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"DETECTIVE JUNE'S STRANGEST CASE"

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EVERY FRIDAY.

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GIRLS' CRYSTAL 3^D

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"



"THE MERRYMAKERS'
ISLAND COLLEGE"

The MERRYMAKERS' Island College



By DAPHNE GRAYSON

DOLLY'S INVITATION

"DOLLY will be interested," said Sally Warner, a twinkle in her blue eyes.

Sally was with her chums, fair-haired Fay Manners, Don Weston, and Johnny Briggs, the four of them being known as the Merry-makers at the International College, situated on Waloorie Island, Australia.

They had just strolled into Main Hall, where a crowd of students were waiting for the morning mail to be distributed. Among them was plump Dolly Dufton.

"Did someone mention my name?" asked Dolly with a blink through her frameless, square-shaped spectacles.

"We did," grinned Johnny. "We were just saying that the Duchess of Dillside is holiday-making on Waloorie. A friend of yours, I suppose, Dolly."

There was laughter. Dolly's bragging about her titled friends was a standing joke at the island college. But Dolly did not regard it as a joke; she took herself very seriously.

"The Duchess of Dillside?" she echoed with an exaggerated drawl. "Oh, yes, a great friend of mine, you know."

"Glad to hear it," Sally said heartily. "What is she like, Dolly? There's a lovely picture of her in the 'Courier'."

Dolly blinked, wishing she had seen the picture.

"Eh? Er—er—now let me see—"

"Seems to have lovely fair hair," Sally murmured.

"That's right," said Dolly, hastily seizing on the clue.

"And I believe she's tall," added Sally.

"Oh, yes. Just what I was going to say. Tall, with fair hair—"

"No, you're wrong," broke in Fay sweetly. "The paper said the duchess has black hair, and she's small. You're getting confused, Sally—"

"It's Dolly who's going to be confused!" chorled Don.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dolly glowered, realising that the chums had been pulling her leg. But just then there was a shout of "Mail up!" and Dolly and her titled friends, imaginary or otherwise, became forgotten in the eager rush for letters which Cliff Anders, the popular college captain, had just brought in.

"One for Dolly Dufton," he sang out. "Pass it along to her, Briggs."

"Sure," said Johnny, taking the letter. "From one of her titled friends, of course," he grinned.

"Bound to have a coronet on it—crikey!" His eyes goggled and his mouth gaped open. "I-i-it has, too!"

"May I have my letter, please?" requested Dolly frigidly.

She thought her leg was being pulled again. Then her own eyes goggled as she took the letter. There was a coronet embossed on the envelope!

With trembling fingers she tore open the flap and extracted an expensive gilt-bordered card. Dolly's heart gave a tremendous flutter.

"It's from the Duchess of Dillside," she announced. "It's an invitation to a luncheon party she's giving at the Palm Hotel."

Everybody stared incredulously, and Dolly herself had another look just to make sure it was not an optical illusion.

"Look for yourselves! Lunch with a duchess! What a surprise—hem!" Dolly suddenly remembered that she and the duchess were supposed to be old friends. "Hem! I hope you believe now that her grace is a friend of mine," she added triumphantly.

If seeing was believing, then the students had to believe. There was the invitation card from the Duchess of Dillside. But it staggered them; none more so than Dolly herself. Having never met the duchess in her life, there was no apparent reason why she should have received such an invitation. Dolly, however, did not pause to ponder the whys and wherefores. Here it was, and she meant to make the most of it.

"I expect I shall be the guest of honour," she said with a smirk.

"Y-yes," came a stunned chorus.

"I shall buy a new dress and wear all my jewellery!"

"All of it? Have you got any?"

"Oh, really! My diamond brooch, you know—"

"Well, brooch, shall we say?" grinned Johnny. "I say, Sally, what do you make of it?" he added, as the Merry-makers strolled out into the campus.

"It's pretty obvious Dolly doesn't know the duchess—and yet she gets this invitation. Beats me."

"Beats me, too," Sally confessed.

"I don't know what to think—"

"Hey, there, Merry-makers! Are you going into Sarneville this morning or this afternoon?" came a cheery shout.

And there in the drive, waiting for

Dolly Dufton Was Delighted When She Received The Duchess' Invitation. But Sally & Co. Feared It Spelt Danger For The Snob Of The College.

them, was good-looking, immaculate Ralph Bond, standing beside a brand new car which his wealthy father had just bought him. Ralph had promised to drive them into Sarneville on a shopping expedition, for it was Saturday, and a holiday at the International College.

"Coming, Ralph," chorused Sally & Co.

They climbed into the car—a gleaming, open roadster—and within a few minutes they had reached Sarneville, that popular seaside resort and port for the ferry to and from the mainland.

"Corton's Stores first," sang out Sally cheerily. "I want to buy some stockings—"

"And I want a blouse and some slacks," put in Fay.

The girls were just entering the dress department of the stores when a telephone bell rang, and one of the assistants went to answer it.

"Yes, this is Corton's," Sally and Fay heard the girl say. "Yes, miss, the dress has already been sent to you on approval. Yes, I'm sure it's been sent to the right address. To Miss Dolly Dufton, Chalet 23, Girls' Side, the International College. Thank you!"

"Goodness, Dolly's working fast," Fay commented. "And spending her money, too. It's curious about that invitation."

"Very," agreed Sally, puckering her brow. "You know, Fay, I can't help thinking it might be a joke. I do hope it isn't if she's going to spend money on a new dress—"

"Mary!" The girl who had answered the telephone was calling over to another assistant. "That parcel for Miss Dufton, of the college, has gone, hasn't it?"

"Ten minutes ago," replied Mary. "I sent it off with that parcel for the Duchess of Dillside—the one she asked us to forward because she's gone to Brisbane and won't be able to collect it!"

Sally gave a violent start.

"Fay, did you hear that?" she gasped. "The duchess has gone to Brisbane—!" Quickly she went across to the counter. "Excuse me," she said to the assistant, "but when did the Duchess of Dillside go—and will she be back to-day?"

"Her grace went yesterday evening, and she won't be returning to the island at all," replied the assistant, staring at Sally and Fay in some surprise.

"Thank you!" Sally swung round to her chum. "Then the whole thing is a hoax!" she exclaimed. "Fay, we must rush back and tell Dolly!"

They hurried out into the street, quickly telling the boys what they had learned. A minute later Ralph was swinging round the car and

speeding back to the college. Sally's blue eyes had clouded.

Poor Dolly! She was going to be dreadfully disappointed; but at least they would be able to warn her in time to prevent her wasting her money on a new dress, and they would be able to soften the blow.

In-record time they reached the college, and found Dolly lounging in a deck chair near her chalet.

"I say, Dolly," burst out Sally, "I'm afraid we've got a disappointment for you. That invitation is a hoax—"

"H-hoax?" Dolly sat up with a jerk. "Oh, really—"

"I'm afraid so—we're awfully sorry," Sally said sympathetically. "But we've just learned that the duchess is in Brisbane, so it must be—"

Sally's voice trailed away, and her blue eyes widened in surprise.

A gleaming luxury limousine had just pulled up in the drive, and stepping out of it was a liveried chauffeur, holding a huge box of chocolates with an enormous bow decorating it.

"Pardon me," he said politely. "Is Miss Dolly Dufton here, please?"

"I—I—I'm Dolly Dufton," gasped the plump one, finding her voice.

"Good-morning, miss. For you, miss," said the chauffeur, holding out that costly box of chocolates. "With the compliments of her grace, the Duchess of Dillside. Her grace wishes me to say that she will be expecting you at the luncheon party as arranged by invitation!"

Sally felt herself sway, her brain beginning to whirl. Less than half an hour ago she had learned that the duchess had left Waloorie—yet now Dolly was being told that her invitation to the luncheon party still held good.

DANGER FOR DOLLY

SOMETHING was wrong somewhere—that was obvious. It was obvious to Sally & Co., if not to Dolly.

Dolly was gazing spellbound at the box of chocolates.

"Thank you," she said, loftily addressing the chauffeur. "Kindly thank her grace for me."

"I will, miss. And there is a note from her grace under the bow, miss."

"But—but—look here, the duchess has left!" burst out Sally then.

"Dolly—"

Dolly surveyed the chums haughtily.

"Don't be absurd," she said in a freezing tone. "Of course, her grace hasn't left. I wouldn't have these chocolates if she had, would I?"

Sally, bewildered by this contradictory situation, turned to the chauffeur.

"We understood from Corton's that the duchess has left the island and isn't returning," she said, watching him closely.

She saw his eyes flicker momentarily. She was sure an uneasy expression showed fleetingly on his hitherto urbane features.

"There must be some mistake, miss," he said politely. "Her grace has returned."

"Where is she now?" demanded Don.

"I am a chauffeur. I am not aware of her grace's movements," the man said smoothly. "But I do know, of course, that she will be present at the luncheon party to which Miss Dufton has been invited. I have an errand to perform, miss," he added, turning to Dolly, "and when I shall be here promptly at twelve o'clock to drive you to the Palm Hotel."

The car purred down the drive. Dolly looked at the chums, tossed her head and then went into her chalet, slamming the door.

For a moment Sally stood irresolute. She was certain the chauffeur had been startled by her questions concerning the Duchess of Dillside's movements. He had looked uneasy, and he had been in a hurry to go, as if fearing further questions.

"I'm not convinced," she told her chums. "There's something fishy somewhere. Quickly—we'll follow

that car and see where it goes. Where's Ralph?"

Ralph was polishing his shiny new car with all the enthusiasm of a proud owner, but he quickly nodded when Sally made her request.

"Sure," he said. "I saw it go—turned left out of the gateway. Hop in!"

A few seconds later they, too, were turning left out of the gateway and following the powerful limousine.

Sally sat tense, still puzzled by the whole affair. She still suspected a hoax—but who could be playing it? And such an elaborate one, with an expensive car and liveried chauffeur and a costly box of chocolates all part of it.

Ralph kept his foot down hard on the accelerator. Then, five miles away from the college, the limousine pulled up by a wayside telephone.

"He's going in to make a call," Johnny hissed excitedly.

"Get as close as you can without being heard, Ralph," Sally said.

The new roadster, in perfect condition, slid noiselessly to a standstill a few yards away from the telephone.

It was open to the sky, with a wooden arrangement to enclose the caller's head and upper part of his body.

"Yes, yes," the chums heard the chauffeur saying. "She'll be coming—with the brooch. The little fool doesn't suspect that she's being tricked!"



Sally and Fay stared at the shop assistant in surprise. If what she said was correct, then the invitation Dolly Dufton had received could not have been from the duchess.

Johnny's eyes were wide and round. Sally guessed what he was thinking—the same as she was. Clearly the chauffeur was not talking to the Duchess of Dillside!

Then who was he talking to? And—was he a genuine chauffeur?

That thought, flashing across Sally's mind, startled her. Suddenly she became uneasy. This sounded something more sinister than a mere hoax.

And why that reference to a brooch? Dolly had only one brooch. She liked to imagine it was set with diamonds, though the chums knew for a fact that she had bought it cheaply at a second-hand shop only two days ago. Then why all this interest in a practically valueless trinket?

Sally did not know the answers to the questions; but she felt the urge and the necessity for action.

"We've heard enough!" she whispered. "Back to the college—and we've got to convince Dolly that it's all a trick."

Even as Ralph's roadster pulled away the man emerged from the telephone cabinet. For a moment he stood stock-still, watching the car reverse. Then, as the chums drove past him, he gave them a smooth smile.

"Ah, the young ladies and gentlemen from the college. Kindly

remind Miss Dufton I shall be calling for her at twelve o'clock," he shouted.

Ignoring him, Sally & Co. drove back to the college—pulling up outside the main steps just as the big clock pointed to a quarter to twelve.

And there on the steps was Dolly, showing off her new dress and trying not to look terribly thrilled and excited.

"How do I look, girls?" she was asking, imagining she was displaying herself like a mannequin.

"Lovely!" cooed Carmenita Pascali, the Mexican girl.

It was an exaggeration, and the Wildcat was really being malicious. Dolly was too plain ever to look lovely; but she had done her best, and her new flowered silk dress was quite pretty. And pinned on it was the brooch, the artificial stones winking in the sunlight.

"Dolly!" cried Sally, leaping out of the roadster and running up to her.

"I am not on speaking terms with you," Dolly said frigidly.

"You are! Dolly, you mustn't accept that invitation. We know now for certain that it's all a trick—"

"Don't believe her, Dolly," cut in Carmenita. "Sally Warner and her crowd are just jealous because you've got a titled friend."

Sally fumed. Carmenita, snobbish and haughty herself, was one of Dolly's worst persecutors, and always ridiculing the plump girl. But now, eager to score against the Merry-makers, she was ready to change her tune.

"Jealous—that's it!" Dolly cried. "Old meanies! Jealous because you haven't been invited to a party by a duchess. Well, I'm going."

"Dolly, do, please, listen!" Fay caught hold of the plump girl's arm, but Dolly misconstrued the action and let out a scream.

"Help! They're going to keep me here by force. Hands off—"

"What is going on here? What is the cause of this commotion?" interrupted an angry voice, and on to the scene strode Mr. Horace Gruley, the portly Housemaster.

"They're trying to stop me going to the Duchess of Dillside's party," Dolly wailed indignantly.

"We're trying to tell her that it's all a hoax—a trick," Sally explained. "We happen to know that the duchess has left the island—"

"Nonsense!" cut in Mr. Gruley. "I have just had a phone message from the duchess herself, asking me to make sure that Dolly goes to the party. I was coming to tell her, and I find this commotion going on. I find you four students trying to prevent her going. Disgraceful!"

Sally had given an incredulous gasp.

"You—you've heard from the duchess, Mr. Gruley? Oh, you can't have—"

"Sally, how dare you!" rapped the master. "Let me have no more impertinence! Dolly, certainly you must go!"

"They'll try to stop me! They're jealous—"

"They will not stop you!" rumbled Mr. Gruley ominously. "I shall find them a task that will keep them occupied, Dolly!"

"Mr. Gruley!" exclaimed Sally desperately. "Please let us explain—"

"I cannot see that any explanation is necessary. Go to the library at once and catalogue the new selection of books that have just come in."

"But—" began Johnny.

"Are you wilfully daring to defy me? Go!"

And helplessly the chums had to obey. Even as they entered the college building they saw a luxury limousine purring down the drive.

It came to a stop. Out jumped the liveried chauffeur, smartly opening the rear door.

And into the car, with a haughty glare in the direction of the chums, stepped Dolly Dufton.

Away glided the car, and away with it went Dolly.

TO THE RESCUE

"WE'VE got to go after her—even if it does mean breaking detention!" said Sally Warner, a note of desperation in her voice.

"Sally's right!" gasped Fay. "Oh, I'm worried. Goodness knows what might happen to Dolly. And to think Gruley let her go—"

"He didn't understand," snorted Johnny. "He didn't give us a chance to explain. I'm ready and willing, Sally."

"Make a dash for it!" said Don recklessly.

The chums had been mounting the stairs on their way up to the library. George Frogatt, the prefect in charge of them, had paused in the hall below to have a word with another prefect.

Sally & Co. turned and made their dash. They knew the seriousness of what they were doing; but they were also convinced that Dolly was not being taken to a party given by the Duchess of Dillside; and, being convinced, they were willing to take any risk.

George Frogatt, about to ascend the stairs, suddenly got the impression that an avalanche had descended upon him.

Four figures rushed towards him; whirled past him and swept on. He reeled dizzily on the stairs; then, recovering from the shock, he turned and plunged in pursuit.

"Stop! Come back!"

Sally & Co. did neither.

"We've got to find Ralph—or his car!" Sally panted.

They reached the entrance hall, raced out on to the wide porch—and were just in time to see a shiny, blue roadster roar out through the main gateway.

"Ralph!" Sally exclaimed. "He's following Dolly. Good for him!"

"But we've got to back him up—but how?" asked Don.

"There's a car parked over by the flag-mast," Johnny said.

"Goodness, it's Gruley's!" Fay gasped. "We daren't take that—"

"We do dare!" Sally's blue eyes gleamed recklessly. "We've burned our boats already. We're booked for trouble, anyway—a bit more can't make much difference. Into it—you drive, Johnny!"

"Stop!" That was George Frogatt's voice again.

"Stop!" That was another voice—the reverberating voice of Mr. Gruley. "Keep on!" panted Sally. "We daren't waste time trying to explain. He'd never believe us. We can't really prove anything, and he'd only make sure we were kept in detention—we're off!"

They were, with Johnny at the wheel.

And Mr. Gruley, who had been looking forward to an enjoyable, leisurely drive to Sarneville, stared and stamped in rage as he saw his car roar down the drive and out through the gateway.

Dolly Dufton leaned back luxuriously among the cushions of the sumptuous limousine.

She was going to lunch with a real duchess. Amid all the excitement Dolly had not yet paused to wonder why the Duchess of Dillside, whom she didn't know, should suddenly have taken such an interest in her.

By now Dolly had succeeded in convincing herself that she and the duchess really had been lifelong friends just as she had invented and boasted to her fellow-students.

Dolly picked up the speaking-tube.

"Charles!" she called.

"Well, what is it?" came a growling voice through the speaking-tube.

Dolly nearly shot out of her seat at the insolence of the tone.

"My good man," she said haughtily, "that is not the way to speak to me."

Then Dolly, glancing out of the window, received another shock.

"Charles, we're not going the right way. This is not the way to Sarneville and the Palm Hotel—"

"We're going somewhere else—new arrangements," replied the chauffeur.

"Ah!" smirked Dolly. "To the mansion the duchess has rented during her stay here I expect."

"That's right. And here we are!"

Again Dolly glanced out through the window, expecting to see a long drive leading to a huge mansion. And again Dolly received a shock.

All she saw was a wooden shack standing near some gum trees.

"Charles, where is the house?" Dolly asked.

"Way back, miss," said the chauffeur, becoming more polite as he opened the car door and gave Dolly to alight. "Her grace gave instructions that she wishes to meet you in the hut first of all!"

"Dad-did she really? How queer," murmured Dolly.

To anyone but Dolly it would have been definitely suspicious. But her suspicions were not aroused until she was ushered into the hut, and saw a man standing inside—and suddenly heard the rasp of bolts in the door behind her.

She swung round with a jerk, to see the chauffeur standing with his back against the barred door, a grin on his face.

"Step right in," said the man in the centre of the room, and gave a grunt of satisfaction. "Good work, Jed. She's wearing the brooch. Hand it over, kid!"

"H-hand it over!" Dolly stuttered.

"Oh, but it's mine. And her grace particularly asked to see it in that note she sent me—"

"The note I sent, you mean," grinned the man. "I sent you those chocolates, too—and that invitation card. But we're wasting time. Get the brooch, Jed!"

"Sure!" said the other man, advancing from the door. "Guess we'd better get away from here as soon as we can. A bunch of youngsters at the college looked like making things awkward—that's why I got my sister to phone through, using the duchess' name."

Dolly swayed as one shock came after another. Now at last the awful truth was dawning on her—that she had been deceived and tricked; that Sally Warner had been right.

There was no party. The Duchess of Dillside had not sent her that invitation. Dolly's lips quivered; and then she gave a frightened gasp as Jed made a snatch at the brooch and, with a quick flick, unclasped it and threw it across to his companion.

"Give it back to me!" cried Dolly shrilly. "My diamond brooch—"

"Diamonds! Wish they were!" The man had caught the brooch, was manipulating the clasp with his fingers.

Dolly's eyes rounded in surprise.

For now he was extracting something from the hollow interior of the metal bar on which the artificial stones were set—a tightly folded strip of thin rice paper.

"Wh-what's that?" Dolly stuttered in amazement.

The man laughed, but made no reply. He had no intention of revealing the secret of the brooch; that on that strip of paper were the detailed plans of a daring robbery which was to be carried out in Brisbane.

"O.K., Jed," he said now. "But your sister slipped up badly, selling this brooch to that secondhand dealer. It's lucky we found out that this kid bought it, and that she's always bragging about having titled friends. It enabled us to bluff her and get back the brooch, but we'd have been in a jam if this piece of paper had got into the wrong hands. O.K., let's go. But you're staying here, kid."

"St-staying here?" quavered Dolly in growing panic. "But why?"

"Hey! Listen to her! Full of questions, aren't you?" he mocked. "Well, I'll tell you. You're stopping here because the boss says so! Understand?"

Dolly did, and felt frightened.

"You can't keep me here!" she gasped. "Help! Help!" she yelled next moment.

And dramatically there came an answering shout.

"Coming, Dolly!"

Jed sprang across to the window in sudden alarm and saw a figure running towards the shed.

"It's one of the boys from the college—"

"Only one? Let him come—and then grab him!"

The door shook as if from a shoulder charge. Quickly Jed slipped the bolts; the door flew open and Ralph Bond hurtled into the shed.

"Help!" screamed Dolly again.

"Look out—"

Her warning came too late. Ralph Bond, having followed the bogus chauffeur, and expecting only him to deal with, pulled up in surprise as he saw the other man. Next moment Jed had sprung on him from behind, pinioning his arms.

"Tie him up!" rapped Jed's companion. "And the girl. We've got to give ourselves time to get clear on the one-thirty ferry from Sarneville—then we'll be safe."

But before he could carry out his intentions there was another rush of footsteps. Sally & Co. poured into the hut, and then the tables were turned; the men were soon overpowered.

They were just being tied up when yet two more figures appeared on the scene—Mr. Gruley and Professor Willard, the headmaster.

Furiously, Mr. Gruley had reported how Sally & Co. had defied him and gone off in his car; and an equally furious Professor Willard had taken up the chase in his own car.

But now their fury evaporated as Dolly, trembling with indignation as much as fright, told them the whole story.

"We must inform the police!" gasped Professor Willard. "Bless my soul, this is incredible. Hem! It seems, Mr. Gruley, that these students are to be congratulated rather than punished!"

Congratulated they all were; and the Brisbane firm whose premises were to have been robbed by the crooks insisted on rewarding them.

Generously, Sally & Co. insisted on Dolly having the major part of that reward to pay for her new dress and to buy herself another brooch. But their hopes that Dolly would be cured of bragging about her imaginary titled friends after such a scare did not materialise.

Her pretended friendship with the Duchess of Dillside had come unstick; but that did not deter Dolly from inventing a few more.

(End of this week's story.)

Next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** will contain another grand complete story featuring the cheery Merry-makers.



THE EAGLE TOTEM

"WHAT—what was that?" Jean Carson paused, ladle in hand, her attractive face suddenly tense. There was a momentary lull in the gale that had been howling in fitful gusts round the log-cabin store at Blue-Pine Creek.

Another, fainter sound made itself heard: a whining and snuffling, followed by a scratching at the massive timber door.

Jean's first thought was that one of the team of huskies in the shed at the rear of the store had somehow got loose. But she remembered fastening the door securely after returning from her daily round of the settlement—one of the many tasks that had fallen to her during her father's absence in hospital.

Pushing the saucepan to the side of the stove, she took down the lamp from its hook and approached the door. With a swift glance at her father's shot-gun, standing reassuringly within her reach, Jean pulled back the bolt.

The door swung open, admitting an icy gust of wind and a flurry of sleet. Something sprang into the cabin—a wolf-like shape, flecked with snow, its jaws gaping. For a second Jean's heart stood still; then she gave a quick, pitying exclamation.

"Oh, you poor thing!" With an effort she slammed the door against the driving wind, and, then, despite the fact that the big grey husky looked like a wild dog, she bent over it. He growled as her fingers touched his fur, but as she spoke to him soothingly he quietened down.

It was not one of her father's team—that she saw at a glance. Unusually large and powerful, even for a husky, its pointed jowl and distinctive markings suggested part Alsatian ancestry.

But Jean's attention was taken up with its limp right paw, the grey fur matted with blood.

"A trap?" she breathed, her grey eyes filled with mingled pity and indignation. "Or perhaps you caught it among the ice-floes—you certainly feel wet enough!"

As if recognising her as a friend, the wild dog let her examine the injury. Luckily the bone was not broken, and the wound was superficial though obviously very painful. Jean set to work skilfully to bathe and bandage it. Next she washed and groomed him.

"I wonder where you came from?" Jean murmured, when she had completed her task. "You're dreadfully thin and muddy, but now—goodness! What a marvellous collar!"

The collar, hidden previously by the mud congealing the fur, was now

revealed—a broad and very handsome collar of Indian workmanship, strongly woven in leather and embroidered with metal beads. And depending from it was a quaint bone amulet or totem, carved in the shape of an eagle, and dyed a deep crimson.

Jean examined it curiously; she had never seen anything quite like it before. She wondered if the dog could belong to a Redskin trapper—and if so how it had wandered into Blue Pine on its own, at this hour of night. Few Redskins ever visited the settlement, which consisted mostly of employees from the big lumber-camp owned by Mr. Hiram Grant, her father's best customer.

"You're quite a mystery, Grey-foot!" she declared, smiling faintly as she named the dog from its distinctive paws. "But you certainly seem at home here. I guess dad'll be surprised when I tell him to-morrow, if—if they'll let me see him, that is."

Jean swallowed, and rose quickly to move the saucepan that was simmering over on to the stove. The dog gave a little woof of anticipation as she raised the lid and took out a large bone and several juicy scraps of meat, putting them on a tin platter to cool.

Her thoughts were busy with another mystery, a mystery never far from her mind these days. What exactly had happened in the dark pine forests, a week ago, when her father had set out to collect supplies from the neighbouring town of Mooseville?

The team of huskies had brought the sleigh home late the following evening, her father huddled on the seat, barely conscious, an ugly gash on his head.

Nothing had been stolen; the stores were intact, and so was his wallet of money. At the settlement hospital, where she had taken him as soon as she realised that his condition was serious, they said that he had met with an accident—possible on the ice-floes.

But Jean wondered. She knew that he had been trying to tell her something before he lapsed into complete unconsciousness—something which she knew, from his expression, was of vital importance.

If only she could speak to him! Though he was now practically out of danger, she was still not allowed to talk to him; the doctor was afraid

By RHODA FLEMING

that any excitement might cause a relapse.

Meanwhile Jean was running the store as best she could, though torn with constant anxiety. To-morrow she would visit the hospital again and beg to be allowed to see him, if only for a few minutes.

An impatient "woof" brought her attention back to the shaggy visitor. With a tremulous smile, she put down the plate, and watched the big dog make short work of the scraps of meat. Then he began crunching delightedly at the bone.

Luckily there was plenty of the tasty stew, which Jean had cooked for the husky team as well as for herself. Scooping a generous quantity into a pail, she carried it outside the cabin. Immediately the mystery dog followed her, padding noiselessly behind her in the snow, keeping close to her heels despite its injured paw.

Jean's heart warmed at the dog's impulsive friendliness. She had been very lonely since her father had been away—lonelier than she would admit. Though she had received a number of kindly offers from the lumbermen's wives to lodge with her, she had pluckily refused, determined to keep the little business going as well as she could; for the rival store that had opened up two miles away threatened to take even more of their custom.

Jean fed the excited huskies, while the mystery dog obediently remained outside the stockade, ignoring the clamorous barkings and yappings.

The gale was blowing with renewed fury when Jean struggled back across the clearing. And suddenly, from overhead, there came an ominous cracking sound—a sound which Jean recognised only too well. White-faced, she started back, as the splintered top of a pine-tree came crashing down towards her.

In her haste she slipped and fell—and the next instant the hurtling piece of timber would have crushed her where she lay. But in that split second a jaw like a steel trap closed on her shoulder, and she was dragged aside, as the hurtling tree-trunk struck the snow barely a foot away.

Trembling, Jean struggled to her

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knees—to throw her arms round her shaggy rescuer.

"Greyfoot," she faltered, "you— you sure saved my life. I guess—I guess it was more than just chance that brought you to Blue Pine to-night."

The big dog barked, and the quaint amulet on his collar rattled as he sprang up at her, endeavouring to lick her face.

Jean thought quickly. Unless the real owner turned up to claim the dog, she was quite determined to keep him now. He would have to be explained to her father, in due course—but Greyfoot's plucky action would be explanation enough.

The question of where to lodge him needed only a moment's thought. It might cause friction to put him with the other huskies; but there was a disused stable close by, where her father kept some of his stores, and there was plenty of sacking and warm straw to make an ideal kennel.

That night Jean could hardly sleep, while the gale howled outside. The excitement of her narrow escape had served to quicken in her mind the thought of that mysterious accident to her father—the mystery about which he had tried to speak to her in vain.

Perhaps to-morrow, when she saw him in hospital.

Jean was awakened by a thunderous knocking on the door. It was broad daylight, though still very early. Who could be knocking her up at this hour?

Jean dressed hastily and was hurrying into the adjoining store when the knocking was repeated even more loudly. She unbolted the door and threw it wide.

"Goodness! What ever's the matter?" she gasped, staring at the two figures who stood there—a squat, bearded man whom she recognised as the foreman from the lumber-camp, and a tall young fellow in the uniform of a Mountie.

Her heart missed a beat at the sight of the latter. Could anything serious have happened? For an instant she froze, thinking of her father. But her fears on that score were banished as the bearded man spoke with a kind of grudging civility.

"Guess you know me, miss. I'm Jabez Forster, from the camp. I've called about a wild dog—"

Enlightenment showed in Jean's eyes. She was about to speak, when the bearded man went on:

"Whacking great husky—stranger to these parts. Broke into th' camp last evening, an' caused a lot of damage—as well as attacking a man who tried to stop it. Boss says it'll have to be destroyed. Guess it was seen comin' this way late at night. Maybe you've got it here?"

And he eyed her with obvious suspicion.

Jean stared back, her hands clenching. They had come for Greyfoot—and they were going to kill him!

Not for an instant did she believe that the big husky would have caused wanton damage—let alone attack a man—without good reason! Either Jabez Forster was mistaken, or deliberately exaggerating. In any case, Jean had no intention of betraying the dog that had saved her life!

Her grey eyes did not flicker as she ignored Forster's stare, and turned to encounter the young Mountie's shrewd glance.

"Well, miss?" The latter spoke in a pleasant drawl, contrasting favourably with his companion's rough tone. "Seen anything of the culprit?"

Jean gave a quick, challenging smile.

"Say, Mountie, do you think I've time to worry about stray dogs when I've got a team of huskies to look after—to say nothing of the store?" she countered. "Guess my dad's in hospital, and I'm single-handed."

"Sorry to hear that, miss"—there was genuine sympathy in the other's keen eyes—"but I've got my job to do. We trailed the dog here

by its paw-marks, but lost 'em just outside your stockade. Reck'n he might have jumped the fence. Any objection to our searching?"

"Of course not!" Jean replied boldly. "I'll show you where I keep the huskies."

She led the way to the shed, followed by the young Mountie and the suspicious foreman. Failing to find the "wanted" dog there, the young Mountie then pointed to the stables. "What d'you keep in there, miss?" he asked.

"Flour sacks and sugar crates," replied Jean, without a tremor.

For an instant the Mountie hesitated; but just then his attention was distracted by the foreman, who was prying suspiciously among the surrounding bushes.

At length, however, the two searchers were forced to take their departure, empty-handed. The foreman turned as Jean stood by the gate to watch them go. There was a scowl on his face.

"Reck'n the boss is pretty sore about that wild dog, Miss Carson," he growled. "He'd take a poor view of anyone who tried to hide it."

"I expect he would!" agreed Jean sweetly. "Well, I'm sorry I can't help you. Good luck, Mountie!"

The young Mountie eyed her for an instant, his expression inscrutable. Then he strode on his way, accompanied by the foreman.

Jean slammed the gate behind them and waited. As soon as she considered it safe, she carried a plate of bones to the stables—to be greeted by a "woof" of delight from the mystery stray.

Greyfoot, almost as though suspecting his danger, had astutely remained silent during the search.

"They say you're a bad dog," breathed Jean, caressing his shaggy head, "but I don't—I won't believe it! And neither will dad—when I tell him."

Greyfoot jumped up to lick her hand. His brown eyes were very innocent. But Jean, remembering the steel-trap jaw that had saved her life, guessed that he could be as dangerous to an enemy as gallant to a friend!

She left him with the bones, in the securely locked stable, with only a small window open high in the wall off in a corner.

Half an hour later she set out for the local hospital in her dog-sleigh, giving the lumber-camp a wide berth.

At the small, timber-built hospital she was greeted by the kindly Scots doctor.

"Your dad's a wee better, lass," he declared, in reply to her anxious question, "but I ken there's something on his mind. He's been asking after you. Maybe if you have a word with him it might help him turn the corner. But only for a few minutes, miss—and dinna excite him, or it'll do more harm than good."

A lump in her throat, but her heart thumping expectantly, Jean entered the cheerful little ward, where her father's bed was screened in a corner.

She dropped to her knees, grasping the roughened hand that lay so limply on the coverlet.

"Dad," she whispered unsteadily, "Dad—it's me—Jean."

The injured man's gaunt face lit up as he turned on the pillow; his eyes seemed unnaturally bright against the paleness of his features.

"Jean—" He made an effort to raise himself. "Jean—I wanted to see you. There is something—something I must tell you—but it keeps slipping away from me." His fingers tightened on her hand. "I—I need your help—"

"Dad—what can I do?" breathed Jean, her voice choked.

"Find"—Jean strained her ears to catch the hollow words—"find the red eagle amulet, and take it—vital—everything depends—"

His head fell back, and the doctor—who had been standing at a little distance—touched Jean's arm warningly.

"Come, lass—that is enough for today. I ken he's been fighting against

sleep, but seeing you has relieved his anxiety. We must na' disturb him."

As in a dream, Jean followed the doctor out of the ward. Her mind was in a whirl. Incredible though it seemed, her father's urgent request concerned the strange totem worn on the collar of the mystery husky!

GREYFOOT'S STRANGE BEHAVIOUR

THE keen wind lashed Jean's face, helping to clear her racing thoughts, as she drove her dog-sleigh back to Blue Pine.

Her anxiety for her father had given place to a tense excitement—a determination to clear up the baffling mystery surrounding his accident—the mystery that was worrying him and delaying his recovery.

And there was no need to seek the vital clue he had mentioned. The clue had come to her—brought by the friendly stray!

Why the dog had sought out her father's cabin was a mystery in itself. Clearly it must have known him, and followed his scent—or the scent of the husky team.

But what of the crimson totem—the amulet shaped like a flying eagle? Only by examining it more closely could she hope to discover its secret!

Jean cracked her whip in the frosty air, and the barking huskies strained excitedly at the reins as the sleigh swept towards Blue Pine.

Arriving at the stockade she paused only to tether the yapping team before hurrying breathlessly to the stable.

"Greyfoot!" she called breathlessly, unlocking the door and clapping her hands. "Come on, boy—"

Her eager voice trailed away, for there was no answering "woof"—nothing but silence. In sudden alarm she stared round in the dim light.

There were flour sacks and the sugar crates, and the straw on which the husky had slept the previous night. His plate was still there, with a few remaining scraps of bone. But of Greyfoot himself there was no sign.

Then Jean saw that one of the empty packing-cases had been overturned—as though the dog had leapt on to it in an effort to escape from the high window. Hurrying out of the stable, her fears were confirmed. The paw marks of the husky were clearly imprinted in the soft snow behind the building.

Jean gave a little gulp of dismay, her excited hopes suddenly shattered. Greyfoot had gone—and with him had gone the eagle amulet, the vital clue on which her father's happiness might depend!

Yet mingled with Jean's dismay was a feeling of perplexity. Why should a dog that had refused to leave her last night, and had gallantly saved her from the falling tree, have suddenly decided to disappear like this—to depart as mysteriously as it had come?

Jean followed the paw-marks as far as the stockade, only to lose trace of them on the hard road outside—the road leading to the lumber-camp.

The precious clue had been actually within her grasp—and she had not known it! How could she hope to find the elusive husky now, and recover the intriguing thing it wore on its collar?

As she stared hopelessly along the road, she noticed some broad toboggan tracks in the piled up snow at the side—tracks that had not been there when she left for the hospital.

A heavy sleigh had been driven towards the lumber-camp—and Jean guessed who owned it. It was the big, laden sleigh driven by Pierre Lemure, the owner of the rival store—the man who for months had been trying to take custom from her father.

A strange thought flashed into Jean's mind. Was it possible that the husky had sprung out of the stable window in order to follow the sledge team? If so, there was a chance she might find it at the lumber-camp.

But her hope was mingled with a

sharp anxiety. There had been trouble at the camp last night—and Jabez Forster, the foreman, was on the look-out for the mystery dog! There was no time to lose. Though it was not her usual morning for deliveries, she decided to take over certain orders as an excuse for visiting the camp.

Quickly she set to work to pack the sleigh with goods; and, intent on her task, she did not notice a tall shadow fall across a patch of sunlight.

"Morning, miss," remarked a pleasant, drawling voice.

Jean whirled with a start, to encounter the shrewd glance of the young Mountie. Why had he come back?

"Good morning," she replied, immediately on her guard.

The Mountie leaned against the fence, watching her, his hands on his belt.

"Afraid we disturbed you this morning," he said, "but it's all in the course of duty. A funny thing about that wild dog—it seems to have vanished without a trace. May I ask you a blunt question, miss?"

"Sure, Mountie!" Jean looked up, her grey eyes very steady.

"Are you hiding that dog, Miss Carson?"

Jean did not flinch; she could answer that question truthfully enough now.

"Certainly not!" she rejoined. "Whatever gave you that idea?"

The young Mountie eyed her searchingly, but appeared satisfied.

"Information received, miss," he explained, with a dry smile. "It's our job to follow up every possibility. From all reports that dog's dangerous, and will have to be put away. But if you're sure you can't help me, I'll be getting along."

"I'm quite sure!" replied Jean, coolly returning his smile.

The young constable touched his stetson and strode out of the gate, spurs clanking.

Jean bit her lip a little remorsefully. She hated to have been so abrupt—for the young man was only doing his duty. But she had acted on the defensive, not only because she believed in the dog's innocence, but because it was vital that she should be the first to find the elusive stray, and obtain the mysterious amulet from its collar!

Quickly she finished packing the sleigh, and set out for the lumber-camp in the crisp morning sunshine.

The camp lay about a mile away, in a heavily wooded district, and the log-cabins of the settlers were clustered in groups around a big central clearing in which stood the saw-mill and workshops.

Jean had delivered most of her orders when she heard a sudden loud commotion coming from beyond the mill—startled, angry shouts, followed by a fierce barking.

Her face paled as the commotion became louder. Securing her sleigh to the stockade, she hurried in the direction of the ominous sounds.

And just then from the bushes close to her sprang a furry, wolf-like shape with something grasped in its jaws—something that looked like part of a man's lumber-jacket.

"Greyfoot!" exclaimed Jean.

The big dog paused as he recognised her, and sprang forward with a deep-throated growl. Jean caught him by the collar, torn between anxiety and delight at having found him.

"Greyfoot, what have you been doing?" she gasped, while her anxious gaze sought the amulet attached to the dog's collar.

Thank goodness it was still safe! The husky growled, shaking its head fiercely, as though worrying an opponent. At that moment there came the sound of running footsteps and shouts.

With a low snarl, the husky struggled in Jean's grasp; then suddenly it broke away, almost sending her sprawling.

As Jean recovered herself, she found that she was holding in her hand the woven leather collar with the eagle amulet!

"Greyfoot!" she called, fearful for the dog's safety.

But the husky had vanished among the bushes, and the running footsteps were coming closer.

Instinctively Jean thrust the collar with the precious amulet out of sight in her leather satchel, and turned to confront the men who were running towards her.

There were two of them. Burly Jabez Forster, whip in hand, an angry scowl on his bearded face; and behind him, more apprehensively, came a lean, swarthy figure wearing a torn lumber-jacket. Jean recognised Pierre Lemure, the rival storekeeper, and the man's dark eyes were rolling with mingled fury and fear.

"Dere she ees, Meester Forster!" exclaimed the storekeeper, pointing at Jean. "Zat ees ze girl who ees hiding ze brute—who bring it here so that it go for me!"

Jean's face paled as the burly foreman strode towards her.

"Guess Pierre is right," he said curtly. "This ain't your usual morning for calling, Miss Carson. Mighty queer the wild dog should turn up at the same time."

"I—I don't know what you mean!" gasped Jean. "How dare you suggest—"

infuriated by this cowardly attack on her father.

"That'll do, Miss Carson!" interrupted the timber boss, frowning. "Forster has my complete confidence when it comes to ordering supplies. I've a respect for your father, and was sorry to hear of his accident, but that's no cause for you to start trouble with Lemure. D'you know anything about this dog that's been raiding my place?" he added, more sternly.

For a fraction of an instant Jean hesitated, conscious of the shrewd scrutiny of the young Mountie's blue eyes as he leaned nonchalantly against a tree.

"All I know is what I've been told!" she declared breathlessly. "If—if the dog has done what they say, then it must have been aggravated. I don't believe the dog is wild. I think—"

"Hear that, boss?" interrupted Forster, with a sneer. "Now she's tryin' to defend the brute!"

Mr. Grant's expression hardened.

"Miss Carson," he said grimly, "though I don't accuse you for a moment of being responsible for this animal's actions, I'm not satisfied. The police are making further inquiries, and if it comes to my ears



"Waal, Miss Carson, what have you to say about this?" asked the young Mountie, and sternly he held out the dog collar.

"What's all this, Forster?"

A deep, authoritative voice boomed out behind them. Jean turned, to confront the massive figure of Mr. Hiram Grant, the boss of Blue Creek timber mill—and owner of some hundreds of acres of adjoining forest land. And strolling unobtrusively in the background was the young Mountie.

"What's the trouble, Forster?" repeated Mr. Grant, looking sharply at Jean.

"It's that dratted wild dog again, Mr. Grant!" growled the foreman. "It got into the storehouse jest now, while Pierre here was unloading the stores I ordered. It went for him—ripped his jacket, and might ha' gone for his throat if I hadn't driven it off with a whip. Pierre swears that it's being hidden up by Miss Carson, whose dad's known to have a grudge against Pierre."

"Oh, that's not true!" White-faced, her grey eyes blazing, Jean whirled on the foreman. "How dare you say such things when—when my father's in hospital, too ill to defend himself? Dad hasn't a grudge against anyone. It's Pierre who's been doing his best to undermine our business, and you've used your influence to put the biggest orders in his way—"

Jean spoke recklessly in her anger,

that you are hiding the dog in spite of what has happened. I'll have no hesitation about cancelling your father's contract!"

And turning abruptly on his heel, he strode away, accompanied by the foreman and the scowling trader, Pierre Lemure.

Jean swallowed hard, her eyes smarting with angry tears as she made her way dazedly back to her sleigh. Hardly looking where she was going, she stumbled over a fallen log; but a hand caught her firmly by the arm, helping her to her feet.

"Steady, miss!" drawled the young Mountie's pleasant voice. "Take it easy. No need to get het up about a little matter like this. I guess I admired your pluck in standin' up to those two rough-necks, but—"

He broke off suddenly, stooping swiftly to pick up something that lay in the snow where Jean had stumbled. When he spoke again his voice had changed; now it was grim and curt.

"Waal, Miss Carson, what have you to say about this?" he asked, holding up his hand. "Reck'n it might help matters if you'd tell me the truth, Miss Carson!"

Jean's face paled, for grasped in the young Mountie's hand was the mystery dog's collar, with the vital amulet!

THE MARK ON THE MAP

"W-A-L, Miss Carson? The young Mountie's keen eyes seemed to be boring into her thoughts. "What you got to say about this?"

Jean's lips trembled as she stared at the tell-tale clue.

What could she say, without admitting her strange connection with Greyfoot—without disclosing the mystery that somehow linked the "wanted" husky with her father?

Even if the Mountie believed her surprising story, he would be compelled to investigate officially. He might even call at the hospital to check up—and Jean's heart turned cold at the thought of the worry it would bring to her father.

"Well?" repeated the young constable, eyeing her with obvious puzzlement. "Guess all this needs a bit of explaining, Miss Carson. This wild dog is seen going towards your store, but you deny having hidden it. Then you turn up at the very moment that it attacks Pierre—an its collar falls out of your satchel. Got anything to say?"

"No!" Jean whispered. "Guess that won't do!" rejoined the Mountie, a frown on his good-looking face. "It's a serious matter, hampering the law, Miss Carson. It's my job to find this dog—an get at the truth of what's been going on."

"I'm not hiding the dog," Jean said desperately. "I don't even know where it comes from—or where it goes. That's the truth!"

"Then—what about this collar?" Jean's expression grew stubborn. That was her secret. Even now she was racking her mind for some way in which to regain possession of the precious amulet.

To her dismay, the young Mountie strolled over to his horse that was tethered nearby, and calmly placed the collar and amulet in the saddle-bag.

"Guess I'll make further enquiries about that," he said dryly. "Meanwhile, Miss Carson"—his tone hardened a little—"I'll have another look round your place, if you don't mind."

Jean bit her lip—but there was nothing she could do or say. This determined young man was fully within his rights.

Ignoring the Mountie, she climbed into the sleigh and cracked her whip. The huskies responded, setting out with delighted yapping for home and their expected meal.

Behind her she heard the muffled clop of the horse's hoofs, as the young Mountie cantered in the wake of the sleigh.

She consoled herself with the thought that his visit would reveal nothing that could incriminate her. Apart from a plate of bones, he would find no scrap of evidence that she or her father had any connection with the mystery dog.

Arriving at the store, Jean drove her team straight into the yard. The young constable dismounted and followed her, his shrewd eyes scanning the log cabin and outbuildings.

She turned to him, her hands clenched. "You're just wasting your time," she began.

Then her voice trailed away in a little gasp, and the Mountie stiffened.

A window at the back of the store was partly open as she had left it, and at that moment a grey shape sprang out of the window into the snow, heading for the gate in the stockade.

"Say, that's the wild dog!" exclaimed the Mountie angrily. "So you have been trying to hamper the law, Miss Carson. Hi—come back, you!"

She watched him as he made a dive after the husky, attempting to cut off its escape. Her thoughts were racing. Greyfoot, the mystery dog, must have come back ahead of them.

But why had the dog returned to the cabin—only to depart again so mysteriously? Its strange activities could not be merely accidental. The intelligent animal must have a pur-

pose in its comings and goings; but it was a purpose that baffled Jean.

Only one thing might help to solve the mystery—the same intriguing clue that her father had urged her to seek. The clue that had been taken from her by the Mountie!

Jean drew in her breath sharply. The young constable was out of sight, bent on catching the elusive husky. And the collar—with the precious amulet—was in the horse's saddle-bag.

Dared she risk it? It was now or never—a chance that wouldn't come her way again.

Throwing caution to the winds, Jean darted across to the horse and fumbled feverishly in the saddle-bag. In a moment the collar was in her grasp. The amulet was attached to it by a stout leather thong; but Jean carried a small sheath-knife, and with anxious haste she cut the amulet free, slipping it into her pocket, while she returned the collar to the saddle-bag.

Only in the nick of time. The young Mountie came striding back, a chagrined look on his weather-tanned features. Jean met his stare with a bold glance, though her heart was pounding.

"So you tried to hoodwink me, Miss Carson," he said shortly. "You're playing some game of your own—but you'll find that it doesn't pay to interfere with the law! You'll hear more from me when I've rounded up that wild dog!"

Jean stifled a little sigh of relief. He was still concerned about catching the dog; he had not given another thought to the collar and quaint amulet.

With a curt nod he vaulted into the saddle, and rode away down the hill towards the pine-woods.

Jean hurried indoors, eager to examine the amulet—to discover its secret. But when she came to look at it more closely, her hopes sank.

The crimson eagle was simply yet realistically carved from bone, in one piece—and quite solid. There was no possibility of its containing a secret. And though she examined it minutely she could find nothing even resembling an inscription.

Could this be the amulet her father had mentioned? Had she been searching all along for the wrong thing?

Despairingly she carried it over to the window, hoping that a brighter light might assist. And then suddenly she paused, staring at something that lay on the floor beside an overturned plant-pot.

It was this window through which the mystery dog had jumped. And the object on the floor was the torn scrap from Pierre Lemure's lumber-jacket—the scrap she had last seen in Greyfoot's jaws. Now she could see that it was actually part of a pocket—and protruding from it was a tattered and crumpled map!

Almost trembling in her excitement, Jean picked up the map, smoothing it out on the table. A glance showed that it was a rough sketch-map of the Blue Pine district and some twenty miles around—with the lakes and forest-land clearly marked.

There appeared to be nothing unusual about it at first sight; but as she stared at it in growing perplexity, Jean caught in her breath.

Drawn in ink near the centre of the map was a peculiar sign—a pair of bird's claws!

THE MYSTERY REVEALED

AN eagle's claws—and the eagle amulet! Could there be a connection?

Jean placed the curious amulet in the centre of the map. Its claws exactly fitted those drawn on the chart!

She sat down, her pulses racing, her active mind grappling with the amazing mystery.

One thing seemed clear. Pierre Lemure must have stolen the map—stolen it from the owner of the amulet: Greyfoot's master!

The dog's surprising actions slowly

began to fall into a logical sequence in Jean's mind. Greyfoot's master had been attacked, and the map stolen. The husky had escaped—or been driven away—carrying the vital amulet, unsuspected by the enemy.

Later, Greyfoot set out in search of his master—and the scent of the enemy led him to the lumber camp. No doubt Pierre had gone there on a visit to the surly Jabez Forster, who was most likely in league with him.

But where did her father's accident come into this—and why had the husky visited their cabin?

Her father, returning from Mooseville, must have surprised the scoundrels, and attempted to intervene on behalf of the dog's owner? He, too, had been attacked and injured—but not before he had discovered something of the truth.

Greyfoot, searching doggedly for his master, had got on to the scent of his friend—and had turned up at the cabin. But next morning, while Jean was at the hospital, the dog had again smelt the hated enemy—and had sprung out of the stable window, to follow Pierre to the camp.

The commotion at the camp—the fierce attack on Pierre—was now explained. But the sagacious husky, realising that it was holding in its jaws something belonging to its master had deliberately carried the map to Jean's cabin, knowing that it would be in safe hands.

Where had Greyfoot gone now? Jean did not know. All her thoughts at the moment were concentrated on this vital clue.

As she stared at the carved eagle, standing in the centre of the map, she saw that its outstretched beak was touching a certain spot on the edge of a lake, about two miles from the Blue Pine settlement.

And her pulses quickened as she remembered that it was in that rather desolate neighbourhood—on the fringe of Mr. Hiram Grant's timber-land—that Pierre Lemure had quite recently set up his rival store.

Jean started to her feet, her thoughts racing with excitement. Though she could not surmise what secret lay behind the strange clue, she was determined to follow it up without delay.

Shutting up the store, she harnessed her husky team and set out on the lonely, winding road to Sunset Lake.

It was late in the afternoon when she came in sight of her goal, and saw the frozen lake shimmering in the fading sunlight. Reining in her team, Jean climbed out of the sleigh and stared round her.

Even now she had no idea where to commence her search—or exactly what she was to look for. But she felt convinced that she was at last within reach of solving the mystery that had been worrying her father—the mystery that Greyfoot, the husky, had set out so luckily to unravel on his own.

To her left, through the tall trees, she glimpsed the wooden outbuildings of Pierre Lemure's new store; but the point she had marked on the map was a mile farther to the east of the lake.

There was no road leading in that direction. It meant setting out on foot through the dark pine forest; but Jean did not hesitate.

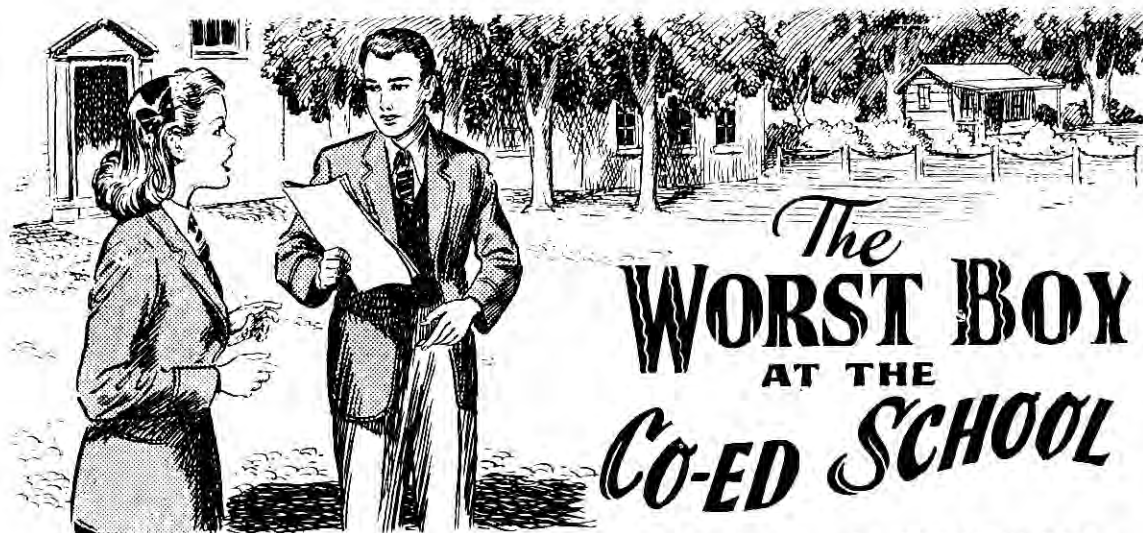
Securing her dog-team, she made her way into the forest, following a narrow track possibly made by some lone trapper. Every now and then she saw a glimmer of water through the trees, and she realised that the path was skirting the lake.

The lonely silence of the forest was beginning to tell on her nerves, strung taut by recent events. She could hear the whisper of the wind in the tall pines—the occasional frightened scurry of some small animal.

Once or twice she thought she heard stealthy footsteps following her in the snow, but decided it must be a trick of her imagination.

At last the winding path brought her out of the dark tunnel of trees,

(Please turn to the back page.)



The WORST BOY AT THE Co-ED SCHOOL

By DOROTHY PAGE

JO SPRINGS A SURPRISE

PADDY DARE, leader of the riding team at Mallington Co-ed College, befriended Vincent Conrad, known to the rest of the school as the Outsider. She was convinced that Vincent was not the rascal he was reputed to be, and she promised him a place in the riding team.

As the result of an argument between Vincent and Ron Bullton, another member of the riding team, Paddy declared at a meeting in the harness-room that if Vincent did anything to prove she was wrong to trust him, she would resign the captaincy.

At that moment Isabella Rocco, the South American girl, appeared in the doorway. She declared that a photograph had been pinned up on the notice-board in Central Hall—a photograph which meant that Vincent would be expelled.

THE group of girls and boys in the school harness-room were startled into silence by Isabella's dramatic words.

"Isabella, you're talking nonsense!" Paddy burst out half-angrily.

Isabella smiled, revelling in the limelight.

"So?" she purred. "Then go to Central Hall, Paddy! Look at the photograph on the sports notice-board! Then you will know why Vincent Conrad will be expelled—"

"Look here," broke in Jimmy Court excitedly, "what is this photograph, Isabella? Who put it there?"

"Who put it there I do not know," Isabella shrugged. "But when a master sees it, then the Outsider is finished—yes! And then Paddy must keep her promise and resign from the captaincy, is it not?"

Paddy herself did not hear that last, rather malicious sentence. She was already racing from the harness-room.

Jo Winter called out after her, but Paddy did not heed; she was too alarmed and aroused.

"What the dickens is this photograph?" she muttered, as she ran across the quadrangle, bright in the early morning sunshine. "Isabella seemed so sure—so excited."

She took the steps of Central Hall three at a time. She was vaguely conscious of running footsteps behind her. The rest of the team was following up.

"Now——"

Paddy slowed in the cool, lofty hall. One sweeping glance showed her that it was deserted. It gave her a moment of relief before she crossed rapidly to the sports notice-board.

And then she caught her breath.

"Oh gosh!"

A large sheet of paper was pinned to the board, with a photograph pasted on the centre of it.

But it was the boldly scrawled

words above the photograph that Paddy had seen first.

"LOOK AT THIS!"

DOESN'T THIS PROVE THAT IT'S TIME THE OUTSIDER WAS KICKED OUT OF MALLINGTON COLLEGE?"

Startled, yet suddenly furious, Paddy hurried forward until she was near enough to see the photograph clearly.

It was quite a good snap, depicting a narrow street, in which a boy in riding-kit was rather furtively entering a garden gate.

Paddy saw—and went rigid. She knew that street; most of the scholars did. It was Birdham Lane, in nearby Mallington, and strictly out of bounds to the whole college. It was out of bounds because in that street lived a shady bookmaker who, indirectly, had been the cause of one of the scholars being expelled the previous term.

And this photograph showed a boy entering the bookmaker's garden gate. The boy——

"No!" exclaimed Paddy. "No, I—I jolly well don't believe it!"

A little pale, she stared hard at the snap. The boy was in riding-kit, and although only a fraction of his face could be seen, it looked exactly like Vincent Conrad!

It shook Paddy badly, but not her faith, her generous loyalty.

She had promised to trust Vincent and give him a chance. In return he had promised her that he would go steady.

"It's—it's a trick—a rotten, mean trick!" she muttered. "That's not Vincent. It can't be! Someone's wangled this snap to get him into trouble."

A name shot into her mind, to help strengthen her conviction.

The Whisperer!

Vincent Conrad's unknown enemy! He—or she—had done this! And surely this now explained the mysterious disappearance and reappearance of Max Milden's camera? It had been secretly borrowed to take this photograph!

"That's it!" exclaimed Paddy angrily. "Must be!"

A voice rang out suddenly from the doorway—Isabella's.

The Boy They Called The Outsider Would Be Expelled If Mr. Voster Saw The Photograph Pinned On The Notice-board

"Ah, Paddy has seen it—yes! And now you others will see proof of what I have said!"

Isabella was in the lead, Jo beside her. Jo was anxious, not for Vincent's sake, but Paddy's. She darted forward.

"Paddy dear——"

Impulsively Paddy put her back against the notice-board. Despite her trust in Vincent, she somehow did not want anyone else to see that incriminating photograph.

"Just a moment!" she cried. "Isabella's made a mistake——"

Before she could go on, however, a cool voice spoke:

"What is all this commotion?"

Heads turned. Paddy gave a tiny gasp of dismay.

A master had entered the Hall, tall, lean, fast moving.

Mr. Voster.

Paddy acted on desperate impulse. This harsh, implacable master, who so disliked Vincent and had vowed to "tame" him, was the last person in the school she wanted to see the photograph. That would mean disaster indeed for Vincent.

Her hand shot up behind her back, fumbling for the photograph.

"Well?" said Mr. Voster. His keen eyes flashed round and alighted on Paddy as the centre of interest. "Ah, Miss Dare, what——"

Then he strode forward, suddenly very alert. Over Paddy's shoulder he had seen the scrawled words above the photograph. His small mouth moved, muttering the words as he read them.

It gave Paddy a moment's chance. Her fingers were on the photograph. She tugged. It came free, but slipped from her fingers. She felt it touch the back of her leg and drop to the ground. She hoped desperately that her feet hid it from view.

Mr. Voster gave a little sigh.

"Miss Dare, please stand away from that notice-board!" he said.

Paddy faced him and tried to smile.

"Why, there's nothing to see, Mr. Voster!" she said. "Someone's been playing a silly joke."

"Indeed?" Mr. Voster gave his tight, unpleasant smile. "It may appeal to my sense of humour. Stand aside, please!"

Paddy stood still. If she moved he could not fail to see the photograph on the floor.

"Paddy——" breathed Jo anxiously, moving to Paddy's side.

The others were silent, tensed. Even Isabella held her peace.

Mr. Voster looked coldly at Paddy.

"It might be as well to remind you, Miss Dare," he said, "that you have already had one serious warning from

your headmistress concerning Vincent Conrad—

He paused, allowing that to sink in. Paddy was a little white, and suddenly rather scared. She remembered only too well that last interview with the headmistress. If she were caught covering up for Vincent again—

But if she moved and revealed that photograph, what, then, of Vincent—a victim, she was sure, of a cunning plot by the unknown Whisperer?

"I give you one last chance!" snapped Mr. Voster. "Stand aside from that notice-board, or I shall immediately take you in front of your headmistress! I think you know what that will mean!"

JO TAKES THE BLAME

THERE were over twelve people in the Hall, yet in the seconds following Mr. Voster's ominous words there was complete and utter silence.

The riding team were startled by Paddy's steady defiance.

Curly-haired Jimmy Court broke the silence.

"Oh gosh!" he blurted. "Paddy, old thing, don't you think—"

Mr. Voster shot him a glance.

"Silence, Court!" he snapped, and then turned back. "Well, Miss Dare?"

Paddy hesitated, scared, yet thinking of Vincent. It was a very soft, urgent whisper from Jo at her side that swayed her.

"Please! Please, Paddy!" breathed Jo. "It'll mean awful trouble! And you can't just keep standing there."

Paddy drew a long breath. It was true what Jo said; she could not stand there indefinitely—and, despite her loyalty, the thought of having to face Miss Bridgett again really frightened her.

"Very well, Mr. Voster," she muttered, dragging the words out.

She shuffled to one side, stepping back a fraction, hoping that she might scuffle the photograph along at the same time. But her feet did not touch it.

She stood staring straight in front of her, angry with herself, waiting for the blow to fall, waiting to hear Mr. Voster exclaim when he saw the photograph on the floor.

It was Isabella, however, who exclaimed—in surprise—

"Oh! Where is it?"

Then Mr. Voster, sharply, angrily:

"Miss Dare, something has obviously been removed from this board. You removed it! You have it now! Give it to me—instantly!"

Paddy turned. Instinctively her gaze flickered to the floor. In amazement, she saw that there was no sign of the photograph. Her gaze rose to Mr. Voster's flushed, hard face.

"I—I haven't got anything!" She stammered in her bewilderment. "On my honour, Mr. Voster!"

The master stared at her, yet he knew Paddy would not lie.

"Then someone has!" he exclaimed angrily. His dark eyes flashed round and fastened on Jo. "Ah, Miss Winter! Take your hands from behind your back!"

Everyone looked at Jo.

"Old Voster's an ass!" muttered Ron Bullton. "As if Jo, of all people—"

A sudden gasp went up. Jo, perfectly calmly, had brought her hands into view. They were clenched tight, and obviously held something.

"Open your hands, please, Miss Winter!" Mr. Voster ordered.

Again there was no hesitation about Jo. Without the slightest trace of apprehension on her sweet face, she loosened her fingers.

From them fluttered scraps of paper gently to the floor.

The incriminating photograph, torn into shreds!

"Jo!" breathed Paddy.

She was flabbergasted. It was so unexpected, although clear enough now that Jo must have seen the dropped photograph and scooped it up when Mr. Voster had glanced at Jimmy Court.

Jo—who had been standing there, calmly tearing up the photograph behind her back!

If it amazed Paddy, the riding team and even Mr. Voster were no less staggered. Jo was so quiet, a model of perfect behaviour!

Quite apart from that, she did not believe in Vincent, so why protect him?

While the boys and girls stared at Jo, Mr. Voster, tight-lipped, took charge again. He stooped swiftly, catching up and examining the torn scraps. They told him nothing.

"Miss Winter," he said, "what did you tear up and drop on the floor?"

"Something I thought better torn up," answered Jo quietly. "I am sorry, Mr. Voster, but that is all I can tell you."

"Very well!" interrupted the master. He was coldly furious now. "So you were responsible, Miss Winter! This has gone quite far enough. You will follow me to your Form-mistress, Miss Chuffleigh!"

That roused Paddy. Whatever had prompted Jo's action, the thought of punishment to her gentle chum caused her to blurt out.

"Just a minute!" she cried. "Jo, I can't let—"

"Please keep out, Paddy!" said Jo quietly but firmly. "This has nothing to do with you. I'm ready, Mr. Voster."

She settled matters by turning and walking quickly to the main doorway. Mr. Voster stalked after her.

Their passing released an excited hum of comment.

"Well, that beats me!" gasped Jimmy. "What came over Jo?"

"Protecting that Outsider! It's dappy—"

"I know one thing," put in Max Milden. "I caught a glimpse of that photograph, and, by the size of it, it was taken with my camera."

"And it was of Vincent Conrad!" insisted Isabella. "I tell you all it was—yes! Even Paddy will have to admit—"

She paused there, staring round for Paddy.

But Paddy had shot away on the tracks of Mr. Voster and Jo. She was very anxious and still rather bewildered over Jo's action.

"Why—why should Jo cover up for Vincent?" she asked herself, hurrying down the steps. "But if she's punished—"

She hated the thought. Ahead of her she saw Jo and Mr. Voster enter Girls' Side. Paddy followed.

Jo had made it clear she did not want interference, so Paddy kept back, and in Girls' Side hung around the end of Mistress' Corridor. But on one thing she was determined—if Jo got into serious trouble because of what she had done, she, Paddy, would step in and demand to share the punishment or take the full blame.

It was nearly four minutes before Miss Chuffleigh's study door opened. Jo came out alone. Paddy shot forward, anxiously scanning her chum's calm face.

"Jo, what happened?"

Jo smiled faintly.

"Nothing much, Paddy. Choo-choo is fussy, but she's fair. After all, it wasn't as if I'd torn down a school notice or something. Mr. Voster really lost his temper, as you know. Of course, he wanted me to say exactly what was on the photo, but, quite honestly, I could say I did not know. Don't look worried, Paddy dear."

Paddy relaxed a little.

"I got a wiggling," continued Jo. "and a hundred lines, as in a way I had sort of defied Mr. Voster. That's all, Paddy."

"Gosh, I'm glad!" Paddy gave a long sigh, and then had to burst out with the point that was bewildering her. "But, Jo dear, I don't understand why you did it. I—I know you don't really think much of Conrad, and to cover up for him like that—"

"Paddy," Jo said gently, "I was thinking of you—not Conrad."

"Of me?"

Paddy ran her fingers through her long, fair hair. Jo smiled again, took her arm, and led her away.

"Of course, Paddy," she said.

"Have you forgotten the serious warning you had from Miss Bridgett about Vincent Conrad and trouble? Supposing Mr. Voster had seen that photograph—after you had tried to prevent him so doing? What would have resulted?"

Paddy's expression changed. No doubt of the result at all! Mr. Voster would have been delighted to take her before the headmistress on a charge of trying to protect the Outsider again. And after the Head's last warning—

"For me it was different," said Jo. "In the circus, nothing very terrible could happen to me. You see, Paddy?"

Paddy saw.

"Oh gosh! Jo, what a friend you are!" she said a little chokily. "So jolly wise and nice! And ass me didn't realise! To do that for me—"

Jo pressed her arm.

"Don't be a goose, Paddy! You would have done it for me, you know that. But listen! A very serious note crept into Jo's gentle voice.

"Isabella told us what she saw on that photograph. You saw it, too, Paddy. Well?"

Paddy bit her lip. They halted together on the landing.

"Jo, I just don't, won't, believe it was Vincent in that snap!" she blurted. "It—it looked like him, but it wasn't—couldn't be! He promised me—"

"He also promised," cut in Jo quietly. "to come to the meeting this morning and apologise to Ron. I agree he may be at the stables now, waiting. But that isn't the important point. Paddy, I'm sorry, but I think it was Vincent Conrad in that photograph! Remember he was suspected of being in Birdham Lane before."

"Jo, that wasn't proved!" Paddy cried.

Jo was silent a moment. She drew a long breath, as if coming to an important decision. She looked straight at Paddy.

"You wanted to give Vincent a chance, Paddy," she said. "I've tried to be fair and give him a chance, too."

"I know," said Paddy warmly. "You've been sweet, Jo!"

Jo flushed a little and continued with an effort.

"But after this business, Paddy, I've made up my mind. As far as that boy is concerned, I can't, and won't, back you up any longer!"

"Jo!"

"I mean it, Paddy!" Jo was speaking with unusual force. "It's for your sake. And if you think you're going to do something for him that will land you into trouble, Ill—I'll do anything I can to stop it—whatever happens to that boy!"

WHAT VINCENT DROPPED

IN that moment Paddy saw the hint of a strong character coming through Jo's normal quietness—the character that had perhaps caused her election as Form captain.

It startled her a little.

"Paddy, that must have sounded all silly and dramatic," said Jo suddenly, more gently. "But I meant it. Now let's go down and see what the others are doing, shall we?"

Paddy nodded. In truth, Jo had shaken and dismayed her a little, making her realise more than ever that her championship of Vincent was having serious repercussions.

They walked down through Girls' Side into Central Hall. The riding team were gathered in a bunch there. They were clustering excitedly around Ron Bullton, who seemed to be holding a letter.

Jimmy Court saw the two girls and came to meet them.

"I say, something pretty staggering's happened!" he cried, then broke off, looking at Jo. "What about Mr. Voster, Jo?"

"That's all right, Jimmy," said Jo quickly, before Paddy could speak. "But what's the excitement?"

"A note from Vincent Conrad to Ron. He spotted it in the letter-rack

after you two had gone. And guess what, girls? It's a letter of apology!" "Oh!" exclaimed Paddy. "Oh whizzo! Gosh, I'm glad!" She ran forward, joining the group, craning over Ron's shoulder. The note said:

"I accused you wrongly yesterday afternoon. I apologise. I meant to tell you so face to face this morning, but I had to go out."
"VINCENT CONRAD."

A terse letter—but it was an apology all right.

Ron's burly face was a study. He had never expected it. The rest were equally amazed. Paddy felt a glow of happiness. Vincent had kept his word to her, though why he had gone out so early was a mystery.

"Well, what about that, gang?" she cried. "He's done it—"
"One moment!" broke in Isabella. "You forget that photograph, Paddy. It may suit that cunning boy to write an apology—yes! But what of the photograph, proof that he was up to his old shady tricks?"

Everyone looked at Paddy. Her chin came up.

"It wasn't Vincent in that photograph!" she flashed. "I— Look here, gang," she said more steadily. "I think that photograph was a fake—a mean trick against Vincent!"

They stared at her incredulously. It was Ron who answered her.

"Bosh, Paddy!" he growled. "Utter bosh!"

"Suppose I can prove it?" flashed Paddy. "Suppose I prove that he couldn't possibly have been there, that the photo's a fake? Will you give me a chance to tackle Vincent before making up your minds?"

The team looked at each other.

"Well," said Jimmy doubtfully, "that seems fair enough—if Paddy can prove it was a fake that Vincent Conrad wasn't visiting that rotten bookmaker! Paddy, I—I think you're wrong; but he has apologised, and I think we ought to give him the chance. O.K., gang?"

Most of the team nodded, and Paddy was satisfied. Inwardly she determined to see Vincent at the first possible moment.

Further discussion was prevented by the ringing of first breakfast bell. That suited Paddy, too. She wanted to have time to think.

During morning lessons her thoughts were all on Vincent and that treacherous secret enemy. Who was the mysterious Whisperer? Who had borrowed Max Milden's camera?

She thought back to the previous afternoon, trying to recall which members of the team had left the practice ground on their own, and thus could have gone off with Max's camera.

"Ron left by himself, of course," she muttered. "But it couldn't have been Ron. We've proved that. Bette Grindle did, too, and also Isabella."

She started. Isabella Rocco! Gosh, why hadn't she thought of Isabella before? The South American girl had been against Vincent from the start—why, she did not know. Also, it had been Isabella who had first drawn attention to the photograph.

Isabella had been late at the meeting. Supposing it was Isabella who had actually pinned up the photograph?

Paddy's eyes gleamed. She suddenly felt that she might be on the track, and that it would pay her to watch the South American girl. But first—she must speak to Vincent himself.

It was with a feeling of impatience that she waited for the bell to signal the end of morning sessions.

Then she was first out of the Form Room, rushing along to Central Hall to try to catch Vincent before he entered the Boys' Dining Hall.

But though she stood there until most of the boys had gone in, there was no sign of Vincent Conrad.

She asked Jimmy Court when he came along with quiet Max Milden, but neither of them had seen the boy the school called the Outsider.

At last she was forced to take her own lunch in the Girls' Dining Hall. Immediately afterwards she rushed outside, looking anxiously around for Vincent.

"Where can he be?" she murmured. And then she saw him, hurrying from the direction of Boys' Side. "Vincent!" she called, running up to him.

They met, and instantly Paddy was struck by the red-haired boy's expression. The usual rather bitter, don't-care look was absent; he seemed very concerned.

"Paddy, I'm sorry," he said earnestly. "I couldn't make it this morning. Something cropped up, so I wrote that note—"

"It's all right," said Paddy quickly. "In the cirs, it was pretty big of you to write to Ron like that, and—"

"But it's not all right!" he cut in sharply. "I heard what happened. About that photograph. About your trying to hide it."

He paused, drawing a deep breath. "Why the dickens do you stick up for a feller like me?" he muttered half-wonderingly. "No one else would care a rap!"

Paddy was a little annoyed to find herself flushing.

eagerly, "once we can prove to her about that photograph being a fake. We'll jolly well convince the rest, too!"

A curious look came into his green-grey eyes.

"They think I'm just a shady cad, up to shady tricks, eh?"

Paddy grimaced.

"Well, 'fraid they do a bit, Vincent," she said. "The photograph did look rather like you. The point is—how was it wangled? Secondly, you must let me know where you actually were at that time; and, thirdly—"

She paused, suddenly very excited. "Vincent, although you don't think so, I'm dashed sure there's somebody trying to hit against you," she blurted. "And I've a suspicion who it might be. I'm going to try to prove it."

He did not respond at all to her excitement.

"Does it matter where I was yesterday afternoon?" he asked abruptly.

"Well—gosh!" She stared at him in surprise. "We want to prove you have an alibi, don't we?"

He did not answer that. Instead, with a strange, twisted smile, he asked:

"And you're the only one that



Angrily Mr. Voster regarded Jo. "What did you tear up and drop to the floor?" he demanded. Paddy caught in her breath. Was the truth to come out after all?

"It was Jo who actually tore up the photograph, Vincent."

He gave his twisty smile, rather bitter, rather rueful.

"I'm not a fool, Paddy," he said. "She did that for you—not me. But I heard a rumour she got a hundred lines. Is that right?"

Paddy nodded.

"I'm afraid she did, Vincent, but I'll help her with those—"

"You won't!" he cut in almost angrily. "Here, take these and give them to her, please. I cut lunch to do them. I did them in a copy-plate hand so that they should pass muster."

He dragged a sheaf of foolscap paper from his blazer pocket. Another slip of paper came out at the same time and fluttered to the ground, but Paddy was suddenly so intent on the foolscap that she did no more than notice it.

"Vincent!" she exclaimed. "Why, you've done—"

"A hundred lines," he said. "I'm not going to let Jo get it in the neck because of me, especially when that rotter Voster's concerned it!"

Paddy took the foolscap, her eyes suddenly glowing. Her faith in Vincent was justified without doubt.

"Vincent, I'm glad," she said simply. "I—I think Jo may be, too."

He shook his head slowly.

"Jo's nice," he said, "but she thinks the same as the rest."

"But she won't," Paddy said

believes it wasn't me in that photograph—that it wasn't me visiting this rotten bookmaker?"

Paddy moved her hand impatiently. "You know I don't believe it, Vincent," she said. "You promised me you'd go steady and do nothing shady. That's good enough for me."

Again he was silent. He ran his fingers through his red hair, quickly, agitatedly.

"Paddy, you—you're decent!" he muttered. "If you're still ready to back me up—"

"Of course!" said Paddy. "Now, the alibi—and that photograph—"

She stopped. Her gaze had fallen on the slip of paper that had dropped from Vincent's pocket when he had withdrawn the foolscap.

Vincent saw; glanced down himself. Too late, he tried to put his foot on the slip of paper. Paddy had bent and snatched it up.

"Paddy, don't look at that! Give it to me—"

But Paddy had seen.

On the front of the paper was scrawled:

"Ten shillings each way on Priory Park, 2.30 race to-morrow."

And above was the printed name of the bookmaker who lived in Birdham Avenue!

Has Paddy's faith in the Outsider been misplaced? There will be further grand chapters of this enthralling serial in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.



Detective June's STRANGEST CASE

THE KIDNAPPING

UNDER the name of Carolyn Stuart, June Gaynor, niece of Noel Raymond, the famous detective, joined a film company staying at lonely Knoll Castle. A mysterious figure known as the Green Archer was plotting to drive the film company out of the castle.

Also staying there was a man who was masquerading as June's uncle, and the girl detective discovered that the impostor was also the Green Archer.

In an effort to get evidence to expose the bogus Noel Raymond, June searched his study. She was caught there by the impostor and Theodore Cronberg, the producer. The former suggested that she should be handed over to the police. The producer agreed, and a little while later a detective arrived by car. He took June away, but instead of going to the police station, the car made for the beach. There, too late, June realised that the man was no detective, but a confederate of the Green Archer.

SHE was not under arrest at all! The discovery made June Gaynor's heart leap, yet she found little comfort in the knowledge.

The Green Archer must have had some grim reason for his latest audacious trick; his men had not brought her to this lonely part of the coast for nothing.

Did they intend to kidnap her—to take her to some secret hideout where she would be powerless to interfere with their mysterious plans?

Even as the frightening thought came the bogus police inspector reached forward and grabbed the girl detective by the arm.

"Come on, get out!" he ordered, and now his voice was gruff and threatening.

Because she had no option, June allowed herself to be half pulled, half led, out of the car; but once her feet were on the sand she began to struggle.

"Let me go! How dare you!" she gasped. "You are no policeman! You are a confederate of that impostor at the castle!"

The man in the soft, grey hat laughed.

"Of course I am. Surely you didn't think the boss really meant you to be arrested? Why, he'd never dare! This bit of play-acting was only to pull the wool over the eyes of your flim-flaming friends."

"I'll say it was," put in the driver of the car, grinning mockingly. "And I reckon you ought to be kinda pleased. Guess a nice steamer trip is much better than being cooped up in a police cell."

"Steamer trip?" echoed June uncertainly.

The bogus police inspector nodded. "Yes; you're too dangerous to be allowed to stay around these parts,"

he declared, "so you're going off on a long pleasure cruise."

And he nodded towards the near-by sea.

In the shallows bobbed an anchored rowboat, in charge of a third member of the gang. It was obviously waiting to transport her to the small, ugly-looking tramp steamer which was moored in the bay.

June felt an icy shiver engulf her. Once aboard that ship and she would be beyond help. Gone would be all hope of unmasking the rascal who was masquerading as Noel Raymond. Even more alarming, gone would be all chance of discovering what had become of the real Noel.

Wildly June looked around, and the bogus police-officer laughed, as if he guessed what was in her mind.

"There's not a chance of your being rescued," he declared. "You could shout your head off and no one would hear. So you may as well be sensible. Come on!"

He gave a tug at her arm, but frantically June resisted.

"No! I won't go! You shan't kidnap me!" she cried.

"Come on!" came the order again, and those strong fingers tightened their grip.

Despite her struggles, June was forced down the shelving beach. The man in the boat, a sinister-looking figure in his black oilskins and thigh boots, leapt into the water and stood in readiness to receive the girl detective.

At sight of him June renewed her efforts to get free, and her captor shouted angrily.

Thrill Succeeds Thrill In This Week's Breathless Instalment

"Stop it! Be sensible! You're going aboard whether you like it or not."

"I won't! I won't! You shan't—"

And then abruptly June's shrill voice broke off; her tensed body suddenly went limp, and she would have fallen headlong had not the bogus police inspector caught her in the nick of time. In disgust he regarded the inert figure in his arms.

"Fainted!" he exclaimed. "Well, perhaps it's all for the best. She'll be less trouble this way. Here, get her aboard as quickly as you can."

The man in the oilskins lifted the girl detective in his arms and waded back through the shallows. Reaching the boat, he dumped June in the stern, then turned to grapple with the anchor, which was stuck firmly in the sand.

The moment his back was turned an astonishing thing happened. June

By PETER LANGLEY

leapt to her feet and clambered over the thwart.

The bogus inspector was so taken by surprise that for a moment he could only stand there, gaping with incredulous eyes. Then he let out a yell.

"Quick! She was only shamming! She never fainted at all!"

Round swung the man in the oilskins, also to yell as he saw that June had seated herself amidstships and was now calmly unshipping the oars.

"You little trickster!" he howled, and waded furiously forward.

But one of the oars, lunging out, caught him full in the chest. Over he toppled with a mighty splash. The bogus inspector, careless of his immaculate trousers, rushed into the water to make a grab at the now freed boat. Out shot the oar again, and another sheet of spray arose as he also capsized.

From the top of the beach came an irate shout.

"Stop her! You fools, don't let her escape!"

But long before the car-driver could reach the scene, long before the two spluttering men in the water could regain their feet, June had hauled in the anchor, dumped it in the bottom of the boat, and fitted in place the two oars.

Sweetly she smiled.

"So long! Hope you both enjoyed your bath!"

She rowed into the safety of deep water, and then, swinging round the boat, kept it parallel with the coastline.

June's eyes were sparkling as she rowed. After the humiliating she had suffered at the hands of the bogus Noel Raymond, this triumph was exhilarating.

She knew it was impossible for her erstwhile captors to follow on foot, for just ahead, jutting out into the sea, was the great headland on which Knoll Castle stood. Once round that, she hoped to land and escape up a cliff path.

A new sound now mingled with the furious shouts which came from the water's edge. The shrill blast of a whistle. At first she did not appreciate its significance. Only as she was rounding the headland did she realise that the whistle had been a signal to those aboard the anchored steamer.

Chug, chug, chug! The sudden noise made June turn her head. Instantly her exultant smile vanished and her heart gave an uneasy lurch.

A motor-boat had been lowered from the ship, and now it was speeding across the bay.

"Oh golly!" June gulped, and frantically plied her oars.

A great wall of rock soon hid the pursuing motor-boat from view, but she knew it must be gaining on her

rapidly. To remain on the water was to encounter certain capture. Her only hope was to land quickly.

Her face white, she pulled for the shore. Beyond the headland the beach was littered with great boulders and piles of seaweed, while the towering cliffs which hemmed it in were pitted with numerous openings, including the great entrance to Rainbow Cave.

Chug, chug, chug!

That ominous sound came again. The motor-boat had rounded the headland. A foaming wave spouting up on either side of its bows, it came hurtling towards her.

Casting another terrified look backwards, June could clearly see the three grim seamen who crouched aboard.

"Oh golly!" she gulped again. And as the rowboat tossed and bobbed in the turbulent shallows she flung aside the oars and scrambled to her feet.

Careless of wet shoes and ruined stockings, she jumped overboard and went wading forward, slipping and stumbling over the loose rocks and trailing seaweed.

"Come back!" The pilot of the motor-boat gave a hoarse shout. "You can't escape. The cave's cut off by the tide!"

The declaration brought something like panic to the girl detective. Were all her efforts to be in vain? Was capture inevitable?

Gaining the beach, she looked frantically about her. To her dismay she saw that the pilot was right. The cliffs here curved like a horseshoe, and at this stage of the tide it was impossible to escape along the beach.

But what about the cliffs?

June's desperate gaze scanned them. Caves there were in plenty, but not a solitary path could she see. A groan was torn from her lips. It looked as if she were trapped!

THE SECRET OF RAINBOW CAVE

FOR a moment despair engulfed the girl detective.

A glance over her shoulder showed that the motor-boat had grounded in the shallows; its occupants were on the point of jumping ashore. Clearly there was no time in which to search for one of the elusive paths leading to the cliff-top.

"There's only one thing for it—I must hide!"

With the words, June broke into a run. In between the great jagged boulders she plunged, twisting and turning. From behind came angry shouts; the clatter of feet on the pebbles.

The pursuit had been taken up.

Before her loomed the great arched entrance of Rainbow Cave. Panting, she rushed through it, making for the loose rocks piled up against one wall.

But before she could reach them she received a stunning shock. From the back of the cavern loomed a tall, athletic figure.

The bogus Noel Raymond!

His appearance was so unexpected that June stood as if petrified.

Her plight was now alarming in the extreme. Out on the beach were the men from the motor-boat. In the cave was the impostor.

Every moment she expected to hear a shout which would announce that the bogus Noel Raymond had spotted her. But no shout came. To her relief, the impostor had been attracted by the yells from outside; his attention was concentrated on the mouth of the cave.

Stealthily, hardly daring to breathe, June crept round the nearest boulder and crouched down out of sight. And only just in time. Next moment a short, thick-set man wearing a peaked cap and a blue, double-breasted coat with brass buttons came into view. It was the pilot of the motor-boat, and close behind him pounded his two jerseyed companions.

At sight of them the impostor gave a startled cry.

"Cap'n Kummel!" he exclaimed, gazing across in surprise at the stocky pilot. "What means this?"

In thick, guttural English the pilot explained.

"We receive a signal. It seems that the girl detective, she escape. We give chase in motor-boat, but she land before we can catch her. When, last we see her she running this way."

The bogus Noel Raymond scowled. Obviously the news had made him angry.

"The fools—to let her slip through their fingers!" he snapped. "I warned Smith that she was as artful as a cartload of monkeys." And then abruptly his expression changed. Once more he was his usual calm, self-assured self, and he gave a sardonic laugh. "But it doesn't matter," he declared. "She won't dare show herself—she'll have to make herself scarce for fear of really being arrested."

Cap'n Kummel rubbed his chin doubtfully.

"But we had better search," he growled. "She will be safer aboard my ship than lurking here, to plan more trouble for us maybe."

The impostor nodded.

"You are right, but she can't have come in here, or I'd have seen her. I expect she's taken refuge in one of the other caves. Send your men to look for her; but you stay, cap'n, I want to talk to you."

The pilot frowned, and his dark eyes took on a grim look.

The impostor broke in sharply, his usual calmness deserting him as he sensed the other man's displeasure.

"I know how urgent it is to get rid of them, Kummel," he cried. "You need not remind me. But you do not understand the difficulties. However, there should not be any further trouble now Noel Raymond's niece is not here to interfere."

"You have then made the plans?" asked Captain Kummel.

The impostor nodded.

"Yes; they go into action to-night. Don't worry. By this time to-morrow the castle will be unoccupied, and then we'll be able to resume Operation Van Dyke."

Crouching behind the jagged rock, June felt herself filled with wonderment.

What was this mysterious Operation Van Dyke? And why was it so essential that the film unit should be driven out of the castle? What could be the mysterious object of the Green Archer and his gang?

But June was given no time to ruminate on these intriguing questions. Captain Kummel gave a harsh laugh.

"I hope that you are right, my friend," he barked. "But forget not that the real Noel Raymond is expected in New York at the end of the



"So long! Hope you both enjoyed your bath!" sang out June, and triumphantly she rowed into the safety of the deep water.

"And I wish also to have words with you," he declared.

Turning, he barked out a command in German, and June watched the seamen turn and tramp out of the cave.

She was safe from discovery—thanks to the unwitting aid of the impostor!

But what did the two men left behind wish to discuss? It was obvious that Captain Kummel was an important member of the gang—indeed, he acted as though he were the leader—and so it was possible she might learn something really worthwhile, something which would enable her to solve the strange mystery which surrounded the ancient castle.

The thought made her heart leap, and eagerly she strained her ears.

Taking a cigar from his breast pocket, the captain bit at it aggressively.

"Time is getting short," he growled, "and still we have not achieved our object. I trust that you are not going to fail us, my friend?"

The bogus detective shook his head. "Of course not. I'm proceeding as fast as I can. After all, I've already managed to smuggle out the emeralds."

"Emeralds!" Captain Kummel puffed irritably at his cigar. "They were only chicken-feed! A few stolen jewels needed to pay expenses. It is Operation Van Dyke I am concerned about, my friend, and that cannot succeed unless we get rid of those film people. While they remain at the castle—"

month, and if Operation Van Dyke is to succeed—himmel, but then it is necessary that you should be there, still impersonating him."

June's heart gave a startled leap.

It was news to her that her famous detective uncle was expected to visit America shortly, and an even greater shock to know that the impostor coolly intended to carry on his masquerade on the other side of the Atlantic.

That warning premonition—which June had had ever since this strange case had started—came back to her. Once again she sensed that not only her own future happiness, but Uncle Noel's as well were at stake. At all costs she must quickly unearth the truth. Her every instinct told her that it would be disastrous if the impostor were allowed to continue his audacious role in the U.S.A.

Tossing down his cigar, the captain put his foot on it, then made as if to depart.

"I work have to do," he declared. "We must resume this conversation later, my friend. Meanwhile, see that everything is prepared in the secret room."

The bogus Noel Raymond smiled.

"Don't worry. There will be no delay once the film unit has been driven out. I've spent all my free time in the secret room. It will be possible to resume Operation Van Dyke immediately the coast is clear."

And, clapping his companion confidently across his broad back, the

impostor led the way down to the mouth of the cave.

Left alone, June felt her pulses leap. So there was a secret room somewhere in the castle! An unsuspected room which in some way was vitally connected with the mysterious Operation Van Dyke! Oh, if only she could locate it! If only—

She hurriedly bobbed down out of sight again, for unexpectedly the impostor had reappeared. Having taken leave of Captain Kummel, he was now striding purposefully back into the cave.

Wonderingly June watched.

What was he up to now?

Then she gave a sudden start. She had remembered the last time she had seen the bogus Noel Raymond in Rainbow Cave. Then he had inexplicably vanished, and she had come to suspect that there might be some secret way out of the place.

Straight for the back of the huge cavern walked the man she knew to be the Green Archer. Then he paused, bending down.

June caught in her breath. Her heart was thudding. The impostor was pulling at a knobbly lump of rock which jutted out from the wall. A muffled grinding noise rang in her ears. Then it happened.

Clang!

Like some massive door, part of the black rock swung open, revealing a short passage, with a flight of crumbling stone stairs beyond.

The secret of Rainbow Cave lay revealed!

THE IRON GLOVE

"SO I was right! There is another way out, and I bet those stairs connect with the castle!"

Her eyes a-gleam, her pulses racing, the girl detective crouched there. This was certainly a morning of exciting discoveries.

After one quick, cautious look around, the impostor passed through the opening, and, with a dull thud, the door clanged to behind him.

For a minute or two June did not move, then excitedly she darted forward. She felt she just had to learn the secret of that hidden door.

Grasping the outjutting knob of rock, she first pushed, then pulled. Nothing happened. Puzzled and disappointed, she twisted at the knob, and, to her delight, that muffled grinding noise again rang out, and the great slab of rock swung open.

Recklessly June rushed into the tiny passageway. Even as she gained the foot of the staircase the door slammed behind her, and she gave a startled gasp as she found herself engulfed in inky blackness.

She had a pencil torch in her pocket, but would it be safe to switch it on? She did not know how near the impostor was, and the last thing she wanted was to be discovered here and recaptured.

Anxiously June strained her ears. Not a sound except for the drip, drip of water from the roof. Reassured, she took out the torch and clicked it on.

The beam of light gave her new courage and eagerly she began to ascend the stairs. Round and round they curved, burrowing right into the heart of the headland on which stood Knoll Castle. And then, as she gained the top, she saw two low tunnels before her, one cutting straight on and one branching away to the left.

From the one on the left came the patter of receding footsteps, the sound echoing eerily in the underground stillness.

"That must be the Green Archer," June told herself. "He's on his way back to the castle. But"—excitedly she gazed at the other tunnel—"I wonder what lies down there?"

She hurried down it, to find that the tunnel was quite short. After twenty feet or so it came to an end, and, flashing her torch around, she found herself confronted by an oak door.

Black with age, it had carved on it a life-sized figure—the figure of a medieval Bowman.

"The Green Archer!" she exclaimed.

And suddenly she knew a feverish excitement.

Could this door lead to the secret room which Captain Kummel and the impostor had talked about? Was there hidden, on the other side of it, the secret of the mysterious Operation Van Dyke?

With thrilled eyes June surveyed it, feeling that if only she could investigate she might find herself face to face with the whole sensational truth.

But the door did not possess any handle or latch; did not budge when she pushed against it. Obviously it was locked, yet she failed to find any keyhole.

How, then, could it be opened?

More and more eager to discover what lay on the other side, June let the torchlight rove over every inch of the ancient slab of carved oak, and suddenly she caught in her breath.

Above the archer's head was a curiously shaped recess. It bore a striking resemblance to a mailed fist, and in the centre, so faint and choked with dust as to be almost unreadable, was carved an instruction which set her heart thudding.

"Fit In The Iron Glove and Turn."

"So that's how the door opens!" June exclaimed, spellbound with wonder. "Somewhere there's a model of this iron glove, and when that's inserted in the recess—"

She broke off, almost trembling with excitement, for suddenly she remembered where she had seen an old metal curio cast in the form of a man's gloved hand.

In the castle!

Such a curio had been amongst the many ancient relics which had been used to decorate the library when one of the film scenes had been shot.

Where was it now? June speculated. Oh, if only she could find it and use it to open this strangely intriguing door!

Then the whole amazing mystery would be solved, for she felt certain that this door gave access to the secret room of which the Green Archer had spoken.

Instantly her next line of action became clear. At all costs she must get back into the castle and find some way of remaining there until the curious iron key was found.

But how could she possibly do it? She was a fugitive. If seen, she was liable to instant arrest.

Frowning, June retraced her steps to the top of the staircase, and then thoughtfully started to explore the second tunnel. It was much longer than the first one, and the floor sloped steeply upward.

Eventually it also came to an end, and the girl detective found herself confronted by what seemed to be a

panelled wall. She looked in vain for a door. Yet there must be one, she told herself, else how had the bogus Noel Raymond managed to escape?

Running her fingers over the beading which framed each oaken panel, June pressed and probed, and suddenly her efforts were rewarded. There was a click, and one of the panels swung open.

Instantly the overpowering darkness vanished, and she found herself looking into a bare, dusty room whose roof was supported by carved stone pillars.

She gave an astonished gasp.

"Why, this is where the fire was! This is that room in the west wing where the film gear was kept!"

Cautiously June stepped through the opening, closed the panel behind her, then looked around.

On the floor still lay the remnants of the burnt costumes, but there was no sign of the rest of the gear. No doubt it had been removed in readiness for to-day's filming.

The thought made June remember another part of that conversation she had overheard in Rainbow Cave. The impostor had declared his intention of striking against the film company to-night.

That was another reason why she must remain at the castle. It was vital that she should be on hand when the latest treacherous blow was launched.

But how could it be done? It would be easy enough to hide, but that would mean she would be forced to keep out of sight, and that would be fatal to all her hopes. If she was to search for the iron glove, was to keep a watch on the bogus Noel Raymond, then it was essential that she should be free to come and go as she pleased.

Racking her brains desperately, June moved across the room, to find that the door leading into the corridor was ajar. Now that there was no film gear to be safeguarded, no one had bothered to lock up the entrance to the forbidden west wing.

Still deep in thought, June walked out into the corridor and made her way towards the main part of the castle. And then suddenly she paused in alarm. From the near-by staircase came the sound of voices.

Fearful of discovery, she tiptoed into an alcove and crouched down beside the armoured figure that stood there.

Clearly the voices reached her. There were two of them, and she recognised both. Bromley, the grey-haired butler, was discussing the domestic arrangements with the bogus Noel Raymond.

"I certainly hope you are right, sir," he was saying. "We cannot afford to have any more upsets. The staff is unsettled enough as it is, and I'm finding it extremely difficult to replace the girls who left this morning."

"What about that girl from Leeds the agency promised to send along?" asked the impostor.

"I'm expecting her at lunch-time," was the reply. "She's arriving at Lerwick at twelve-twenty. I only hope she stays, but I must say, sir, that I'm extremely doubtful. Apparently the news of these Green Archer outrages has got abroad, and, according to the agency people, this girl Millie Haytor took a bit of persuading. You see, sir—"

But June heard no more. Suddenly her worried frown had vanished and an excited gleam had crept into her blue eyes.

"Got it!" she ejaculated, and she smiled with satisfaction.

For an audacious idea had occurred to her—an idea which, if only she could carry it out, would enable her to stay on at the castle unsuspected, would enable her not only to search for the vital key, but also to outwit the Green Archer's next cunning move!

More exciting developments in next week's chapters of this thrilling detective story.

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THE SINGING COMPETITION

JOY OLIVER skipped with glee. The postman had just delivered the letter she had been waiting for so eagerly. And in it was the application form for entering the singing competition at the Pierrot Pavilion on Morsea front.

All Joy had to do was to fill in the form and post it off.

"This is the last form, and the entry list will now be closed," said the accompanying letter.

If Joy had left her application just a day longer, perhaps even a post longer she wouldn't have been able to enter.

She had been staying with her grandfather at Morsea for a few days, and was having a grand time. There was, in fact, only one blemish to the holiday—Percy, her cousin. She could have done without Percy.

Joy opened out the entry form, and glanced through it. But no sooner was it spread open than Percy appeared on the scene.

"Had a parcel?" he asked.

"No," said Joy.

"Sure? No sweets?" he asked suspiciously.

"Only this—"

But Joy ended abruptly, not wishing him to know about the form. She was not abrupt enough, however.

"I say, what's that you've got there, Joy?" asked Percy. Then he read the heading. "Entry form for singing competition—ten pounds prize. Gosh, you're not entering?"

"Yes, I am!"

"Then I'll enter, too!" decided Percy.

"You can't! This is the last entry form; the competition is now closed," smiled Joy, and picked up her pen.

"Mind!" warned Percy excitedly. "Gosh—look out!"

Joy spun round, wondering what the ass was bubbling about, and she was off her guard when he sprang forward and grabbed the form.

"Got it!" he chortled, holding it high in his hand. "Now we'll see who enters for the competition! I'm reckoned to have a good voice, you know!"

"Give it to me, Percy," ordered Joy. "Try and get it," invited Percy, waving the paper mockingly.

Joy made a grab at it, but Percy, despite his plumpness, side-stepped nectly, stuffing the paper into his jacket pocket.

"Oh, Percy, don't play the fool!" said Joy crossly. "I must take it in this afternoon early, properly filled in."

"I'll fill it in."

Percy turned to the door, and Joy

realised that he was not joking; he really did intend taking her form and entering for the competition.

Bzzzzzzzz!

It was the sound of an angry wasp, and it seemed to come from under Percy's nose. He started back.

"Keep off!" he muttered, flapping his arms in panic.

It was such a truly realistic sound he didn't suspect that it was a fake. Yet that sound really came from Joy.

Joy, ventriloquist and mimic, was using her powers to good purpose. It was a gift she kept secret, and consequently Percy had no reason to think that it was anything but a wasp he heard buzzing.

"Keep off, you brute!" he muttered, still flapping his arms wildly.

What Joy wanted to do was to make him take his jacket off. In the excitement and alarm he might forget the form he had in his pocket, and she could get it back.

"Mind—under your jacket—bzzzzzzzz!" said Joy.

Percy lifted his jacket and flapped it.

"Take it off," urged Joy.

Percy wrenched at his jacket, and no sooner was it off than Joy grabbed it.

"Give that to me!" snapped Percy. "Not until I get my form!" retorted Joy.

Percy knew now what Joy was after, and tugged at the jacket. They were having a tug-o-war with it when the door opened.

Aunt Jemima, horrified, looked into the room.

"Stop! Stop at once!" she cried. "If this is how you two behave, then I shall not allow you to go out to the pierrot performance together this afternoon!"

"Oh, we weren't quarrelling!" said Joy swiftly.

Percy, his eyes gleaming triumphantly, backed to the door with his coat.

"No, we weren't quarrelling, Aunt Jemima," he said with a smirk. "I'm just going up to my room to fill in my entry form for the singing competition."

"Very well," said Aunt Jemima, and frowned at Joy. "You, Joy, had better go out into the garden with grandfather."

Joy nodded her head meekly. She

might have explained about the form, but she had a shrewd idea that if she and Percy argued about it, Aunt Jemima would either forbid them to go to the pierrot show or say that neither should fill in the form.

That wasn't at all what Joy wanted. She wanted that form back, and she meant to get it—quickly!

PERCY PROVES OBSTINATE

JOY arrived at the door of Percy's room only two minutes after Aunt Jemima had gone back to supervise the cooking. She arrived to find the door locked.

"Percy," called Joy. "Run away!" said Percy. "I'm busy. I'm just going to fill in this form!"

Joy breathed hard. If ever a boy needed a lesson it was Percy, and she meant to give him one.

"Percy! Open this door at once!"

It was a perfect imitation of Aunt Jemima's voice, and Joy heard Percy gasp aloud and hastily scrape back his chair.

"Y—yes, aunt!"

"Go down to the garden at once, Percy, and help your grandfather trim the edge of the lawn—"

Joy's imitation of Aunt Jemima ended, for she suddenly saw her aunt on the stairs below. Dodging back, Joy concealed herself on the landing at the side of a large cupboard.

Into view came Aunt Jemima, and at the same moment Percy opened his door.

"I'm just going to do as you told me and help granddad trim the lawn," said Percy.

"Do as I told you?" gasped Aunt Jemima.

Joy's heart sank. Purposely she had not told Percy in Aunt Jemima's voice to give her the form—because he would have gone to Aunt Jemima to argue and the truth might have come out.

Now Aunt Jemima would deny having spoken, and Percy would insist that she had.

There seemed only one thing to do to end the discussion.

Joy used her ventriloquism again. Most realistically, the mewling of a cat came from Aunt Jemima's room.

Aunt Jemima almost leaped in the air with horror—not because she disliked cats, but because of the

There's Never A Dull Moment When Ventriloquist
Joy Goes Into Action

damage their claws could do to a precious embroidered counterpane she carried with her everywhere.

"A cat—in my room!" she wailed. "Oh, how did it get there? Mind, Percy!"

She rushed to her room, and Percy, shrugging his shoulders, went downstairs and out into the garden. Grandfather was not trimming the lawn. He wasn't anywhere in sight.

Percy turned to go back into the house and almost collided with Joy. She could see the corner of the folded form peeping out from his inside jacket pocket.

"Get on with the trimming," said Joy. "You heard what Aunt Jemima said, naughty boy. And give me my form back!"

Percy folded his arms.

"I'm filling in that form."

"I've a good mind to report this to Basher!" Joy said warningly.

"Basher?" frowned Percy. "Who's he?"

Joy had just invented this tough-sounding character in readiness for using her ventriloquism again.

"You must know Basher," she said. "A big chap, about a year or two older than you. He's called the Basher because he's always ready for a scrap."

"Huh! Chaps like that have no brains!" scoffed Percy. "They only bash people because they're bullies, and I'll tell this chap Basher to his face!"

A voice came from the direction of the fence.

"Oh, you would, would you? Well, now's your chance, because I'm standing here!"

Percy looked towards the fence and his eyes goggled.

"Hallo, Basher!" called Joy, and danced across to the fence.

There was no one there, of course, for Joy had been ventriloquising.

"Hallo, Joy!" said a deep boyish voice. "Who's that ass with the big ears?"

"That's Percy. He's just stolen a form from me, and won't give it back," said Joy. "I warned him you were around!"

"You give that back!" came a threatening voice.

Percy moved forward.

"I'll tell Aunt Jemima or granddad," he squeaked. "You keep out!"

"I'll knock you for six if you don't give that form back to Joy!"

Percy's hand moved to his jacket pocket, as though to take out the form, and obey; but then he hesitated.

"If Basher wants it, why doesn't he show himself and come in?" he asked cunningly. "Maybe because Aunt Jemima doesn't know about him, eh? Maybe Aunt Jemima wouldn't like you knowing him, Joy. Ask him into the garden. If he wants the form he can come and get it!"

Percy had plenty of artfulness, and Joy saw that her little plan, so near to success, was now hanging fire. Thinking of a way out, she was on the point of imitating her grandfather's voice and making it seem that he was effusively welcoming Basher, when she saw a cap bob up on the far side of the fence.

A boy's school cap! Or was it a man's cricket cap?

And then she suddenly realised that the wearer of that cap was granddad. There was a waste patch of ground on the far side of the fence, and granddad had gone there to snip some weeds that were growing through. Joy remembered he had mentioned it. And granddad sometimes wore an old cricket cap in the garden.

What should she do now? She was so near diddling Percy and getting back that form—

But all thoughts were chased from her mind when she suddenly saw Percy rush forward from behind her, holding a bucket of water.

"Percy, what are you going to do?" she gasped.

"I'm going to show the Basher where he gets off!" chorled Percy, and, as the cricket cap bobbed into view again, he swung the bucket.

Swoosh! Over the fence shot a stream of cold water.

"Urrrrrh!" came a spluttering yell from the far side.

Percy held his sides and howled with mirth. But Joy stood there in horrified dismay, too startled to move.

Then up into view bobbed the drenched cricket cap, and under it the florid, wrathful face and figure of granddad!

"Wh-wh-wh-wh-wh who threw that water?" he howled.

Percy's laughter died.

"Wh-wh—wow—gig—granddad!" he babbled, still holding the bucket.

"Did you throw that water over me?"

"Y-yes! I thought it was someone else—"

"Whoever it was, do you think throwing water is right and proper conduct?" demanded granddad in a rage. "Wait there, and I'll give you the thrashing you deserve!"

His cricket cap went bobbing along the fence as he made for the gate.

Percy turned in panic to the house, nearly knocking Joy over in his haste.

"Wait!" cried Joy. "Didn't you hear? Granddad wants you to wait—"

"And be thrashed?" asked Percy, round-eyed. "Not me!"

Joy thought swiftly.

"Hide—in the chicken run—quickly!"

Percy had just taken refuge amongst the chickens when granddad charged into the garden. He had had no time to make a careful choice of weapon. In an emergency he was prepared to use anything for whacking Percy, and he had ripped off a flexible switch from a tree in passing.

"Where's Percy?" he demanded, glaring round.

At that moment Aunt Jemima came from the house, astounded by the uproar.

"Good gracious, father! What are you doing with that switch?"

"Nothing yet, Jemima. Where is Percy? He threw a bucket of water over me! Look! Look! And all he said—he thought it was someone else!"

Joy intervened. This had gone far enough.

"There was someone else, granddad!"

"That's no excuse. There is no excuse for drenching people with water—none! That boy must be punished!"

Aunt Jemima strode forward and took the switch gently from granddad, for she had a soothing manner at times, and could even get a bone away from a dog.

"I will punish him, father! I will forbid him to go to the pierrot show this afternoon. Instead, he will stay here and trim the lawn!"

Joy suppressed a smile. It was roundabout justice Percy was getting, but he deserved it. It had all started by his stealing the competition form, and although the route might be roundabout he was certainly getting the consequences.

But Joy's smile soon vanished.

"Of course, Joy, this will mean that you cannot go, either; for you cannot go alone," said Aunt Jemima.

She hurried off, and then off went granddad to change his wet clothes. Joy, utterly dismayed, and for the moment quite baffled, stood with folded arms; while in the chicken run, Percy crouched in discomfort, whistling her to ask if the coast was clear for him to escape.

The singing contest was off. And Joy had looked forward to it as to nothing else. What fun it would have been! What a thrill, baffling everybody by doing one of her impersonations and singing like some famous person!

But it was off, unless—

Unless she could save Percy! That was what it amounted to.

If she could make granddad repent and Aunt Jemima relent, then Percy could take her to the pierrot show.

And if she did save Percy, making it conditional on being given that competition form back—

Joy's eyes lit up; she clapped her hands and skipped.

"The idea had come. She could do it—and she would!"

JOY'S WINNING TRICK

"PERCY—you there?" asked Joy, going nearer to the chicken run.

"Yes! I can't stay here with these wretched hens!" he muttered. "There's a rooster glaring at me, and I can see him sharpening his claws!"

"He thinks you're after the eggs!" chuckled Joy. "But don't come out until it's clear. Hark—"

Joy imitated granddad's voice, making it sound nearby.

"Now where's that young scamp hiding? I'll give him such a thrashing when he comes out wherever he is."

Percy gasped in alarm.

"Don't let him know I'm here. Joy!"

"Shh! I'll bring you lunch if you're nice to me," said Joy. "You can't live on chicken food!"

"Lunch? I'm not staying here all the morning—"

"Be careful. You may have to back out, and that would be awful with granddad standing by!" warned Joy teasingly. "Still, I'm a fool trying to help you after what you've done!"

Percy gulped and then spoke imploringly.

"Listen, Joy! Get me out of this. You tell them about Basher—and how I thought it was Basher behind the fence!"

"That's no excuse, Percy. Granddad said so himself. Whoever it was, you shouldn't have swamped him!"

"Yes, but—Gosh, if granddad whacks me, it won't hurt!"

"It won't last more than about twenty minutes," said Joy cheerfully.

"But, of course, I might get round him."

"How?"

"Oh, I think I could—make him see that even he might swamp someone with water if he had been in your position!"

It sounded unlikely to Percy.

"Give me the form and I'll see what I can do," offered Joy.

"No fear!"

Joy breathed hard, and then, ventriloquising once more, she made granddad's voice come a little closer.

"That boy must be around here somewhere. I wonder if he's hiding in the chicken run?"

"You couldn't give him a hiding in the chicken run—not enough room, granddad!" said Joy in her own voice.

"There's room enough outside. Where is the young scamp? I'll find him—"

Joy, stifling a chuckle, stood nearer the run. She could feel Percy prodding her through the mesh.

"Don't give me away!" he begged her.

Joy stooped down.

"Shall I have a look in the run, granddad?" she asked. "Just as a matter of form—"

A piece of paper fluttered through the partly open door, and Joy stooped down to take it. It was the form Percy had been scared enough.

"You can dismiss the run from your thoughts, granddad," she called.

Then, with the form in her possession, Joy danced away.

But, triumphant though she was, she knew that this was not the end. She still had to save Percy, cooped up in the run.

As Joy turned away with the form, her grandfather came out of the house. He was defiantly wearing his other cricket cap with orange and green stripes in which he had scored a neat fifty not out for the Grubblers.

No sooner did he step into the garden than a voice assailed him from the direction of the fence:

"Wotcher, guv'nor! Got any old clothes you don't want—old trousers or old caps?"

Granddad turned, frowning.

(Please turn to the back page.)

That Dutch Holiday of Surprises



VAN HAGEL'S DEMAND

SHIRLEY BLYTHE and her chums, Tess and Dick Foley, were staying 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 a cryptic message they had found hidden in a clog-shaped tulip bowl.

The chums learnt that Zella had been sent to Winsum, in the North of Holland. They themselves were framed for a robbery by Mr. van Hagel, and forced to become fugitives aboard a barge which Jan had hired.

They reached Winsum, and found Zella a prisoner in a tower. They showed her the cryptic message and discovered that it was proof of van Hagel's trickery.

Hearing footsteps on the stairs, and thinking it was the police, they waited expectantly. But when the door was thrown open they stared in horror. Standing there was van Hagel, Zella's guardian.

"**G**IVE me the tulip-bowl!" van Hagel commanded harshly.

None of the chums moved. Shirley stood with the brass, clog-shaped bowl in her hand, gazing incredulously at the triumphant figure of Zella's guardian.

She saw him advancing towards her.

And then, with quick presence of mind, she realised one thing. He believed the secret lay in the tulip-bowl. It did not. He did not know that the secret had been removed, and was now in Zella's pocket.

He must not know it—must not have one glimmer of suspicion that the secret was anywhere but in this bowl.

Shirley ducked aside desperately as his hand pounced. She whirled round to the farther window overlooking the river. Quicker than thought, she flung the bowl out—flung it out with all her might through the narrow, barred opening. There was a startled hush. Then:

Splash! With a faint sound in the night, the metal struck the water far below.

A shout of rage came from van Hagel:

"The tulip-bowl! She's flung it into the canal! Why, you—"

He did not finish. With a furious look at Shirley, he rushed out through the door, yelling to his ferryman hireling who stood there. They both went pounding down the stairway to the waterside.

The chums were alone, momentarily forgotten.

Shirley flew to that other window in the tower, where their rope-ladder still dangled from the bars.

"Quick—it's our chance! Get out while we can! Zella first!"

Dick and Jan seized Zella, hoisting her up to the narrow window, and a moment later she was shinnyng nimbly down to the ground.

Tess and Shirley followed, then the boys. Silent as shadows in the night, they streaked across the tower yard to the jetty.

"Where's the dinghy?" Dick whispered breathlessly. "If we could cross to the barge—"

"The dinghy's not here; we left it round the other side when we fetched the ladder," Shirley told him. "I'll find another. You boys keep cave for van Hagel."

She made a swoop for a small fishing-boat moored under the jetty. Feverishly Tess and Zella helped her to untie it. They could hear van Hagel and the ferryman only twenty yards along the shore, trying to mark the spot where the tulip-bowl had fallen into the river.

"D'you know your bearings here, Zella? How far's the mainland?" Shirley whispered, as they tugged frantically at the boat's mooring-rope.

"Two miles. Not more. I know the quickest passage— Oh!" Zella broke off, panting. "It's too late! They've seen us!"

There was a shout from van Hagel, followed by running feet. From the darkness the boys rushed out to intercept van Hagel and the ferryman, and for a moment the girls had a brief respite.

Shirley knew it was hopeless. Dick and Jan were no match for the men, but there was still a chance to help Zella and cheat van Hagel.

"You go, Zella! Save yourself!" She was pushing Zella frantically into the boat.

"But—but, Shirley, you—"

"Never mind us for the moment. Save yourself, Zella! Quick—you've got the secret! Go now! Make for the main shore! It's our only hope!"

Feverishly Shirley tore the mooring-rope loose and, with a shove from Tess, the boat shot away.

It vanished into the darkness, carrying Zella with it just a split second before the boys were overpowered.

"You have not cheated me of the

tulip-bowl, my young English miss—do not think that!" van Hagel said furiously to Shirley. "I'll find it if it takes me a month! Meanwhile, I am going to put you under lock and key."

He paused, realising for the first time that Zella was missing. The faint swish of oars in the darkness told him what had happened.

"So you've saved Zella, have you?" He laughed. "Much good that will do you! Let her go! Come!"

Shirley and Tess were seized and marched back to the tower with the boys.

Shirley wondered if van Hagel had seen the rope-ladder dangling from the high window of the tower, but he gave no sign. He marched them up the stone spiral stairs, flung them back into the turret room.

While the ferryman stood guard at the door, van Hagel crossed the room and unhooked the rope-ladder. Coiling it over his arm, he followed the ferryman out through the door. The door closed, and the chums heard the heavy rasp of the bolt as it slammed in its socket.

There was a tense hush. Dick switched on a torch in the darkness. No one spoke until their captors' footsteps had echoed away down the stairs.

"If only he hadn't seen that rope-ladder and taken it!" sighed Tess faintly.

Dick gave a low chuckle. "Chin up, girls! He didn't see this!" And from under his jersey he drew the marlin-spike.

"I didn't dare breathe for fear van Hagel would find that!" Shirley said, with a fervent sigh. "Gee, I'm glad you've got it, Dick! It was strong enough to prise open these window bars—"

"And it will be strong enough to prise open dot door," murmured Jan, "even it is safe to try!"

When it was safe! How long would that be?

Down below, on the shore, they could hear van Hagel and the ferryman still searching frantically for the tulip-bowl.

Hour upon hour the chums waited. The strain was intense. Grey streaks of dawn were creeping in between the bars of their prison when, at last, they heard footsteps receding on the shore below and the slamming of a door.

"They've gone into the ferryman's house!" Shirley said in relief. "Now, boys!"

Jan seized the marlin-spike. He bent to the door and began desperately prising the spike between door and jamb, forcing with all his strength to achieve a breach. Dick took turns in helping him. The door

Concluding Chapters Of Elise Probyn's Thrilling Serial

was stout as rock. The bolt seemed high impregnable.

For what seemed hours they pulled and twisted. It seemed that the door would never yield. They were trapped inescapably. Van Hagel would be here again before they could hope to force their way out. And then—

With a shudder the door crashed open. Its woodwork had split. The bolt was torn loose. The crash as the heavy door swung outward, striking the wall, echoed like a gunshot in the stillness of the tower.

"Run for it, girls! Run! They'll have heard us!" Dick panted.

Shirley and Tess plunged down the steps, the boys after them. They hurled themselves down that crazy stone spiral, and out into the grey dawn to the waterside. Shirley swooped to the first boat she saw. Jan slashed it loose with his knife. The chums leapt aboard, seizing oars and tiller. They were striking off towards the barge at the instant van Hagel and the ferryman came pelting down to the shore.

"Stop! Stop, you young fools! You haven't a chance—"

Van Hagel's voice was lost in the echoes. The chums were not even looking at him. They were pulling out for dear life to the barge.

"Got your knife ready, Jan? Cut the barge loose—cut her free of that other boat!" Dick panted.

It was van Hagel's boat tied up alongside the barge. His white motor-launch, which had pursued them unseen in the mist yesterday. They recognised it now. Jan slashed its rope loose as the chums leapt on to the deck of the barge.

"Get under way, Jan—fast as you can!" Dick cried, and rushed to take up the anchor. "They've got the ferry-boat out! They're after us!"

There was the roar of a motor as the ferry-boat shot out from the shore. Then the deeper roar of the Viktor's engine. Jan was at the wheel. The barge was off!

"Where's van Hagel? What's he doing?" Dick asked breathlessly.

"He's boarding his launch, taking the ferryman with him. He's"—Shirley strained her eyes alertly through the grey mist—"he's starting up his engine. Yes, he's chasing us!"

"Bluff! He's bluffing!" Dick cried out incredulously. "All that van Hagel wants is the tulip-bowl, as he thinks. What's he got to gain by chasing us?"

Jan, at the wheel, looked perplexed but anxious now.

"Shirley's right! He's chasing us! He can be a big danger to us still—if he thinks it is worth it!"

"That's true enough!" Dick nodded uneasily. "But—but why should he think it's worth it?"

Shirley gazed in growing alarm from the deck of the speeding barge.

"Can you throw him off, Jan?" she asked tensely.

Jan set his teeth. He was keeping away from the misty mainland, heading for the open river—the vast expanse of inland sea that stretched away into the dawn mist.

"I'll lead him a dance until he gives up the chase!" Jan muttered. "He is trying to scare us, but he is a danger! If he should meet the river police and signal to them—" He stopped abruptly.

Across the water a glaring blue light pierced the mists. A shrill siren rent the stillness.

The chums gazed, thunderstruck. It was a police boat from the mainland, bearing down upon them at full speed and signalling them to stop.

"Van Hagel's beaten us! He must have signalled the police from the ferry-house before he gave chase!" Shirley cried in horror.

"Jan—gasped Dick and Tess. "We are finished, mine kamrades!" Jan said hoarsely. "Van Hagel wins!"

He shut off the engine. Shirley dropped the anchor, and the barge bobbed, lifeless, on the water. The chums drew together, unable to speak, just waiting.

The blue-lighted police boat flashed alongside. One officer flung a rope over the pinnacle of the barge, hold-

ing her fast. Two others emerged from the cabin and sprang aboard.

"Are you English? Are you the young runaways from Breukelen?" the senior rapped out.

"Yes, that's us, captain!" Dick answered unsteadily.

Another rope, hung from van Hagel's launch, coiled itself round the capstan of the imprisoned barge. Van Hagel leapt aboard.

"A smart capture, officers! You've caught the young jewel thieves!" he cried. "Search their vessel!"

He was bristling with self-righteous triumph. He followed sternly as the police led the chums below and helped them search.

Shirley was watching him in unspeakable scorn. She saw him throw open the lid of the cabin locker—and then her eyes widened.

"The stolen diamonds! They are here!" he cried. "The Schiphol diamonds!"

The chums gazed, petrified. There, in the locker, bulging from Shirley's open cycle-bag, lay a cluster of glittering diamonds!

VAN HAGEL'S EXPOSURE

"DIAMONDS!" Dick stared wildly. "How did—how did they get there?" Tess gasped faintly.

"It's a frame-up! Another frame-up!" Shirley cried, and gazed at van Hagel in horror. "You—you planted them here!"

The truth had burst upon her. This was the meaning of that light they had seen in their anchored barge last night. It had been van Hagel aboard, planting the final deadly evidence against them—planting the stolen diamonds here in their cabin!

"You—you are the thief, Mr. van Hagel!" she accused hotly. "You couldn't have had the jewels to plant unless you yourself had stolen—"

He ignored her and handed the jewellery very gravely to the police captain.

"You have here the stolen property, officer, and you have the thieves. You will do your duty!" Then to Shirley he added sardoniously: "You will be given an opportunity to speak before the magistrates!"

"Nevertheless, I think we will hear what the young lady has to say now," said the police captain calmly in excellent English. "Kindly step on deck, everybody!"

Van Hagel smiled. He got in the first shot as they stepped back on deck.

"This—er—young lady," he said sardonically, "is the thief whose scarf was found in the museum!"

"How would you know that?" Shirley flashed at him.

"Everyone in Holland knows it. Your photograph has appeared in the police columns," he said, with a shrug.

"I wasn't wearing a scarf, nor was Tess, on the day we were supposed to have burgled the Schiphol Museum. I hadn't a scarf to wear. Also," Shirley burst out fearlessly, "we broke in and out of the museum during the day-time. It wasn't burgled until the night."

"Take note of that, officer! She admits they broke in!" said van Hagel.

The police captain still calmly addressed Shirley:

"You say you weren't wearing a scarf, because you hadn't one, on the day of the robbery. How was that?"

"Because I'd lent it to someone. I'd lent it to Zella—to this—this gentleman's own ward. And it was in his house at the time, in Bootendorp. If that scarf was found in Schiphol Museum, it was because he planted it there!"

"One moment, please!" The captain held up his hand. "Let's settle this matter about the scarf. If the young lady lent it to someone in this gentleman's house, then there should be a witness, sure? This girl you lent it to—you say her name is Zella?"

"Yes—" began Shirley.

The captain made a sign to the officer on the police launch, who promptly opened the door of the cabin.

Out of that cabin stepped—Zella!

Van Hagel gave a violent jump. The chums stared, spellbound. Then it was not van Hagel who had signalled the police. It was Zella who had fetched them!

With eyes strangely sparkling, Zella leapt lightly on to the deck of the barge. Dawn had lifted, and she looked quite radiant in the morning light.

"Zella, do you remember that I lent you my red-and-blue scarf?" Shirley began, trying to recover from her astonishment.

"I do! The police know all about it, Shirley. They've been on the telephone all night to Bootendorp." And Zella fixed her gaze upon van Hagel. "They've taken a statement from our maid, Anna."

Van Hagel lurched back. The chums saw his face go suddenly white. Zella went on steadily:

"Anna says that your scarf was in my room, Shirley, until the night of the museum robbery. My guardian took it that night. Anna saw him take it. She saw him put it in his pocket, and then drive out somewhere in his car—"

The police captain took over. His tone now was cold.

"Your car was seen in Schiphol that night, van Hagel. The scarf was found next morning in the Schiphol Museum. At the scene of the robbery—in the midst of the burgled diamond cases. You see what I am leading to, don't you?"

"Are you trying to pin this on me?" van Hagel cried hoarsely. "You've found the thieves! You've found the diamonds on their barge—"

"There were no diamonds on this barge on the night these youngsters sailed. It was searched," the captain said. "You found them here to-day—yes. Because you planted them here, as our young English friend rightly stated. Van Hagel, I am going to arrest you now on the charge of jewel robbery—"

"Hold him!" shouted Dick.

Van Hagel was seized as he made a leap for his launch. Handcuffs were snapped on his wrists.

"But there will be another and more serious charge!" the police captain went on steadily. "We owe it to these young English folk that the evidence has been brought so light. It concerns a dastardly plot to swindle Miss Zella van Deen and her brother while acting as their trusted guardian. Your guilty secret was unearthed by these intrepid young friends of hers. That secret is here now in Miss Zella's hands!"

"You see it, my guardian!"

Quietly Zella took from her pocket a faded, yellowish document.

Van Hagel looked, and his jaw dropped incredulously.

"The secret! The secret of the miracle bulb! Then—then—the chums could have laughed at the dumbfounded expression on his face—" then the English girl f-fooled me! She d-didn't fling it away in the tulip-bowl! It was a trick! She had already given the secret to you! That's why she—why she smuggled you off in that boat!"

There was bitter hatred in the look he turned on Shirley.

"That makes us quits, Mr. van Hagel," Shirley told him calmly. "Your reckoning now is for what you did to Zella and her brother!"

"Where is my brother?" Zella flashed at him.

Van Hagel's eyes glinted. He was caught, but he saw that he could still hurt and torment Zella.

"You'll never see your brother again! He's gone! He's fled the country—"

"It's a lie! You've always said that my brother's hiding in England, and it's a lie. All your charges against him were lies. My brother has courage; he's a fighter. He would never skulk in hiding from you!" Zella's voice trembled with passion, but also with fear. "Where is my brother?"

The ferryman had been dragged aboard from van Hagel's launch. He stood in the grip of a police officer,

quaking for his own guilty part in van Hagel's villainy. Zella fired her question at him, but there was no doubting the truth in his assurance that he had no idea where Zella's brother was.

The chums saw Zella's face whiten. Her joy was gone. She was frightened. She pleaded again with van Hagel tremblingly:

"Where is my brother? Tell me. I can even forgive you everything else if you'll only tell me where my brother is—"

"He's gone, and you'll never find him!" van Hagel gloated.

Shirley was watching van Hagel very thoughtfully. There was something which had always puzzled her. She remembered it now. Queer how van Hagel's wife had always been away, never at home. She was staying with friends, it was said, at Amsterdam.

Shirley took a chance shot—swift as an arrow:

"The police will find your brother, Zella, when they find the one who's shut him up. Mrs. van Hagel!"

By the look on van Hagel's face, Shirley knew she had been right.

"That's Mrs. van Hagel's part in the game, Zella—I'm certain of it!" she cried excitedly. "Ask the police to raid the house where she's staying with her friends in Amsterdam, and I'm sure they'll find your brother shut up in some attic or cellar, kept there a prisoner, the same as you've been kept a prisoner so long!"

A LAST SURPRISE

"NOW, Zella! Now tell us! What is the meaning of the tulip-bowl secret? What is this—this Miracle bulb?"

The chums were gathered breathlessly round Zella on the deck of the barge. It was hours since the police had gone, taking van Hagel with them. A bright noon sun rippled on the water. Jan had left the wheel and was letting the barge drift peacefully and cheerfully into the blue.

Zella smiled at the eager faces around her, her own eyes shining.

"In Holland," she began, "we can produce tulips of every colour in the rainbow—except one colour."

"A black tulip!" cried Tess.

"No one's ever produced a black tulip, have they, Zella?" Shirley echoed breathlessly.

"It has always been said that it would be a miracle if anyone ever did," Zella said, with a fluttering breath. "But there was one grower—an old gentleman, a dear old friend of my father's—who did perform that miracle. He gave a life-time's work to his secret experiments—till at last, at the very end, he produced a bulb unlike any other in the whole world. It grew a tulip of gorgeous, velvety, ebony black!"

"Zella!" Dick cried. "And that is the bulb you call the Miracle bulb?"

"Yes. Only one like it was ever produced," Zella said, "and the secret of how it was cultivated was known only to my father's old friend who produced it." She paused, her eyes saddening. "That friend was to have been our guardian when my brother and I were orphaned. We loved him. But—but it wasn't to be. He died."

She steadied herself and went on: "I thought that the secret of the bulb had died with him—if I ever thought about it at all. But van Hagel knew better. He knew in some sly way—before my brother discovered it—that the secret of the bulb had been left to us, hidden away from us, by that old friend of ours before he died. Van Hagel schemed, and got himself appointed as our guardian and trustee. He came to live in our house at Bootendorp."

"Your house, Zella?" Shirley asked, with a start.

"Yes. My father left us that house and all the land, too; van Hagel was there only as our trustee," Zella said quietly. "While he was there he must have been prying night and day to find the precious formula, the secret of the bulb. He knew it was hidden somewhere, and he knew its value. There is a fortune awaiting anyone

who can produce black tulips. But he didn't find the secret. My brother found it first, and he just had time to hide it again before van Hagel knew that he'd been beaten to it. The rest you know."

Zella paused, looking at the chums with misty eyes.

"How can I ever repay you for all you have done—for myself and my brother?" she went on huskily. "Perhaps we shall never succeed in growing black tulips, but we shall have the joy of trying. And it is through you that I am free, carefree, happy again. So happy to think that I am on my way now to meet my brother and be together with him again."

There was silence on the barge for a while after Zella had spoken. Then a sudden cry came from Dick:

"Look! Isn't that Vendam lock ahead?"

It was, and when they drew into the lock—scene of one of their scares—the people on the towpath cheered them. The officials on the bridge waved their hats.

"Shirley," laughed Zella, "I want to be dressed like you! I want to wear a skirt and jersey like a bargee girl! At the moment I feel like an idle passenger!"

Shirley chuckled.

fair hair and handsome features, waving joyously back.

Excitedly they waved, too, and soon the barge was close to the stone platform; the mooring-rope was thrown out, and they were all clambering ashore.

Jan's mother and father welcomed the chums with open arms, while Zella threw herself at the fair-haired Dutch boy.

The crowds were milling around, all eager to congratulate Zella, her brother, and the chums; but at last they were able to get away to the quiet kitchen in Jan's farmhouse home.

In true Dutch fashion, his mother made hot coffee, and the chums were able to relax for the first time for days.

Shirley heaved an inward sigh.

The adventure was over, and she was realising how much she loved Holland; how she had loved every moment of her holiday here, with its thrills, its joys, and even its dangers, too. Her gaze went wistfully to the window.

There was no frost on the meadows now, she saw. Soon spring would come, and then those meadows would be glorious with tulips of every colour.



Mr. van Hagel gave a loud shout as he threw open the cabin locker. "The stolen diamonds—they are here!" he announced.

"Your wish will be granted, Zella. You shall have a jersey and skirt as soon as possible. In fact, we'll get one to-morrow!"

That night they lay anchored in a snug little backwater, and the following morning, after they had sailed a few miles, Shirley led the way delightedly ashore to a tiny village shop, where Zella was able to get her bargee skirt and jersey.

Then they were off again, on the last stage of their journey back to Bootendorp, where by now Zella's brother would be awaiting them.

The afternoon wore on as they glided along the familiar and remembered canal. Soon Shirley could see the sun shining on the roofs of Bootendorp, and then, indistinct at first, the people standing on the landing-stage. A distant cheer reached her ears. It was the first sounds of welcome.

They drew nearer, and now they could see Jan's mother and father waving excitedly. As the barge slid closer in to the landing-stage, a little cry came from Zella:

"My brother! Look! Look! He is there!"

"Where?"

Shirley and Tess were at Zella's side in a moment, staring towards the crowd on the landing-stage.

"He is standing by Jan's mother—see?"

Zella was waving wildly, calling his name. And now the chums saw a boy, slightly older than Dick, with curly,

"Shirley!" A soft voice spoke at her side. It was Tess. "I can guess what you're thinking. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be here in the spring!"

"Rather! Only we go back next week!" sighed Shirley. "Isn't it a pity holidays have to end—"

Zella heard.

"Your holiday is not ending yet, my friends!" she cried. "Hans and I want you to stay a month with us—all of you—as our guests—"

"It's lovely of you, Zella—and you, Hans!" Shirley broke in softly. "But, you see—"

"It's a question of school," said Tess.

Jan, who had been talking in low tones to his mother, suddenly joined in the conversation with a chuckle.

"It is all arranged, mine kamaarades. You will stay a whole month with Zella—but you will have to come to my school. You will have lessons in Dutch—and dot guy Dick needs them! But you will have time also for play, time for fun and dancing, and—his eyes rested warmly on Shirley—"and time for adventure, too, mine Shirley!"

"Whoopee!" Shirley's eyes sparkled. "Gosh, what an ending to a holiday full of surprises!"

THE END.

Now get ready for another grand serial. In next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** will begin "Her Dancing Days in Mexico," by Denise Cowan, author of that popular story, "The Impostor At The Winter Sports."

THE WILD DOG OF BLUE PINE

(Continued from page 28.)

and within sight of the lake. Here the scene was even more desolate—the rugged splendour of pine-clad hills giving place to barren rocks protruding starkly from the snow.

But as Jean stared round her, with sinking hopes, she found herself staring at one of the rocks. Her heart gave a sudden incredulous bound.

For the rock was shaped vaguely like an eagle—an eagle with outstretched wings!

Excitedly Jean started forward, stumbling over the uneven, icy ground. And at the same moment two figures appeared stealthily from the trees behind her.

A choking scream was torn from Jean's lips as a hand fastened suddenly on her shoulder. She whirled, to find herself staring into the leering, swarthy features of Pierre Lemure.

"Quickly, Jabez!" he shouted. "Ze girl has ze map—and ze leetle token!"

Frantically, pluckily Jean fought her captor, but the next moment her arms were plucked in the bear-like hold of the lumber-camp foreman.

He held her while her wrists and ankles were securely tied by Pierre, and she was thrown roughly to the ground.

"'Eet is good, Jabez!" panted the storekeeper, gleefully examining the map. "As we thought, ze bird token fits the marks. Ze beak points to the place where the girl has led us."

The other gave a satisfied grunt.

"Sure enough! That crafty Redskin knew what he was about when he drew up this chart. He meant to sell his information to Mr. Grant, but we were too smart for him—eh, Pierre? An' if it hadn't been for this girl an' that dratted dog, we'd have staked our claim to the gold afore this, and—"

His voice trailed away in a startled gasp as from the trees sprang a great, wolf-like shape, its fangs bared, a terrifying snarl rising from its throat.

"Greyfoot!" cried Jean, her heart leaping.

Pierre yelled a warning, but an instant too late. The huge husky landed on the foreman's shoulders, sending the man sprawling to the ground.

He struck out desperately, shouting to Pierre; but the cowardly storekeeper, his eyes rolling, had backed away.

In tense, horrified fascination, Jean looked on as man and dog struggled on the icy ground. Greyfoot, snarling menacingly, had a grip on Forster's collar; but the foreman's hand was groping for his belt—and Jean's heart turned cold as she saw his fingers close on a revolver.

Slowly the foreman's hand came up. But even as the muzzle of the revolver turned towards the husky's side, a shot rang out, and the deafening report was mingled with a yell from Jabez Forster as the revolver was sent spinning out of his hand.

"Ze Mountie!" shouted Pierre, turning to run.

"Stand where you are, Lemure!" rapped a stern voice. "And as for you, Forster—if I weren't in uniform, I reckon I'd let that dog teach you th' lesson you deserve!"

Jean gave a broken cry of relief as she saw the young Mountie's tall figure striding from the trees, a smoking carbine in hand.

In a moment he had cut her free; and while Jean clung to the furiously struggling husky, the young Mountie handcuffed the two scoundrels.

Later that evening—after Forster and his villainous accomplice had been taken by sleigh to Mooseville and safely locked up, to await their trial—Jean returned with Greyfoot and the young Mountie to Pierre's store by the lake.

There the excited dog discovered its master—the Redskin trapper, bound and gagged in one of the out-buildings. Brokenly he told them of his discovery of a rich seam of gold by the lake; of his efforts to safeguard his secret from his employer, the scoundrelly Lemure. He described how he had been trailed on his way to visit Mr. Grant, and attacked in the forest, and he described the intervention of the brave stranger—Jean's father.

"Reck'n that clears up everything," Miss Carson, drawled the young Mountie, a twinkle in his keen eyes. "You took the law into your own hands, an' you an' the husky man-

aged to clear things up between you. But in future," he added sternly, "I advise you to call in the police!"

"Thank you, Mountie!" Jean smiled tremulously. "I shan't forget! And now—please—I guess I must be getting along to the hospital, to break the news to dad. It's going to make him a lot better!"

"Sure!" The young Mountie grinned understandingly as he bent to pat Greyfoot. "An' you can tell him that the Redskin is anxious to share his claim with the stranger who came to his help. Guess Greyfoot, here, must have had a word with his master!"

Jean laughed, her eyes misted, and she turned to hug the big dog as it sprang up to lick her face.

THE END.

Another thrilling long complete story next Friday.

JOY—THE GIRL WITH A 100 VOICES

(Continued from page 36.)

"Go away! I won't have tramps loitering about my fence!"

"Lummie, only a boy, and I thought it was a grown man!" came the voice—Joy's voice, of course—as once again she used her gifts of mimicry and ventriloquism. "Little boy wiv a school cap on!"

Joy filled the bucket with water and put it within granddad's easy reach.

"Look here," fumed granddad, "if you don't go away I'll call the police!"

"All right, guv. Keep your hair on! You've got four white ones left—keep 'em. You won't get any more. Give me a shilling for a swim in the pool, and I'll go. I can do with a soaking on a hot morning like this. Come on! Give me the cash, you silly old fool!"

That settled it. Granddad swung the bucket of water in the direction of the voice.

A terrific yell came. A howl of dire dismay. Then into view bobbed a face streaming with water—Joy's!

Joy, self-sacrificing, had hurried round the fence and had spoken the last words with mimicry of a deep voice but without ventriloquism. Granddad had to swamp someone!

"I'm drenched!" wailed Joy. "Oh, Aunt Jemima, I'm soaked!"

Aunt Jemima hurried from the house at once and then gaped as Joy, saturated from the stream of water, clambered over the fence.

"Granddad aimed the water at a tramp and swamped me!" said Joy. Granddad bit his lip in shame.

"Granddad threw a bucket of water? But that's the very thing he chided Percy for doing!" said Aunt Jemima, astounded. "Can it be true, father?"

"I—er—I—er—I thought it was the tramp. He checked me. Joy got in the way!"

"And the Basher cheeked me, granddad," said Percy, beaming as he came confidently from the chicken run. "You did what I did."

Granddad smiled feebly.

"The water being there was a temptation," he admitted. "I'm not defending it but—er—I can't punish you, Percy, for what I did myself!"

"So he can go to the pierrot show?" asked Joy eagerly.

"Yes," consented granddad. "I'm sorry it was you and not the tramp, Joy."

"I was driving him off. But hurrah! I can go!" cried Joy, and rushed up to change into dry things, and to fill in the entry form.

And, thanks to her ventriloquising and mimicry, it was Joy who was handed the ten pounds prize at the pierrot show that afternoon.

(End of this week's story.)

More fun with Joy in another amusing story next week.

FILM STAR AUTOGRAPHS FOR YOUR ALBUM

This week's autographs are those of Valentina Cortesa, Vivien Leigh, Jane Wyman, Virginia Mayo, Trevor Howard, Edmund Gwenn, Judy Garland and Janet Leigh. Another eight next Friday. Make certain of securing them by placing a regular order for your "GIRLS' CRYSTAL"—and urge all your friends to do the same.

Valentina Cortesa

Vivien Leigh

Jane Wyman

Virginia Mayo

Trevor Howard

Edmund Gwenn

Judy Garland

Janet Leigh