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

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"



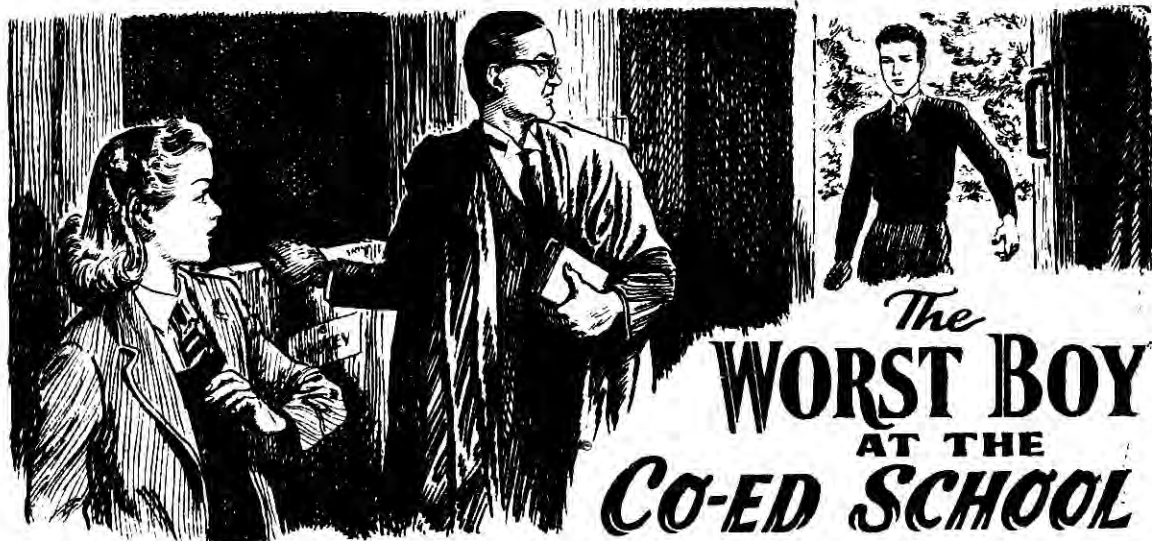
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# The WORST BOY AT THE CO-ED SCHOOL

By DOROTHY PAGE

## OUTWITTING MR. VOSTER

**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 Winter, Paddy's chum, though there was no definite proof.

Mr. Voster, one of the masters, vowed to tame Vincent, and Paddy-ensued the hostility between boy and master. Vincent learnt that he was partly the cause of Paddy being refused permission to practise on his jumps. He locked her in a shed, broke bounds, and went to Mallington Park himself on his horse, Whitey.

Paddy escaped, and learnt that Mr. Voster was looking for Vincent. She hurried to the stables, to find Whitey's stall empty, and at that moment heard Mr. Voster approaching.

"**THINK** quickly—quickly!" Paddy sharply ordered herself. "You've got to save Vincent."

She was alert and determined, standing there in the dimly lit stables.

Outside she could hear footsteps coming nearer and nearer.

Mr. Voster, that cold, implacable master, was approaching.

She looked about her rather desperately.

"Got to do something—"

But what? Whitey's loose-box was empty—conclusive proof that Vincent had indeed taken out his magnificent black, a reckless act so typical of the boy.

The catch of the main door rattled. "Oh golly!" Paddy gasped, and instinctively jumped forward. She placed her back against the door of Whitey's loose-box, thereby concealing the printed piece of cardboard bearing the name "Whitey."

Then tensely she watched the stable door. It opened. Mr. Voster stalked inside, gown rustling. He saw her instantly and stopped short.

"Miss Dare!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, good-evening, Mr. Voster!"

Paddy got the words out coolly enough. She even smiled brightly.

The master's habitually cold expression did not change; but his dark eyes narrowed, fixed on her calculatingly.

"Why are you not inside your college building, Miss Dare?" he tapped. "It is past quarter to eight."

Paddy simulated a start.

"Goodness, is it really—"

"It is," he interrupted coldly.

"However, I think just at the

moment I am more interested to know why you are here!"

"Just looking round, Mr. Voster," came Paddy's quick answer. "You see, I am in charge of Junior riding. Didn't you know?"

"I was aware of it. I am also aware that you appear to be friendly with the boy Vincent Conrad!"

There was a meaning note in his voice that Paddy did not miss.

"However," the master went on abruptly, "we can discuss your presence here when I have taken a look round the stables. Let me see, the name of Vincent Conrad's horse is Whitey, I believe?"

He turned to the first loose-box on his right.

To the door of every loose-box was pinned the name of its occupant. With deliberate slowness and thoroughness Mr. Voster began to move down one side of the stable, peering at the names.

It was clear he did not know which was Whitey's box, but soon he would reach it. She would have to move aside. He would see the name "Whitey." He would look inside, see the empty box—

Then he would have his proof! Then more and deeper trouble would come to the embittered boy to whom she was striving to give a chance.

Paddy shifted restlessly with the fierce effort to think clearly. A sudden idea shot into her mind. She had it—a simple, yet daring idea.

The loose-box to her left housed Jig, Ron Bullton's big brown. "Jig" was a short name, on a smaller piece of card than that which bore Whitey's.

Paddy acted impulsively as Mr. Voster made to turn.

Her hand flashed up. She unpinned the nameplate "Whitey"; she took one rapid step and pinned it on to the door of the next loose-box, completely covering the name "Jig!"

Her hand dropped again as Mr. Voster turned. He moved towards her. He had seen the name "Whitey" pinned up.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, almost as if licking his lips. "Stand away from that loose-box, Miss Dare! I trust you have not been attempting to conceal that name from me!"

**It Would Be Disastrous  
If Mr. Voster Discovered  
That Vincent Had Broken  
Bounds, But How Could  
Paddy Prevent Him  
Learning The Truth?**

Paddy stepped back, tense, holding her breath.

Mr. Voster reached up and unbolted the top half of the loose-box door.

"Now—"

Paddy waited, hoping with all her heart that her ruse might succeed.

From inside the loose-box came a rustle of straw. Obviously Jig had been resting, and turned his head at the opening of the door. But—

Did Mr. Voster know Whitey well by sight? In the shadowy loose-box would he realise that Jig was not a black, but a deep brown? Would he assume that Jig was Whitey?

If not—

Paddy licked rather dry lips. Then Vincent was lost! And she herself would be in a most unenviable position.

Mr. Voster stood very still, staring in. Then his lips screwed up in a thin line. With an abrupt movement he slammed the door to. The disappointment on his face was obvious. He glared at Paddy.

"I have been misinformed! Misinformed!" he snapped. "But you, Miss Dare, I am not satisfied with your presence here! And you will remember that you should have been in college buildings."

Paddy met his snapping gaze steadily. It was hard to conceal her dislike and scorn of him. Just because he had been unable to trap Vincent, he was venting his anger on her.

"I know I was late, Mr. Voster, but only just a few minutes—"

She stopped, her hand flying to her mouth.

Outside the stables footsteps sounded. She felt sure she recognised the swing of them—Vincent Conrad's—and she nearly called out.

If the Outsider walked in now, leading Whitey, then all her efforts would have been in vain; then the fat would be in the fire!

Mr. Voster had heard, too. He turned sharply, just as the stable door swung open—and Vincent Conrad stepped inside.

## JO HAS NEWS

**PADDY** gulped audibly in the silence that fell.

Vincent stopped. He seemed unperturbed. There was a reckless glint in his grey-green eyes.

"Evenin', Miss Dare," he drawled. "Evenin', Mr. Voster. Didn't know you were interested in horses, sir!"

Paddy's dismay was tempered by wonderment. How typical of the boy to show no sign of alarm. But, oh gosh, where was Whitey? Where? Vincent could only just have returned. His black horse must be near.

Mr. Voster expelled his breath in cold satisfaction.

"Ah, Conrad!" he exclaimed. "So! You did not expect to find me here, no doubt!"

"On the contrary, sir," said Vincent calmly, "it's just where I expected to find you!"

"Don't lie, boy!" the master snapped.

A dangerous, bitter look crossed Vincent's face. At once Paddy warningly shook her head at him, hoping he would not flare out and make things worse for himself.

"No doubt I'm an outsider, sir," he gritted, "but it so happens I don't tell lies!"

"Or that I am not convinced," snapped the master. "However, Conrad"—Mr. Voster smiled his tight, unpleasant little smile—"I shall be most interested to hear your—er—version of why you came here after school hours!"

The red-haired boy had control of himself.

"Certainly, sir. I came here because Jimmy Court told me you were here; that you were looking for me."

That calm reply made Mr. Voster start.

"It seems," continued Vincent, "that you have been trying to find me, sir, so I thought I'd better come here at once."

The master was silent, unsure now, his expression changing.

Paddy wanted to giggle. She suddenly began to guess at what had happened. Where Vincent's horse was she had no idea, but it was clear to her now that Vincent had returned safely, run into Jimmy Court, and had been told about Mr. Voster's search.

And so, with the utmost calmness and typical recklessness, the Outsider had marched into the lion's den!

Mr. Voster was struggling with himself. Discovering—as he thought—that Whitey was still in the stables had been a shock, a disappointment. The sudden appearance of Vincent had given him fresh hope. Now—

"If you doubt my word, Mr. Voster," said Vincent with an unusual quietness that relieved Paddy, "I am quite prepared to go to the Head with Jimmy Court to prove that he did see me and tell me you wanted me."

Mr. Voster straightened. He was no fool. He knew he had no case.

"I have been misinformed!" he snapped. "But I warn you, Conrad, I shall keep an eye on you! Now turn out the light here and see this place is closed up, then both of you get back to your houses!"

With dark, set face, gown swinging, he stalked from the stables. His footsteps receded. Paddy relaxed and sighed deeply.

"Wow! That was close—and how! Gosh, Vincent, how the dickens you could walk in so coolly—"

He shrugged.

"I saw the light in here, just as I was leading Whitey in through the side entrance. So I left him in the trees, slipped forward, and heard enough to realise what was happening. When I heard that rotter start to slang you I thought I'd step in and give him something else to think about!"

Paddy's heart warmed. She understood now.

"Jolly nice of you, Vincent! Thanks a lot."

"No—I thank you. You covered up for me—goodness knows why. I can't think of anybody else who would." He stared at her rather strangely. "Maybe that's why I tried to keep cool with Voster just now. Anyway—here," he added abruptly, "you'd better take this."

He dug into his pocket and handed her a folded piece of notepaper. With sudden excitement, she opened it, an excitement that grew into pleasure as she scanned the written words on it.

It was a hastily scrawled note from Mr. Milroy to his agent, Mr. Brown, telling him that the junior riders of Mallington Co-Ed. College had his permission to use the jumping grounds in Mallington Park.

"O.K.," asked Vincent. "What you wanted?"

Paddy looked up. She was delighted. This permission meant a very great deal to her; it meant that the junior riding team could get in all-important practice for the great event against their rival college, Critchley.

"Vincent," she blurted, "you're a whizzing marvel!"

"Not me," he said. "Mr. Milroy was in a hurry to catch his train; it was only when I mentioned your name that he came round." He smiled twistedly. "What a thing it is to be popular, Paddy Dare!" He turned. "Well, if it's O.K., I'd better get old Whitey in—"

"Vincent—wait!" She caught his arm and spoke very earnestly enthusiastically.

"Look," she said, "you talk about popularity. Well, just wait until I tell the riding gang what you've risked and done to-night! That'll make 'em think twice about you—you'll see!"

His casually spoken answer to that startled her.

"Probably get me expelled or something if you do tell them!"

"Hey, what on earth do you mean?" she exclaimed.

Paddy watched him go, then, hurriedly switching back the horses' nameplates, she left the door open for Vincent and trotted off through the darkness towards Girls' Side.

Inside the main entrance hall, Jo Winter was waiting. The anxiety in her brown eyes lifted as she saw Paddy.

"Paddy—oh, I'm so glad you're back! I've been worried."

"Bless you, Jo, but there was no need." Paddy glanced round. The entrance hall was deserted save for themselves. "Jo I've got it—the permission from Mr. Milroy," she added excitedly. "And guess—I didn't have to break bounds to get it, either!"

"What! Then how—"

"Because Vincent went instead!" Paddy exclaimed, beaming. "It was a whizzo thing, Jo—reckless, but whizzo! Just listen!"

With great enthusiasm, she told the story.

"Now, what about that for a so-called outsider, Jo!" she finished triumphantly. "Look at the risk he took for the team!"

Jo looked at her rather queerly.

"Paddy, are—are you sure that his real reason for breaking bounds was



"You're wrong," Paddy told Ron Bullton. "It wasn't Vincent who nearly lost us the practice-ground. In fact, it was thanks to him that we've got it."

"Work it out for yourself," he drawled. "If you tell the riding team the story'll spread farther until it gets to Mr. Voster's ears—and that'll be the proof he didn't get to-night, thanks to you."

Paddy frowned. She realised the truth in that.

"But—Oh dash!" she exclaimed. "I want to tell the others—convince them they're wrong about you. I—I want to put you in good."

He shrugged.

"I couldn't care less—"

"Now, stop that, Vincent!" she flashed instantly. "You did this to-night for the team, didn't you? Thanks to you, we've got our practice ground. Right! I've put you in the team. Good! Now it's up to you to show everyone what you can do. That you'll see how people accept you!"

"Maybe—"

"No maybe about it. But two things—do you mind if I tell Jo about to-night? She's my chum; she won't breathe a word. Secondly, we'll have our first practice on Saturday. You'll be there—promise?"

"Do what you like about telling Jo," he said coolly. "As to Saturday, yes, I'll be there, and thanks. Now you must excuse me. I must get Whitey in, and you'd better cut back." He paused. "I—I hope you won't be sorry you've helped me—given me a chance."

He turned abruptly and swung out into the night.

to get that permission from Mr. Milroy?"

Paddy blinked. "Why, of course, Jo! I don't understand you."

"A little while ago," Jo said quietly, "Miss Chuffleigh came in. She had been to the village in her car with a prefect. I couldn't help overhearing what they said. They drove back by way of Birdham Lane."

Jo paused. Paddy watched her in some amazement. She could not see what Jo was getting at. She knew Birdham Lane, of course. A book-maker with a very shady reputation lived there. Last term one of the senior boys had been expelled for betting with him and running into debt. Since then that area of Mallington had been put out of bounds.

"Jo, you old ass, what are you getting at?" she demanded. "How does it affect Vincent's whizzo act?"

"Supposing," said Jo, "that Vincent had already planned to break bounds to-night for some shady reason, and collected that note from Mr. Milroy en route to—to bluff you, keep in your good books and thus get a place in the riding team?"

Paddy stared at her rather aghast. "Jo, what are you saying? This isn't like you at all. Why else should Vincent have broken bounds?"

Jo flushed a little.

"I—I don't want to seem mean, Paddy, but I'm thinking of you. You see, Miss Chuffleigh saw a boy in the college blazer in Birdham Lane, sneak-

ing furtively in the shadows. He was leaving the bookmaker's house, and"—she looked straight at Paddy—"and Miss Chuffleigh said she thought the boy looked like Vincent Conrad!"

Paddy was startled, struck to silence.

"Paddy dear," said Jo gently, "the riding team means an awful lot to you, and so are—are you sure you aren't making a mistake about Vincent? Are you sure he's to be trusted?"

### PADDY'S BARGAIN

IT was early next morning before breakfast.

Paddy had been first up. She now sat at the table in Study B, busily writing. The memory of her conversation with Jo the previous night was still fresh in her mind.

After the first shock Paddy had sprung to Vincent's defence, convinced that Miss Chuffleigh had made a mistake. She believed in Vincent; believed he had broken bounds solely in the interests of the team.

Jo, sweet-natured, seeing how Paddy felt, had said no more, though obviously she had doubts about the Outsider.

There the matter had rested. But Paddy knew Miss Chuffleigh's report would spread around the college, and, although there was no concrete evidence against Vincent, many would think the boy guilty. It would be another black mark against him—another reason for keeping him out of the riding team.

For that reason Paddy had risen early.

She finished writing and studied the sheet of paper with a sparkle of approval in her blue eyes. It was a notice that read:

"Mallington Park practice ground can now be used by the junior riding team. First practice will be held there on Saturday at two-thirty. Team as under: . . ."

And prominent in the list was Vincent's name.

"That'll show what I think, anyway," she murmured. "I'm not going to start doubting Vincent. That would be rotter: after what he's done—after I've once shown trust in him."

She sped from the study, out of Girls' Side, and across to Central Hall, which at this hour was deserted. With a determined little nod, she pinned up her sheet of paper on the sports notice-board.

Cheerfully she turned away and left the hall. Soon the college would come swarming in prior to breakfast.

"What a blind fool you are, Paddy Dare!"

Paddy halted, with a gasp, whirling as that hollow whisper struck her ears. She was standing at cross corridors. She stared round, but could see no one.

"So you've put him in the team for Saturday," continued the strange voice. "You're crazy! He won't turn up! He visits his shady bookmaker friends on half-holidays. Didn't you know?"

Paddy was alert now, eyes blazing angrily.

It was the unknown whisperer again! But where was he—or she? The voice was curiously hollow, faint but distinct.

"Look here," she called sharply, listening hard, eyes darting round, "stop this rotten joking—"

"I'm not joking, Paddy Dare," came the whisper. "I'm warning you! For your own sake, have nothing to do with the Outsider, in case trouble comes to you, too! He's just fooling you. He'll find some cunning way of being absent on Saturday, just to let the team down."

Paddy, really angry, was moving then. It seemed that the voice came from around the corner of the corridor to her left. She sped round the bend. No sign of anyone. Ahead was a side door, leading into the grounds.

Out into the open she sprinted, determined to come to grips with this unknown person.

But Paddy failed. The quadrangle was deserted. She darted across to the distant shrubbery and searched here and there—in vain.

"How the dickens—" Paddy stared round, frowning. "Who was it? The voice sounded so queer! But what a mean, rotten trick, trying to put me against Vincent! Not only that—"

Hadn't there been the hint of a threat against her, too?

A fighting look crossed Paddy's face. "Can't scare me," she muttered. "It's a low-down trick. I know a lot of people don't like Vincent, but this is different somehow—like—like a deliberate whispering campaign against him."

Rather thoughtful, Paddy wandered back through the shrubbery.

Over the bushes she suddenly saw Ron Bullton entering Central Hall.

"Hallo, Ron! Come over early—"

There she paused, eyes wide. Ron Bullton—the boy who so disliked Vincent! Could it be—that he was the unknown whisperer?

"Oh, rot!" she told herself instantly. "Ron's aggressive and rather pig-headed, but he's not a mean, sneaking type."

And the fact that Ron Bullton was now on the scene meant little, for already streams of boys and girls were leaving their respective houses to forage in Central Hall until breakfast-bell.

Paddy slowly crossed from the shrubbery.

When she entered Central Hall it was already fairly crowded; the usual chatter smote her ears. There was no sign yet of Vincent Conrad, but she overheard a group chattering excitedly.

"Hear about last night? About Miss Chuffleigh seeing a collegier in Birdham Lane—by the bookie's place?"

"Rather! No definite proof, of course, but it's pretty plain—"

"You bet! That cad Conrad! Who else?"

"The Outsider's keeping it up! Did you hear, though, that Paddy Dare was thinking of putting him in the riding team?"

"No! Gee, she must be bats! She'll get herself disliked—"

Paddy passed that group, unseen, eyes glinting.

A small knot of boys and girls was gathered round the sports notice-board, most of them members of the junior riding team: good-natured Jimmy Court and his quiet friend Max Milden; Bette Grindle; exuberant, slangy Dot Nelson; Isabella Rocco and Ron Bullton.

Ron Bullton, face red, was waving his arms excitedly.

"Can't think what Paddy's doing!" he cried. "Including the Outsider—after last night, too. I know Paddy's captain, but if she's going to run things like this—"

"Whoa—steady!" cut in Jimmy.

"Don't forget Paddy's somehow got permission to use the park! That's what I call captaincy!"

"Rather, Jimmy!" supported quiet Max Milden.

"A fizzing miracle indeed!" beamed Dot Nelson. "Can't say I care much for the Conrad bird myself. But if he can be trusted—"

"Of course he can't!" growled Ron. "Fat lot he cares about the team. We nearly lost the practice ground, thanks to him."

That was where Paddy walked up.

"You're wrong," she said firmly.

"It wasn't Vincent who nearly lost us the practice ground. In fact, it was thanks to him that we got it."

Heads turned quickly. Faces were startled and suddenly incredulous.

"Paddy," exclaimed curly haired Jimmy, "you—you say that Vincent Conrad got us the practice ground?"

"Just that!" beamed Paddy. "And he's in the team. O.K.?"

Another pause. Isabella Rocco broke it.

"Of course, Paddy can do just as she likes—yes?" she murmured, with a dangerously sweet smile. "But might it not be a good idea to know exactly how the Outsider saved the practice ground?"

"Yes—how, Paddy?" demanded Ron Bullton, frankly sceptical.

Paddy hesitated. She could not tell the full story.

"Sorry," she said quietly, "but please take my word for it that he did. Secondly, I just don't believe that Vincent Conrad was in Birdham Lane last night! Now we've cleared the air—how do you all feel?"

She waited, fighting down a touch of anxiety.

"If you say Vincent did get the ground, Paddy," Jimmy said slowly, "then he did—and I reckon we can give him a chance."

"I'm with Jimmy," said Max instantly. "If we can trust him—"

"Which I'm dashed sure we can't!" blurted Ron truculently. "And I'm going to be frank, Paddy. If you put him in the team and he lets us down, then—you can count me out of the team!"

"Ron!"

"Ah—yes, and perhaps me, too, I think!" said Isabella sweetly.

"Steady on, you two!" cried Jimmy.

"You know what the riding team means to Paddy—"

Paddy cut in. It was not in her nature to throw over Vincent because the situation was getting tricky. She decided for the boy's sake to make a bold step.

"O.K., Isabella, and you, Ron!" she said calmly. "We'll make a bargain. I'm so certain about Vincent that I'll promise this." She drew a quick little breath. "If he lets us down on Saturday I'll take the blame, and—"

and you can, if you wish, elect another captain! Will you give him the chance now?"

That brought silence. Jimmy, Dot, Bette, and Max looked startled by the calmly spoken offer. They realised, perhaps, the sacrifice involved. But Ron silently nodded, and Isabella's smile widened.

"Ah, that is different!" she murmured. "Agreed!"

Paddy glanced at the darkly beautiful South American girl. She knew Isabella had long had her eyes on the captaincy, but the main thing was—she had gained her point for Vincent.

"Then that's that," she said brightly. "Let's take brekker, kids!"

And the impromptu meeting broke up.

On Saturday morning, after lessons, those riders who did not possess horses of their own cycled off to the stables in Mallington to get their hired mounts. The rest were to ride straight from school to Mallington Park.

Paddy, busy to the last moment on drawing up plans for the practice, was the last to change into riding kit in her dormitory. She saw the cyclists leave from the window, then, later, the horse party.

Her pleased smile suddenly faded. Vincent was not in that party!

"Following a bit behind the others, of course," she told herself quickly.

"Keeping to himself—"

But she left the dormitory very hurriedly and sprinted across to the stables. A glance into Whitey's loose-box made her heart sink strangely.

The Outsider's magnificent black was still there—not even harnessed.

A little pale, she strode into the open again, and instantly saw Jimmy Court running from Boys' Side. He spotted her. He came up, looking disturbed, angry.

"Paddy!" he panted. "Oh gosh, I don't know how to say it—"

Paddy caught her breath.

"Jimmy, where's Vincent? Is—is it about him?"

He nodded.

"I'm terribly sorry, Paddy! I—I know what this means to you, but—"

He clenched his hands. "That—that rotter, he's let you down! He never meant to come to the practice this afternoon!"

"Jimmy!"

"It's true, Paddy! I've just heard something that proves it."

What is it Jimmy has overheard? And has Vincent Conrad really let the team down? There are exciting developments to this serial in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.

# THE CHINESE GIRL'S SECRET



## A SURPRISING NEW GIRL

"JUST look at the girl with matron!"

"I wonder who she is?"

"Must be some foreign visitor matron is showing round the school." All the girls in the Cliffpoint quadrangle turned to stare at the two figures that had appeared on the school steps. It was upon the matron's companion they concentrated their attention. In a school where all the girls wore the same uniform she looked very much out of place.

Smooth, dark hair was drawn back from the forehead of her rather pale, oval face, and she was wearing a rather tight gown which reached to her ankles. In order to give her freedom of movement, one side of the gown was slit to the knee.

"She must be a Chinese girl," somebody commented.

Mrs. Fowler, the matron, looked about her. "Beryl!" she called. "I want you for a moment, please."

Beryl Mend, the Cliffpoint junior captain, who had been staring at the visitor with the same curiosity as her chums, now hurried forward.

"Oh, Beryl," Mrs. Fowler greeted her. "I want you to meet Anna Li Sing! She is a new girl in the Fourth, and she is to share your study."

The Chinese girl smiled, and then made a stiff curtsy.

"The honour overwhelms me," she said in a thin, yet pleasant voice. "Anna Li Sing is so unworthy to share study with the so august sports captain."

Beryl had known a new girl was coming to the school, and she had known the newcomer was going to share her study. Because it was a study so full of happy memories she had dreaded the coming of a stranger.

How much she missed Eileen Morton, her old study chum!

Even now Beryl could not realise that Eileen would never return to Cliffpoint—that she had been expelled in disgrace. It was too fantastic to think of Eileen as a thief—as a girl who would steal a valuable diamond ring. But that had been the charge against Eileen, and the circumstantial evidence had been overwhelming.

Beryl suddenly remembered her manners. She must make the newcomer welcome, especially as the Chinese girl must be feeling strange and very much out of place.

"I don't think the seniors would call me that," she answered, with a smile. "I'm pleased to meet you, Anna."

"I've finished with Anna now,"

Mrs. Fowler went on, "so I'll leave her with you, Beryl. Perhaps you'll take her along to the study, introduce her to the other girls, and generally help her to settle down."

The girls in the quadrangle were staring more than ever.

"She's not a visitor—she's a new girl!"

"I wonder if she'll always dress like that?"

"Not likely! I can't see the seniors allowing a Fourth Form girl to walk about with a flower in her hair!"

A tiny flower was indeed tucked into the smooth, dark hair.

"I expect you'll want to change into school uniform?" Beryl said, as she and Anna entered the study corridor.

The Chinese girl looked at her, and then shook her head.

"Humbly regret it is not possible for me to wear school uniform," she declared. "Honourable ancestors insist that all members of my family wear national dress at all times. And honourable ancestors must be obeyed."

"Oh!" Beryl said, feeling somewhat at a loss. And the thought came to her she was going to miss Eileen more than ever.

She showed the Chinese girl into the neat study. Anna crossed the threshold, and then pulled up with a tiny gasp.

"Why," she exclaimed, "you still have the photograph on the mantelpiece!"

Beryl looked at her in surprise. It was a photograph of Eileen as stroke of the junior crew.

"What do you know about Eileen Morton, Anna?" Beryl demanded.

Anna's almond eyes were inscrutable.

"My father and the honourable father of Eileen do much business together," she answered. "It is because of Eileen I have come to this so respected scholastic establishment. Once—twice—I have met Eileen, and it was she who told me of the happy and exciting times here. She told me, too, of her study and of her photograph which stood upon the mantelpiece."

Beryl's heart was suddenly much lighter. So this new girl knew Eileen. That was bound to be a bond between them.

By JANE PRESTON

Anna turned to look again at the photograph.

"Permission to ask question, please," she said. "If photograph still on the mantelpiece, then it is sign you do not believe in Eileen's guilt?"

Instantly Beryl's face was flushed and indignant.

"Of course I don't believe in Eileen's guilt!" she said. "Eileen was too nice ever to be a thief!"

"Humbly request you tell me about it," Anna suggested, "for I am Eileen's friend, too."

Beryl knew then she was going to like her new study chum very much.

She told of how Miss Niven, the headmistress, had mislaid a valuable diamond ring. At first there had been no suspicion it had been stolen. But after a few days it was seen in the window of an antique dealer, and the dealer explained he had bought it from a Cliffpoint girl.

Miss Niven had invited him to the school, and he had identified Eileen as the girl who had sold him the ring. Everybody remembered then how Miss Niven had been giving Eileen private tuition, and that she was often left alone in the headmistress' study.

"Humbly suggest dealer must have been mistaken," Anne said.

"Of course he was mistaken," Beryl insisted. "But that isn't all the story. On the day Eileen was supposed to have sold the ring she was very flush with money. When questioned she said the money had arrived through the post that morning. She had jumped to the conclusion it was from a rather eccentric uncle of hers—one who could never be bothered to write letters. But when Miss Niven got in touch with him the uncle denied sending Eileen any money."

"I see," Anna said softly. "And so Eileen was expelled."

"I haven't got over it yet," Beryl went on. "It's dreadful to be so sure of Eileen's innocence, yet not to be able to do anything about it. I—"

The door opened, and Ina Wilson looked in.

"Better get a move on, Beryl," she said. "It's time we were down at the river."

Surprises Abound In This Exciting Complete Story Of School Life

Beryl looked apologetically at Anna.

"I'm afraid I must rush off—it's rowing practice this afternoon, Anna," she explained. "We've entered for the Tanley Regatta next week, and it's the only rowing trophy the school has failed to win. When Eileen was stroking the crew we thought we had a chance of winning this year. But now—" She shrugged her shoulders.

"Is it permitted to accompany you?" Anna asked. "Much of my life has been spent near a river."

"Of course you can come," Beryl smiled.

On the way to the river Beryl was conscious of all the curiosity Anna created. But the moment she entered the boathouse Beryl lost touch with her new study chum.

The Eight went out on the river, and it seemed they could do nothing to please Miss Carter, the games mistress. In particular was her criticism directed against Ada Kemp, the girl who had taken Eileen's place at stroke.

"You don't give the girls behind you a chance, Ada," Miss Carter stated. "You start off with a long stroke, and then, without warning, you suddenly shorten it. That's the reason the crew becomes ragged."

Ada Kemp, a rather sullen-looking girl, scowled at her.

"I'm doing my best!" she angrily retorted.

"And it still isn't good enough!" Miss Carter said shortly. "Take a breather now, and then we'll try again."

How Beryl, seated at No. 2, wished that Eileen could have been the girl in front of her! Eileen had always been so easy to follow, and she set a standard that called for the very best from the rest of the crew. With Eileen as stroke this would have been the best crew ever.

It was Beryl who first saw the light skiff come skimming over the water.

"Here's somebody who can row!" she cried, and then gave a gasp as she recognised the rower.

It was a dark-haired girl who wore a tiny flower just above her ear—a girl clad in a long, clinging gown.

Anna Li Sing! Beryl exclaimed.

The skiff flashed by, and the Chinese girl never gave a glance at the crew or at the excited crowd on the bank.

Miss Carter had been staring, too. "Beryl!" she rapped. "Get your bike and go after her! Get her to start at the end of the racing stretch and to row back here as quickly as she possibly can. Make an exact note of the time she starts off, and I'll mark the time when she finishes here. I think we shall get a surprise."

Beryl lost no time in scorching along the river path. Reaching the end of the racing stretch, she saw that the Chinese girl had pulled into the bank and was resting on her oars.

"Golly," Beryl gasped, "I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw you flash by, Anna! Why didn't you tell me you could row so well?"

"Only foolish person sound own trumpet—"

Anna broke off and made a quick movement with her foot, and a furry toy rabbit was suddenly hidden by the hem of her long gown. But Beryl had already seen and, just for the moment, her eyes were wide. For she could have sworn she had recognised that rabbit.

It was Eileen's mascot—the one she had always insisted upon taking into the boat with her. But it couldn't be—unless Eileen had given her mascot to this strange Chinese girl. But, if so, why had Anna tried so quickly to hide the toy rabbit?

She realised that Anna was still smiling at her.

"Miss Carter wants you to start from that oak-tree and row back to the boathouse as hard as you can," Beryl said, remembering why she was here. "We're going to time you."

"A request from honourable mistress is an order," replied the Chinese girl.

She moved the boat into position, and then it seemed to leap forward through the water. Beryl took a quick glance at her watch and, by the time she was back in the saddle, Anna was around the bend and out of sight.

"She—she's wonderful!" Beryl gasped. "She's even better than Eileen!"

Anna beat her back to the boathouse, for Beryl had to swing a little away from the river. She compared times with Miss Carter, and she saw the excitement that flashed into the mistress's face.

"It's equal to the record!" Miss Carter exclaimed. "A truly amazing performance! To-morrow afternoon I shall put two trial eights on the river. You will stroke one, Ada, and you, Anna, will stroke the other."

At that moment Beryl happened to catch sight of Ada Kemp. Ada was looking at the Chinese girl, and her eyes were dilated by hatred. The glance shocked Beryl. She could imagine Ada's chagrin at the prospect of being left out of the crew, but surely it did not call for such a look of undisguised hatred.

Miss Carter spoke to Anna again.

"If you haven't a rowing outfit," she said, "I'm sure Beryl will be able to fix you up."

Anna made the same reply she had made to Beryl—that her ancestors insisted upon her wearing national dress at all times.

"I'll be a little unusual," Miss Carter smiled, "but there's no rule against it."

Beryl went into the boathouse to change, and Miss Carter kept her talking for some time. When she came out at last there was no sign of Anna or of any of the others.

Remembering she had to make a call in the village, Beryl hurried through the woods, and she was almost in sight of the village when she suddenly pulled up.

A little ahead of her a figure had darted out from behind a wide tree—a figure she could not help but recognise.

It was Anna Li Sing, and now Beryl realised that the Chinese girl was following two other girls—Ada Kemp and a friend of hers, Mona Gregory. Then all three of them were lost to sight among the trees.

Beryl stared in amazement. Why was Anna shadowing Ada Kemp and her friend? Beryl suddenly remembered Ada's look of hatred. She also remembered the toy rabbit she had seen in Anna's boat—the tiny mascot Anna had tried to hide. Thinking of it now, Beryl was sure it had been Eileen's own mascot.

"There's a mystery about Anna," Beryl decided excitedly. "I sensed it the moment she spoke of Eileen's photograph. Perhaps she has some clue to the real thief. Perhaps she's working on Eileen's behalf, and, if she is, I'm going to help her all I can!"

## THE NIGHT INTRUDER

TEA was ready and waiting when Anna returned to the school. Beryl wondered if she would give any explanation of her strange behaviour, but the Chinese girl had no comment to make. All she spoke about was the beautiful river scenery.

All the girls wanted to be introduced to Anna that evening. Wherever she appeared a group soon formed about her. The only girl who stood apart was Ada Kemp. Time and time again Beryl saw her looking at Anna with hatred in her eyes.

During the evening Beryl discovered that Anna would not be sleeping in the dormitory with the rest of Form A. A small box-room on the same corridor had been fitted up as her private bedroom.

When the bed-time bell rang Beryl and Anna went up the staircase together, and Beryl noticed that Ada Kemp and Mona Gregory kept close behind them.

"I'd rather like to see how they've fixed up your room, Anna," Beryl smiled. "It used to be full of old trunks."

Anna looked at her in her inscrutable way.

"It will be honour to show you humble sleeping-place," she answered, "but I humbly beg that you wait until to-morrow. Owing to necessity of unpacking, room now very untidy."

Ada Kemp stepped forward.

"Go on!" she urged. "We all want to have a look at the room."

Beryl stared at her with quick curiosity. As far as she knew, this was the first time Ada had spoken to the new girl.

"It is Chinese custom only to invite friends to home," Anna said.

Ada's face flushed darkly at the snub. She took another step forward and came between Anna and the door.

"What do you mean by that?" she hotly demanded. "If you're trying to make out—"

"Please excuse!" Anna said.

It seemed to Beryl that the Chinese girl made to push by Ada, and that, in doing so, she stumbled, causing Ada to stagger back and cannon against the door. It flew open with her weight, Ada sat down, and then

Thud!

Something seemed to burst above the door and something fell. As it hit the floor it billowed up again as a dirty, greyish cloud, and for the moment the unfortunate Ada was blotted out.

"It's a booby-trap!" somebody shrieked. "Somebody fixed it up for the Chinese girl and Ada Kemp has walked into it!"

Beryl remembered how closely Ada Kemp had followed them up the staircase, and how insistent she had been to see inside the room. It looked as if Ada had known about the trap!

"The wise man should beware of his own trap!" Anna said clearly.

Girls had come flocking out of the dormitory, and they all stood there laughing. For Ada Kemp, still seated on the floor, looked more like a female chimney-sweep than anything else.

"But what a rotten trick to play on a new girl!" somebody said.

A tall figure suddenly appeared upon the scene.

"What is happening here?" Miss Carter wanted to know. "Why are you seated on the floor, Ada? And why are you in such a disgraceful state?"

Ada Kemp's eyes blazed furiously as she scrambled to her feet, and dramatically she pointed to Anna.

"She deliberately pushed me into the door!" she excitedly accused. "She—she must have seen me fix it up—"

Her face grew pale under its coating of soot. In her furious anger with Anna, she had given herself away.

"So you fixed it up!" Miss Carter said coldly. "This is the kind of welcome you give a new girl! I am ashamed of you, Ada, and you deserve all you've got!"

Ada Kemp stood biting her lip. There was no longer any laughter, and angry stares were being directed towards her.

"As you are responsible, Ada, you will clear up the mess!" Miss Carter went on. "Bring brushes and a dustpan first of all, and then go to the kitchen for hot water, soap, and scrubbing brushes! When the whole floor had been cleaned you will come and report to me!"

Ada Kemp darted one last angry look at Anna, and then turned sulkily on her heels. Anna, completely unperturbed, walked into the dormitory and seated herself comfortably on the edge of a bed.

At last Miss Carter came to report that Anna's room had been cleaned, but long after lights out the sound of scrubbing was heard in the corridor. Evidently Miss Carter was seeing to it that Ada Kemp made a thorough job of the cleaning.

Sleep was slow in coming to Beryl. She found herself wondering about the Chinese girl. She thought about Eileen's mascot and about the way she had seen Anna following Ada Kemp. What was the explanation of the mystery?

And what about the boat race?

Would Anna become stroke in place of Ada Kemp? If so it might make all the difference to the crew. How wonderful if they were going to bring the Tanley Trophy to the school after all.

Thinking of the boat race, Beryl suddenly sat up in bed. She intended getting up an hour before rising bell in order to go down to the river for training. And she had left her wrist watch in the study. Without it she would have no means of knowing the time in the morning.

"I'll slip down and get it," she told herself.

Pulling on slippers and dressing-gown, she crept out of the dormitory. Subdued lights were burning at the ends of each corridor, making it just light enough for anyone to move about with ease.

Having picked up her watch from the study table, Beryl turned to close the door after her. It was then she caught sight of the line of light underneath a study door farther along the corridor.

"Ada Kemp's study," she breathed. "But Ada is in bed."

Her own bed was the nearest to the dormitory door. She had seen Ada go to bed, and was positive nobody had left the dormitory.

"She probably forgot to switch it off when she went up," Beryl decided. "I'd better do it for her or she'll be running into more trouble in the morning."

Beryl opened the door wide and reached out for the switch. Then she gave a gasp of astonishment.

For the study was not empty. A youthful figure stood in the centre of the room—a youthful figure with a mop of unruly fair hair. Behind her the lid of Ada Kemp's desk was up, and the figure was holding a letter in her hand—a letter she had obviously taken from the desk.

For one long moment the two girls stared at each other. Beryl wanted to rub her eyes.

"Eileen!" she gasped. The intruder in Ada Kemp's study was Eileen Morton—the Fourth Form girl who had been expelled from Cliffpoint in disgrace.

That one word broke the tension. The lid of the desk fell with a crash, and then the intruder leapt forward, knocking up the light switch.

Darkness blotted out the room: Beryl went staggering backwards as the figure cannoned against her. By the time she had recovered her balance the other girl was running down the corridor. Then a shaft of light blazed out, and Beryl realised that Miss Carter had opened her study door.

"Who is that?" the games mistress angrily demanded. "One moment!"

Beryl heard hasty footsteps go flying up the staircase.

"Oh, dear!" Beryl moaned aloud. "My head!"

Somehow she must stop Miss Carter going in chase, for Eileen could not hope to escape the athletic mistress.

Miss Carter heard her, and she switched on the corridor lights.

"Beryl Mead!" she exclaimed in startled surprise. "What has happened to you and what are you doing out of your dormitory at this hour of the night? And who was the girl who ran past my study?"

Beryl knew it would never do to tell that Eileen had been inside the school. Miss Carter would start inquiries at once—she might even send for the police!

She told of coming down for her watch.

"I'd just come out of the study when someone cannoned into me," Beryl said. "I had no chance to recognise anyone in the gloom. And I bumped my head against the wall."

Miss Carter looked at her, and then looked back along the corridor.

"I've lost her now, whoever she was," she said rather tartly. "You'd better get back to bed, Beryl."

Beryl was only too glad to hurry away. She turned into the dormitory corridor and was instantly conscious of a strong draught. She caught her breath when she saw that the end window was wide open. Then Eileen had made her escape by way of the window.

She was on her way to close it down when a door opened and Anna Li Sing came into the corridor. The Chinese girl was wearing a long, silk kimono.

"Sleep comes slowly to a strange bed," she told Beryl. "And there was someone who ran along the corridor."

"There's nothing to be frightened about, Anna," Beryl said. "Just—just somebody ragging after lights out, perhaps."

She closed the window, saying nothing about Eileen's startling appearance in the school.

Anna nodded and returned to her room. Beryl also went back to bed, but her mind was rioting with a medley of thoughts.

Why had Eileen taken such a risk? What had she been doing in Ada Kemp's study? Why had she rifled Ada's desk and what was the letter she'd been reading?

"If only she'd explained to me," Beryl thought wistfully. "I'd have done anything to help her."

She thought of Anna's unexpected appearance. Had Anna really spoken

the truth—had she really been frightened? Or had she known about Eileen's visit—perhaps opened the window to admit Eileen in the first place? And she might have come into the corridor and pretended to be scared just in order to find out what Beryl intended to do about her strange discovery.

The more she thought about it the more convinced Beryl became that the latter explanation was the true one.

Why had Eileen returned to the school? In what way was Anna Li Sing connected with her? Even Beryl's dreams were tormented by those two questions.

## AN EXCITING DISCOVERY

EVERYTHING seemed so normal next morning that Beryl was tempted to wonder if she had imagined the whole affair. But she found herself watching Anna very closely, and more and more she marvelled at the quick way in which the Chinese girl had settled down.

"Eileen must have put her wise to everything here," Beryl decided. More than once she wondered if she should question Anna about Eileen; but the Chinese girl never gave her an opening, and Beryl herself hesitated to take the plunge. She might be wrong about Anna; it would be better to wait and see what happened.

As soon as dinner was over the whole Lower School was agog with excitement. Every path seemed to lead to the river as far as the junior girls were concerned. For everybody wanted to see Anna in action as stroke of one of the trial eights.

When Miss Carter read out the names of the two crews Beryl discovered she was down as No. 2 in Anna's boat. But she quickly realised that Anna's was by far the weaker of the two crews.

There was great excitement when the two boats were placed in the water. Anna was still wearing her split frock and the tiny flower was still in her hair—facts which caused much comment, for it seemed to the onlookers that the Chinese girl was hampering her own chances of winning.

The two crews jockeyed for position at the starting line. Ada Kemp's face was set in dour fashion and she made it obvious she did not intend easily to lose her position as stroke of the junior crew.

The pistol was fired and sixteen blades dipped into the water. Anna set a long swinging stroke, and immediately Beryl was conscious of the perfect rhythm in the boat.

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But it was Ada Kemp's boat that shot ahead. Within a very short space of time there were two lengths of daylight between the boats.

Halfway down the course and Anna was still two lengths behind. It was then that she started to quicken her stroke. The crew responded at once and Beryl was conscious of the sudden lift of the boat. The air was filled with excited shouts.

"They're catching up!"

"The Chinese girl is going to do it after all."

It was a wonderful sight for Beryl when the rival cox came suddenly into view. They were catching up—how they were catching up!

And how raggedly Ada Kemp was rowing now! How angry she looked. Then they were in front, the pistol had sounded, and the weaker crew had won by an easy half length.

The excited girls almost mobbed Anna when she stepped ashore.

"This settles it, Anna," Miss Carter said quietly. "From now onwards you'll take over as stroke of the junior crew."

Just for one moment Ada Kemp looked at Anna; then without a word she turned on her heel and strode away.

Every day after that there were crowds on the river path to see the junior crew at work. Even the seniors deigned to come and watch. The villagers, too, showed an interest, for it was a very strange sight to see a Chinese girl stroking a crew, especially when that girl was dressed in her national costume.

The crew improved wonderfully, and Miss Carter grew more and more optimistic.

"Thank goodness you came before the regatta, Anna," she said once. "I can't tell you what a difference you've made to the crew."

Ada Kemp was the only girl who stayed away from the river.

During these days of hectic practice there were times when Beryl forgot about Eileen's strange appearance at the school. Time and time again she was tempted to try and force Anna out into the open, but as the Chinese girl showed no sign of being communicative about Eileen, Beryl decided to bide her time. She would wait until the race was over, and then she would find out if Anna was really trying to help Eileen.

Not once during the days of practice did she see the little rabbit mascot again.

There was no practice for the crew on the afternoon before the regatta, but Beryl persuaded Anna to join her in taking out a double-oared skiff.

"We need only paddle a little," Beryl smiled.

They had been on the river some half hour when a wildly excited girl suddenly appeared upon the bank.

"Some of the Third have upset their boat," she shouted, "and one of them can't swim. Hurry—oh, please hurry! They're only just around the bend—"

Two oars were already flashing in

was staring as though she could not believe her eyes.

Anna saw that look, and she made a quick movement to cover her arm and to hide a tell-tale mark. Then she shrugged.

"You know!" she said quietly.

Beryl had no words—she could only nod her head.

"You won't give me away?" Anna said then.

An excited smile began to form about Beryl's lips.

"Of course not!" she declared.

Anna clambered on to the bank.

"I'm glad you know, Beryl," she said. "But this is no time for explanations—even here someone may be listening. But now that you do know, I want you to promise me something. Pretend to avoid me tomorrow until the time of the race, but whatever happens don't let me out of your sight for a moment."

As they sculled rapidly downstream Beryl thought that Anna's last request was the strangest happening in a very strange situation.

## THE SECRET REVEALED

AS soon as dinner was over next day Beryl continued her task of seeming to avoid Anna yet keeping her in sight.

When it was almost time to start out for Tanley Miss Carter called to Beryl, and for nearly a quarter of an hour she was kept in conversation. It seemed that if the crew won the Trophy, Beryl would be expected to make a speech in Hall that night.

She got away at last, but there was no sign of Anna now. Beryl questioned girl after girl but nobody had seen her and then she bumped into Ina Wilson.

"Anna's just left for Tanley," Ina said. "She borrowed my old bike and she rode away a good five minutes or so ago."

Beryl caught her breath. Thanks to Miss Carter she had let Anna down.

"And she probably thinks I'm following her on my own bike," she thought.

A minute or two later Beryl was scorching out of the gates.

Tanley was only a little way up the river, and quite a number of girls were walking over. When the regatta started Cliffpoint were massed on both banks in force. Half a dozen races were rowed off, and the time drew near for the start of the Tanley Junior Trophy.

It was then that an alarming rumour spread through the ranks of the school.

"Anna Li Sing and Beryl Mead haven't turned up! They're missing!"

Miss Carter was pacing up and down in agitated fashion, and presently the games mistress beckoned to Ada Kemp and Mona Gregory.

"Both you girls get changed," she said. "Just in case."

Ada Kemp was smiling as she vanished inside one of the boathouses.

Cliffpoint knew then that the rumour was true. Anna Li Sing and Beryl Mead had failed to turn up—

they were gone. And the most curious part of the story was that the school

had not noticed their absence until the water

was almost at the end of the course.

Then, stooping down in a corner, Eileen came up with a dark wig in her hands—a wig with a tiny flower tucked into one side. Carefully she fitted it over her head, and then she used two short strips of sticking plaster to pull up the corners of her eyes and to give them an almond appearance. Finally she climbed into a long garment with a slit skirt and—

Anna Li Sing had returned to life.

And now something even stranger took place. Eileen sat down in a corner, and Beryl tied her hands and ankles with rope. Her last task before leaving the hut was to blindfold her chum.

Half an hour went by, and then a

voice came from the bushes. "It's me!" she called. "I'm here!"

"Where?" Miss Carter gasped.

The seven girls and the cox were

already in their seats before another figure burst out of the bushes. It ran with its head well down. Without a word it scrambled into the boat and then the Cliffpoint crew were pushing off.

Then suddenly shouts of amazement were heard along the river bank. Everybody was staring at the Cliffpoint stroke—a girl with a mop of unruly fair hair.

"It—it isn't Anna Li Sing at all!" voices shrilly exclaimed. "It—it's Eileen Morton!"

She's come back to stroke the crew."

Ada Kemp's face was livid. Angriest she caught at Miss Carter's arm. "It's Eileen Morton!" she exclaimed wildly. "She's been expelled—she's no right to row for the school! The race will be declared void! You must call the boat back!"

Miss Carter was staring as though she could not believe her eyes.

"It—it's too late," she gasped. "And—and the race will be declared void—"

The report of the starter's pistol interrupted her, and only at the last moment did Miss Carter scramble into the launch that was to follow the crews.

The race started in dead silence as far as Cliffpoint was concerned. Rosemount began as though they intended to race away from their rivals, but Eileen kept a steady stroke and her crew moved in unison behind her.

It was the trial race all over again. At the half-way mark Rosemount were two lengths ahead. Then Eileen's stroke perceptibly quickened. Her crew backed her up in heroic fashion, and for the first time Cliffpoint started to shout.

"They're beginning to catch up!"

"Cliffpoint for ever!"

"Oh, well rowed, Eileen!"

Only the race mattered now.

And Beryl once again knew that wonderful moment when she caught sight of the rival cox. They were drawing level. Her arms and legs were aching, but Eileen had quickened the stroke even more, and Rosemount were beginning to make heavy water of it.

Then Cliffpoint shot ahead, and when their boat flashed over the finishing line it was a good two lengths ahead of Rosemount.

For the first time Cliffpoint had won the trophy. Thanks to Eileen Morton—a girl who had been expelled. And, remembering that, Cliffpoint's excitement faded. The race had been won and yet it had been lost. An expelled girl could not represent the school, so the race must go to Rosemount by default.

Miss Carter was the first to greet the crew as they stepped ashore.

"You have spoiled everything for us, Eileen," she rapped. "Where is Anna and—"

Beryl caught her arm.

"We must talk to you in private, Miss Carter," she gasped. "We haven't a moment to lose."

It was five minutes later that Miss Carter went cycling recklessly in the direction of Tanley town. At the same time Beryl and Eileen tore through the woods, and both were still in their rowing outfits. Coming in sight of a hut, both slowed down and then approached it with care. Both sighed their relief at finding it empty.

A very strange thing happened then. Stooping down in a corner, Eileen came up with a dark wig in her hands—a wig with a tiny flower tucked into one side. Carefully she fitted it over her head, and then she used two short strips of sticking plaster to pull up the corners of her eyes and to give them an almond appearance. Finally she climbed into a long garment with a slit skirt and—

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Half an hour went by, and then a

voice came from the bushes. "It's me!" she called. "I'm here!"

"Where?" Miss Carter gasped.

The seven girls and the cox were

she saw that one of Anna's long sleeves had been torn. Suddenly Beryl

The seven girls and the cox were



# That Dutch Holiday of Surprises

By ELISE PROBYN

## A BLOW FOR THE CHUMS

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 in the keeping of an artist in Schipol. He, however, would give it to no one else but Zella.

Shirley, dressed in Dutch clothes, managed to steal into van Hagel's house and up to Zella's room. She meant to persuade Zella to come with them to Schipol.

To her dismay, Zella's room was empty, and, turning, Shirley was confronted by Zella's guardian. He told her that he had sent Zella to Germany.

"ZELLA'S gone to—to—Germany?" Shirley repeated, and stared at Van Hagel almost stupidly.

It was a disastrous blow. She had located the tulip-bowl at last; had come here to take Zella straight to her brother's friend, who would give the tulip-bowl into her hands. But she had come too late!

Zella had been sent away, right out of the country. And that artist friend of her brother's would give the tulip-bowl to no one else but Zella!

"It comes as a shock to you? You wanted to see Zella—very particularly?" Mr. van Hagel said, watching Shirley with gleaming eyes. "Why should you think that?" Shirley asked.

His smile twisted. He stood there, tall and dark and sinister in the shaded light of the landing.

"You would not have taken this dreadful risk," he said, "unless it was for something desperately important. A young English girl, a young holiday-maker like you, breaking into my house. Stealing in like a thief! You realise, of course, that I must call the police!"

Shirley eyed him. "Call them!" she invited. "I will give you a chance to save yourself!" he went on, changing his tone. "Confess everything. Tell me why you broke into my house. Tell me exactly what it is that you and your friends were conspiring to do for Zella—"

"I think you might as well call the police," Shirley replied calmly.

He breathed hard, realising that he could not browbeat her. But she was worried by the grim triumph she saw in his eyes.

"It was fortunate, Shirley, that I caught you with Zella on the night of the ball," he said slowly, "and saw that very interesting picture you discovered. It has helped me a great deal." He paused. "Now make no mistake about it—you are finished

with Zella and her affairs. The consequences will be serious: you will find yourself in the hands of the police even yet, if you or your friends ever cross my path again!"

Shirley was mute as she put on her clogs and followed him down the stairs. His threat meant nothing to her. His triumph was already complete, unless she could find Zella!

Outside the kitchen door, in the dusk, Tess and Dick were eagerly awaiting her beside the gay, beehive-shaped cake-van. They stared, horrified, as they saw Shirley walk out through that door, accompanied, not by Zella, but by the ominous figure of Zella's guardian!

Anna the maid almost dropped the tray of honeycakes she was holding.

"The—the English girl!" she gasped.

"You were fooled, Anna! But it's the last time these young English will fool anyone in this house!" Mr. van Hagel said pointedly, as the maid scurried in.

Then the door slammed. Tess and Dick gazed in dismay, while Shirley told them the crushing news.

"Zella gone!" gasped Dick. "But—but we're beat if we can't get in touch with her—can't find her address somehow."

"Jan's the only one who can help us—he may be able to get it out of Anna!" Shirley said hopefully. "He'll be home from school by now. We'll get Willem to drive us along to the farmhouse."

All three got into the back of the van, empty now of its succulent honeycakes. Empty of its hoped-for passenger! Willem, the driver, asked no questions. He realised that they had met no friend, but only the strongest disfavour, at Mr. van Hagel's house, and he was only too glad to drive away—anywhere they liked.

They were bowling along the Bootendorp road, alongside the canal, when Jan's voice hailed them unexpectedly out of the blue. They all turned, gazing out of the back of the van in surprise, for at first they could not see him.

"There he is! On that barge!" Tess cried.

The barge was anchored at the side of the canal, its engine silent, but Jan looked as proud as an admiral as he stood nursing the

wheel. He did not wait for the chums' news when they came scrambling aboard. Jan had big news of his own!

"See dis barge, mine friends?" he cried. "You like it? Vot you say if I tell you it's ours—perhaps?"

"Glad you said perhaps! Listen, Jan, we want you to help us—"

Shirley began earnestly.

"You t'ink I am joking, eh? Perhaps yes, perhaps no!" laughed Jan, with mysterious elation. "I haf a surprise for you, mine Shirley and Tess and Dick. In two days I begin a week's holiday from school!"

"Gee, that's fine, Jan!" All the chums echoed Shirley's delight. "If only you can get us what we want, we'll celebrate—"

"Vot I want," cried Jan, "is for us to go cruising for a week's holiday—on dis barge. I can hire it very cheap. It belongs to the village postman here in Bootendorp, and he is a friend of mine, and vot you call hard-up. It vould do him big favour."

Shirley's eyes were shining.

"Did you say he's the village postman, Jan?" she asked eagerly. "Will he do you a favour?" she said in a rush. "Van Hagel's sent Zella away to Germany. Do you think your postman friend could find out her address for us? He's bound to handle letters to her from Van Hagel!"

They waited excitedly for Jan's reply.

"Ja, he will find out Zella's address for us—even if I cannot hire dis barge. He is great friend to me, mine postman!"

The chums bowed back to Breukelen, in the cake-van, feeling in a much happier frame of mind. It once they could trace Zella's address, and get a message to her in secret, Tess and Dick declared that the game was won. Shirley was thoughtful and more cautious.

"We've got to get the tulip-bowl safe in our hands—and we've got to get it quickly," she said with conviction. "Otherwise, I've a hunch Van Hagel will beat us to it yet!"

"How could he? He doesn't know where it is!" grinned Dick.

"No. But he's got mighty busy since we saw that painting in Amsterdam. And it might occur to him to trace the artist who painted it!" Shirley said slowly. "We'll go to Schipol first thing to-morrow and beg this artist chap, for Zella's sake, to give the tulip-bowl to us. If he won't—well, we'll have to find some

## IN QUEST OF THE SECOND TULIP BOWL

other way of getting it. But get it we must!"

They set off early next morning on their bikes. It was an exhilarating ride to Schipol. A keen, white frost glistened on windmills and waterways. The crisp air stirred in all three an exultant thrill of purposefulness. They were on the track of the mystery tulip-bowl, and they were determined not to leave Schipol without it.

They reached Schipol at last, and Shirley fell in love with it as soon as she saw the old-world houses, no two alike, and the bright-coloured cafés, busy now serving luncheons.

Its main quarter was modern enough, and the chums could see the planes flying over its big airport. But they followed the directions given them by the miller's daughter, and kept to the long, cobbled street of the artists' quarter.

"Here's the museum! It's the second turning on the left from here!" Shirley sang out in sudden excitement.

"And we'll know the studio by its wooden gable jutting out like a pigeon cote," said Dick.

There was no missing it as they turned into the road in which it was situated. But even as Shirley's excited eyes spotted the studio she saw something else, too; something that made her bike skid to a crazy halt.

"That car! Look! Outside the studio!" she gasped.

But Tess and Dick had also seen that car standing outside the door of the studio. They jammed on their brakes and jumped off their bikes in shocked dismay.

"Van Hagel's car," Dick cried, staring up the narrow side-turning. "It's Van Hagel's car! He's got here before us! He's there now—"

Then all three stood as if frozen. They saw a tall, dark figure emerge briskly from the studio and get into the car, his errand finished. It was Mr. van Hagel!

#### WHAT THE ARTIST TOLD THEM

"OH, do you think he's got the tulip-bowl?" Tess asked faintly. Shirley shook her head.

"I don't know, but— Quick! Dodge back before he sees us!"

Van Hagel had already stepped into his car; now he was heading for the corner where the three of them were standing.

Shirley's warning had come too late. It was impossible to dodge, and Dick gave a hopeless shrug.

"He's seen us already. He looked straight at us!" Dick said flatly as the car shot past them round the corner. "What does it matter?"

"It would matter a lot if he hasn't got the tulip-bowl!" Shirley told Dick. "We don't want him spying on us. And we don't know that he's got it," she panted. "Come on! Come to the studio and see the artist. There may still be a chance."

Quickly they wheeled their bikes to the door of the studio. Dick knocked. The door opened mechanically from within. They found themselves stepping into a room full of easels and paintings and grinning plaster busts.

Regarding them interestedly stood a tousle-haired youth in baggy Dutch trousers and a paint-smeared velvet jacket, a palette and brushes balanced on his arm.

"H'm! More callers!" he observed, then added slowly in English: "You wouldn't be English, would you?"

"Yes—" began all three breathlessly.

"Then I think I know what you've come for!" he murmured.

"The tulip-bowl!" Shirley burst out eagerly. Please don't say you've given it to that swindling Van Hagel! We're Zella's friends. He's a fraud and a cheat and a scoundrel! He's—"

"That's nothing to what he said about you!" the artist interrupted, with a solemn shake of the head. "Personally, I think you ought to be very grateful to him."

"Grateful to Van Hagel!" echoed the chums.

"Certainly!" said the artist. "I wouldn't have known that I could trust you if I hadn't met Van Hagel first. He was after the tulip-bowl. And it was what he said against you three that convinced me that you are genuine. Genuinely Zella's friends!" Shirley's eyes sparkled.

"Then you didn't give him the tulip-bowl?"

"I did not!" The young artist shook his head. "I've taken care of it for Zella, as I promised her brother, and I would give it into your trust now—if I had it here to give you!"

The smiles vanished from the chums' faces.

"Then—then you haven't got the tulip-bowl?" Shirley asked faintly.

"Not here. But it isn't far away," the artist reassured her with a confident grin. "I put it in a safer place—just in case of visits from people like Van Hagel when I'm not here. You will find it in the museum, in the students' room."

"Whereabouts?" The chums held their breath.

"Go to the third floor of the museum," he directed them. "You will see the artists' corner, in the students' room, and you will see a whole collection of objects that we use for still-life painting. Amongst them you will find the tulip-bowl! Take it and give it to Zella. The trust is yours now. Good-bye!"

With no more words, but the warmest sincerity, he ushered them out of the studio before they could adequately thank him.

In hopeful excitement the chums mounted their bikes and made for the museum. Quickly reaching it, they propped their bikes against each other, in too much of a hurry to look for a proper parking place, and then raced up the steps and pushed at the door. But the door did not budge. Shirley and Tess gave it another push, with the same result.

"It couldn't be closed for the lunch-hour, could it?" Tess asked doubtfully.

"Of course not! It's a public museum—it's open all day!" exclaimed Dick. "I expect the door-keeper's having a cup of coffee or else gone to sleep. I'll knock!" And Dick raised his hand to the iron ring in the door, and knocked lustily.

There was a hollow silence. Then heavy boots came echoing along the stone flagging within, and the door was opened by a uniformed official.

His brows shot up in indignation at sight of the three dusty figures in shorts and sweaters.

"What do you want?" he rapped out in Dutch. "The museum is closed!"

"Pardon?" Shirley stuttered.

"It is closed to the public till Friday, except for privileged visitors. Can you not read?" And he pointed peremptorily to the placards in the forecourt.

"But—" Dick made a desperate attempt to wedge his foot in the doorway while he tried to explain in Dutch: "But we only wish to stay a moment. If you will please let us in, as a privilege—"

"The public is not privileged. The museum is closed till Friday!" barked the official with an unmistakable finality, and slammed the door.

The chums gazed at each other in dismay. Shirley was about to try the knocker again and plead with the official, but Tess' detaining hand upon her arm, and the swift, warning look in her chum's eyes made her drop her hand.

"Look who's watching!" Tess whispered.

And then Shirley caught a glimpse of a tall figure on the opposite pavement disappear into a cigar shop. It was Van Hagel!

"Blow! If only we could have got in, he wouldn't have seen us. Now we've set him guessing!" Shirley gasped. "Try to look off-hand—pretend to be reading those placards. I'll bet he's still watching us through that shop window."

They tried to walk carelessly down the steps. But the placards, when they read them, only confirmed that the museum was closed.

"Opening again on Friday," Dick translated glumly, "for a special exhibition of precious stones, kindly loaned by the diamond merchants of Amsterdam."

"So we've got to wait till Friday before we can get the tulip-bowl," fumed Tess.

"We're going to get it to-day—Friday may be too late!" Shirley said with a deep breath. "We're going to get into this museum somehow! We've got to!"

She paused, then went on significantly: "Remember, Van Hagel, as a privileged person, can get in whenever he likes—if he should happen to smell a rat!"

That was enough to spur them to any risk. Outwardly casual, in case of watching eyes, they rode away from the museum. But only to put their bikes away in the nearest cycle-park.

Ten minutes later they stole back, on foot, through the narrow street behind the museum.

"I can see—yes, there's a door there at the back!" Tess pointed out. "A fire exit!"

"Is it locked?"

"I'll see."

Dick took a wary look up and down the street, then breathlessly ran to the door and gave it a soft push.

Shirley and Tess stood cover round him while he pushed again, pressing his whole weight against it.

But that back door was more than locked. It was bolted and barred as well!

"Look out!" warned Shirley, concealing her dismay.

The chums moved away unconcernedly while a milkman passed with his dogcart.

"Try round the corner—there may be a side-door!" Dick said under his breath. "Careful no one spots us!"

It was a nerve-shaking ordeal. Each time they came upon another door, someone seemed to appear in the street from nowhere. But each of those doors proved to be firmly locked. How could they ever hope to get into the museum?

They walked round the back again and tried the other side of the building.

"I say, there's a window open here!"

The whisper came from Shirley. "Where?" The others dashed to join her.

"There isn't much room. It's propped open from the inside." Shirley had stopped eagerly at a casement window, low to her reach, but its aperture forbiddingly narrow. "Gee, though, it's wide enough for me to squeeze in!"

"And us! You're not going in alone!" Dick said grimly.

"Yes—we'll all go in!" echoed Tess.

"Then keep cave for me!" breathed Shirley. "If I can get in I'll open the window wider. Here goes!"

She hoisted herself over the sill. For one awful moment her shoulders were wedged there; she could move neither in nor out.

"Quick, Shirley—quick! Someone's coming!" came an agonised whisper from Tess.

With a frantic effort Shirley heaved herself forward, and dived head-first into darkness. She landed on hands and knees on a stone floor, bruised and shaken. But she was inside the museum!

Crouching there, she waited until footsteps had passed safely by in the street.

"O.K., Dick? O.K., Tess?" she whispered.

Not till they answered did she venture to reach for the bar of the window, drawing it open wider.

"Come on," she called softly.

Next second Tess, then Dick, came wriggling in through the window. They were in the museum—they had gained their goal!

## IN THE MUSEUM

"NOW for the tulip-bowl!" whispered Dick.

"We've got to find the stairs—the students' room on the third floor," Shirley peered about her in the ghostly gloom. "Wh-what's this room, I wonder? Why is it so dark? Ow—What's that round thing?"

"Only a boiler. We're in the boiler-room. Where they make the central heating. Here's the door," Dick groped forward. "Follow me, girls! Not a sound! If that uniformed Johnny hears us—Ouch!"

His yell sounded terrifyingly loud to the girls. He had knocked his knee against the boiler.

Tess grabbed frantically at his arm.

"Let Shirley go in front, Dick. You make a racket like an elephant."

Shirley led them out through the door, tiptoeing along a dark passage, then up a short stone staircase. Her heart jumped as she came to the top of those stairs.

"L-look at those white things!" quaked Tess.

White, shrouded shapes loomed up like ghosts in the dim light of the cathedral-like windows. Shirley recovered herself with a shiver of relief.

"They're only museum-cases—covered with white cloths," she whispered. "This is one of the main rooms. I—I wish the blinds weren't drawn. Isn't it creepy?"

"Of course not. That's only your imagination!" Dick rallied her with a teeth-chattering grin. "Where are the stairs?"

"Through this room. I should think. The other end—this way!"

"Careful how you go, Dick. Don't knock anything over!" warned Tess, as they stole past the shrouded cases.

"You watch your own step, Tess. You're the one who's jumpy, not me." And then Dick gave a gasp. "What was that? D-did you hear something?"

A muffled footstep sounded somewhere in the echoes. It was followed by the metallic clank of a kettle or a coffee-can.

"It's all right—it's only that door-man again. He hasn't heard us," Shirley said with a throb of relief.

She hurried on nervously through the long, dim-lit room and its ghostly rows of white, vague shapes. She knew they were only museum-cases protected by dust-covers. But it was easy to imagine they could be anything. That tall one looked as if it were coming towards her. Supposing someone suddenly sprang out from it—

A hand tugged at her arm and she almost swooned.

"Shirley, we're wrong—there's no staircase this end!" whispered Tess in her ear.

"Gee, you made me nearly jump out of my skin!" gasped Shirley. "What d'you mean? The stairs must be this end."

But she could see now that they were not. There was only a blank wall at the end of the room.

"We must have gone past the staircase—it's here somewhere. At least, I—I suppose it is," added Tess.

"Here we are. What's through these curtains?" And Dick made a dive for a curtained partition in the wall. "This must be the stairs—Oh!"

A polar bear leered from behind the curtains. Dick skipped back gasping before he realised that it was only a stuffed bear on a pedestal.

"There's an archway—look! On the other side of the room," Shirley led the way softly to it. "If this isn't the staircase—Yes, it is!"

Thankfully she beckoned the others. Eagerly she darted through the archway and up the dim-lit stairs. Tess and Dick were following behind her, when suddenly she stopped, petrified.

A sardonic face peered down at her from the landing!

"That—that man!" Shirley could

hardly speak. "He's seen us! He's going to—to spring on us!"

She could only see his head and shoulders and his gleaming, watching eyes. He was crouching forward to jump, his attitude so menacing that all the life went out of her limbs.

Dick came up behind her, then gasped.

"That's not a man!"

"Wh-what?"

"It's a ship's figurehead!" Dick spluttered. "Gee, you made me as jumpy as you!"

"Who's jumpy?" protested Shirley faintly.

She could see now that the figure was, indeed, only a figurehead of wood. But it was a moment before she could get over her shock.

"I'll go in front. Up we go. It's the third floor we want!" breathed Dick, pushing ahead.

Shirley was close on his heels when they reached the third landing. She had recovered herself somewhat. She spotted the students' room before Dick did.

Her hand flashed to the door-knob while he was still groping in the gloom on the other side of the landing.

"It's here, Dick!" And she whisked open the door.

Bright daylight dazzled her for the

Shirley gave a smothered little cry.

"There's a paper inside!" With trembling fingers she drew out a tightly folded document that had been wedged inside the heel.

Her chums held their breath while Shirley unfolded the paper. Then a gasp came from all.

The curiously thick, Dutch writing was quite unintelligible to them. words were interspersed with figures and symbols, so incomprehensible that they might almost have been hieroglyphics.

"Gee, I don't know enough Dutch to translate that," admitted Dick with a rueful grin. "Looks like Chinese algebra to me."

"Zella's the only one who'll be able to understand it and tell us what it means," sighed Tess.

"Or Jan. We can show it to Jan to-morrow, and he'll interpret it for us," Shirley said swiftly. "We've got to know what it means. Zella's not here; she's depending on us to help her, and it may tell us everything we need to know!"

Shirley wedged the document back into its secret cache, and placed the tulip-bowl in the safe custody of Dick's pocket.

"Now," she said, eyes shining, "we'll go!"



"The tulip bowl!" cried Shirley, and excitedly she pointed to the table.

moment. The blinds of the room were not drawn; the roof was of glass for the benefit of the art students. Their easels and drawing-boards stood in the corner. A table was littered with curios for still-life drawing. Old Dutch pottery, ancient wood carvings, pewter goblets, and—

"The tulip-bowl!"

Shirley excitedly ran to it.

Their quest had triumphed; their trophy was found at last! This brass, clog-shaped tulip-bowl was the exact replica of the first they had located. It was unmistakably the twin of the pair.

"Gee, let's examine it, Shirley!" Breathlessly Dick closed the door. "Let's see if we can find the secret."

"Rub off the tarnish. There may be some words scratched on it, Shirley, the same as you found on the other," urged Tess.

But Shirley was groping her hand inside the clog, tapping her fingertips excitedly on the metal. There was something different about this second clog. It was lighter than the other. It seemed to give a hollow sound when she tapped it. She pressed her fingers to the inside of the heel—

Click! A slot flew open on a spring and revealed the heel to be hollow, like a box.

All three crept down the stairs with even more caution than before. Discovery now would not bear thinking of. It would be disastrous. At the very least they would be searched. They had taken the tulip-bowl from the museum, after all, and the official would most certainly make them hand it back!

Silent as shadows they reached the boiler-room again, unseen and unsuspected.

Shirley went softly to the window. "I'll see if the coast's clear first and no one about," she said softly. "We mustn't be caught breaking out—Oh!"

With a gasp she jumped back from the window. A tall, lean figure was pacing restlessly up and down on the opposite pavement.

"Hagel!" she whispered tensely. "Van Hagel's snooping outside! I—I don't know if he suspects something—"

"Did he see us?" asked Dick and Tess.

"No," said Shirley. "B-but—" All three looked at each other in apprehension.

They dared not steal out while Van Hagel was there. They were trapped in the museum until he chose to go!

What can the chums do now? Will they be discovered? There will be a further thrilling instalment of this grand serial in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.

# The MERRYMAKERS' ISLAND COLLEGE



By DAPHNE GRAYSON

## JOHNNY'S BIG CATCH

"GEE!" exclaimed Don Weston. "No doubt about it—that fish George Frogatt caught was a real whopper!"

"If he hadn't actually shown us the fish I'd have said Frogatt was the whopper—telling them, not catching them!" chuckled Sally Warner.

"A fifteen-pounder!" murmured Fay Manners. "It's the largest one I've heard of being caught in this lake!"

"Well, we'll see if we can't beat it!" said Johnny Briggs, the optimist. "How about this spot?"

"Rather!"

The four chums—known as the Merry-makers—were in Johnny's speedboat, preparing for an afternoon's fishing on the lake near the International College, situated on Waloorie Island, off the coast of Australia.

And they were not the only students fishing on that placid stretch of water. Other boats drifted leisurely about the lake, all occupied by boys and girls from the island college.

George Frogatt, the bullying, boastful West House prefect, had been responsible for this sudden interest in the sport of angling.

For once he had had something to boast about. That morning he had turned up with a huge fifteen-pounder, which he said he had caught in the lake.

"Cast off!" said Johnny now, giving his fishing rod a preliminary swing. "Sounds more like knitting than fishing," laughed Sally.

"Careful with that hook, Johnny!" yelled Don. "You've caught me—" "We always did know you were a queer sort of fish, Weston!" came a cheery shout.

A rowing boat had drawn alongside, and in it were Tim Topham, Tex Trevor and the Terry sisters, Tess and Tibs—the Merry-makers' cheery rivals from East House who called themselves the Tops.

"No cheek, Topham!" retorted Don as he disentangled Johnny's hook from his trousers' pocket.

"Buzz off, Tops!" said Johnny, baiting the hook and then flicking the line out across the water. "We've booked this spot. This is where we're going to catch a twenty-pounder and show you East House fatheads what fishing really is—gosh, I've got a bite already!"

Excitedly he wound in the line, and

then a yell of laughter went up from the Tops.

"Is that your twenty-pounder?" roared Topham. "Seems to have shrunk a bit. Looks more like a two-ounce sprat to me. These West House windbags! Now if you want to see a real fish—"

And triumphantly Topham held up a lovely fish which must have weighed all of eight pounds—and which made Johnny's dab look ludicrously small.

"East House winning!" chortled Trevor. "Tops on top!"

They rowed away, leaving the Merry-makers speechless.

"Golly, we'll have to do something about this," said Sally at last. "Can't have the Tops crowing over us like this!"

Out went the chums' lines, and eagerly they awaited results. So engrossed were they that at first it was not noticed they were slowly drifting towards a big motor-boat.

"Keep away!" went up a shout suddenly.

The chums stared round, becoming aware of the proximity of that motor-boat. There were two men on board, one of whom was waving his arms.

"Hallo, who are they?" asked Don, spinning the helm to alter the direction of drift. "Fishing, too, I suppose."

"Ssssh!" hissed Johnny. "I believe I've got a bite! Look at this!"

He was tugging at the line, and the fishing-rod was bending with the weight of whatever he had caught.

"Here, lend a hand, Don!" cried Johnny. "I can't pull it in!"

He was trying to wind in the line; but instead the line was unwinding itself, and the more he pulled the more the rod bent.

"Gee, you've got something here!" gasped Don. "Feels like a whale by the weight of it—crkey!"

"Look!" gurgled Sally, her blue eyes dilating with amazement.

For out of the water appeared

**Was There Really A Monster In The College Lake? That Is What Sally & Co. Are Out To Discover This Week.**

something that held the chums rigid with shock. It came up by the big motor-boat, first of all appearing as a large, round object.

"Oh, my g-g-goodness!" stuttered Fay. "Johnny, you've caught a diver!"

A diver it was! The round object was his helmet, and caught in it was Johnny's fishing hook.

Slowly the heavily weighted diver ascended a ladder at the side of the boat, and for the first time the chums became aware of the sounds of the pumping gear and the apparatus which had hauled the diver to the surface.

"We told you to keep clear!" yelled one of the men angrily.

"Sorry!" gulped Johnny, winding up his fishing line now that it had been freed from the diver's helmet.

"No damage done, is there?"

"Fortunately for you, no; but you might have fouled the air pipe. Get away from here," shouted the man. "Get right off the lake—and that goes for everybody if they'll take my advice. Don't you realise the danger?"

"Danger?" echoed Sally & Co. in surprise.

"Yes—danger! Haven't you heard about the monster?"

"Monster?" gasped the chums, looking startled.

"Sure. It's being said there's a mighty queer creature lurking somewhere in this lake!"

"But—but we haven't heard anything about it," Sally said.

"Well, I'm telling you there are people who say they've seen this creature. That's why we're carrying out diving operations here—to see if we can find any trace of this monster. Did you find anything, Slid, before these youngsters butted in?"

The man turned to his companions. The diver's helmet had been removed, and now he nodded.

"Reckon I did, Bart," he replied. "There's some sort of queer creature in these waters right enough, and I should say it's got its den somewhere in this vicinity. You're right to warn these kids to keep away."

"You hear that?" Bart turned back to the chums. "We're warning you. Keep off the lake—and tell your pals what we've told you. Now get going."

Johnny started up the engine of his speed-boat and cruised away. He looked across at Sally, from her to Fay and Don.

"Gosh! A monster in the lake!" he exclaimed. "What do you make of it—"

"I should say it's this week's fishy story!" chuckled Sally. "Did you see

those men wink at each other when they were talking?"

"No!"

"Well, I did. If you ask me, it was just a yarn to keep us away from their boat. And I'm not surprised," added Sally, still chuckling, "when Johnny hooks their diver and thinks it's a whale!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Merrymakers roared with laughter. At first they had been startled by this story of a monster in the lake; but now they refused to believe there could be any truth in it.

"So we go on fishing, do we?" asked Johnny.

"We do. And let's have some serious fishing this time, Johnny. Fishing for fish, you know. We want to beat East House and those Tops

"Sally, wh-what's that?"

It was Fay who spoke, and the sudden quaver in her voice made the others look round quickly. Sally was startled to see how pale her girl chum had gone.

"What is it, Fay—golly!"

Fay had been pointing astern of the speed-boat, and now Sally gave a little jump.

Something was following the boat. There it was, in the water, submerged just below the surface—a large, greyish shape.

"The monster!" yelled Johnny. "My hat, full speed ahead!"

### THE MONSTER OF THE LAKE

THE speed-boat shot forward as Johnny opened up the throttle. But fast as the boat went, that greyish shape kept up with it. In mingled alarm and amazement Sally stared down at the water.

She could just see that queer underseas denizen. It had a large flat-shaped head, with a tapering serpent-like body the length of which she could not be certain.

The speed-boat raced on through the water; and after it raced that frightening shape.

Johnny spun round the helm, circling in an endeavour to throw off the pursuer. They sped past a rowing-boat—and in that moment Sally heard shouts above the roar of the engine. Shouts of laughter.

In that boat were the Tops; and Topham & Co. were doubled up with mirth.

Sally gave a violent start, suddenly filled with suspicion.

"Johnny, pull up!" she cried. "I believe this is a lape!"

The roar of the engine died away, and now the Tops' shouts could be plainly heard.

"Tops on Top! Poor old Merrymakers!"

"What a monster of a lape!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Sheepishly Sally & Co. were looking at each other now.

"Jigger me!" snorted Johnny, making a dive to the back of the speed-boat. "Then what is this giddy thing—why, we've been towing it. It's fastened to the underside of the boat!"

"That's right," said Topham cheerfully. "It's a tarpaulin and a couple of anchors. I fastened it so that it missed the propeller. Fixed it while you were talking to those men. I heard them bubbling about a monster of the lake. A lot of rot—but it made a rattling good jape. Can you hear us laughing?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Sally & Co. glared, and then they themselves were laughing, too. They had to admit it—Tops were on top!

"But you won't get away with it!" vowed Johnny. "Wait until we catch our twenty-pounder—"

"Haven't you caught it yet?" chortled Trevor. "Have a look at this!"

He held up a large, gleaming fish. It was not a twenty-pounder, but it was larger than the previous one caught by the Tops.

"Tops still leading!" grinned Topham, peering into the chums' boat

as it drifted alongside. "Jumping mackerel, they haven't caught anything yet. Call yourselves anglers? I say, Merrymakers, return the monster, will you?"

"Come and get it! You put it there—oh, all right," grinned Johnny. "Heave-ho, my hearties!"

The chums hauled on the rope; the heavy tarpaulin, weighted with two anchors, was dragged out of the water. And as they did so—

"Golly—look!" cried Sally, and gave a startled jump.

"Help!" gasped Fay, leaping on to a seat.

For out of the tarpaulin had flopped a large, glistening fish. In a flash Don had stunned it.

"Gee, what a beauty!" he exclaimed. "This is nearly as big as Frogg's. Feel the weight of it, Johnny. Who's leading now, Topham?" he added, chortling triumphantly. "Better cover up that shrimp of yours!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was the Merrymakers' turn to laugh.

"Okay," grinned Topham. "Sure

from the lake saturated. Their boat was overturned—by the monster!"

"What?"

Incredulously Merrymakers and Tops regarded the American girl.

"They were rescued by some men in a motor-boat," went on Linda. "The men are warning everybody to keep away from the lake!"

There was a buzz of excited chatter then, for other students had overheard Linda's startling news, and the sensational story quickly spread. What had seemed to be a joke had now become a real menace, and it was not long before the whole college had heard about it.

Sally & Co. were as startled as anybody—perhaps more so because they had been so certain, when originally hearing about this queer creature, that there could be no truth in it.

"I'm positive I saw three men winking at each other when they were telling us about it," Sally declared now, as she and her chums strolled across the campus in the brief evening twilight. "So what does that suggest?"

"That they didn't believe the story—"



"We're warning you to keep off the lake," said one of the men on the boat. Sally and Co. regarded him incredulously. Could there really be danger from a monster?

is a beauty. Levels things up a bit, eh? Now we'll have to go after a twenty-pounder—"

"Bet we get one first!" challenged Johnny.

"Done!"

"But first," suggested Fay smilingly. "I vote we go back for tea!"

"Well, well, these Merrymakers get a good idea now and again," said Topham airily. "Tea it is—rather!"

And Merrymakers and Tops returned to the college—rivals, but always the best of friends.

Over tea, amid much hilarity, they discussed the happenings of the afternoon, and particularly the story told them by the three men in the motor-boat.

"A monster in the lake, eh?" chortled Johnny. "It was a story all right—a tall one! Gosh, it would cause some excitement if there really were one—"

"Seems there is one, buddy!" broke in a nasal voice, and there stood Slick Kaplan, the American boy inventor, and with him were Tubby Winwood, Linda Powell and Chandra Jamaset Singh, the Indian student.

For a moment the chums rapped at the American boy almost stupidly, then as one they burst out laughing.

"Of course there isn't!" smiled Sally. "Now don't you try to kid us, Slick. We've had enough of that from the Tops this afternoon—"

"Very serious!" said the Indian boy gravely.

"Sure is," nodded Linda. "Katrina Parvi and Erikson Thorger and the two Swiss girls have just come back

themselves—that they were kidding us," murmured Fay.

"Exactly."

"Yet they said they were looking for the creature's den—and they had a diver with them," pointed out Don. "That part of it fits in with this monster scare."

"Well, monster or no monster," Johnny said, "I'm not taking any chances—I don't want my speed-boat damaged. I'm going to put it away in the boathouse. And then we'll have a scout round. Agreed?"

"Agreed," said Sally. "I can't help feeling myself that there might be more to this than meets the eye."

"And if so it's up to us to find out what it's all about," nodded Don. "Come on, let's get going."

They made their way down to the lake, past their recently opened clubhouse and along to the college boathouse.

Night had fallen—a velvety tropical night, warm, with a clear, star-clustered sky and a large yellow moon appearing over the distant hills.

"That motor-boat's still out there," said Sally.

It was positioned much closer to the bank now—the only craft to be seen on the serenely placid water.

"And the diver is still at work—hear the sound of the pump?" commented Don.

Johnny had hold of a mooring rope and was pulling his speed-boat into the shelter of the large shed. As he did so another sound was heard, rising above the thump of the air-pumping apparatus.

"A plane!" murmured Fay. "There it is—coming over the lake."  
"Gosh, it's low, too—and coming lower!" exclaimed Don. "I say—look!"

For suddenly a red light flashed upwards into the sky, coming from the motor-boat. There was an answering flash from the plane—a green light this time.

The aircraft passed on over the lake; and then, a moment later, Sally suddenly gave an amazed cry.

"Look—look!" she exclaimed, pointing.

They all followed the direction of her quivering finger, to see a small parachute floating down from the aircraft. Another parachute followed, and another, something swinging from the harness of each one.

"What's going on?" asked Don in bewilderment. "First those signal flashes, and now this—"

"Come on!" broke in Sally tensely. "This looks fishy to me—and I don't mean only the monster in the lake!"

## A FIND IN THE CLEARING

EXCITEDLY the four chums ran along the bank, heading in the direction in which they had seen those parachutes floating downwards.

"How do you mean—fishy?" asked Johnny.

"Well, after what's just happened I'm beginning to form a theory," Sally said. "Do you remember that last night, just about this same time, we heard a plane go over when we were in the clubhouse?"

"Yes."  
"Perhaps that plane dropped some parachutes, too—and perhaps they fell into the water. And perhaps that's what the diver was looking for this afternoon!" Sally said breathlessly, as she raced on through a belt of gum trees growing near the lake edge.

"Gosh!" gasped Don. "And all that talk about a monster was to scare us off?"

"Just that," nodded Sally. "The Tops played that trick on us with the fake monster. Those men might have done the same thing with Katrina and Erikson and the other girls—only they did it more realistically and overturned their boat! But, as I say, it's only a theory—"

"And probably the right one, too!" Fay breathed. "What are we going to do now, Sally?"

"Find some evidence to support it, and then tell the Head!" Sally answered. "This way. Those parachutes fell quite near the bank."

The chums raced on excitedly. They saw the big motor-boat still moored in the same position; but in their eagerness to locate the parachutes they did not see the dinghy which rocked gently against the bank.

"There they are!" cried Sally, bursting through some trees into a clearing.

The parachutes lay draped out on the ground. There were half a dozen of them, each with a bulky, square-shaped package attached to the harness. And then, even as the chums ran forward to investigate them, a figure suddenly emerged from the shadows.

"Keep back!" he shouted.

"It's one of the men from the motor-boat!" said Johnny. "Why should we keep back?" he demanded.

"I'm warning you—keep out of this!" the man rapped.

"Rats! Grab him!"

"Stand back!"

His hand flashed into his pocket; and the chums, about to rush forward, suddenly pulled up dead as they found themselves menaced by a pistol that glinted in the moonlight.

"Gosh, he is a crook!" gasped Johnny. "You're right, Sally. But we've guessed what your game is, you rotter! Trying to scare us with that story of a monster while your diver pal searches for some more of these packages—"

"Guessed that, have you?" the man

snarled. "Clever of you—too clever! Get moving—back to the lake!"

"What are you going to do?"

"You'll soon see. And I'm warning you not to try any tricks!"

With the man following them, with that pistol menacing them all the time, Sally & Co. had no option but to obey.

They reached the bank of the lake, and for the first time saw the dinghy drawn up there.

"Get into it!" rapped the man.

"Where are you going to take us—"

"Across to the motor-boat. Get in—and don't try to rock the boat or anything like that. I'm watching you all the time."

Helpless, the chums climbed into the boat. The man followed them.

"Push off from the bank with those oars," he ordered grimly. "You row!"

Silently Don and Johnny obeyed, rowing across to the motor-boat. And now any doubts they might have had about Sally's sensational theory disappeared as they drew nearer and nearer to the bigger craft.

The diver and his companion stood by the gunwale, pulling up out of the water a net containing three bulky packages similar to those attached to the parachutes.

There were startled shouts as the loaded dinghy was seen; furious exclamations when the chums had been forced to climb aboard and their captor had told his story.

"I was afraid of this," growled the man Bart. "Everything's gone wrong since that fool of a pilot dropped the parachutes into the lake instead of that clearing. And now these pesky kids know everything. eh? Well, we're not letting them stop us. Shut 'em up in the cabin. Go back and fetch those packages. Slid. By the time you've got those Sam and I will have recovered the rest of them from the lake."

Seething but helpless, the chums were forced into the cabin and the door was locked on them.

"Isn't there something we can do?" growled Johnny. "Are we going to let them get away with this—"

"If we could only signal," breathed Sally. "Somebody would be sure to see it—"

She broke off, her gaze resting on a large lamp which stood on one of the seats.

She recognised it as an Aldis lamp; no doubt the same lamp with which the men had signalled to the aircraft.

Don, following the direction of her gaze, nodded eagerly.

"It's connected to the battery!" he whispered. "Shine it through this porthole and it'll be pointing straight towards the collector!"

Even as he spoke he caught hold of the lamp. Next moment he had switched on, was holding it to the porthole and operating the shutter.

Breathlessly Sally and Fay and Don watched as the light flashed on and off in Morse code.

"H-e-l-p. O-n b-o-a-t—"

But that was as far as he got. A sudden furious shout from the well of the motor-boat told the chums that the flashes had been seen by the crooks.

The door of the cabin was flung open, and one of the men leapt in, kicking the wire out of the battery and at the same time pulling the lamp out of Don's grasp.

"Confound you!" he snarled.

"Sam, we'll have to shove off. These kids have sent a message—we daren't stay here. Where's Slid—"

"Just coming with the packages, Bart!"

"Get the engine started up—stop him!"

Recklessly Johnny had flung himself at Bart. Don followed suit, and the man was bowled over.

Out of the cabin rushed Don and Johnny. Sally and Fay scrambling after them.

"Overboard!" shouted Sally. "Swim for it!"

Sam rushed at them, but he suf-

fered the same fate as Bart as the two boys dived at his legs.

Splash! Splash!

Sally and Fay flung themselves into the water, followed a moment later by Don and Johnny.

"Start the engine, Sam! Start it, you fool!" came a shout from Bart.

"Where's the handle, Bart?"

"How do I know—what's that?"

A roar sounded across the lake. Sally, swimming frantically, gave an excited shout.

"Somebody's coming. Our message has been seen!" she cried.

A boat was speeding across the lake. "The engine, you fool!" screamed Bart.

Another roar as the engine started up at last.

"Oh, gosh," spluttered Don, swimming beside Sally and Fay. "They'll get away. Where's Johnny—"

"Here I am! I say—"

"We're not moving! The propeller's jammed!" yelled Sam.

"Sure it's jammed!" shouted Johnny triumphantly. "I've just wrapped a rope round it. Oh, gosh, look who's coming—and in my speed-boat, too! The Head, and Mr. Vindholm and Wilf Hammer, Cliff Anders—and the police!"

"Here we are, sir!"

"Grab the men on that motor-boat—and that rotter in the dinghy!"

Terrific was the excitement then. The police boarded the motor-boat, and Sally & Co. were picked up.

"What has been happening?" asked Professor Willard. "I suppose it was you students who sent out that message asking for help. But what are you doing on the lake when I had expressly put it out of bounds—"

"Golly, we didn't know that, sir!" gasped Sally.

"Ah! Well, naturally I put it out of bounds when I heard about this extraordinary story of a monster lurking in its depths," said the headmaster. "And I also phoned up the police to investigate the matter. They arrived just as your message was seen."

And then Sally & Co. were telling their sensational story, by which time the crooks had been rounded up, and the mysterious packages investigated and found to contain contraband.

And so they all returned to the bank, the crooks escorted by the police. And there, just as Sally & Co. were climbing out on to the landing stage, Tim Topham arrived on the scene, accompanied by Tex Trevor and the Terry sisters.

"I say, what's all the excitement?" grinned Topham. "But look at this, you Merry-makers! A twenty-pounder!"

Triumphantly Topham held up the huge, glistening fish.

"Caught it from the bank, seeing that the lake was put out of bounds," chortled Trevor. "Gaze on it, Merry-makers. A twenty-pounder, caught by the Tops—"

"Poof! That's nothing!" grinned Johnny. "We've just caught three crooks!"

"What?"

"I reckon that puts the Merry-makers on top!" laughed Sally. "And it's all thanks to George Frogatt here!" she added, spotting that burly prefect. "He started this fishing craze with his fifteen-pounder. Yes, George deserves some of the credit, too!"

"Thanks!" beamed Frogatt, pulling his hand out of his pocket at that moment.

As he did so, a piece of paper fluttered to the ground.

"You've dropped this," said Sally, stooping to pick it up. "Here you are—golly!"

Frogatt snatched it away from her—but not before Sally had seen what it was.

A bill from a Sarneville fishmonger—and the item on it was the purchase price of a fifteen-pound fish!

(End of this week's story.)

There will be another grand school story featuring Sally Warner and the Merry-makers next week.



# JOY—The Girl With a 100 Voices

By IDA MELBOURNE

## A DISAPPOINTMENT FOR JOY

**B**UT we're playing in the tennis tournament this afternoon," Jack. You can't let me down," Joy Oliver could hardly believe her ears. It couldn't be true. This afternoon she and her Cousin Jack were partners in the local tennis tournament—and now, on the morning of the great day, Jack said he couldn't play.

"I'm sorry," came Jack's glum voice over the phone. "But Nunky has barred it."

"He can't bar it. Put him on the phone and I'll explain," said Joy hotly.

"Put him on the phone?" yelled Jack. "Don't be daft. You don't know uncles, even though he's your uncle, too! Talk about tigers! Why a tiger's got a sweet and gentle nature compared with Nunky's!"

Joy sniffed in scorn.

"The trouble with you is you take things lying down. He jolly well wouldn't keep me from a tournament. And he jolly well won't keep you from one either. I'm coming over to see him."

Click! Joy hung up the receiver, and then folded her arms and strode up and down the small hall of her aunt's cottage.

Joy had only recently met her Cousin Jack after a number of years. Uncle Horace had come home from India and had taken a large house near by, and Jack, an orphan, was now living with him. Apparently while in India uncle had caught the tiger's temper, although so far he hadn't come out in stripes.

There was only one thing for it—she must go to beard the tiger in his den; she must go and see Uncle Horace.

But Joy quickly ran up against an obstacle. No sooner had she strapped her racket to her cycle than Cousin Hypatia appeared.

Hypatia was her senior, and seemed to think that she was a home prefect. "And where do you think you are going, Joy?" she asked severely.

"To Uncle Horace's."

"With mama's permission?"

It was on the tip of Joy's tongue to say that Aunt Jemima, Hypatia's mother, was out. Then Joy had a better idea.

"If I have your mother's permission I suppose I can go?" she asked meekly.

"Of course. But you are not

likely to get that permission——"

To Hypatia's surprise, her mother's voice sounded almost immediately.

"Rubbish, Hypatia! If Joy wishes to go then of course she may go. You are too much given to twittering, my dear!"

Joy chuckled at the expression on Hypatia's face. It was blank, and it was comic—and no wonder. For, so far as Hypatia knew, her mother had not returned from the village where she had gone shopping. Yet her voice came from the garden, through the open window—or so it seemed.

"Really, mother," she protested, going pink. "I didn't realise you were back——"

"Joy has to go to the tennis tournament, as you know. Go inside and clean her spare shoes for her. Hurry!"

Hypatia, startled though she was, turned obediently and went to do as she had been bidden; for she was a law-abiding, dutiful daughter.

Had she remained there, she might have seen her mother—not in the garden as the sound of her voice had suggested, but some fifty yards away down the road.

Joy, the girl with a hundred voices, had been ventriloquising, giving a perfect imitation of Aunt Jemima's voice. One day she hoped her gifts would bring her fame; in the meantime, for many good reasons, she preferred the source of the mystery voices to remain a secret.

Hurrying off before her aunt came within hailing range, Joy pedalled furiously on her way to Uncle Horace's.

In chirpy mood she arrived at the Towers, cycled up the drive, rested her machine against the porch, and then knocked on the door.

A Hindu servant opened it to her, bowed deeply, and showed her in, asking her to wait until he had consulted his master.

Joy waited restlessly in the hall, looking curiously at the various trophies of the hunt, the queer relics, ornaments and furniture that Uncle Horace had brought home. The

whole house seemed to breathe the spirit of the mystic East.

"Come in!" roared Uncle Horace, from his study.

Joy entered. Uncle Horace, in a white linen jacket, his face almost mahogany colour, his hair and moustache and eyebrows snowy white, sat at his desk and glowered at her.

"Well?" he barked.

But Joy suddenly looked from him to a parrot that was perched on a tall stand near the window.

A parrot to a ventriloquist was a gift. What couldn't she make that parrot say! Why it was easy—dead easy.

"Stop gaping! You must have seen a parrot before," snapped Uncle Horace. "Explain the reason for this hurried visit. A message from Jemima?"

Joy found her voice.

"No, uncle," she said. "I've come to explain about the tennis tournament this afternoon. Jack and I have entered——"

"What? Jack and you? Then you had better cancel it. Jack is in his room. Look at my desk—look at all this purple ink! Look at this valuable rug—covered with purple ink. And who spilled it? Jack! Despite the fact that I have forbidden him to enter my study!"

Joy took a breath; she was almost frightened so ferocious did Uncle Horace look.

"But, uncle, does he deny it?"

"He does—and that doubles his crime."

Joy shook her head. "There was a witness, uncle; and I think that witness can save Jack."

"What witness?" snapped Uncle Horace, glowering. "There was no witness."

Joy pointed triumphantly to the parrot.

"The parrot was here—the parrot saw. And parrots don't lie."

"Hah! That one certainly doesn't—and for one good reason," snapped Uncle Horace. "It doesn't talk."

Joy took a breath. This might be difficult but it could be done. Remarkable though it might seem, that parrot would have to do some talking—now.

The Colonel's Parrot Couldn't Talk—Until  
Ventriloquist Joy Arrived On The Scene!

"Doesn't talk? But—but, uncle," she cried in wonder, "didn't the Indian gipsies tell you the trick? Almost any parrot can be made to talk. Watch this!"

Joy walked across to the parrot. "Speak, parrot," she urged. "O.K., I'll speak!" the parrot seemed to croak.

Uncle Horace caught Joy's shoulder; his eyes almost started from his head.

"It can't be true! Did—did I hear that parrot speak?"

Joy threw her voice again so that the words seemed to come from the parrot.

"Sure, I can speak—I can speak—"

Joy had intended to go on ventriloquising, with the parrot appearing to make some remarks which would clear Jack.

But now her voice tailed away; for she saw Uncle Horace put a hand to his brow. He looked dazed, as though he had had a terrible shock. Then suddenly he released her, pointing to the study door.

"Go!" he cried hoarsely. "Leave this house, and never return. There is a curse of silence on this parrot—a curse from which it could be released only by the presence of an evil person who would bring doom to my house! You have freed the parrot's tongue—you are that evil person. Begone! Henceforth I forbid Jack ever to speak to you or associate with you at all!"

### JOY TAKES ACTION

Joy, meeting her uncle's fierce gaze, backed to the door. She had not foreseen such a situation as this. She had been confident that with her ventriloquism she would be able to win over her uncle.

But evidently Uncle Horace, after so many years spent in India, had succumbed to its mysteries. He had heard so many strange stories, had seen so many inexplicable happenings that despite his better judgment he believed in ill omens and evil influences.

Joy backed to the door, bewildered and alarmed.

Not only was the tennis tournament this afternoon off, but all tennis parties, picnics, even cycle rides with Jack were off, too. She was barred from seeing him again.

Uncle Horace flung open his study door for her to go, and his servant, Chota, glided into view.

"Chota—show this young lady out!" he commanded.

"Yes, sahib."

"The parrot has spoken," said Uncle Horace dramatically.

Joy saw Chota jerk his head up; his inscrutable calm deserted him.

"It spoke?" he quavered. "What did it say, sahib?"

"I've forgotten. What does it matter? It spoke. The curse is lifted—and that is an ill omen," said Uncle Horace in a mournful voice.

Joy saw the Hindu servant tremble. "It is bad," he muttered.

Uncle Horace closed the door, and Joy turned to the servant.

"What's so bad about it?" she asked. "Perhaps the parrot could have told uncle who spilled the ink and how."

But that prospect did not excite the Hindu. Indeed, it plunged him into gloom; it made his eyes roll.

"So. You think that?" he asked worriedly.

Joy stared at him keenly, and a sudden thought came to her mind. If this Hindu servant disliked the idea of the parrot's speaking and telling the truth, he must have reason for his alarm.

"Who did spill that ink and ruin the rug?" asked Joy.

The servant shot her a quick look, and then visibly pulled himself together.

"Master Jack," he said coldly. "Bad boy."

"I wonder," murmured Joy.

The servant made no comment, but his dark eyes had a penetrating stare and seemed to glint as he regarded

Joy at the main door. He opened the door wide and bowed.

"It is my master's wish you never come again," he said.

"Oh, you heard that? Listening at the door, eh?" said Joy.

She halted on the threshold, suddenly looking at the stuffed monkey on a shelf.

"My goodness—he spoke!" she gasped. "Oh! What did he say?"

The Hindu servant's eyes goggled. "The stuffed monkey," spoke.

Never! You imagine it—"

But the monkey certainly did seem to speak.

"Beware, you cunning trickster! Your punishment is near; your deception shall be exposed!"

Joy was using her ventriloquism again. The voice came so realistically from the stuffed monkey's mouth that the Hindu stood gaping at it, unable to move.

"My golly—I wouldn't be in your shoes," gasped Joy.

She hurried down the steps; and then, instead of making for the gates, she went round to the rear of the house to make contact with Jack.

Joy expected to find Jack in his room, but to her surprise he was out of doors—weeding. He straightened up when she called him.

"Gosh, you, Joy! Better not let uncle see you."

"He has seen me," said Joy.

"And you've talked him round?" asked Jack in wonder. "I bet you haven't!"

"Not yet. But don't overdo this weeding and spoil your tennis. We want to put up a good show this afternoon."

"Huh. No chance of our putting up any kind of show."

Joy looked about her in case Chota was around; but she saw no sign of him. The coast was clear.

"Jack, you didn't upset that ink and ruin the rug?"

"No, I jolly well didn't!"

"Do you know who did?"

"Not an idea; but nothing will convince uncle I didn't do it. It may have been one of the cats, but he found a fountain-pen of mine there, and that looked like hot evidence. I'm just wasting my time denying it."

Joy's ideas raced; she was far from abandoning hope.

"You'd better chuck this garden-ing and practise your backhand," said Joy.

"Before long Uncle Horace is going to crawl on his knees and beg you to forgive him."

"Yes—I can just picture it," grinned Jack.

"Seriously though," said Joy briskly, "I—"

She broke off, for Jack's grin had suddenly waned and he snatched her arm, pointing to the far side of the garden.

"My gosh! Look! That's Chota—what's he carrying?"

Joy wheeled and stared. Chota was moving amongst the trees, carrying something in his arms—something wrapped in a red cloth.

"I'll make a guess that it's the parrot!" she gasped.

Chota, scared of the parrot's talking powers, was smuggling it away, setting it free!

Joy hurried across the garden, but took care not to make her presence too obvious. Breathless, she reached the cover of the trees and there crept after Chota. But she was too late to save the parrot. He sent it up into a tree, and then shook his fist at it.

"Speak all you wish there," he said. Joy pressed against a tree.

"Rascal!" she said, throwing her voice. "You shall not still my tongue. I know it was you ruined your master's rug."

Chota stared up at the parrot, his eyes round.

"Evil bird, no one will believe you."

"Huh? Is that why you brought me out here?"

Chota threw a small stick at the parrot but missed it.

"No one knows you are here. You will not speak to my master."

"Pah!" was the parrot's rejoinder.

"I have mysterious ways. I shall speak."

Chota did not stay to argue. He hurried fearfully back to the house.

Joy chirped with glee. She could not rescue the parrot, but Chota had left the red cloth on the ground and she snatched it up. She remembered that in Uncle Horace's study was an empty parrot cage—and the study itself was now empty, for Uncle Horace was in the garden telling Jack to get on with the weeding.

Joy, taking the longest way round, made for the house. She tip-toed up to the open french window of her uncle's study, went in and threw the cloth over the parrot cage.

That done, Joy dodged behind the curtains. Once again she would make the parrot speak; this time it would denounce Chota.

She had not long to wait. She heard her uncle's step, and then Jack's.

"Now, my boy, it is useless for you to deny your guilt," said Uncle Horace sternly. "There is the purple ink spilt all over the rug, and there—where I have left it—is your pen. Deny that you were filling your pen there with my purple ink."

"I do deny it, uncle."

Uncle Horace snorted.

"This is mere defiance—well, Chota?" he added.

Joy could not see what was happening, but she knew from that remark that Chota had just entered the study.

"Sahib!" cried the servant. "The girl—your niece—she has stolen the parrot!"

"Stolen the parrot?" cried Uncle Horace, staring across at the deserted perch near the window. "You're right, Chota—the parrot has disappeared. Where is my niece?"

"Gone, sahib! She has set it free, fearful that it would speak the boy's guilt."

Suddenly Joy felt the curtain that concealed her move. Then with a rustle it was hurled aside, bringing her into full view.

And there in front of her stood Uncle Horace, his face pale with anger.

"Spying!" he exclaimed accusingly. "Not content with stealing my parrot, and getting rid of it, you conceal yourself in my study. Very well. I will drive you back to your aunt immediately and give her a full report of your disgraceful conduct!"

### THAT AMAZING PARROT

THIS was the end. Things had been bad enough before, but the cunning servant had proved too much for Joy. It was he who had noticed the tips of her shoes peeping unguardedly below the curtain, and his artful story of her stealing the parrot made her honest rejoinder—that it was he who had stolen it—sound absurd.

Joy went pink and then white as she faced her uncle.

"Have you nothing to say?" he demanded. "No word of explanation for this unforgivable behaviour?"

Joy found her voice—but she herself did not appear to speak. It was from the shrouded parrot cage that a voice seemed to come.

"Give the girl a chance!" a voice croaked.

Uncle Horace spun round.

"Wh—what? That was the parrot! It's in the cage under that cloth."

He strode towards the cage, and Joy thought for one horrifying moment that he would whip off the enveloping cloth.

"Don't you lift my cloth," went on that squawking voice. "This is my rest time. You never think I want darkness—that's because you don't understand parrots. You don't deserve a parrot like me."

Uncle Horace opened and shut his mouth.

"This—is this extraordinary. The—parrot talks sense," he muttered.

"Well, and why shouldn't I talk sense?"

Uncle Horace mopped his brow. He

(Please turn to the back page.)



# Detective June's STRANGEST CASE

By PETER LANGLEY

## THE BOGUS DETECTIVE

**J**UNE 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 believed 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.

June, however, decided to stay at the castle. She saw Noel meet three fishermen, and heard him address as the Green Archer. Her suspicions aroused, she put them to the test, and, to her horror, discovered that it was not Noel Raymond at all, but an impostor!

## AN impostor!

The man everyone at Knoll Castle believed to be Noel Raymond was nothing but a fraud!

It was an astounding discovery, and one which caused June Gaynor's face to go scarlet with shame.

What a fool she had been ever to think that this could be the uncle she admired and loved!

And yet how could she possibly have guessed the truth? The likeness between the impostor and the real Noel was amazing. Even now, studying him as he bent to light his cigarette, the girl detective found it hard to believe that she was not mistaken.

Every feature—every gesture—was the same. Even the unknown's voice was an echo of the real Noel's. Not only was the man a perfect double, but he must be a marvellous actor as well.

June was still striving to grapple with this sensational development when the impostor straightened up. Slipping into his pocket the silver lighter with which June had tricked him, he puffed at his cigarette and regarded her half in apology, half in entreaty.

"I don't want to keep harping on our disagreement, my dear," he said. "It hurts me to think that anything should mar our splendid partnership, but—well, there are very special reasons why you should not stay at the castle."

"I bet there are!" was June's unspoken comment, but she remained silent.

He shook his head sadly.

"I wish I could confide in you, my dear—tell you all I know," he went on. "but I can't. My lips are sealed. I can only assure you that this is no case for you. It is too dangerous, for one thing. For another—" he gave a heavy sigh. "If you knew all the facts you would not hesitate. You would obey me instantly."

His acting was superb, and, even though June now knew the truth about him, she found it difficult to smother the feeling that he really had her interests at heart.

"Please do as I ask," he urged, and laid a pleading hand on her shoulder. "Pack up and go at once. You needn't worry about Cronberg. I will settle things with him. Will you?"

Almost irresistible was the wistful look in his grey eyes but June shook off the spell that uncannily he threatened to weave about her.

"No," she said.

"But, my dear—"

"No," said June again, and now her indignation got the upper hand. "I don't care what you say! I'm going to stay on!" she declared.

His features hardened, and an angry glitter flashed in his eyes.

"But you can't!" he cried. "I won't let you."

"Sorry, nunky, but I'm afraid you can't stop me," she asserted.

Though she hated to call him by the affectionate nickname she had always used for the real Noel, yet she forced herself to use it. Not yet must he suspect that she had seen through his audacious impersonation.

He flung down his cigarette.

"I can't imagine what's come over you, June," he muttered. "You seem to forget that you are my assistant—that it is your duty to carry out my orders."

June tossed her curls. She could restrain her pent-up emotion no longer.

"I'm under Mr. Cronberg's orders—not yours!" she snapped. "He engaged me to come up here, and I only leave when he tells me to go."

"But—"

"It's useless arguing. My mind's made up. I remain here until the Green Archer has been captured—no matter whom he might turn out to be."

And she could not smother the challenging look which rose to her eyes.

Her vehemence seemed to startle him, and for a moment he seemed uneasy, almost suspicious. Then he gave an angry laugh.

"Very well, my dear; have it your own way," he said. "But I rather fancy you will rue your decision before you're very much older. Now, please go—and don't dare come here again! Only the technicians and myself are allowed in the west wing."

He made a furious gesture of dismissal, and June was only too glad to avail herself of it. If she stayed she

might be stung into betraying what she had discovered. Besides, she wanted to go somewhere quiet and decide what she ought to do in face of this startling development.

Uneasily conscious of the threatening expression on his face, June walked out of the room. On reaching the main landing, she found herself confronted by a flight of stone steps which gave access to the battlements.

Ascending them, she crossed the flat roof and, resting her arms against the ancient parapet, stared unseeingly over the rugged coastline.

Who was the impostor? And what reason had he for embarking upon his daring masquerade? In what way could it help his mysterious plans to drive the film unit out of the castle?

June shook her head. Those questions were all beyond her. And she forgot them as another took possession of her aching mind.

When exactly had the impersonation begun?

She found that easier to answer. "At Folkestone—the day I went to meet nunky off the cross-Channel boat," she told herself. "But it wasn't nunky I met. It was this impostor. I thought he was a little strange and different at the time, but I put it down to his having been ill, and—"

She drew in an angry breath as she realised that all along she had been deceived. Noel had never returned from his long convalescence in the South of France. All the time it had been his double who had been posing as him.

All the queer incidents which had puzzled her so much were crystal clear now. The fact that the so-called detective was an impostor explained them all.

But—

June's heart gave a sudden leap, and the angry colour faded from her cheeks, for a disturbing thought had occurred to her.

If this man was a fraud, then where was the real Noel? What had become of her famous partner?

He could not be still convalescing on the Riviera, living there in ignorance of what was afoot, or she would have heard from him.

Then—

She caught in her breath.

Noel must be a prisoner!

At this very moment he must be lying helpless, possibly in a foreign country—the victim of the rascal who had so audaciously taken his place!

## JUNE'S AUDACIOUS ACT

**J**UNE shrank from the alarming possibility, but in her heart she knew there could be no other explanation.

If her uncle were free, then the Green Archer would never have dared embark upon his masquerade. Only by getting Noel into his power could

No Matter What The  
Risk, June Was Determined  
To Get Into The  
Forbidden West Wing.

the impostor hope to carry out his mysterious plans.

June clenched her hands. Her blue eyes were full of fear; there was desperation in her heart.

Unbearable was the thought that her uncle was imprisoned, possibly in danger. She must go to his aid—must somehow secure his release.

But how?

She hadn't the foggiest idea where he was. He might have been captured while on the Riviera, or he might have fallen into a trap after returning to England. It was impossible to guess which, but—her heart leapt excitedly—surely the police would help her to discover the truth?

Gloomily she shook her head.

It would be useless to seek their aid—useless to reveal her startling discovery to anyone. Without proof, she would never be believed. If the impostor had been able to deceive her for so long, he would find it easy to hoodwink other people.

"He'd laugh to scorn my theory," June told herself. "Everyone would think I was crazy. Oh, golly, then what am I to do? I can't let poor munky remain a prisoner."

With every fibre of her being she longed to get on the track of Noel. Every instinct urged her to leave Knoll Castle and rush off in search of him. Yet where was she to rush to? She hadn't even the slightest clue as to where he was imprisoned.

Tears of helplessness rose to her eyes, and for a moment despair engulfed her. Pluckily she fought her emotions, and suddenly her lips set in a fierce, determined line.

There was only one choice before her.

She must stay here and solve the mystery. Single-handed, she must fight the Green Archer and his rascally confederates. Only in that way could she hope eventually to discover the truth about Noel.

But how should she make a start? Standing there on the battlements, June thought hard, and a gleam came into her blue eyes as she remembered what she had overheard this morning outside Rainbow Cave.

The Green Archer had promised to pass over the mysterious green boxes to his confederates either to-night or to-morrow. Those boxes obviously held the key to the whole mystery, and they were still hidden away in the west wing. If only she could find them—

She drew in an excited breath, then her eyes gleamed more than ever as abruptly her thoughts switched to something else.

Back in London, locked in Noel's flat, was a card on which was a specimen of the detective's fingerprint. That might help her to show up the impostor. Anyway, she would telephone Parker and ask him to post it to her. But her first line of action must be those green boxes.

Turning, June went racing down the stairs, and in a minute or two she was hurrying down the corridor leading to the unused portion of the castle. The door leading to the west wing was locked, and, to her dismay, a newly typed notice had been pinned to it.

"No unauthorised person is allowed in the west wing. Anyone disobeying this order will be dismissed."

(Signed) JAMES WEATHERLY,  
"Manager of Film Unit."

Obvious it was who had been responsible for that notice being put up—the fake Noel Raymond. That realisation intensified June's determination to gain admittance to the forbidden wing.

But how?

The impostor, she knew, had possession of the only key, for he had been given responsibility of guarding the valuable film gear which, when not in use, was stored in the wing.

Was there any way of tricking the key out of him?

Reluctantly June shook her head. The Green Archer was too careful.

Besides, he was already vaguely suspicious of her. Then how—

A surprised shout from the near-by landing cut into her desperate thoughts:

"So that's where you are!"

And, turning, June saw Vera March and several other members of the Twenties, as the younger members of the film unit were nicknamed, regarding her curiously.

"Everybody's been wondering what had become of you!" exclaimed Vera.

"Yes, don't you realise that you've missed lunch?" put in her brother, Dick.

June gave a start. She had been so worried that she had not realised how long she had remained up on the battlements.

"Have I?" she asked.

They all stared, while Tilly Norton, the plump member of the unit, gave an astonished gasp.

"Fancy not knowing whether it's lunch-time or not!" she cried.

"Golly, but I never need reminding! But what have you been up to?"

"You're not ill, are you?" added Bob Staines, a note of concern in his voice as he noted how pale and troubled June looked.

Hurriedly the girl detective shook her head.

"No, only—a little bit of a headache," she said. "I—I didn't feel like eating. I've been up on the battlements for a blow of fresh air. You see—"

But that was as far as she got, for suddenly an irate voice rang out:

"What are you youngsters doing there?"

And the man everyone believed to be Noel Raymond appeared at the end of the corridor. Behind him trooped a crowd of technicians, who had come to collect the film gear needed for the filming that afternoon.

The fake detective pointed to the notice on the door of the west wing as he came striding forward.

"Don't you know you're not supposed to be in this part of the castle?" he demanded.

The Twenties looked sheepish, and Vera hastened to apologise.

"Sorry, Mr. Raymond," she said hastily. "We didn't mean to disobey orders. We only came to look for Carolyn."

"Carolyn?" The impostor looked sharply at June, who had joined the film unit under the assumed name of Carolyn Stuart. "And what brought you here?" he asked.

Aware of the suspicion in his eyes, the girl detective did her best to look innocent.

"Oh, I was only looking around!" she said. "I didn't know the west wing had been put out of bounds."

"Well, it has!" snapped the impostor. "So you'd better not let me

catch you hanging about here again, or there'll be trouble!"

And he frowned warningly around The Twenties, made themselves scarce, June going with them, but what the fake Noel had said only made her more determined than ever to gain entrance to the forbidden wing.

It was not until after tea that she thought of a daring way of achieving her objective. Before putting her brain-wave into action, however, she put a trunk call through to her uncle's flat in London, and asked Parker, the manservant, to post off immediately the envelope which contained the cards giving specimens not only of Noel's finger-prints, but her own as well.

That done, she made her way back to the main hall, and her eyes gleamed as she saw what was stacked up at the foot of the stairs—the cine-cameras and other film gear used that afternoon, also several hampers containing props and costumes.

The rehearsal had finished late, and not yet had the gear been put away for the night. But any minute the technicians would be coming to collect it, and June's pulses began to race more excitedly than ever as she realised that those big wickerwork baskets would soon be carried upstairs and deposited in the west wing.

She gave a quick glance around, then, darting across to the nearest hamper, she lifted the lid. It was full of heavy metal shields and imitation curios, which had been used to decorate the walls of the ballroom where the afternoon's filming had taken place.

She caught in her breath.

Suppose she removed some of the props and concealed herself in the basket!

No sooner the thought than June put it into action. Hurriedly, stealthily, she lifted out the curios and hid them in the cupboard under the stairs. The hamper was half-empty when she heard the sound of voices and the thump of approaching feet.

Frantically she stepped into the big basket and lay down, tucking her knees up under her chin. Then, even as a group of men appeared at the far end of the hall, she reached up and pulled down the lid.

Had any of them seen her?

In an agony of suspense she waited, but, to her relief, there came no outcry. Instead, she heard an impatient voice ring out:

"Hurry up, please! I want to see everything locked safely up before I go out."

It was the bogus Noel Raymond, and once again June was amazed at the uncanny way his voice resembled that of the real detective.

There came the sound of men moving about, and then she stiffened, hardly daring to breathe.

Strong hands had grasped the handles of the hamper in which she lay curled up. The heavy basket tilted; was lifted up. Another moment, and the girl detective was being carried up the broad stairs—was being taken to that forbidden part of the castle where she believed lay the key to the whole mystery.

## THE GREEN BOXES

"O.K.! That's the lot, sir. You can lock up now."

It was one of the busy technicians speaking, and he chuckled as he looked around at the valuable film gear piled up on the floor of the empty room.

"Everything ought to be safe enough here, Mr. Raymond," he declared. "No fear of the Green Archer getting into this place."

"Not unless the blighter's got a confederate inside the castle—someone who can unlock the door for him," put in another of the men.

The bogus Noel Raymond laughed. "Not much chance of that," he said. "Right—l-o! Let's go."

There came the tramp of feet, a thud as the massive oaken door was slammed, then a grating sound as the key was turned in the lock.

## BOOK-LENGTH STORIES YOU MUST NOT MISS

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No. 84.—"Delia In Mystery House," by Evelyn Day.

Both are now on sale, price 7d. each from all newsagents.

Still hidden inside the wickerwork hamper, June gave a gasp of triumph.

"Done it!" she told herself gleefully. "I've smuggled myself in, and, with the door locked, there's no danger of anyone discovering I'm here."

Though hot and cramped, she did not move for several minutes. She wanted to make absolutely sure that no one returned to the west wing. The moments flitted by: still all remained quiet, and so at last she pressed against the lid of the hamper, but, to her dismay, it refused to lift. "Oh, golly, they've piled some of the other stuff on top!"

In panic, she lay there. Suppose she could not get out! Suppose she was forced to remain here, a helpless prisoner, until the men came to collect the film gear to-morrow morning!

It was an alarming thought, and even more alarming was the impossibility of successfully explaining her presence here, if she were eventually rescued from the hamper.

Frantically June wriggled round until she could plant both hands against the underside of the lid, then she heaved again. The wickerwork creaked and groaned, but still the lid did not budge.

Panting, her face moist with perspiration, June twisted into a new position, then thrust upwards with her knees. The lid rose an inch or two, only to stick. She redoubled her efforts, pushing and thrusting with all her strength.

Crash!  
Whatever was piled on top of the hamper slid off, toppling down to the floor. In the confined space of the basket the noise sounded like thunder, and a new panic gripped the girl detective.

Suppose the row had been heard! Suppose someone came rushing up to the west wing to investigate!

Exhausted, fearful, she lay there, listening anxiously, but silence had once again settled over the room. There came no alarming footsteps—nothing at all.

Reassured, June pressed against the wickerwork lid once more, and this time it squeaked fully open. Breathlessly she scrambled to her feet and stepped out.

It was almost dark in the big, unfurnished room where the film gear had been stored, but she had taken the precaution of bringing a torch with her. Switching it on, she turned the beam of light downwards. It was to see with relief that none of the gear she had knocked over had been damaged.

"Good!" she exclaimed. "Now to find those green boxes!"

Her heart beating excitedly, June crossed the large room. Right opposite her, near the narrow stairs leading down to the ground floor of the wing, was the door opening into the inner room which she had been on the point of investigating when the impostor had surprised her that morning.

Remembering how alarmed and uneasy he had been, she made to step into the room, feeling that it was probable that the mystery boxes might be hidden there; but before doing so she glanced across at the stairs.

Now there was no need to worry how she was to escape unseen from the west wing. Surely she would be able to clamber through one of the downstairs windows and get out into the courtyard?

Her mind set at rest, she entered the inner room. It was even larger than the one she had just left: it was completely bare, and carved pillars of stone supported the rafters roof.

Eagerly June shone around her torch.

Dust and cobwebs were everywhere, and from behind the ancient woodwork there came queer squeakings and rustlings.

"Mice," June told herself, but, nevertheless, an uneasy feeling stole over her.

There was something very eerie

about this bare, disused place, and it was easy to conjure up the ghostly legends which had given the castle its haunted reputation.

She took a firm grip on herself. There were no such things as ghosts. There was nothing to be frightened of—nothing at all.

Still, it was a little nervously that she started to explore. At first sight it seemed that nothing could be hidden there. There were no cupboards—nowhere at all where anything could be hidden.

She frowned around, feeling a little dismayed.

Had she made a mistake? Weren't the mystery green boxes to be found in this room after all?

"But they must be," she murmured. "Otherwise that impostor wouldn't have been so alarmed when he saw me about to enter the room earlier on. There must be—"

Breaking off, she let her torch rove around the walls again.

Then an idea occurred to her.

Perhaps there was a loose floor-

the girl detective shone her torch into the black cavity, and then a triumphant whoop escaped her lips.

For in the cupboard were the two objects she had been seeking.

Green-painted boxes, each about twelve inches square!

"Found 'em!"

In her triumph, June could not smother the delighted whoop which rose to her lips. And, putting her torch down on the mantelpiece, she lifted down the top box.

What did it contain? What could be its secret?

She thrilled as she remembered what the Green Archer confederates had said; how insistent they were that the green boxes must be smuggled out to them.

Obvious it was that these boxes must hold something of great value—something which must be a key to the fake Noel Raymond's rascally plotting.

The box was surprisingly light. It was made of metal, and had a lid like



"What are you youngsters doing here?" demanded an irate voice, and, swinging round, June and Co. saw the fake Noel Raymond striding towards them.

board—perhaps the boxes were hidden under it!

She turned her torch downwards and almost at once she gave an excited cry.

But it was not a loose floorboard which had attracted her attention. It was a trail of footprints in the dust.

Her experienced eyes told her instantly that they had been made by a man.

"And I bet it was that impostor who made them!" she told herself.

The footprints led to the huge carved fireplace and back again. What had taken the bogus Noel Raymond to the empty fireplace?

Wonderingly she crossed over and peered at the carved oak mantelpiece. As the bright light of her torch travelled over it, her heart gave an excited leap.

For it revealed that the carved oak panel let into the wall was not, as she had first thought, a single oblong of wood.

Running down the centre was a thin, black line.

A crack!

And on either side, hardly visible amongst the elaborate carving, were two tiny wooden knobs.

"Golly, I believe I've struck oil!" she exclaimed. "This looks like a secret cupboard!"

Putting the torch down on the mantelpiece, she grasped the two tiny knobs and pulled.

At first nothing happened, then there came the creak of rusty hinges and the two halves of the carved panel swung open, like two doors, revealing an unsuspected cavity in the wall.

A secret cupboard, indeed!

Her eyes aching, her pulses racing,

a biscuit-tin. Indeed, the box itself, except for its colour, looked just like a biscuit-tin.

Holding it with one arm, June tugged at the lid with her other hand. It was stiff and at first resisted her efforts, then abruptly it came away—so quickly that she was taken by surprise, and both box and lid clattered to the ground.

Excitedly she snatched up her torch, eager to see what was in the box. As a result of the fall, its contents had spilled out. She turned the torchlight on them, and next moment a startled gasp had escaped her lips.

What she had expected to see she hardly knew, but certainly not what lay on the floor.

Biscuits!

Little piles of cream crackers, each wrapped in "Cellophane."

It was amazing—almost incredible.

Why should the Green Archer hide tins of biscuits? Why should he be so anxious that no one should discover them? Above all, why should his three unknown confederates be so desperately eager to secure possession of them?

Baffled, bewildered, June took down the second box and opened it, thinking that perhaps it might contain the vital secret. But once again she was disappointed. It also only contained packets of unsweetened biscuits.

Hardly able to believe her own eyes, she stared at them.

The mystery, instead of clearing, had become more intriguing, more inexplicable than ever.

Look out for surprises and thrills when June again clashes with the Green Archer in next week's gripping chapters.

## THE CHINESE GIRL'S SECRET

(Continued from page 168.)

man walked quickly into the hut. Bending over Eileen, he loosened her bonds a little.

"That'll do!" he grunted in a very gruff voice. "You should be able to free yourself easily now."

He walked out of the hut—straight into the arms of two policemen. Beryl and Miss Carter broke from cover, and it was Beryl who untied Eileen, and brought her out of the hut.

The man gazed with bulging eyes—eyes that were suddenly full of fear—as Eileen removed her disguise.

"I see you recognise me, Mr. Antique Dealer," Eileen cried in triumphant excitement. "I'm the girl you caused to be expelled. You wouldn't have dared kidnap me this afternoon, so that Ada Kemp could row in my place, if you'd known my real identity."

"I shadowed Eileen all the morning," Beryl explained. "I lost sight of her once, but I caught up with her just as she was kidnapped. I saw her taken into the hut, and I had to wait for this man to leave before I could set her free. That's why we almost missed the race."

When the full story was told it piled sensation upon sensation.

Ada Kemp was Eileen's cousin, and when Eileen was expelled she suspected that Ada had schemed against her. She had no knowledge of the reason, however. Meeting the real Anna Li Sing, she had had the idea of changing identities with the Chinese girl and so returning to the school. She had wanted to return for two reasons—to stroke the crew for the Tanley Trophy, and to try and bowl out Ada Kemp and the antique dealer.

On the night Beryl had discovered her in Ada's study, Eileen had found a letter which partly explained the

mystery. Ada had been warned that their eccentric uncle had decided to give a large sum of money to whoever of his two nieces did best at sport during their schooldays. Evidently Ada had engineered Eileen's expulsion in order to make sure of the money.

Realising Ada would still be very anxious to row in the race, Eileen had expected an attempt would be made to keep her out of the crew, and so she had asked Beryl to shadow her all day.

The police uncovered everything. It was Ada Kemp who had taken the ring and who had given it to the antique dealer so that it could be displayed in his shop window.

He turned out to be an old servant of her family and, having been dismissed in disgrace, Ada had held this over his head. At the same time Ada had sent five pounds through the post to Eileen, knowing she would think it was from her uncle. Thus, when the antique dealer pretended to identify Eileen, the evidence had been black against her.

"I'm glad to welcome you back, Eileen," Miss Niven said when the story had been told. "To-night you must stand with Beryl when she makes her speech about winning the Tanley Trophy."

"Humbly request whole crew be allowed to stand," Eileen said in the assumed voice of Anna Li Sing. "Stroke little use in boat without good crew to back up."

A week later the real Anna Li Sing arrived at the school. She proved to be a slim, neat girl, in correct school uniform, who spoke perfect English, and one had to look very closely at her to discover she was Chinese. Beryl and Eileen welcomed her with open arms.

### THE END.

Another grand long complete story next week entitled: "She Wouldn't Be Bossed By Brian." Don't miss it—and don't miss your chance of obtaining our wonderful Album of Film Stars!

## JOY—THE GIRL WITH A 100 VOICES

(Continued from page 176.)

blinked at the cloth covered cage and then he looked at Jack.

"Do—do you hear what the bird says?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. Seems to be standing up for its rights," said Jack with a grin.

"Ah—and that's what you ought to do," said the voice, "and not let that iving rascal Chota put the blame for his misdeeds on to you!"

Joy looked swiftly at Chota. His eyes were wide and staring—his hands clenched.

He sprang towards the cage to snatch off the cloth.

"Stop!" shrieked that squawking voice. "Stop him!"

Joy, pausing in her ventriloquism, held her breath. If Chota whipped off the cloth and saw the empty cage he might suspect the truth.

"Steady, Chota," said Uncle Horace. "This is a most uncommon bird. We must take care. I have never before heard a bird talk sense. It is almost incredible!"

"Aha! You say yourself I speak only if great evil is done and great evil is done. Someone has been falsely accused," said the parrot's voice. "The guilty one is not the boy, but Chota!"

Chota clawed out a hand in anger, but Uncle Horace caught his arm.

It seemed to Joy that triumph was at hand, but glancing suddenly at the door she saw the parrot perched there. It had returned.

But for Joy the return was badly timed! If Uncle Horace or Chota saw it the game would be up.

And yet Joy had success in her grasp.

"If you pluck off the cloth I shall vanish—vanish!" she cried, still imitating the squawking voice of a parrot.

Chota, dodging Uncle Horace's arm, snatched the cloth. He whipped it into the air and gave a strangled cry of horror as he saw the empty cage.

But now from behind him came a mocking laugh.

"I am here, Chota!"

And there, perched on the door when they all turned, was the parrot. It was more than Chota could endure.

"I confess," he cried. "I confess—I did it! I used the ink—I ruined the rug, master. Have mercy!"

Uncle Horace stared at him aghast. Then, with an impatient gesture he dismissed Joy and Jack, who hurried gladly into the garden.

Jack, Joy saw with amazement, was quite dazed.

"I say, this really is comic," he said, blinking. "Fancy a parrot—talking sense!"

"Someone here has to," said Joy.

"Yes, but—gosh! These Indian mysteries give me the creeps," frowned Jack. "Although I must say the old parrot has been a help."

"I should jolly well say so," agreed Joy. "You know what this means? You can come to tennis!"

She was right. Uncle Horace called them both into the study ten minutes later, and with some embarrassment explained that he had sacked Chota, who had basely deceived him in other matters, too.

To Jack, Uncle Horace held out his hand and humbly asked forgiveness. Then, when that was readily given, he whipped out a pound note from his case.

"Here, my boy," he said, "take Joy out to tea after tennis, and I hope both of you have a grand afternoon and win."

They certainly had a grand afternoon—and they did win two out of three contests!

(End of this week's story.)

Joy will be ventriloquising again in another lively story next week.

## AUTOGRAPHS FOR YOUR FREE FILM STAR ALBUM

Here, week by week, will be printed the autographs of the film stars whose portraits appear in the magnificent album which you can secure free. (See page 167).

This week's autographs are those of Alan Ladd, Joseph Cotten, Anna Neagle, Errol Flynn, Gary Cooper, Lana Turner, Danny Kaye and Alastair Sim. Cut them out and keep them safely until you receive your album. Eight more famous autographs next Friday.

Alan Ladd Joseph Cotten

Anna Neagle Errol Flynn

Gary Cooper Lana Turner

Danny Kaye Alastair Sim