my hands. With his last breath he urged me to continue the quest for its secret—a secret which he bequeathed to his young daughter."

Avril's lips trembled, and a little lump rose in her throat as she gazed through misted eyes at the plain, square box.

"You—you succeeded?" she whispered.

"I think so, my dear," the professor nodded. "By long research I believe I have discovered the vital clue. But my injury prevents me from traveling to put my conclusion to the test. And there has been no one whom I could entrust with the important task."

"Your nephew Hal——" ventured Avril.

"A young scatter-brain! Well-meaning enough, but empty-headed. My secretary, Baxter, is a shrewd young man; but I do not care to take him into my confidence in this matter. You, my dear, are the one person to carry out your father's last bequest. And before I explain the mission I have in mind for you, let me show you the talisman."

Breathlessly the chums watched as the professor opened the box. Then Avril's heart gave a violent jump, and Gwen gasped, her face suddenly pale.

For gleaming against the dark velvet in the box lay a bangle of solid gold—a bangle shaped like a coiled serpent, with jewelled eyes that seemed to glitter malevolently in the yellow light.

It was the sign of ill-omen—drawn by the bearded fortune-teller in his tray of sand! The very object against which they had been warned!

### A PROPHECY COMES TRUE

**T**ONGUE-TIED, the chums stared at the gold bangle.

"Your father's last bequest, my dear," murmured the professor, unaware that anything was amiss.

Avril flashed a warning glance at Gwen. Of course, the whole thing was just a coincidence! It was too incredible to suppose that the sand-

diviner in Algiers could have known anything about the professor's talisman.

"What—what is it that you want us to do?" she asked, her voice a little unsteady.

The professor beamed at them short-sightedly.

"It is quite a simple task, my dear, but it necessitates a journey by camel train to the desert village of El Kara. It is a two day's journey, there and back. A caravan leaves here early to-morrow, in charge of a native merchant—Mohammed Bey—who is a friend of mine.

"I have certain business connections in El Kara, which will be an excuse for sending my secretary," went on the professor. "You girls will accompany him, ostensibly on a pleasure trip."

The two girls looked at each other excitedly.

"While Baxter is carrying out my affairs in El Kara, you two girls will naturally visit the famous local beauty spot known as the Silent Valley," continued the professor.

"There is a cave in the valley, said to have been the dwelling-place of the Prophet Istar. And in that cave you will search for a stone—or rock—carved with symbols identical to those inscribed on this bangle."

Her pulses thrilling, Avril bent forward, staring at the faint, hieroglyphic markings on the serpent bangle.

"And—then?" she breathed.

"Then, my dear," said the professor, "you will raise the stone. Whatever lies under that stone is very precious to you, and no one must take charge of it but yourself. You girls are still ready to go forward with this task?"

He peered at them over his spectacles, an anxious expression in his shrewd eyes.

"Are we!" exclaimed Avril, her voice shaking with excited anticipation. "I wouldn't miss the chance for anything!"

"Nor I!" Gwen added staunchly, though it was plain from the rather nervous way she glanced at the serpent bangle that the sand-diviner's strange warning still lingered in her mind.

By the following morning, however, even her fears were forgotten as she and Avril prepared for the journey.

They breakfasted alone, for the professor was not yet down; but he sent word by the dusky Suleiman that the carriage would call for them at nine. The efficient Baxter had already departed to make final arrangements with the caravan leader.

Avril felt a little disappointed that the cheery Hal had not come to say good-bye, but that youth appeared to have gone out early on some errand of his own.

Promptly at nine Suleiman drove the carriage up to the door. The professor came downstairs to bid his young guests farewell, and to hand Avril the precious bangle, in its cedarwood case, impressing on both girls the importance of guarding their secret.

As the carriage swung out of the shady drive on to the dusty road the chums heard a cheery hail. Avril's face lit up; she recognised that voice and the boyish, sun-helmeted figure racing towards them.

"Why, Hal, I thought you'd forgotten us!" she exclaimed.

"Not me!" panted the boy, grinning broadly as he sprang on to the step. "Drive on, Suleiman—the market-place first!" Then, meeting Avril's surprised glance, he added breathlessly: "The caravan doesn't start out till ten, and it won't hurt Baxter to wait. I want to buy you girls a little memento before you go."

He waved aside their chorus of laughing protests and excited questions, refusing to satisfy their curiosity till the carriage drew up in the village market-place.

Then the boy gravely assisted them to alight, and escorted them to a stall laden with—slippers!

Dainty, fascinating Eastern slippers of all colours and sizes; some in

velvet, others in silver and gold brocade. Some with curled toe-caps and without heels; others with high heels and slender, tapering feet.

"Take your choice!" said Hal breezily, glancing at his watch. "Better try them on for safety. I'll give you quarter of an hour—no need to rush."

The girls eagerly made their selection. Gwen chose blue-and-silver Turkish slippers that fitted her to perfection. Avril was trying on a pair in red velvet when her chum gave a sudden startled scream.

From behind an adjacent stall leaped a black dog. Barking loudly, it made straight towards them, despite the angry shouts of the stallholder.

Avril, who had removed her own sandals, started back instinctively, one foot in a red slipper, the other shoeless. But the dog barely looked at her. With a deep, delighted growl, it pounced on her sandals and, seizing them in its jaws, made off across the market-square, needless of shouts and cries, to be lost to view among a medley of stalls.

For a moment the girls were almost too bewildered to realise what had happened. Then Hal, shouting to the chums to wait for him, made off in pursuit of the dog.

An unsteady laugh escaped Avril's lips as she recovered from her first shock for the situation, awkward though it was, appealed to her sense of humour. But, glancing at Gwen, she was startled to see the pallor on her chum's face.

"Avril, the sand-diviner's first warning has come true!" gasped Gwen. "A dark stranger has stolen your shoes!"

Avril's heart missed a beat. They had disregarded the sand-diviner's warning about the serpent bangle—and this had happened. It was a coincidence—it must be! But—supposing the other, more sinister predictions came true—

Almost angrily, Avril dismissed the thought as Hal came hurrying back to them, out of breath and distinctly rueful.

"That black rascal got clean away!" he panted. "I'm no end sorry about this, Avril! Looks as though you're in a bit of a jam. You can't possibly travel in Turkish slippers, and the caravan will be starting out any time now. Perhaps we'd better drive back to the house and explain things to uncle? There'll be bags more chances of pleasure trips while you're here, and Baxter's business in El Kara isn't really urgent. I'll tell Suleiman to turn the carriage."

It seemed to Avril that Hal was treating the affair with surprising lightness. She was about to protest when there came a sudden disturbance among the curious crowd of onlookers surrounding the stall. Avril caught in her breath. Elbowing his way towards them, looking very hot and flustered despite his immaculate riding-kit, came the efficient Herbert Baxter. And grasped in the secretary's hand were the missing sandals.

Avril gave a little sigh of relief. She did not like Herbert Baxter, but his opportune arrival sent him up in her esteem.

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Baxter!" she exclaimed, gratefully accepting the sandals, undamaged except for a trace of canine teeth.

"Stout work, Baxter!" chuckled Hal. "A friend in need—what?"

The secretary eyed him coldly. "I might have suspected, Gayford, that this came about through your meddling!" he said stiffly. "You had no right to bring Miss Harding and her friend here when you knew that the caravan was waiting for them. By a fortunate chance, I happened to be in the vicinity and was able to rescue Miss Harding's sandals."

"Remind me to recommend you for a medal, Baxter!" murmured Hal.

Avril glanced at the boy quickly. Behind his flippant tone she detected a hint of anger, and the way he stared at the secretary was distinctly unfriendly.

An incredible thought flashed for an instant into her mind. Was it pos-



sible that the cheery Hal had wished them to delay their journey—because he was jealous of Herbert Baxter?

Her cheeks crimsoned with sudden shame at the ungrateful suspicion as she met the boy's frank, smiling glance. He held out his hand, taking hers in a friendly grip.

"Well, cheerio, Avril! So-long, Gwen! Enjoy yourselves! Toodle-oo, Herbert—and keep out of mischief!" "Good-bye!" said Herbert Baxter, with cold satisfaction, as the carriage bowed swiftly on its way.

As Avril turned to wave good-bye to the boy, standing rather forlornly in the market-place, her last suspicions were banished. And soon even Hal was forgotten in the bustle and excitement of taking their places in the desert-bound caravan.

There were laden camels and pack-mules, in charge of swarthy nomads, and spirited Arab horses for those accompanying the train. The caravan leader, bearded Mohammed Bey, shook hands with the two girls and allocated them a place in the centre of the train. Herbert Baxter rode a little ahead with the leader as the caravan wound its way along the desert road.

It was an unforgettable journey to the two chums, fresh from England's changeable climate and crowded towns. As far as the eye could see the undulating sand-dunes reached out towards the horizon, broken only by scattered clumps of date palms and occasional sun-bleached buildings.

At noon Mohammed Bey called a halt for lunch. The party drew rein in the shadow of a high cliff, from which a spring of well-water bubbled in a sparkling, refreshing cascade. The chums had finished their appetising picnic lunch when they were approached by Herbert Baxter.

"How are you young ladies getting on?" he asked in his stiff, polite manner. "I thought of riding out to the plateau, where it is cooler, and from where, incidentally, you can get an excellent view of El Kara. I wondered if you would care to accompany me?"

"We'd love to!" Avril declared, and Gwen nodded quickly.

They set out together on horseback, riding through a deep and picturesque gorge bounded by red cliffs. The

scenery was magnificent, awe-inspiring, and the two girls cantered ahead, quickly outdistancing their companion, who was a very cautious rider.

They had been riding for some ten minutes when Gwen, edging her horse close to Avril's, plucked uneasily at her chum's sleeve.

"Avril, I don't like this place!" she whispered. "You remember the sand-diviner's warning—a place of red rocks where danger lurks!"

Avril gave a quick, rather unsteady laugh as she looked round for their stolid companion, but Herbert Baxter was not longer in sight.

On two sides loomed the red cliffs of the gorge, while ahead of them lay a dark clump of palms.

Were they to allow the superstitious warning of a ragged old fortune-teller to spoil their pleasure—to deter them from their exciting quest?

"Don't let's get nervy, Gwen," Avril said, with an attempted gaiety she was far from feeling. "Now we've gone so far, I'm longing to get a glimpse of El Kara and the Silent Valley, and, to make our plans for to-morrow—"

Her voice trailed away as something whistled through the air close to them. Gwen gave a terrified scream as her horse reared suddenly. Then, with a startled neigh, it went plunging forward, galloping madly towards the dark clump of palms, its frightened rider clinging helplessly to the reins.

#### THE SILENT VALLEY

FOR one frozen moment the recollection of the fortune-teller's uncanny prophecy flashed into Avril's thoughts; then she was spurting her own horse as she galloped frantically to overtake her chum.

Into the shadow of the palm-trees the two horses thundered, their flailing hoofs sending up clouds of red sand. Then, as they raced out into the sunlight beyond, the blood drained from Avril's face.

Straight ahead of them yawned a deep chasm among the rocks, and Gwen's horse was galloping directly towards it, despite its rider's desperate attempts to avert the peril.

Avril called out to her chum, urging her own horse to even greater efforts,

but despair gripped her heart as she realised that she could not hope to catch up with the runaway in time.

At that instant she heard a shout, and a thunder of hoofs galloping from the direction of the cliffs. For a moment she supposed that Herbert Baxter had overtaken them; but as she caught sight of the reckless horseman, spurring his mount along the edge of the precipice towards the runaway, her heart leaped incredulously.

"Hal!" she cried.

Gwen's horse was rearing on the very brink of the chasm when Hal overtook it, seizing it by the bridle. There was a moment's agonising suspense as the boy sought to calm the frantic animal, holding on to his own mount by one hand.

Then the struggle was over. Avril galloped up, to catch her chum as she slid, half-fainting, from the saddle.

Instinctively she looked across at Hal. His boyish face was white under his tan, and there were beads of perspiration on his forehead. But he grinned at her cheerily as he met her glance.

"Trust you girls to run into some scrape as soon as you get out of my sight!" he panted, leaping from the saddle.

"Hal——" Avril's voice was choked with bewilderment and gratitude as she assisted the boy to lower her chum to the ground. "Hal, what ever brought you here?"

It seemed to her that the boy's manner became a trifle evasive.

"Your guardian genii, I should imagine," he rejoined lightly. Then, with his usual bantering smile: "Matter of fact, I thought you'd be bored stiff with Herbert Baxter, and decided to liven up your journey. By the way, where is friend Herbert?"

Avril smiled unsteadily as she explained. She felt too relieved at Gwen's safety, and the fact that her chum seemed little the worse for her narrow escape, to question the boy more closely. But she noticed that he thrust something hastily out of sight under his belt—something that looked like the butt of a pistol.

For a moment she wondered why Hal should be carrying a pistol for a pleasure trip into the desert, but the

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passing thought was banished by the arrival of Herbert Baxter.

"Thank goodness you young ladies are safe!" he exclaimed. "I was afraid—Why, Gayford—he stared with hostile surprise at the boy—where did you spring from?"

"I thought a ride in the desert might blow the cobwebs away!" countered Hal flippantly.

As on the previous occasion in the market-place, Avril was uneasily conscious of the hostility between Hal and his uncle's secretary. But just then her thoughts were interrupted by a cry from Gwen. Her chum, now recovered from her shock, was tightening her horse's harness.

"Avril—look! He's been hurt!" she gasped, pointing to a graze on the animal's glossy neck. "That's what made him bolt!"

Avril caught in her breath as she examined the ugly graze. She remembered suddenly that faint whistling sound she had heard.

"Let me see," said Herbert Baxter, adjusting his spectacles. "That's most peculiar. Almost like a gash made by a flying stone—or a pellet fired from an air-pistol!"

Avril's heart gave an unsteady jump. She was trying not to think of the pistol she had seen Hal thrust so hastily under his belt!

Questions buzzed through her brain as they rode back to join the caravan. Why had Hal been so anxious that they should delay their journey in the first place? Why had he followed them here so secretly, turning up only at that perilous moment on the brink of the chasm?

Angrily she tried to dismiss her suspicions, conscious that both Hal and Gwen were glancing at her curiously as she failed to join in their friendly conversation. She told herself that all this had come about through listening to the warnings of a fraudulent old fortune-teller—warnings that inexplicably seemed to be shaping as he had foretold.

They found the leader of the caravan waiting impatiently, for he was anxious to reach El Kara before dusk. The three young people rode together, and Hal's cheery friendliness gradually thawed Avril's lingering doubts.

It was sunset when they reached El Kara and pitched camp on the outskirts of the village. Avril and Gwen partook of a delicious cold supper, seated on the sand outside their tent, in Hal's company.

"What plans have you girls for tomorrow?" asked Hal cheerfully. "I suppose you'll pay a visit to the famous Silent Valley?"

Avril glanced warningly at her chum.

"We haven't decided yet," she rejoined lightly.

"I've got some snaps of it here," said Hal, opening his wallet. "Like to see them?"

Eagerly the girls examined the snapshots, photographs showing a lonely valley of picturesque grandeur, hemmed in by tree-clad hills. As Gwen and Hal bent over one of the larger photos, Avril caught a glimpse of a small snapshot that had fallen unnoticed from the boy's wallet.

She plucked it up, glancing at it casually; then she drew in a sharp, incredulous breath. She was staring at a photo of Hal himself—Hal reclining in a deckchair in the professor's garden. And standing beside him, its shaggy head and forepaws resting in a friendly fashion across the boy's lap, was a black dog—the same dog that had stolen her sandals!

So Hal had deliberately tricked them! He had decoyed them to the market-place, intending that they should miss the caravan. All her previous suspicions came racing back. It must have been Hal who had scared Gwen's horse, hoping that they would not get back in time to rejoin the camel train; that they would be prevented from reaching El Kara. The unlooked-for peril of the precipice had caused him to change his plans—but his opportune arrival on the scene now appeared in a very different light.

She stared at him as he laughed

and talked with Gwen, as though nothing were amiss. Why had he done it—why? Mere boyish jealousy of Herbert Baxter could not explain his treachery. He must have some deeper, more sinister purpose.

Her hands clenched as she remembered the sand-diviner's third warning—the warning of an enemy who would lay a snare for them!

Twice the strange old man's predictions had come true; and here was Hal breezily discussing the Silent Valley, suggesting an outing there the next morning!

The Silent Valley—the serpent bangle—and her secret quest! Was it possible that the boy knew more than he admitted about her mission—and was planning deliberately to rob her of her father's secret?

White-faced, she met his bantering glance, forcing herself to return a careless answer to his suggestion.

"Perhaps!" she said lightly. "Gwen and I will see how we feel in the morning—won't we, Gwen?"

Though plainly puzzled by her chum's tense manner, Gwen agreed. But she could not guess what was in Avril's mind.

That night, as the desert moonlight streamed into their tent, Gwen awoke with a start, to find her chum standing fully dressed beside her camp-bed.

"Avril, what is it?" she gasped, sitting up. "Is anything wrong?"

Avril raised a cautioning finger to her lips.

"Listen, Gwen! I'm not waiting till to-morrow to visit the Cave of Istar. I'm going to carry out the professor's instructions to-night!"

"To-night!" Gwen stared at her chum incredulously. "But—but we can't go there on our own. We don't know the way—"

"I do," said Avril, as she knelt down and unfolded a little pocket-map. "I borrowed this from Mr. Baxter after supper, and the Silent Valley's marked on it—barely a mile from here. Of course, he doesn't know what we intend to do."

"But, Avril, why—why to-night?" Gwen persisted.

"Because," said Avril softly, "I'm almost certain we've an enemy in the camp—an enemy who is after daddy's secret!"

Gwen caught in her breath sharply, her dark eyes widening.

"Then—then the sand-diviner's warning was true, after all?" she whispered. "Is it—one of the natives?"

Avril shook her head. Even now she could not bring herself to tell Gwen about her suspicions of the boy who had appeared so gallantly to save her chum's life.

"Please don't ask me now, dear," she said hastily. "There's no time to lose. If—if you'd rather not come with me I'll understand—"

"Stupid!" Gwen was already climbing out of her camp-bed, hastily pulling on her riding-kit. "Do you imagine I'd let you go on your own?"

Cautiously they crept out across the moonlit encampment, taking care as they untethered their horses not to disturb the sleeping native guards.

They were unaware that a muffled figure was watching them from the shadow of the palms—a figure that silently dogged their footsteps as the chums led their horses out on to the desert road.

THAT moonlight ride to the Silent Valley was an eerie experience for the two girls. By the aid of her map, Avril was easily able to locate the valley—approached by a steep descent between rugged cliffs and overhanging palm-trees.

Though neither chum would admit it, the recollection of the sand-diviner's warning was not far from either of their minds. Avril remembered the old man's glittering stare as he had pointed a shaking hand at them, urging them to have no dealings with the serpent bangle.

Her fingers closed on the sinister amulet, now in her pocket. She steeled her nerves, thinking of her

promise to the professor—her hope of discovering her father's secret.

"Look, Gwen!" she whispered, drawing rein and pointing excitedly. "That must be the Cave of Istar!"

In the cliffs ahead of them loomed the dark entrance of a cavern, partly hidden by trailing creepers. Dismounting, the chums approached it, and Avril drew a torch from her pocket.

"I'll go first, dear," she breathed. "Remember, we've got to look for a stone or rock inscribed with hieroglyphics like those of the bangle."

She took a step into the echoing cavern, flashing her torch round her. And just then an ominous rumbling sound reached her ears—a rumbling that seemed to come from overhead.

She heard Gwen's warning scream and turned. At the same moment a muffled figure sprang suddenly from the shadows, seizing the two girls in a powerful grip and dragging them back against the wall of the cave.

Only in the nick of time. With a sound like thunder, a huge piece of rock struck the ground where they had been standing, breaking into fragments of flying splinters and dust.

Deadly pale, her heart standing still, Avril stared at their rescuer in the moonlight that filtered through the dust.

An incredulous cry was torn from her lips—for she was staring into the bearded face of the sand-diviner of Algiers!

### A RASCAL EXPOSED

"SO, young ladies!" The sand-diviner gave a croaking laugh as he peered at them. "You thought to defy the message of the sand—to ignore my warning! Three times have you been warned, and woe may yet come to you if you persist in your reckless folly!"

Avril stared at him, her arm round her chum, her thoughts racing wildly.

"Who—who are you?" she gasped, finding her voice. "How did you come here?"

The man laughed huskily, shaking his head.

"My footsteps were guided by Fate—ask no more! I was led here in time to save you from a ruthless enemy—an enemy, twice foiled, who intended this time to make no mistake!"

White to the lips, Avril looked back at him.

"No!" she whispered unsteadily. "I can't—I won't believe it! It was Hal who played that trick with the dog—he might even have scared Gwen's horse—but he wouldn't do a thing like this!"

"Hal?" gasped Gwen in amazement.

The sand-diviner stared at her, a strange expression on his bearded face. His voice came even more harshly when he spoke.

"The boy you speak of may be a fool, but he is no rogue. You have misread the warnings. O foolish one! Your real enemy is near at hand even now, and if you must go through with your reckless purpose, then make haste! You have the amulet safely?"

Avril started, her mind in a whirl.

"You know—about that?"

"I know many things!" The old man struck a match, lighting a lantern that he drew from his girdle. "Come—the stone that you seek is but a few paces from here. But you alone can pick out the ancient carvings that will reveal the forgotten secret."

Gwen caught nervously at her chum's arm.

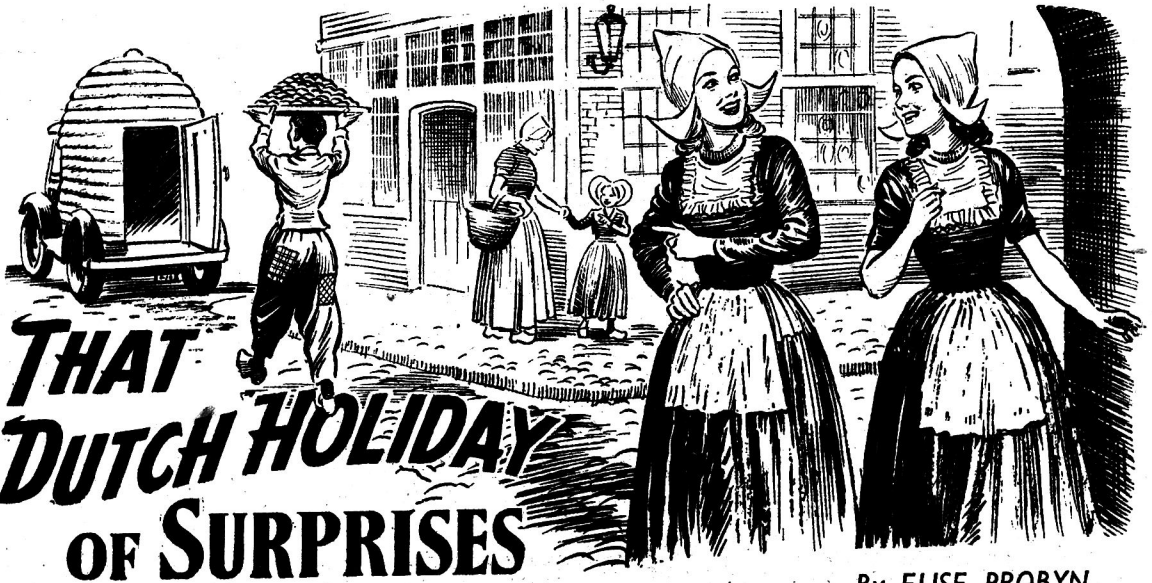
"Don't trust him, Avril!" she whispered unsteadily. "So many awful things have happened already through his warnings. He may have made them happen—he may be lying about another enemy."

But Avril's hands were clenched, and her grey eyes shone with a reckless excitement.

"We've come so far, Gwen—I must go on!" she breathed. "Daddy's secret is at stake. I—I'm going to follow him."

(Please turn to the back page.)





# THAT DUTCH HOLIDAY OF SURPRISES

By ELISE PROBYN

## FORCED TO LEAVE

SHIRLEY BLYTHE and her chums, Tess and Dick Foley, were staying in Bootendorp, in Holland, as the guests of their Dutch chum, Jan.

They were helping Zella van Deen, ward of a wealthy bulb grower, Mr. van Hagel, to solve the secret of a brass tulip bowl shaped like a clog. Zella was afraid of her guardian, who was also after the secret.

The chums discovered there was a second tulip bowl in existence, and that it was to be found in a windmill at Boskoop.

They were preparing to set off in search of it when van Hagel arrived at the farmhouse and threatened to turn out Jan's parents if Shirley & Co. did not leave. Rather than allow Jan's parents to suffer, the chums said they would go.

"MR. VAN HAGEL will stoop to anything to get rid of us—but he shan't turn you out of your home!" Shirley cried to Mr. and Mrs. de Voort.

"We'll go!"

"Shirley's right! We'll leave!" Tess echoed.

"And if it's any satisfaction to a bully," Dick added, eyes flashing, "he wins!"

The chums could see at a glance that van Hagel took small satisfaction at this turn of events. He stood there in the hall of the farmhouse, glowering at them in mortified wrath.

Obviously, he had expected to bring them to their knees. Obviously, he had believed that Jan's parents, under so dire a threat, would have ordered them out of the house; and that the young English strangers, in their panic, would have promised to have nothing more to do with Zella, promised anything if only they could be permitted to stay.

"This is brave talk, my young English friends!" he said, tight-lipped. "I hope you understand the full import of my words."

"We understand you only too well," Shirley told him steadily. "And we shall go."

Jan was listening, like one stunned, in the kitchen doorway. His mother gave a choked little cry.

"Mine dears, who is to take care of you if I do not? Where—where can you go?"

It was no time to think of that. The chums knew only that there was no other course for them but to go; they could not see Jan and his warm-hearted parents rendered homeless and ruined.

"We'll be all right, Mrs. de Voort. We shall manage!" Shirley told her reassuringly.

Van Hagel glared at the chums as if he felt himself somehow cheated

Shirley guessed that he had hoped they would beg for mercy and be willing to tell him all they knew about the tulip-bowl secret. But van Hagel realised that he must be content to be rid of them.

"You have been a bad influence on Zella ever since you came here," he told them now. "You have made her defy my authority, as her guardian—and by your escapade yesterday you have destroyed valuable bulbs of mine worth more than a thousand guilders." He glanced at his watch. "I will give you one hour to be gone!" And he swung out of the door.

Shirley saw how concerned Jan and his parents were looking. But already her wits were busy.

"Jan, it will be easier for your mother and father if we go," she said. "But there's no need for us to go far," she added swiftly. "Can't you help us to find digs somewhere near your school?"

"In Breukelen?" Jan asked hopefully.

"Yes—where you took us when we got Zella that ticket for the ball," Shirley nodded. "Then we'd still see you every day, Jan. You're bound to have friends there—school friends—whose people could put us up?"

"Gee, we'd be within reach of everyone then," breathed Dick. "Including Zella!"

Jan's eyes began to brighten. "There is a little cafe—the Hotel Bijenkorf. It means Beehive," he told the chums. "It is where I lunch every day when I am at school—and it is goot food, goot home like Momma's. If you could get rooms there—"

Then he paused, the light fading from his eyes as he met his parents' harassed gaze.

"We'll manage—that'll be just the place," Shirley said breathlessly. "It's going to be an awful wrench leaving you all, but—but—" She looked in troubled perplexity at Jan's mother and father. "Why are you so worried? Please, please, you're not going to be anxious about us?"

"Mine dears, you—you will not be able to manage," Jan's mother said, an anxious note in her voice.

"You do not know your difficulties," Mr. de Voort frowned.

"It's all part of the adventure of

.....

**Whatever The Cost, Shirley & Co. Meant To Prevent Their Dutch Friends From Being Turned Out Of Their Home**

.....

being abroad—as long as you won't worry about us, Mrs. de Voort!" Shirley said brightly. But she knew that Jan's mother was still worried.

For the last time the chums ate breakfast in the cosy farmhouse kitchen. They hastened up to their rooms and began packing, while Jan went out to the farmyard to ask Hans to have the lorry ready.

Shirley had charge of their holiday money. She counted it carefully as she took her handbag from the big wardrobe drawer.

"Golly, we've hardly spent anything since we came to Holland!" she exclaimed.

Jan and his folks wouldn't let us. They've been just—just bricks!" Dick said a little huskily.

The one consolation about this parting was the fact that the friendship was by no means at an end. It was just the beginning of new adventures.

Shirley's eyes glistened as she packed in her suitcase the brass, clog-shaped tulip-bowl. As soon as they had fixed up somewhere to stay they would be able to carry on their search for the other clog at Boskoop.

There was a lump in all their throats as they carried their cases downstairs. The lorry was already waiting at the gate, their bikes aboard. Jan's mother and father were there to see them off—both trying at the last to be bright, but both still looking very worried.

"This is not good-bye, mine dears," began Mrs. de Voort shakily.

"No fear! We shall only be two villages away, in Breukelen!" Shirley cried, hugging her.

"Ja! But if you do not find rooms there, mine dears—then never mind vot Heer van Hagel threatened, never mind anything. You come back to us!"

The chums reassured her again, and then climbed on to the lorry with Jan, and soon were waving back fondly to Jan's parents, and the friendly little farmhouse was vanishing out of sight.

The last they saw of Bootendorp was the high, forbidding spectre of van Hagel's house, and that shuttered window in the eaves behind which Zella was a prisoner.

"We shan't be long away from Zella," Shirley murmured. "We shall have found the secret when we see her again!"

The lorry sped on; their suitcases, rattling at their knees, gave a finality to the journey. A sense of exhilaration filled the chums.

This change had been forced on them all in a moment, a bolt out of the blue. Yet now that it had come, it had a thrill of its own. New sur-



roundings, new adventures and experiences, and, above all, the thrill of anticipation.

How would they fare in their new abode? Would they find rooms in Breukelen?

They recognised it again, with delight, as they drew into the spotless little town. The lorry bowled through the square, past the civic hall, and its miniature fire-station. And then, a little way beyond Jan's school it stopped outside a cosy, bright-fronted cafe. The roof was carved in the shape of a beehive, and a sign hanging from it proclaimed that it was also a family hotel.

"The Bijenkorf. It is here!" Jan said with a deep breath, as he jumped down from the lorry. "Come, I ask if there are rooms for you."

Shirley & Co. followed him in eagerly. The cafe was simple and homely, and bright as a new pin. The floor was scrubbed as white as the tables and chairs. Mrs. Golz, the proprietress, was polishing the brasswork of the big Dutch stove, and she was blue-eyed and fair and jolly, like Jan's mother, only a lot plumper.

She heard what Jan had to say, and then her kindly eyes rested upon the chums.

"Ja, I can gif you rooms—but not mooch service," she said. "I am short of help, you see? So I charge you only seven guilders a day."

Shirley felt a sudden sinking feeling inside her. She had not realised it would cost as much as that.

Dick and Tess, too, were looking at each other in stunned dismay. They had easily managed to meet their little expenses in Jan's warm, hospitable home. Now they understood the difficulties that his parents had foreseen for them to-day.

How could they manage on their own resources? At seven guilders a day their holiday would be over in a few days—their money would be gone!

### THE GIRL AT THE MILL

"SHIRLEY, we can't afford it—can't possibly stay here!" Tess whispered, startled.

"But—but it'll cost the same anywhere else!" gasped Dick.

"And we can't write home for more money, even if we wanted to. They're not allowed to send it!" Shirley groaned.

It was a shock they had not reckoned on. They saw themselves saying good-bye to Holland, sailing back home, their holiday cut short as a result of the blow van Hagel had dealt them to-day.

Jan tried to persuade them to return home with him, but that was the last thing the chums would do. They could not return; van Hagel would keep his threat, and they could not put Jan's folks again to the risk of losing their home. They must solve their own problem somehow if they were to save their holiday. But how? What could they do?

Shirley's wits were working feverishly—and then suddenly she remembered that here, in Holland, it was the usual thing for Dutch school-boys and girls to take jobs in their holidays, and thus earn money to pay for them.

"Mrs. Golz, you told us you were short of help," she burst out eagerly. "We don't mind what we do. Couldn't we work here for you and earn part of our keep?"

Tess and Dick held their breath. Was there a chance? Mrs. Golz looked at the three of them brightly, without surprise at the suggestion, and in a moment it was settled.

"Ja, goot! It is now, at week-ends, that I need help. I have other vorkers who come in on school days," she said. "You tree, vork for me full-time this week-end—zen I charge you only half for your rooms. Ja?"

The chums could have hugged her. They thanked her, and a moment later were carrying their bags up to their rooms, Jan helping them.

"It means," breathed Jan, "dot we will not be able to go to Boskoop to-day to find the second tulip-bowl.

But no matter. You will be free to go on Monday—"

"We will! And it won't be our last Monday in Holland, either!" Tess said in ecstasies of relief. "Shirley, you're a gem for thinking up that brain-wave! I do hope Mrs. Golz will let me work in the kitchen—I'm dying to learn Dutch cookery. And aren't these rooms lovely?"

They were in tiny rooms, high up in the beehive-shaped roof, but they were as dainty as the rooms of a dolls-house, and the snowy white curtains and linen dazzled the eye. Shirley and Tess shared the double room, and Dick took possession of the single one next door.

Mrs. Golz bustled up again almost before the girls had unpacked. She had two neatly folded bundles under her arm.

"I bring you more suitable dress to work in, ja!" she said, and smiled at their English cycling shorts and sweaters as she handed them the bundles. "Mine kitchen-man, he lend your English boy friend vot to wear."

Shirley and Tess did not know themselves when they came down-stairs a few minutes later. The blue print frocks they wore were supposed to be loose-fitting, so it did not matter that they were a little large for them. But the frilly white aprons and the dainty starched headresses were really chic. Even Dick said how cute they looked as soon as he saw them.

Dick was already in the kitchen, dressed for work. He wore baggy Dutch overalls, clogs, and a little round felt cap on his head. He would have passed for a brother of Jan, who was working beside him now, helping him carry traysloads of cakes under the genial orders of the kitchen porter.

"Jan, you don't have to do this—" began Shirley.

"I often help Vrow Golz. I likes her honey-cakes," chuckled Jan.

"Jolly glad to have him. There's plenty to do!" grinned Dick.

There was! The Beehive lived up to its name. The chums were soon as busy as bees. Shirley was darting between kitchen and cafe, serving customers; Tess was equally busy getting the practical experience in Dutch cookery that she wanted.

It seemed that the Beehive was famous for its honey cakes. Mrs. Golz and her cook baked whole van-loads of them every day, and delivered them all over the village, and to other villages, too.

Shirley and Tess learnt the secret of baking them, and the exact quantity of honey and butter, and cinnamon for flavouring, while Mrs. Golz told them proudly:

"I serve the mayor and everybody in Breukelen. I send my honey cakes even as far as Bootendorp, where you came from. Every week I send to the big house there."

"Mr. van Hagel's?" Shirley asked.

"Yes—to Heer van Hagel," chatted Mrs. Golz. "He is very rich man. Goot customer. I must remember," she reminded herself, "I haf an order for him now, for next Tuesday. Dot is my van you see in the yard now," she added.

The van was certainly a striking spectacle, for its body was designed in the shape of a big golden beehive.

But what caught Shirley's interest even more was the sight of Dick, looking completely unrecognisable, as he went out to load the van. Wearing those baggy Dutch overalls, and with the large wooden tray balanced on his head, the effect was so uncannily a disguise that she would not have known him herself!

Tess bubbled with laughter.

"Remind me to take a snap of him like that, Shirley!" she cried. "They'll love it at home!" she said.

But there was no time for snapshotting that week-end. Dick was out with the van, delivering honey cakes, most of the time. And Shirley and Tess were helping to make them, and serve them in the cafe, as fast as the customers consumed them.

Mrs. Golz was delighted with their help. She was a tireless worker herself, despite her plumpness and her placid manner, and she appreciated

the energy and willingness of the chums. She shooped them out of the kitchen on Monday as soon as her weekday workers arrived.

"You got an' make holiday now—you haf earned it," she said. "Off with you an' enjoy yourselves!"

Wearing their shorts and sweaters again, Shirley & Co. set off on their bikes in high excitement—to Boskoop.

The two-day interruption had given them fresh zeal for their quest, though it meant that Jan could not join them now. Jan was at school.

Dick quickly found the Boskoop road on the map, however, and they needed no guide to the exact location of the windmill. It was clearly shown on one of those six postcard-views given them so mysteriously by Zella.

They were following the winding sweep of the Rhine, where it flowed like a ribbon through Boskoop's endless quiltwork of bulb-fields, when Shirley gave an excited cry:

"The windmill! There it is—where all those gulls are circling. That's the mill we saw in the picture! But—but I say"—she stared, flabbergasted, from her saddle—"it's not a delerict; its sails are going round—"

"It's a working mill—it's still got people living in it!" gasped Dick. "Then how are we going to—to search inside it?"

The other windmills in their mystery quest had all been derelict, deserted. But this one was flourishingly alive, and now the chums saw a girl come out through the little doorway. Her smiling face was strangely familiar. She was holding a bowl of scraps to feed the gulls, and her attitude now aroused an instant memory.

"It's the girl in the picture!" Tess cried. "It's the girl the artist painted with the two tulip-bowls in her hands!"

Shirley took one spellbound look at that girl. For an instant it was as though she were back in the flower chateau, on the night of the ball, watching that picture come to life. Next instant all three were pedalling breathlessly across to that girl at the windmill door.

She answered their greetings with smiling Dutch courtesy. She laughed with them at the antics of the gulls, who were sweeping boldly to her hand, taking the scraps right out of her fingers.

"You are English? Holiday-makers? Me, I live here—I am the miller's daughter. I am Alma Klaar," she chatted.

"We're hoping you'll be able to help us, Alma," Shirley smiled. "We came here for a special reason. We're searching for a quaint little brass tulip-bowl—one of a pair, shaped like clogs, and we saw a picture of you holding them—"

She stopped, for the Dutch girl's smile had gone. She had stiffened like a rod, and was gazing at Shirley now with cold scorn.

"So you came for the tulip-bowl!" Her eyes flashed. "You have wasted your time! Go back and tell those who sent you!"

The chums jumped. Who did the girl think had sent them? What did she suspect?

"I—I think you're making a mistake," Shirley began breathlessly. "I'll be frank with you. We came to help a friend of ours—a girl to whom the tulip-bowl may be very important. A girl named—Zella. Now do you trust—"

"I know nothing of you. I know nothing of the tulip-bowl," Alma interrupted coldly. "It was owned, as you are well aware, by a boy who had a sister named Zella. I have no more to say. You are not Zella!"

"But she is our friend. Won't you believe that?" Shirley pleaded. "It is Zella we wish to help—"

But the Dutch girl had turned away. She was feeding the gulls again, ignoring the chums.

It was a crushing setback. They looked at each other dumbly. Were they to go back empty-handed, leaving the vital tulip-bowl here in the windmill, out of their grasp—all because this girl did not believe they were Zella's friends?

The gulls flew round Shirley's head while she pondered what to do. Absently she took some scraps of honey cake from her pocket and fed them at her finger-tips. But her wits had never worked more desperately. How could she win Alma's trust? How could she prove her sincerity?

Then she became aware that the Dutch girl was watching her, more softly, while the gulls pecked from her hand.

"I could not give you the tulip-bowl, even if I did trust you," Alma said in a more friendly tone. "I do not have it."

"But you know where it is? And you do believe now that we are truly Zella's friends?" Shirley coaxed her eagerly.

"Perhaps—maybe—I think I trust you," Alma's smile stole back in spite of herself. "But I cannot help you," she said slowly "because the one who has the tulip-bowl will never, never give it to you. It was entrusted to him by his dearest friend, and he believes it holds a very great secret!"

"Alma! Who is it who has the tulip-bowl? Where is he?" Shirley cried, echoed breathlessly by Tess and Dick.

"He is the artist who painted my picture—he is to be found in the studio in Schipol," Alma answered slowly. "But the tulip-bowl was entrusted to him by Zella's brother, and he will give it to no one in the world but Zella!"

### SHIRLEY'S PLAN

"SO we're up a gum-tree!" Dick groaned, as they wheeled their cycles back to the road. "We've tracked the tulip-bowl almost to its lair—"

"And we can't get it!" Tess sighed. "The only one who can get it is Zella herself—and she's locked up in van Hagel's house!"

"So our problem is how to get Zella out of van Hagel's house," said Shirley thoughtfully. "We did it before!"

Her chums looked at her closely. They knew that was their problem well enough. They knew, by the repulse they had had from Alma, that the possessor of the tulip-bowl would certainly give it up to no one but Zella.

But Zella was in Bootendorp, under closer guard than ever before. She was farther out of their reach than the tulip-bowl itself.

"Yes, that's our problem—and it's because we smuggled Zella out once before that van Hagel won't give us the chance to do it again," Dick said. "Any other bright ideas, Shirley?"

"We'd have to act fast," mused Shirley. "I can see us bowling up to house all right, in disguise—"

"Can you see us getting in?"

"But the job will be—to get her out before van Hagel suspects! If only—Shirley drew a deep breath—"if only we can get Zella out of the house, we can whisk her off with us as quickly as we came!"

"How's that? By jet plane?" Tess asked.

"No, you chump!" said Shirley. "By the cake van!"

"What?" Tess and Dick's eyes opened wide.

"The Beehive van's taking honey cakes to van Hagel's house tomorrow," Shirley reminded them softly. "We shall go with it! And if only our luck holds out, we shall bring Zella away with us—all the way to Schipol, to collect the mystery tulip-bowl!"

Mrs. Golz was delighted next day when the chums offered to help with the honey-cake round. She had not expected any further work from them till the week-end. Willem, the kitchen porter, was particularly grateful, because it was his job to drive the van, and he much appreciated having Dick to do the carrying for him.

"It's all right, Willem. You can do a little favour for us, if you like," Dick told him carelessly.

"Sure!" said Willem.

"We want to meet a friend at Bootendorp," Shirley explained.

"Then, if you won't mind, we'd like you to run us all out to Schipol. You can make it as snappy as you like, Willem!"

"Sure!" Willem agreed heartily. "Bootendorp is our last call—then I take you and your friend to Schipol. Goot!"

Tess and Shirley donned their Beehive working-frocks and aprons. Dick donned his baggy blue overalls, with the little round padded cap on which he balanced the cake-tray.

Directly after lunch they started out in the van—the girls sitting in front, beside Willem, and Dick in the back amongst the cakes.

There were plenty of calls to be made first in Breukelen and the neighbourhood. All the chums helped, delivering cakes at the various houses—and all three contrived to get their faces liberally daubed with flour.

Tess and Shirley would not have been recognised except on close scrutiny. Dick looked like a miller's boy—completely unrecognisable.

It was late afternoon, and already dusk by the time the van bowled off to Bootendorp. The chums were thankful for the darkness as they approached the familiar little village. And they were thrilled at the van's turn of speed. That golden beehive body was as light as Mrs. Golz' honey

had eyes for nothing else. "How many have you brought?" she asked in rapid Dutch. "Have you brought extra for me, besides what my master ordered?"

Dick mumbled something in a disguised voice, under the tray. He did not really know what Anna was talking about, but that did not matter. He beckoned her to follow him to the van, where Willem would attend to her.

Shirley could not have hoped for easier success. As Anna followed Dick to the van, she darted through the kitchen door. Unseen, unsuspected, she sped through the kitchen to the hall, while Anna's head was in the beehive van, beaming at the honey cakes.

Soft as a shadow, Shirley glided up the stairs. It was not her first intrusion into van Hagel's house. She knew her way to Zella's room.

Her feet made no sound on the richly carpeted stairs. She was carrying her clogs.

Next second she was on the top landing, outside Zella's door. Carefully she reached for the key in the lock and silently turned it. She must be cautious, now, not to startle Zella. One involuntary cry from Zella might betray her.

Softly but swiftly she pushed open



While Dick, dressed as a Dutch boy, delivered the honeycakes, Shirley remained out of sight—awaiting her opportunity to slip unseen into van Hagel's house.

cakes—and Willem was one of those drivers who made it a point of honour that nothing should pass him on the road.

He did not slow up till they came at last within sight of van Hagel's tall house.

"Where you meet your friend?" he inquired.

"Here!" answered Shirley quickly. "She lives at this house, Willem. We won't be a moment fetching her, if—"

—if you'll just help Dick with the cakes."

A thrill went through her as the van turned in through the tradesmen's gate. There was a light in the top window—Zella's window. But there was no light downstairs save at the back—in the kitchen. Was van Hagel not at home? If he were not, nothing now could thwart their plan. They would smuggle Zella out in the few seconds it took to hoodwink the maid.

The van crunched to a halt on the gravel drive. Shirley and Tess jumped down from their seats and concealed themselves round the angle of the wall by the kitchen door. Then, at their signal, Dick came to the door and knocked, holding a tray of honey cakes on top of his bent head.

Anna, the maid, opened the door with eager alacrity.

"Ah!" Obviously she had been waiting for those honey cakes, and

the door. And then her taut nerves met a painful jolt.

She was gazing into a deserted room. Zella was not there. The light was on, but the desk was bare. There were no school-books on it, and the whole room had a depressingly tidy, unoccupied look. Where—

"What is it you want—Shirley?" said an ironical voice behind her.

Shirley's heart almost stopped beating. She whirled round and saw van Hagel's tall, dark figure facing her on the landing. The shock momentarily robbed her of speech.

He looked at her, a grim smile on his face.

"Did you want Zella, perhaps?" he inquired.

He was smiling, almost mockingly, and Shirley answered spiritedly.

"Yes, Mr. van Hagel. I do want Zella. You've stopped me meeting her to-day, but I shall meet her another time."

"Will you?" I'm afraid you are a little too late," he said, and paused to give full effect to his words. "I have sent Zella right away—right out of reach of her young English friends. You will never see her again, Shirley. I have sent her to Germany!"

What a dreadful shock for Shirley! What can she and her chums do now? There will be further chapters of this enthralling serial in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.





# Detective June's STRANGEST CASE

By PETER LANGLEY

## RAINBOW CAVE

JUNE GAYNOR, niece of Noel Raymond, the famous detective, went to lonely Knoll Castle under an assumed name, Carolyn Stuart. She had been asked to go there by Ronald Garth, an author whose story about the legendary Green Archer was to be filmed there. He believed that a mysterious figure dressed as the Green Archer was threatening the film.

June received a terrific shock when she met Noel there, for she had believed that he was on the Continent. He disagreed with her theory that the Green Archer was a member of the film unit, and insisted that she must return to London.

An even worse shock followed when it seemed that Noel himself might be the Green Archer. Refusing to credit this, June went along to see her uncle in his office. He was not there, but June became very excited when she found a map with a cross marked on it.

**EXCITEDLY** June Gaynor stared down at the green cross on the map.

It had been drawn on that part of the rocky coast on which Knoll Castle was situated, and the girl detective's heart gave a startled leap as she read the name printed alongside it.

Rainbow Cave!  
That was the name which had been written on the strip of parchment she had found in the Green Archer's costume. Why was he so interested in Rainbow Cave? And—  
She caught in her breath.

And why was Noel Raymond also interested in it? Had he discovered that the cave was in some way connected with the Green Archer's vendetta against the film company?

"He must have done," June told herself. "Otherwise Nunky would never have put that cross against it on the map. Unless—"

She broke off, that worried, uneasy look returning to her face.

Unbidden had come whirling back the disturbing suspicions which had haunted her a few minutes back—the suspicions which inevitably had led to her asking herself whether Uncle Noel might not be the Green Archer.

Fiercely she forced those dreadful doubts from her mind and thoughtfully looked around the office.

Where was her uncle now?  
It was obvious that he had been here a few minutes ago. Then she remembered how Noel liked to take a stroll before breakfast. Suppose he had gone for a walk along the beach? Suppose he had gone to take a look at Rainbow Cave!

The possibility excited her, and she decided to go down to the seashore herself. If Noel were in the cave, then she would convince him of the correctness of her theory that the Green Archer was a member of the film unit, and together they would

explore—detective partners once more!

Her eyes asparkle, June hurried down the corridor and across the great stone-flagged hall. The oaken doors stood open. She darted through them and across the courtyard.

A ghostly white mist blanketed the castle, and it was only with difficulty that she managed to locate the path which led to the steep steps cut in the face of the cliff.

Descending them, she gained the beach and looked about her. Dimly through the sea fog she could see the still water lapping against the loose rocks just ahead. Her brief study of the map had shown her that Rainbow Cave was situated almost beneath the castle, about a hundred yards to her right.

The morning sun was beginning to glow redly through the white vapour as June groped her way along the sands. Massive boulders, slippery with seaweed, made progress difficult, but at last she glimpsed a great black gap in the cliff-face—the mouth of a huge cavern.

Rainbow Cave!  
She paused, and her heart gave a delighted leap as she saw a tall, athletic figure standing by the entrance to the cavern.

Noel Raymond!  
She was about to hail him when something about his attitude made her hesitate. He was peering out to sea, and there was a look of anxious concentration on his face. It was as if he were waiting and watching, but what could he be expecting to see on this lonely strip of coast?

Abruptly the stillness was broken. From seawards came the creak of oars. Instantly the famous detective was galvanised into life. He darted into the cavern, but swiftly reappeared, and now he was carrying an electric lantern.

Dot—dash—dot!  
A green light winked in and out. June caught in her breath. Noel was signalling to the as yet unseen boat. What did it mean?

An answering light flashed out, and then through the thinning mist there loomed a rowboat. Two burly men were at the oars, and a third man, wearing a sou'-wester and oilskins, and holding a signalling lamp, stood in the bows.

Noel ran down the shelving beach towards the oncoming boat.

"You're late," he called. "I've been waiting here over ten minutes."

"The mist delayed us," said the man in the sou'-wester.

One of his companions laughed, as he laid aside his oar and jumped out into the shallow water, holding the boat steady.

"Still, it has its uses," he declared. "No fear of the coastguards spotting us."

June, crouching behind the boulder, gave a startled gasp.

Why should the men who had come to meet Noel not wish to be seen? Could it be that secretly they were helping him to track down the Green Archer?

The man in the bows regarded the detective disappointedly.

"You haven't brought either of the green boxes," he commented.

Noel shook his head.

"No—I didn't think it wise to try to get them from the west wing," he said. "All the film gear is stowed away there, and technicians have been tramping in and out since early on. But don't worry. I'll let you have it as soon as I can."

The man in the sou'-wester frowned. "Well, don't keep us waiting too long. Those green boxes are mighty important—especially now that we can't use the castle."

June felt her brain whirl. What did this strange conversation mean? What could the green boxes contain? And what exactly was Noel up to?

The bearded seaman holding the boat steady gave another booming laugh.

"Don't fret, Jabe," he said. "You can bet your boots the Green Archer will wrangle things—and scare those pesky film people out o' the castle."

And cheerfully he clapped the detective across the shoulders.

June could hardly believe her own ears. But worse was to follow. Her uncle grinned back.

"Of course I will," he said. "But my first job is to smuggle out those green boxes. I'll do it after dark—either to-night or to-morrow. Look out for the green light. When you see it you'll know the coast is clear."

"Okay," said the bearded man, and clambered back into the boat while his companion in the sou'-wester nodded.

"Very well, we'll be watching out," he said. "So long, Green Archer."

"So long," was Noel's calm reply.

June felt the blood drain from her cheeks and she had to clutch at the rock for support, so overwhelming was the shock.

One of the unknown men had addressed her uncle as "Green Archer" and Noel had actually accepted the name as if it were his own!

Icy fingers seemed to clutch at June's heart, and suddenly she felt faint and dazed.

Was it possible that those awful suspicions she had for long secretly held were true?

**This Week June Discovers  
The Identity Of The Green  
Archer**

Could it be that the uncle she admired and loved was indeed the rascally Green Archer?

### JUNE DISOBEYS ORDERS

"THERE must be some mistake! I can't believe it! Perhaps nunky is just playing a part—fooling those men for his own ends!" Eagerly June snatched at the possibility. Better anything than to believe that her trust had been cruelly betrayed.

Feverishly she developed the slim hope that had come to her.

The men in the boat were in league with the real Green Archer. Somehow Noel had discovered they intended to meet the mystery plotter this morning, so, anxious to discover all he could, he had daringly decided to impersonate the rascal. Perhaps he had managed to decoy the real Green Archer away. Perhaps—

June's thoughts came to an abrupt end, and tears spurted to her eyes. For, loyal though she was, she knew her theory would not stand up against the facts.

The mist had almost gone so the men in the boat had had a good view of the detective. So how could they possibly have been deceived? It wasn't as if Noel had made any attempt to disguise himself.

Besides, there were all those strange incidents which had puzzled her ever since Noel had returned from the Continent. If what she now feared were true, then they could be easily explained.

If Noel were indeed the Green Archer, then it was obvious why he had smashed that lovely porcelain statuette in the Folkestone museum—in order to make it seem that the ancient legend was coming true.

And why he was so anxious for her to leave Knoll Castle—because he feared that she might begin to suspect the rascally double role he was playing.

Then there was the ransacking of her suitcase—the stealing back of the Green Archer's costume and incriminating note. The mystery of how the case had been opened was solved, if Noel were the thief, for he could easily have helped himself to her duplicate set of keys.

As June wrestled with her nightmare thoughts, the men in the boat went rowing back to the open sea, while Noel, picking up his signalling lamp, disappeared into Rainbow Cave. "I can't believe it," June whispered to herself. "It seems so incredible. Nunky has always been the soul of honour, and—"

She broke off, her heart giving a startled leap. Suddenly she had remembered two facts which seemed to contradict all the grim facts now teeming in her brain.

Those half-burnt pages from her uncle's diary which she had found in his flat! They had suggested that the detective was very anxious to get to the bottom of the Green Archer mystery. Surely if he were the Green Archer he would not have written in the way that he had done.

Then there was the fingerprint on the threatening note which the Green Archer had sent Ronald Garth, the film author. June had definitely proved that that print was not Noel's.

New colour flushed her cheeks, and impulsively she began to clamber over the loose rocks.

She must have things out with Noel once and for all—must ask him to explain, not only his disturbing conversation with the three men in the boat, but all the rest of his strange behaviour.

Not until she had heard what he had to say would she condemn him.

Eager to put an end to the awful suspense which tore at her heart, June ran into the great cavern.

"Nunky!" she called. "Nunky!" To her surprise there came no response, nor could she see anything of the detective.

Wonderingly she gazed about her. It instantly became clear how the cave had got its name. At the back of it was a curved strata of rock

peppered with tiny particles of mica, iron and other minerals, and these, reflecting back the light, glowed colourfully.

But where was Noel? She was positive she had seen him enter the cave. Perhaps there was another exit? She searched, but failed to find one.

"Nunky!" she called once more. Only the echoes of her own voice answered her, and with a startled gasp she realised that she was now the only occupant. Her uncle had vanished as completely as if the floor had opened and swallowed him up.

"There must be some secret way out," she told herself, and stared down at the trail of footprints the detective had left behind. They ran across the smooth sand, then came to an abrupt end by a pile of loose boulders. "I wonder—" she began, then broke off, peering at the footprints in sudden astonishment.

They had been made by crepe rubber soles, but that was not the only fact June's sharp eyes had discovered. There was something else—something which set her heart hammering wildly.

"My goodness!" she gasped. "Can

your trying to get round me," he declared. "This case is far too dangerous for you to tackle. You must leave immediately after breakfast."

"Leave! Jumpin' mackerel, who's talkin' about leaving?" demanded a surprised voice, and a small excitable man, who was almost as broad as he was high, emerged from the hall.

It was Theodore Cronberg, the producer of the film, and he glared from Noel to June.

"Well, out with it!" he roared. "Who's talking of leaving?"

Noel indicated June. "It's Miss—er—Stuart," he said, giving June the name she had assumed when joining the film company. "It appears that important business has called her back to London."

"What!" The producer gave an exasperated roar.

"There is no need to worry, sir," went on Noel. "I am sure I can secure a good substitute. Fortunately, Miss Stuart has only a minor part in the film, so it won't be difficult to replace her. Of course, Miss Stuart is very sorry to leave you in the lurch like this, but something has arisen



"Surely you recognise the lighter, nunky?" said June—and then waited tensely. For his answer would prove whether or not her startling suspicions regarding Noel Raymond were true!

it be possible! Is that the explanation?"

She did not stop to try to answer the startled question—which had flashed into her mind, but turned and darted out of the cave, running along the beach.

She must get back to the castle without delay. Now, more than ever, she must interview Noel. Though she had half-suspected he might have made his way there, nevertheless it was a shock when she turned into the courtyard and found him standing in the doorway, his hands in his pockets, enjoying a cigarette, just as if he had strolled out straight from the breakfast table.

How on earth had he managed to get here so quickly? And how had he vanished from Rainbow Cave?

But those questions must wait. There were others, much more important and pressing, she wanted to ask. Eagerly she hailed him, and he turned, his expression half of relief, half of disapproval.

"So there you are, June!" he exclaimed. "I was beginning to wonder what had become of you. The taxi will arrive at any moment, you know. I hope you haven't forgotten that you're catching the morning train."

June gave a start. In view of all that had happened the fact that her uncle had insisted that she should return to London this morning had gone clean from her mind.

"But, nunky—" she began. He raised his hand, his manner kindly but firm.

"Sorry, my dear, but it's no use

that gives her no option. Isn't that so, my dear?"

The girl detective hesitated. Never before had she gone against Noel's wishes. Always she had obeyed him implicitly. But then never before had there been any reason to doubt his motives.

She thought of her strange discoveries down on the beach. Oh, she could not go on until she had put her startling suspicion to the test—until she had found out the truth about her uncle.

Noel frowned, and despite herself June winced at the hurt, reproachful look in his eyes.

"Isn't that so, my dear?" he repeated. "Isn't it essential that you leave for London right away?"

For a fraction of a second longer June continued to hesitate, a fierce struggle going on within her, then she shook her head.

"As a matter of fact, it isn't," she said.

Noel Raymond was staggered. He gazed at her incredulously, and in his startled surprise he gripped her arm.

"But, my dear—" he began.

June, though she found it hard to resist the almost pleading look in his eyes, hardened her heart. Smilingly she turned to the still glaring producer.

"I am afraid Mr. Raymond has made a mistake," she said. "At one time I thought I might have to leave, but now other circumstances have arisen and so I can remain until the film's completed." And with another smile at the relieved producer, she



walked up the steps and into the castle.

But as she passed the famous detective she was appalled by the furious glare in his grey eyes. Such a look she had never seen in them before, and as she thought of what had happened down on the beach, thought, too of the footprints she had found in Rainbow Cave, her lips tightened determinedly.

No matter how much her defiance might upset Noel, she did not mean to leave Knoll Castle until she had unearthed the whole sensational truth—until the Green Archer, no matter who he might be, had been unmasked.

### A DRAMATIC DISCOVERY

"GOLLY, still gormandising?"

"You'd better get a move on, my girl, or you'll have the Great Theodore roaring his head off!"

"Yep—the rehearsal's timed to begin in a quarter of an hour!"

June, seated at the dining table, apparently finishing off a late breakfast, but actually deep in thought, looked up with a start as those laughing, teasing voices hailed her.

Grouped in the doorway were plump Tilly Norton, Bob Staines and the rest of the young filmmakers known as The Tweenies, and with a start June saw that they had already changed and made-up.

"Phew! I'll have to fly!" she cried, jumping up from the table. "Thanks for the reminder. See you all later."

And with an agitated wave of the hand June dashed up to the dormitory she shared with five of the other girls.

The school uniform and bright red blazer which, as the schoolgirl daughter of the supposed owner of the castle, she was to wear in the film, was spread out on her bed, and hastily she changed into them.

She could not help smiling when she looked at herself in the mirror. The clothes took several years off her age.

"I look a regular Fourth Form tomboy!" she exclaimed. "No one would mistake me for a serious detective in this rig-out."

Thought of her job made her remember her uneasy suspicions about Noel Raymond, and the smile faded from her face, to be replaced by a worried frown—a frown which still persisted when she went downstairs and submitted herself to the skilled attention of Mrs. Daintry, the fat, motherly make-up artist.

From her she learnt that three scenes were to be rehearsed to-day. One was to feature the Tweenies, one Cecilia Selwyn, the glamorous star, and Donald Hinton, the detective hero of the film, and the third the actor who was to enact the role of the legendary Green Archer.

When she went out into the courtyard, June found the rest of the unit already there. Cameras had been fixed up, electricians were busy with cables, and the trim, white-bloused Script Girl was in anxious consultation with the Props Man.

Theodore Cronberg, the inevitable cigar clamped between his teeth was gazing up at the sky. It was now blue and sunny, but a few wisps of clammy mist still clung to the castle walls.

Beside the excitable producer stood Noel Raymond, and June's heart thumped anxiously as she gazed across at him.

How could she put her startling suspicions to the test?

After the way she had defied him before breakfast, it would be useless to question him, even if she now wished to do so.

Then how was she to discover the truth?

An impatient shout from Mr. Cronberg interrupted her thoughts. He was waving to herself and the rest of the Tweenies. Hurriedly they all mounted the stone steps to the battlements. From their scripts they knew exactly what was required of them.

June, showing her school chums around the castle, was supposed to come upon the Green Archer poised on the battlements, an arrow fitted to his longbow. Screaming, June was to

turn and lead a wild rush from the scene.

But all that, though it appeared earlier in the film, was to be shot later. All that Mr. Cronberg was concerned with now was their headlong dash down the steps and across the courtyard.

A simple scene, but it took half an hour before the excitable little producer was satisfied. Time and again he made June & Co. embark upon that panic-stricken flight. Up and down the winding stairs they trudged until they felt they would never please him, but suddenly Theodore Cronberg's ferocious scowl faded and he grinned.

"Fine! Fine! That's just it!" he cried. "Forward, cameras. Guess we'll shoot that bit before these kids go off the boil!"

Despite her worries, June could not help being thrilled as for the twentieth time she led the headlong charge down to the courtyard. She was actually being filmed!

Panting, exhausted, the Tweenies pulled up as soon as they were out of camera range, fanned their hot, perspiring faces and looked anxiously back at the producer. But they need not have worried.

"Good show, kids. You did fine," he said.

The Tweenies now gathered around to watch the two famous stars in action, but June had no eyes for the rest of the rehearsal. Her gaze remained riveted on Noel Raymond, now seated beside the producer, a script on his knee.

Covertly she studied him, noting the moody frown between his eyes, the thin, angry way his lips were compressed. His obvious preoccupation was not with the film, but with his own thoughts.

Watching him now, critically—through, as it were, new eyes—she noticed several small details about him she had not observed before, and suddenly she felt that, after all, she must have a talk with him.

Hardly had the thought come than the detective, after making a hurried excuse to Theodore Cronberg, rose to his feet and briskly threaded his way through the onlookers gathered behind the cameras.

Before June could realise his intention, he had disappeared into the castle. Quickly she hurried after him. Now was her chance to see him on her own.

On entering the great hall there was no sign of Noel, but Bromley, the gray-haired butler, informed her that the detective had gone in the direction of the West Wing.

With a nod and a smile June went rushing up the broad stairs. What had taken Noel to the West Wing? she wondered, and caught in her breath as she remembered that cryptic conversation down on the beach.

It was in the unoccupied West Wing where the mysterious green boxes the three fishermen had mentioned were kept. Had Noel seized his opportunity, now that the rest of the film company was out of doors, to smuggle them down to the Rainbow Cave, in readiness for handing over that night?

A few hours ago June would have been indignant with herself for suspecting such a thing, but now all she felt was a burning determination to discover the truth.

It was cautiously that she made her way down the corridor leading to the West Wing where, for safety's sake, all the costumes and valuable film gear was kept when not in use.

The massive oaken door at the far end of the corridor stood open, and a big, old-fashioned key hung in the lock.

June's eyes gleamed. Only Noel had a key to the West Wing, so obviously it must have been he who had entered.

She tip-toed through the doorway, to find herself in a bare, circular chamber, its ancient roof supported by carved stone columns. On the floor stood hampers of theatrical costumes, spare cameras, electrical gear of all kinds, and an amazing

collection of props to be used in the film.

There was no sign of Noel Raymond, but there were several doors leading to other rooms, and one of them was ajar.

Her heart thumping, the girl detective stole across to it and she was just about to open it further and peer through when with startling suddenness she felt her arm seized.

"What are you up to now? How dare you come up here?"

It was Noel himself who rapped out the words, and never had June known him so upset and angry.

"I'm sorry, nunky!" she gasped. "I didn't think I was doing any harm. I—I wanted to speak to you."

Instantly his manner changed. He let go of her arm and smiled.

"You mean you want to apologise for going against my orders this morning?" he asked.

"I'm afraid not, nunky. You see—"

His smile faded and he cut her short.

"What is it you want to ask me about then?" he asked impatiently.

"I won't keep you a moment, nunky," June said hurriedly. "I only want to give you this. You must have dropped it down in the courtyard just now."

From her pocket she produced a distinctive little silver lighter. But he made no attempt to take it.

"You must have made a mistake, my dear. It wasn't I who dropped it."

"Oh, but it must have been!" June gave a cry of concern. "Surely you recognise the lighter, nunky? Why, it's the lighter I gave you last Christmas!"

Noel took it from her, peered at it, patted his right-hand pocket, then abruptly smiled.

"Of course it is! How stupid of me not to recognise it at once!" he exclaimed. "It must be this Green Archer business. I've no room in my head for anything but that."

He gazed admiringly down at the lighter, then gave June an apologetic pat.

"Please forgive me, my dear," he said. "And thanks for bringing it up. I'd rather lose almost anything than your Christmas present. It's been the most useful gift I've had for years."

As he spoke, he took out a packet of cigarettes, extracted one and put it between his lips. Next moment his head bent to light it—which was just as well, otherwise he could not have failed to have noticed June's extraordinary expression.

Her eyes dilated with horror, she was gazing at him as if he were some nightmare spectre.

And no wonder. For she had never given her uncle a lighter at Christmas. Actually, it had been he who had given that lighter to her!

Then why had he claimed it as his own? Why had he accepted all she had said as if it had been the truth?

June's heart gave a wild leap, then her lips compressed as she remembered her sensational discoveries down in Rainbow Cave.

Those footprints left by Noel had shown that he had been wearing crepe rubber soles, but—

Her uncle had always disliked that kind of sole!

Even more significant, on measuring one of the prints she had discovered that it had been made by a size 8 shoe.

But her uncle always wore 9's.

Those two small, but startling facts had put a new suspicion into her head, and it had been because of that suspicion that she had decided on the cigarette lighter test.

This man, now unsuspectingly lighting his cigarette, was the Green Archer—there could be no possible doubt about that.

But—

He was not Noel Raymond—not the uncle she had always admired and loved. He was—a fraud! A cunning impostor!

What will June do now in the light of this startling revelation? Be sure to read next week's exciting chapters.



### WHEN ZINKO ESCAPED

"If Zinko is half as wonderful a cat as you say he is, Aunt," said Joy Oliver to her Aunt Jemima, "he'll win the first prize at the show."

"Of course he'll take the first prize—if someone doesn't take him first, Joy," said Aunt Jemima. "And that's why I'm so doubtful about leaving him in your care on this railway station."

"Oh, Aunt," protested Joy, in reproach. "I'll look after him." Joy looked down at the basket in which the cat was housed. Now and then it mewled, but most of the time it was quiet. As the basket was securely shut, Joy did not see how Zinko could escape; and the odds against highway robbers stealing a cat seemed tremendous.

Besides, there were only two other people on the railway platform, and they looked harmless.

But Aunt Jemima was nervous. She knew that Joy was happy-go-lucky and high-spirited, and she feared that Joy might not keep a close eye on the basket.

Joy, who had been staying with her Aunt Jemima only recently, had not yet seen Zinko, for the cat had been having some special treatment in the care of a vet.

"Rely on me, Aunt," said Joy. "You go and change the ticket or whatever it is you want to do. I'll look after Zinko."

"Very well. If you let anything happen to him I shall never, never forgive you."

"No, Aunt."

Aunt Jemima walked off, then turned back suddenly.

"And beware of the general!" she exclaimed.

"What general? Which general?" asked Joy, in surprise. She had seen no general.

"General—oh, I forget his name. He, too, is a cat fancier. Twice he has mistaken my cat for his mangy creature. Beware of him. I saw him not long ago—he must be on his way to the show. He is wearing a check suit, red tie and a green hat."

"Very well, Aunt," said Joy. "Off went her aunt, leaving her to take sole charge of one Persian cat of immense value."

"Ywowowow!" said the cat. Joy looked down at the basket and smiled.

"Ywowowow!" she answered. It was a perfect cat sound. For Joy was a mimic and a ventriloquist. "I bet you think it's another cat, eh?" she chuckled.

"Yew-w-w-wee!" The cat's cry ended in a scream and there was the sound of struggling in the basket.

Zinko must be in trouble—though how a cat alone in a basket could run into trouble, Joy did not know. Perhaps it had caught a claw in the side of the basket.

Unbuckling the basket, but taking care not to give the cat a chance to escape, Joy peeped in.

Sure enough, the poor cat had caught its claw and could not free it. "I'll fix that," said Joy comfortingly.

She opened the lid wider and neatly unfixd the claw. It was an act of pure kindness for which Zinko should have been grateful—and Zinko was grateful, too. For with his claw freed, there was now absolutely nothing to prevent his jumping out of the basket to freedom!

When that furry shape suddenly brushed past her cheek, Joy had the shock of her life. In utter dismay she watched Zinko spring first on to the wall farther along the platform, and then on to a tree.

In absolute panic, Joy ran to the spot, and then back as she heard Aunt Jemima's voice.

The train was not due for another ten minutes—time enough for her to catch Zinko, as she surely could by luring him with cat noises. But meanwhile—what of Aunt Jemima?

The thought of her aunt's returning and finding Zinko missing shook Joy considerably. She just couldn't face that. Better to let aunt think all was well, and then afterwards get Zinko.

Joy hurriedly shut down the basket. Then, realizing that if her aunt picked it up she would notice the loss of weight, Joy hurriedly seized a rock from the ornamental border on top of the platform wall, dumped it in the basket, put the embroidered velvet cloth over it, and shut the lid.

"Well?" said Aunt Jemima.

Joy stooped down to the basket.

"Ywowowow!" she imitated realistically.

Aunt Jemima smiled.

### Fun With The Girl Ventriloquist—On The Trail Of The Missing Prize Cat

"Dear Zinko—such an unmistakable voice." Joy winked at the poster on the wall.

"Doesn't sound like a block of stone certainly!" she said.

"There's nothing like a block of stone about Zinko," said Aunt Jemima proudly. "Zinko, speak to mamma!" she added to the basket.

"Ywowow!" went Joy, ventriloquising so that the sound seemed to come from inside the basket.

Aunt Jemima beamed. She knew nothing about Joy's gifts of ventriloquism and mimicry.

"Dear Zinko!" she said. "I think, before the train comes, that I will take Zinko for a walk!" she added.

"A walk?" echoed Joy, in horror. "I'll open the basket. I have a lead," explained Aunt Jemima.

"Oh golly!" gasped Joy, in dismay; for if Aunt Jemima even lifted the lid an inch, she would know the truth. "I—I should mind the dogs—"

"Dogs? What dogs?"

"A savage dog might attack him and—" Joy saw the way to gain a moment's respite. "Oh, listen, Aunt!" she added, in pretended alarm.

A ferocious, realistic dog noise seemed to come from the far side of a nearby wall. Joy was ventriloquising again.

"Great goodness!" cried Aunt Jemima. "Keep that dog away!"

Joy gave an inward chuckle. Aunt Jemima had changed her mind about opening the basket, and had thrown her coat over it to cut the horrid doggy sound off from Zinko.

"Don't let it come near poor Zinko!" Aunt Jemima said frantically. "Leave it to me, Aunt. I'll soon drive it away." And Joy, heaving a sigh of relief, went over the wall.

Now to find Zinko! She crossed the garden and reached the road, to see a man standing by a tree.

"Have you seen a Persian cat?" Joy asked him anxiously.

"Why, sure! That gent over there is getting it."

Joy turned, and saw a man in a grey check suit crawling on all fours, making odd noises; and there, not half a dozen yards in front of him, was a cat.

"Zinko!" she gasped. "Oh, goodie!" She went forward softly, heaving a sigh of immense relief; for now she would soon have Zinko back again.

But Joy's delight and relief were short-lived; for when she was a yard from the man she saw a smartly liveried chauffeur appear.



"The milk, sir," he said, and saluted as he held out a saucer of milk. "I said it was for the general, as you instructed me to, sir."

The general! The cat thief—according to Aunt Jemima!

Joy fell back; her eyes rounded with horror as the man in the check suit turned, and revealed a red tie. He was the general—the man she had to beware of; the man who thought this cat was his.

And Zinko was within a yard of being in his clutches!

### JOY MAKES A MISTAKE

Joy was horrified, shocked, and dismayed. She didn't know what to do. There was the missing Zinko, ready to be caught; but the general thought it was his cat!

Suppose he took hold of Zinko and claimed him? Suppose he drove off in his waiting car with the cat?

"My golly, I could never face Aunt Jemima again," groaned Joy. She simply had to get Zinko away from the general.

The general was luring the cat into ambush, using all his strategy and field craft tactics.

"I've got him, Mushden," whispered the general to the chauffeur. "Here, puss!"

Joy was desperate. As she saw the chauffeur move forward, she crept towards the bushes; and there, taking a breath, she imitated the song of a bird.

Zinko paused. He lifted his head; he looked. Birds fascinated Zinko.

With a spring, he leaped up a tree in search of the songster, landing on a branch only a yard from Joy.

"He's gone!" yelled the general, and charged forward, knocking Joy flying. "Pardon," he said, lifting his green hat. "My fault!"

Then, stepping over Joy as she scrambled to rise, he looked up at the branch where Zinko crouched, and called his chauffeur.

"Mushden!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Shin up that tree."

"Eg pardon, sir?" asked the chauffeur stiffly. "Tree climbing is er—not one of my accomplishments."

"Then hold my hat while I climb!" That gave Joy her grand chance. "Gr-r-r-r-r!" she snarled, imitating a ferocious dog.

She was just behind the chauffeur, and he leaped high in the air, collared with the general and both fell back. Then they looked round anxiously for the savage dog.

Zinko did the obvious thing and climbed high up the tree, but as neither the general nor his chauffeur had noticed that, Joy again seized her chance.

She wanted them to get off the scene so that she could capture Zinko.

"There—after it—that lorry!" she cried wildly.

Joy rushed at a large lorry that was reversing, and the general and the chauffeur rushed after her, thinking that she had seen Zinko.

"Mind the puddle" Joy warned the driver of the lorry, as he drove back—and she pointed to it. She was just beside it, and did not want to be splashed.

"Mind the puddle yourself," scoffed the driver, a young man with an ear-to-ear grin.

Ss-s-s-s-s! went the mud over Joy. She fell back in horror.

"Why, you—you silly chump!" she cried crossly. "Look at me!"

"If you saw the puddle, why did you stand there, eh?"

He jumped down and chortled with mirth as Joy wiped off the mud, and then he nearly collided with the general.

"Have you seen a cat?" asked the general.

"I have."

"Where?"

"On that windowsill on the fourth floor of the Station Hotel," said the vanman, pointing high up.

"The cat couldn't have jumped from the ground up there," protested the general.

"That's right, gov'nor. It stepped on the sill from inside the flat there. It's where it lives. Haw, haw, haw!"

Joy wiped her face of mud, and for the first time felt a little sympathy for the general. The vanman, still chortling, opened his van door. He was carrying laundry, and threw in a bundle.

Meanwhile, the general was hunting round the lorry for Zinko.

"Ywowowowow!" went Joy.

When that cat call sounded, the general was at the front of the lorry, and the chauffeur on the far side, Joy brought her ventriloquism into use, imitating the chauffeur's voice.

"He's in the van, sir!"

"In the van! Good, good! Trapped!" The general rushed to the open doors of the van, and looked inside. There were baskets, and there were large bundles of laundry tied up in sheets and towels. The cat might have been anywhere amongst them.

Just to make sure that the general was duly convinced, Joy went to the front of the lorry and into the driver's cab. There she found a small sight hole through which the driver could look back, and Joy made use of it to give a loud, pathetic meeeeuw!

"There—heard him?" cried the general. "I may be a bit short-sighted but I'm not deaf. Out with all these things. You stand there, Mushden, while I go inside."

Joy hurried away. While they were busy dumping the laundry out into the road she could get Zinko down from the tree. Easy!

When she looked back she saw the general in his shirtsleeves, passing out laundry baskets to his chauffeur, who piled them up on the kerb. Then bundles of laundry followed. Both men were leaving nothing unturned in their efforts to trace the cat.

"What a good thing the vanman has such a rollicking sense of humour," Joy told herself, with a chuckle. "How he will laugh when he sees what's happening—and I don't think!"

Joy went at once to the tree, and there, to her delight, she saw the cat. "Cheers!" said Joy gladly.

She stood at the bottom of the tree, and sang like a bird in the sweetest, most alluring way. It was quite irresistible, and down the tree came the bird-lover.

Joy was waiting, hand poised. A quick snatch and she had him.

At first the Persian struggled, but Joy made such soothing, purring, noises that he was appeased, and she was able to walk with him across the garden to the wall which backed on to the platform where she had left Aunt Jemima.

Joy holding the cat out of sight, peeped over the wall.

There, sure enough, was Aunt Jemima. But where was the basket? There was no sign of it.

"Aunt!" cried Joy, aghast.

Aunt Jemima wheeled, startled. "So there you are! Good gracious, Joy—where have you been?"

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Joy ignored that question and asked another more important.

"The basket—Zinko, Aunt? What's happened?"

Aunt Jemima was quite calm. "Shush! The general is about," she said, hurrying towards her niece. "I have sent Zinko in his basket with Mrs. Watlington, who has gone on to the show with her special cat van. I shall go by train. In any case, I had to wait for you. Where have you been?"

Joy did not answer, but it was all she could do to smother a yelp, for she had had to hold the cat behind her and it was not easy. It was easier for the cat, for, having claws, he could get a decent grip on Joy—and did.

"Ooo!" gasped Joy. Joy had worries in plenty. The basket with the stone in it had gone to the show! And here she was with Zinko—and no basket!

How on earth was she to get round this? She couldn't carry Zinko in her arms—and certainly not behind her back, for he was proving that to her now.

"Joy, stop wriggling in that absurd way," snapped Aunt Jemima. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing, Aunt," said Joy. "Yowp!" "Have you a pin sticking in you? And why are you leaning forward and—good gracious!" gasped Aunt Jemima in horror.

For at that moment the cat wriggled up Joy's back and, taking a grip on her hair, scanned the horizon from the top of her head.

"Joy! Where did you get that cat?" asked Aunt Jemima. "Oh, you silly ninny! It's the general's!"

### SENSATIONS AT THE SHOW

Joy let go of the cat, which Aunt Jemima skilfully seized.

"The—the general's cat? Then—then where is Zinko?" asked Joy. "Oh, Aunt! Where can he be?"

"I told you—in the basket."

"You—you looked?"

"Of course not! I did not open it. You heard it and I heard it. A cat cannot escape through the mesh of a basket. Zinko has gone to the show. This is the general's cat, and I am returning it to him now."

Leaving Joy with her brain in a complete whirl, Aunt Jemima strode away.

That that cat was the one from the basket, Joy did not doubt. But if it was not Zinko, then it had not been Zinko Aunt Jemima had been guarding.

Where was the precious, prize-winning Zinko, Aunt Jemima's pet?

Leaving Aunt Jemima with the cat, Joy wheeled and dashed back to the laundry van to tell the general that his cat was found.

She arrived to find him staggering off with a laundry basket, and to see the laundry man dancing and shouting with rage.

"Look at my van! Who's going to pack it all back?" he shouted.

"The general will compensate you," said the chauffeur. "Here is sixpence. He has found his cat!"

"Where?" cried Joy.

"In the van. In the basket that he is carrying now!"

Joy's head was in a whirl. "But how did it get there?" she gasped. "General! Stop!"

The general took no notice of Joy, but marched on to his waiting car. There seemed only one way of making him attend—to let him think that the angry vanman was behind him.

"Hi!" ventriloquised Joy in a gruff voice hardly distinguishable from the vanman's. "I want compensation. Stop, or I'll knock that basket out of your hands."

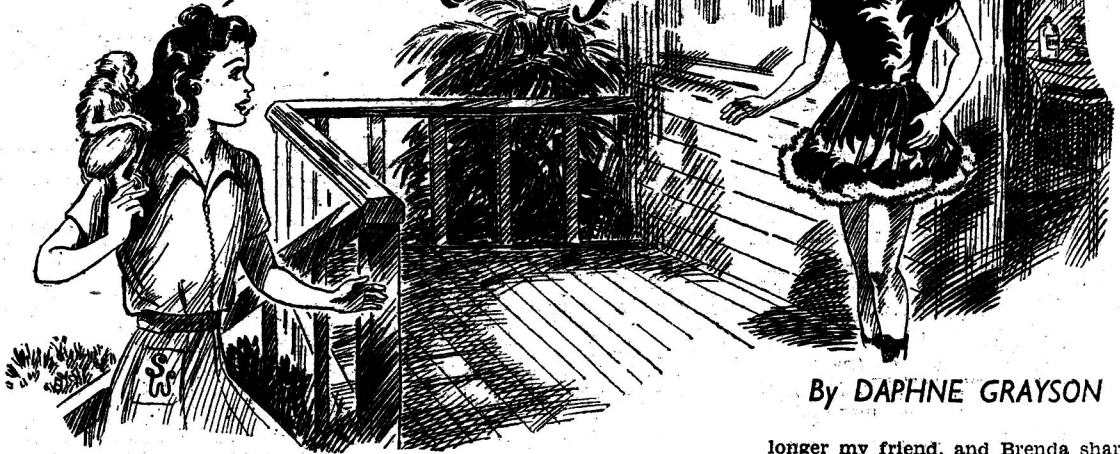
The general halted and turned. In surprise he looked for the vanman, but saw only Joy.

"Oh, general," she said in honeyed tone. "Are you quite sure that is a cat, you have in the basket?"

He held the basket forward so that Joy could hear; and from it came a soft, out plaintive miaow. Unless the

(Please turn to the back page.)

# The Merrymakers' Island College



By DAPHNE GRAYSON

## A BROKEN FRIENDSHIP

"A LARGE money prize, a silver cup, and a film test—just for winning an ice-skating contest!" exclaimed Johnny Briggs enthusiastically. "Gosh! I could do that standing on my head!"

"More likely flat on your back," chuckled blue-eyed Sally Warner. "That's why you will not be chosen to represent the college, Johnny!"

"The idea of the contest is to finish upright and on your feet," grinned Don Weston.

"Your skating may be amusing, Johnny, but if I may say so it is a little lacking in grace and dignity," added Fay Manners.

There was a laugh from the little group crowded around the brightly coloured poster fixed to a large gum tree in the road outside the International College on Waloorie Island, where Sally & Co. and their friends were students.

The poster announced the opening of a new ice-rink in Sarneville that afternoon, with, among the many attractions, a handsome prize and possible film-fame for the winning pair of amateur skaters.

"We want that cup among our other trophies here at the college," said Sally thoughtfully. "And I know who'll be able to get it for us. Ingrid Nielsen and Helga Bergen—our super-skaters! They'll just romp home with the prizes. What about it, Helga?" she called gaily, to the girl hovering on the fringe of the crowd. "Can we count on you?"

Helga Bergen's head, with its riotous mass of flaxen curls, jerked up; there was a flush of excitement on her attractive face as she gazed at Sally with shining forget-me-not blue eyes.

"Oh, yes!" she exclaimed, in her entrancing Norwegian accent. "It will be so lovely to skate again after so long. We try very hard and maybe we bring the cup back to you, yes?" she laughed. "And also—"

Then suddenly the glow of happiness faded from her face, leaving it strained and downcast.

"But I forget," she added mournfully. "Ingrid will not enter as my partner. We—we are no longer friends! She has left my chalet."

"Left your chalet? Then where's she gone?" asked Sally.

"She—she has transferred to East House," Helga replied. "It was arranged this morning. She has, as you say, swapped with Brenda Fox, who is now sharing my chalet. It is better that way!"

Helga's chin rose as she made that last remark. Her lips tightened

continuously, as if she were daring anyone to challenge her statement. But in that moment of shock Sally & Co. were incapable of challenging it.

For Helga and Ingrid, the two Norwegian girls, had been inseparable since the first day they had arrived at college. They were a perfect foil for each other. Helga, vivacious, mischievous, full of fun; Ingrid quiet, gentle, always ready to help her friend out of the scrapes into which her quicksilver nature had led her.

Of course, as everyone knew, they had had several tiffs recently, apparently over Helga's pet marmoset, Mitzi, which, Ingrid had declared, was becoming very mischievous and even spiteful. But nobody had dreamed for one moment that those tiffs had developed into a really serious quarrel.

"Helga!" Sally called, as that girl slowly began to move away. "Just a moment. You and Ingrid simply can't break up your friendship like this. Supposing you tell me about it—I may be able to help!"

For a moment Helga hesitated, then she poured out the unhappy little story of the quarrel between herself and Ingrid. How Ingrid had always seemed to love the little marmoset, but these last few days had done nothing but complain about it.

"Though I know Mitzi is not spiteful or mischievous," said Helga stormily, "I agreed to keep her chained up outside when I was absent from the chalet. Then this morning I find Mitzi very frightened. And Ingrid is there, very angry. She tell me Mitzi has torn up her lecture notes and ruined other things. That I must choose between Mitzi and herself."

"And you chose Mitzi, eh?" asked Sally quietly.

"We—all not exactly," said Helga a little chokily. "We are quarrelling, you understand, when Brenda Fox from East Side comes along. She say we get on each other's nerves—we should part for a time. And before I realise, Ingrid has asked permission and has swapped chalets with Brenda. So now Ingrid is no

longer my friend, and Brenda shares my chalet."

Sally did not know whether to smile or sigh as Helga ended. It seemed to her a trivial thing to cause the break-up of such a splendid friendship.

"Helga," she said persuasively, "you can't let a thing like this ruin your friendship. I'll bet Ingrid is feeling awful now, away from her own chalet, away from you—and from Mitzi. Because she is very fond of Mitzi, really you know! Won't you come over to see her now? I'll come with you—and we'll talk it over calmly. Please, Helga!"

For a moment Helga hesitated, conflicting emotions passing over her very expressive little face. Then there was a call from behind her.

"Coo-ee! Helga!" It was Brenda Fox, an ingratiating smile on her rather colourless face. "I've just ordered a passion-fruit melba for you, old thing," she cried, as she hurried up to where Sally and Helga stood. "I thought you might need something cooling after your hot time with Ingrid a little while ago."

In an instant Helga's face hardened as Brenda's words brought back to her mind the angry brush she had had with Ingrid.

"Thank you, Sally," she said stiffly. "I do not think Ingrid or I have anything to say to each other. If you will excuse me—"

And before Sally could detain her she had darted off with Brenda. But Sally was not beaten yet. Maybe Ingrid, the quiet one, would be more amenable to reason. She would go to see her right now—and take Mitzi with her. If Mitzi was on her best behaviour, perhaps Ingrid would overlook all the trouble the little marmoset had apparently caused.

Ingrid was trying on a blue skating costume which she had been busily altering in her chalet when Sally called. She jerked up her fair head, her sweet, oval face flushing with pleasure. But her deep blue eyes remained troubled and unhappy.

Sally plunged into the reason for her visit straight away, while Ingrid listened with downcast eyes, her lip trembling a little. And quite absently her hand caressed little Mitzi, who

What A Shame It Was The Two Norwegian Girls Had Quarrelled! But Sally & Co. Meant To Bring Them Together Again



chattered with pleasure and hopped on to Ingrid's shoulder.

"Perhaps," she said a little tremulously, as Sally finished, "I was a little too hasty. I have felt ashamed, and so sad. It would be so lovely to be friends with Helga again, and how I should like to enter the competition with her! See, Sally, I have already laid out my skating outfit, although I—I could not think of anyone for a partner."

Holding Mitzi again, Sally followed Ingrid into the chalet, her heart leaping with joy at the success of her appeal.

She gave a gasp of admiration as she saw the lovely skating outfit with its brief but billowing white skirt, and tiny red jacket, which Ingrid had draped over an armchair.

"It's lovely," she exclaimed. "Oh, Ingrid, you'll look wonderful! And so will Helga, as your partner! What do you say, old thing—will you come over and see her now and patch up this silly quarrel?"

Ingrid smiled, a growing happiness blotting out the shadow in her eyes.

"Well," she said slowly, "all— She broke off abruptly, with a cry of alarm as Mitzi, who had been sitting quietly on Sally's shoulder as she leaned against the window-sill, suddenly gave a shrill squeak.

Before Sally realised what was happening the marmoset had jumped off her shoulder on to the table, knocking over a glass of orangeade standing there. Chattering and gibbering, seeming beside herself with terror, Mitzi evaded Sally and Ingrid as they made a lunge at her. With sticky orange liquid dripping from her little paws she leapt between them, and then—

"Mitzi!" shrieked Sally and Ingrid together.

It was too late! Straight on to the armchair leapt Mitzi, dabbing her wet paws all over the lovely white skirt. Quickly Sally caught hold of the monkey, then gazed in helpless anguish at Ingrid.

"Oh, Ingrid—," she began shakily. "I don't know—I can't think— Isn't there something I can do?" she asked desperately.

Ingrid's lovely face was pale and hard; her eyes looked slaty.

"I'm not blaming you, Sally," she said in a low voice. "But now you have seen for yourself just what I have had to put up with from that animal. I'm sorry, but—but I can never be friends with Helga again as long as Mitzi is around. That means I stay over at East House."

#### WHAT SALLY SAW

**S**LOWLY, unhappily, Sally made her way back to Helga's chalet. Her interview with Ingrid, which had seemed so hopeful at first, had only succeeded in making things worse than ever.

Mitzi was quieter now, though still chattering agitatedly and shivering. She kept rubbing her head with her small paw, peering into Sally's face as if trying to tell her something.

Sally frowned puzzledly. Queer, but she would have said Mitzi was frightened. But what could have happened to frighten her?

Suddenly Mitzi's gibbering grew louder, shriller. She danced up and down agitatedly, then buried herself in Sally's arms as if for protection. In some surprise Sally looked around, frowning a little as she saw Brenda Fox approaching.

"Hallo," said Brenda, her voice as colourless as her appearance. "Has the great peacemaker had any luck? I heard you'd been over to see Ingrid."

That remark jarred on Sally. She looked coldly at Brenda, but before she could answer Helga herself came running up, a hopeful, eager light in her eyes. But that light died away as Sally told her what had happened at Ingrid's chalet, of that girl's ultimatum.

"It is as I said," she said in unhappy resentment, as she lifted Mitzi from Sally's arms and buried

her face in the soft fur. "I am sorry, very sorry about the dress. But Ingrid must have upset Mitzi in some way to make her behave like that! Sally, don't you see—"

"Oh, forget it," said Brenda carelessly. "Why should you upset yourself about Ingrid? After all, you've got a partner for the skating contest—"

"A partner?" Sally looked at Helga in astonishment. "But who?"

"Just me," said Brenda with a slightly self-conscious smirk. "I've always been considered a very good skater, and I'm confident that Helga and I between us can carry off the prize. Isn't that so, Helga?"

Helga nodded, a trifle defiantly it seemed to Sally.

"I think so," she admitted in a low voice. "At figure skating I am a little better than Ingrid, but I never thought— She broke off, biting her lip. But Sally knew what she had been about to say. She never thought she would partner another girl in a contest against Ingrid!

Sally shrugged helplessly. Certainly the rift between the two girls seemed to be widening, and her own efforts to put things right had failed dismally. With a feeling of hopelessness, she fastened Mitzi to the light chain outside the chalet, then linking her arm in that of Helga's they strolled slowly and silently towards the café, where Don, Johnny and Fay were waiting.

They were almost there when Sally, glancing down, gave a little exclamation of dismay. The lovely little fob watch, which Don had given her for her last birthday, was no longer pinned to her dress.

"I remember now," she said, as Helga expressed concern, "I must have dropped it off when I put Mitzi on the chain. I'll run back and look—"

Hastily, because she would have been very grieved to lose the charming little trinket, she hurried back towards Helga's chalet. But as she drew near, an expression of alarm crossed her face.

Mitzi, who had been sitting placidly outside the chalet when Helga and Sally left a few moments ago, busily cracking and eating nuts, was now uttering shrill little cries of pain and anger.

"Keep quiet, you fool, or you'll get another taste of this stick! And give me that—"

It was Brenda Fox's voice, sharp with anger. And hearing it, Sally darted towards the back of the chalet, her eyes blazing with resentment at what she saw.

For there was Mitzi, cowering pathetically on the ground, while beside her stood Brenda, a thin switch in her hand, trying to force something from the marmoset's tightly clenched paw.

A wave of red flooded her sallow cheeks as she looked up and saw Sally. She jumped to her feet, groping desperately for words.

"I—I—," she began, blurtily. "It—she—she's got a stone in her paw," she jerked out at last. "I—I thought she might put it in her mouth. I—I shouldn't like the poor little thing to choke herself."

"You've no objections to hitting the poor little thing with a stick, I notice," said Sally coldly. "In any case—"

But Brenda hurried away, fumblingly trying to tuck something in her pocket as she went. Seeing that action, a queer, suspicious feeling began to creep over Sally.

Quickly she turned, with no effort whatever opened the monkey's paw. Then she stared puzzledly. It wasn't a stone which Mitzi had clutched so tightly, but several very hard and very dry peas.

But the sight of them seemed to have a strange effect on Mitzi. She began to shiver again, to make queer little crying noises and rub her tiny head, looking at Sally with pathetically pleading eyes, and then at the peas.

"Mitzi, you're trying to tell me something," said Sally, soothingly

stroking the little animal. "Now what—golly!"

Suddenly she understood. Mitzi, with her funny little gestures, was saying that these iron-hard peas had hit her head.

Somebody must have shot these peas at the small monkey from a pea-shooter! That would explain why she had suddenly developed moments of what seemed to be bad temper and destructive mischief.

"That would explain, thought Sally with a quickening of her pulses, why Mitzi had suddenly behaved so queerly a short time ago in Ingrid's hut!

But who could be so cruel as to treat a defenceless animal in this way? And what had they to gain by such treatment?

Like a flash the answer came to Sally, Brenda Fox! That explained why Mitzi was so frightened of her. Brenda had been nearby when Sally had emerged from Ingrid's chalet. She had been trying to wrest the peas from Mitzi just now, so that no one should see them and guess what had happened. And why?

Sally didn't know for sure, but after hearing Brenda's smugly confident remark that she and Helga could win the skating contest together, she could guess. Brenda had deliberately tried to break up Helga's and Ingrid's friendship so that she herself could become Helga's skating partner!

For a moment Sally's eyes kindled with anger at Brenda's trickery. Then she remembered something else. That object Brenda had been trying to stuff into her pocket when she hurried off—a long, shining object—could that have been the pea-shooter?

If only she could catch Brenda with it, then she would be able to explain to Helga and Ingrid just what had been happening, how unfairly poor little Mitzi had been blamed for something which was not her fault!

Sally went hurrying after Brenda. She saw that girl just disappearing through a doorway which led to East House games-room. And, unaware that she was being followed, Brenda, with a crafty grin on her face, dragged the shining object from her pocket together with a small linen bag which rattled as she handled it.

She stared around, obviously looking for a safe hiding-place for the pea-shooter and the bag of dried peas.

"Give me that!" cried Sally, and rushed into the room. With a frightened gasp, Brenda threw the pea-shooter and the peas high in the air so that they landed on the topmost shelf of the high wall-fitting which contained all the games and sporting equipment.

"There—now try and get it, Sally Warner!" she mocked.

At once Sally began to ascend shelf by shelf to the top of the fitting, while Brenda tried frantically to pull her back. Down tumbled boxes of games, spilling their contents to the floor. A pair of dumbbells swayed, toppled, clattered to the floor with a crash. And then—

"Sally! Brenda!" roared a voice from the doorway—the voice of Bruce Vindholm, Housemaster of East House. What is the meaning of this?"

Sally, half-way up the shelves, froze.

"I—I tried to stop her," Brenda said pathetically. "I know Sally only looks on it as a joke, but I—I think it's real mean to wreck all the East House games equipment just because she and her friends don't like me transferring to West House!"

"Brenda, that's not true—" began Sally.

"Silence," Bruce Vindholm's voice was stern and angry.

"Brenda, clear up this mess! Sally, leave here at once—and don't dare to come back again. And no arguing!" he snapped, as Sally opened her mouth to speak.

Scarlet-faced, aware of Brenda's triumphant grin, Sally stalked from the room!

## BRENDA'S TRICKERY

But if Brenda thought Sally was beaten, she was vastly mistaken. Five minutes later Sally was back at East House, this time with her three bewildered-looking chums, and a rather unhappy, perplexed Ingrid, who had been trying to remove the stains from her skirt when Sally had called her.

Sally had hoped to bring Helga along, too, but she, unfortunately, had just gone off to Sarneville, leaving Mitzi in Johnny's care.

"I can't come up to the games-room myself," explained Sally, "because Mr. Vindholm might still be there, and he's forbidden me to go back. But I'm quite sure Brenda will try to retrieve that pea-shooter and if you can catch her with it—"

She swung round on Ingrid, her blue eyes appealing.

"Ingrid, if you see that will you believe that Mitzi isn't really mischievous and spiteful? Will you believe that it is Brenda who has caused the trouble between you and Helga?"

Her face lit up as Ingrid nodded. "I will believe, Sally—and I will make Helga understand, too."

"That's fine!" said Johnny enthusiastically. "You wait down here, Sally!"

But that request, simple though it was, Sally found impossible to obey. She watched as Don, Johnny, Fay and Ingrid ascended the stairs and then, almost unknowingly, quietly began to follow. They reached the games room and peered through the half open door, to find Brenda, alone, clambering up the shelves.

As the chums watched, she reached the topmost shelf, groped there, and then began to make her way down, a shining object and a tiny bag clutched in one hand. And as she did so, Sally took Mitzi from Johnny's arms, gave her a little push through the half-open door.

Mitzi began to chatter. Brenda gave a gasp; then she saw the marmoset.

"Why, you little beast!" she panted. "How did you get here? I'll teach you to frighten me—!" And with a look of spiteful malice she fumbled in the bag, raised the pea-shooter to her lips.

But, as Brenda made to blow, her mouth fell open; she turned pale with alarm. For the door crashed back, into the room rushed the four chums with Ingrid, flashing-eyed and furious, in their midst.

"We've caught you beautifully!" cried Sally triumphantly. "Now, Ingrid, do you believe what I told you—"

"Believe you!" With a scathing glare at the dumbfounded Brenda, Ingrid stooped and picked up the little monkey, cradling him tenderly in her arms. "I am ashamed of myself for being such a fool," she said. "And Helga, too, will feel the same when I have explained. To think," she added indignantly, "anyone could treat a helpless animal so just to realize their selfish ambitions!"

"Well, thank goodness you've found out before it's too late," said Fay quickly. "You've still got time to get to Sarneville before the contest starts, Ingrid—"

"Is that so?" said a mocking voice from behind them.

Even as the chums spun round, there came the slam of a door, the sound of a key turning in the lock.

"You were so busy petting that wretched monkey, you forgot to watch me," came Brenda's gleeful voice through the keyhole. "I'm off to Sarneville now—and, by the way, I don't think I'd shout for help if I were you. Mr. Vindholm is in the building and would hear, and that would be too bad for Sally. So long!"

Furious, dismayed, the chums stared at each other as Brenda's footsteps died away. To think they should have allowed themselves to be tricked like this just when everything seemed to be working out so splendidly! And there seemed no other escape from the room, for the

window was high above the ground, and the creeper not strong enough to hold them.

"It won't hold us," Sally murmured, gazing from the window, "but it would hold a marmoset! Listen! I've got an idea! Mitzi's great friends with Riki, isn't she?" Riki was Erikson Thorgen, the boy student from Norway, a compatriot of Helga's and Ingrid's, and greatly attached to Mitzi. "If we tuck a note in her collar, send her down the creeper and tell her to find Riki—"

"He'll come and let us out," whooped Fay. "As long as he hasn't already left for Sarneville," she added uncertainly. "I know he was going."

"We'll hope for the best," said Ingrid, her eyes shining with hope. "A pencil—ah!" In a few seconds she had written the note, fixed it to Mitzi's collar. "Riki!" she said clearly to Mitzi. "Riki—to Riki!"

Mitzi stared for a moment rather puzzledly, her head on one side. Then, as Ingrid leaned out of the window, and lowered the marmoset on to the creeper, the little creature chattered excitedly. Watched by the

blue eyes clouded. For, without realizing it, her thoughts had flown to Ingrid—Ingrid, who had been her greatest chum, whom she had known from early childhood back in Norway. "Gosh! At last!" said Brenda in nervous elation. "Listen—"

"Contestants for the Ladies' Fancy Skating—" came the voice over the loudspeaker, echoing through the crowded ice-rink.

"That's us!" said Brenda, with a triumphant glance towards the glass doors. "Quickly, Helga!"

She urged Helga forward, her eyes glittering with malicious exultation. She had managed it after all! Those interfering Merrymakers hadn't got out of the games-room in time to spoil her chances. She had won!

And there Brenda's triumphant thoughts abruptly ceased. There was a crash as the doors flew open, a helter-skelter rush, and an urgent cry.

"Helga! Helga! Wait!" It was Sally, with Ingrid in skating-dress beside her, with Don, Johnny and Fay following.

"Quickly!" urged Brenda desperately. "Helga—"

But she was too late. Sally had



"Sally, leave here at once—and don't dare to come back again!" said Mr. Vindholm sternly. Brenda Fox smiled triumphantly, believing now that Sally would be unable to spoil her plans.

chums she clambered swiftly and expertly down the ivy, disappeared from sight.

For what seemed ages the chums waited. They had almost given up hope when suddenly Sally gave a shout.

"Look—there's Mitzi! And she's brought Mike Finney!"

Michael Finney, Erikson's chalet-mate it was. In a matter of seconds he had ascended the stairs, freed the joyful but impatient prisoners, explaining as he did so that Erikson had already left for Sarneville, but that he had seen the message instead.

"Thanks, Mike!" said Don gratefully. "We're off to Sarneville, too—and let's hope we're not too late!"

"WHY don't they get on with it?" snapped Brenda Fox, biting her lip agitatedly. "All this hanging about!"

"There is no hurry," replied Helga calmly. "Why do you worry so, Brenda? I do not understand why you are so nervous. In any case," she added a little wistfully, "I would like to wait until Sally and the others get here. They promised they would come."

Helga's voice faltered a little as she mentioned "the others." Her

already reached Helga's side, had gripped her hand.

"There's no time to explain now," she said breathlessly, "but, Helga, you and Ingrid were tricked by this girl—Brenda Fox! We'll tell you all about it later, but meantime—off you go, the pair of you. And the very best of luck!"

For just a moment Helga and Ingrid stared at each other. Then their eyes softened, their lips curved in warm smiles. With half a laugh, half a sob, they gave each other a hug. Next moment they were on the ice. They had always skated superbly. Now, in their new-found happiness, their performance was flawless perfection.

While the admiring crowd watched breathlessly, while Sally & Co. applauded enthusiastically, Brenda Fox, pale and furious, sidled towards the doors. And, as she swung them open, passed through them, she was followed by the roar of cheering which followed the announcement that Helga and Ingrid were the winners of the skating contest—that they had won the award she had coveted.

(End of this week's story.)

Another lively story featuring the Merrymakers next week—with Sally & Co. and their cheery rivals, the Tups, providing plenty of fun.



# THE WARNING OF THE SAND DIVINER

(Continued from page 448.)

"Then I'm coming with you!" Gwen gulped, holding tightly to her chum's arm.

Into the echoing cavern the old sand-diviner led the way.

"See! The stones that you seek!" Their guide's husky, sing-song voice echoed through the cavern as he raised his lantern, revealing a number of strangely carved rocks that formed a circle.

Avril started forward, her pulses racing. This was the thrilling moment she had anticipated from the time the professor had revealed the serpent amulet. With Gwen's assistance, while the old man held the lantern, she examined the circle of rocks. Her heart leaped as she discovered a massive slab of black basalt, bearing several curious inscriptions identical to those on the amulet.

Then came the problem of raising the massive stone.

"Let me try!" croaked the voice of their bearded guide.

He grasped the slab, the muscles of his arms straining, while the chums watched with bated breath. Suddenly, with a hollow thud, the stone fell back, revealing, in a dusty cavity, a small wooden casket secured with bronze bands.

Eagerly Avril bent to lift it. But at that instant a cold voice rang out behind her:

"Thank you, Miss Harding! You have saved me the trouble of obtaining the casket for myself!"

Avril whirled to stare in horrified amazement at the bespectacled, cynical figure who stood there, revolver in hand, and accompanied by an armed Arab.

Herbert Baxter, the professor's trusted secretary!

"You!" gasped Avril, finding her voice as she backed away. "You are the enemy!"

A thin smile curved the secretary's lips.

"If you like to put it that way, Miss Harding, I was aware of your mission, and decided to relieve you of the amulet. Had it not been for that meddlesome Hal Gayford, I might have succeeded before. But everything has turned out for the best, as it happens." His voice became suddenly menacing. "Kindly hand me that casket!"

Clutching the precious casket, Avril backed away, her face very pale. So Hal—the boy she had mistrusted—had been their friend from the first! His innocent trick to delay their journey had been for their own safety; and it had been Herbert Baxter, not Hal, who had fired the treacherous shot to scare Gwen's horse, hoping to steal the amulet in the ensuing confusion.

"I—I won't!" she gasped, facing him with reckless defiance. "You daren't take it away from me! The sand-diviner is our friend, and he

Herbert Baxter laughed scornfully. "That old fossil! Ah, here, could hold him with one hand—"

"Not quite so easy, Herbert, my boy!" sang out a familiar, cheery voice—from behind the sand-diviner's beard.

All gave an incredulous cry, and Herbert Baxter recoiled as the bushy beard was whisked aside—to reveal Hal Gayford's determined, boyish face, a reckless glitter in his blue eyes.

Even as the Arab swung up his rifle, Hal ducked, flinging himself head-first at the man and sending him sprawling.

Herbert Baxter raised his revolver, but Avril caught at his arm, and the bullet whistled harmlessly into the roof of the cave.

The next moment Hal was holding the Arab's rifle, directed at the secretary's pallid face.

"That's better, Herbert," he said. "Better not make a rash move, in case my finger slips on the trigger. You see, Avril!—he grinned cheerily at the astounded chums—"I was the

sand-diviner of Algiers!"

"But—but I don't understand," Avril faltered, her mind in a whirl. "How did you know that all these things would happen?"

"Partly guesswork," said Hal, with a grin, "though I was responsible for the first happening myself. Good old Rollo, our neighbour's black retriever, played his part well!"

"You—you wanted to prevent our travelling?" breathed Avril.

"Because I suspected Baxter's game!" Hal snapped, his eyes hardening. "He was after uncle's secret—your secret. It was he who persuaded uncle to let him accompany you in my stead. I guessed he'd try to rob you—possibly at some lonely spot like the place of red rocks, where the caravans always halt for a rest. So I decided on a novel method of warning you. When that failed I followed the caravan, and caught up with you just in time. Now to deal with friend Baxter, while you examine your father's casket, Avril!"

CREATED in their tent, by the light of a swinging lamp, the two girls gazed speechlessly at the long-buried treasures of an ancient prince of Morocco—the legacy left by Avril's explorer father.

A cheery, freckled face was poked through the flap of the tent.

"Hallo, girls!" said Hal. "Wondering what to buy with your new-found wealth? How about some eastern robes to go with these Turkish slippers. But, joking apart, I came to tell you that the caravan will be setting out for Marakand at dawn, and I'll want you to back me up when I make my peace with uncle. He'll have more reason than ever now to call me a scatter-brain!"

"I wouldn't have you change that name, Hal," Avril said. "Not for anything!"

THE END.

"The Chinese Girl's Secret"—this is the title of next week's exciting, long complete story. Make sure of reading it by ordering your copy of **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** now.

# JOY—THE GIRL WITH A 100 VOICES

(Continued from page 456.)

general was a mimic, too, there was a cat in that basket.

"See—it has the laundry tag of the kennels on it," he snapped. "Some careless ass put the cat basket in the laundry van. This is my cat!"

"Hurry up, Mushden! I'll drive myself."

He put the basket on the front seat beside him, and took the wheel. The chauffeur was many yards away, still trying to placate the vanman, and Joy's brain worked desperately.

The cat in that basket must be Zinko—and she had to wrest him from the general. In a minute the general would drive off, and she had to go with him. But how?

The general wouldn't willingly take her, and she couldn't force him to—

And then the idea came: Joy opened the rear door.

"Right, sir," she gasped in the chauffeur's voice, and stepped into the back of the car and slammed the door.

The general, completely deceived by Joy's mimicry, drove on.

"Mushden, we've won through," he said in ringing triumph.

"Yes, sir," said Joy crouching out of sight from the rear-view mirror.

"I must telephone from that box down the road and tell the show people I'll be there."

The general stopped the car and stepped out; then he went across to the telephone box.

That was Joy's chance. She opened the basket on the seat and hurriedly gripped the harness of the sleek,

beautiful cat that crouched there. Zinko!

She saw a pair of heavy golf shoes in the car well at her feet; seizing them, she dumped them in the basket after whipping out Zinko, then closed the lid.

And what to do with Zinko now? On the seat beside her was a golf club bag. She pulled out the clubs, and persuaded Zinko to get into the bag. That done, and making sure the cat wouldn't escape, Joy stepped from the car.

Just in time, too, for a taxi pulled up with a screech of brakes, and from it jumped the chauffeur, who ran to the telephone box as soon as he had paid the driver.

"Taxi!" called Joy, and then added, as she stepped in: "The cat show!"

AUNT JEMIMA was frantic. She had taken a taxi to the cat show after all, and had rushed at once to deposit the general's cat with one of the officials. That done, she went to her own cubicle.

That was when she went frantic. For on opening Zinko's basket—

"A stone—a stone!" babbled Aunt Jemima. "Oh, this is terrible! Where is my Zinko?"

She heard the general's voice behind her; he had overtaken Joy's taxi and had arrived first.

"What's that? Lost your cat?" he asked Aunt Jemima. "Then you may now watch me open my cat basket and take out the best cat in the show."

"H'm!" said Aunt Jemima darkly. "I just wonder what you really have got in that basket?"

Joy had just arrived; but she did not interrupt.

The general opened the basket and

flung back the lid. Then, with a cry of mingled rage and horror, he staggered back. His cheeks flamed and then paled.

"A pair of golf shoes—my shoes! Then—then where's my cat? Where's my cat? Someone has stolen my cat!" he raged.

"On the contrary," said Aunt Jemima coolly. "If you go to your allotted cubicle you will find your cat there."

Then Joy spoke up.

"And here, Aunt Jemima, is Zinko," she said. "Didn't I say I would look after Zinko, and here he is, safe and sound. If someone had stolen the basket he would have stolen only a stone. Little did anyone think Zinko would be in the general's golf club bag—here!"

There was a shout of amazement from all. Aunt Jemima hugged her pet; the general took back his golf club bag and goggled in wonder at Joy.

"Oh, Joy! You marvellous girl! Oh, well done!" said Aunt Jemima gleefully. "You outwitted the general."

"Fah!" said the general. "Wait, madam—wait until the testing time of the show comes!"

Never had Joy been in her aunt's good books so completely. Aunt Jemima actually hugged her, for she had saved the situation.

Joy's work was done, and not even her mimicry and ventriloquism were needed to win the first prize for Zinko. Zinko did that with ease, while the general's cat came a good second.

(End of this week's story.)

There will be another amusing story featuring ventriloquist Joy next week.