

feature

"THE HOLIDAY-CAMP REVELLERS"

One Of This Week's 6 Grand
Stories For Schoolgirls

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EVERY FRIDAY.

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GIRLS' CRYSTAL ^{3^D}

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"



"THE GIRL STOWAWAY'S
MYSTERY QUEST"



The Return of Colin Forrest

A BAD BLUNDER

GWYNNE ARNOLD and her chums of Riversdale Co-ed School were keen on entering a team for the local regatta.

Mr. Kestrel, the senior master, did not approve of the idea, however.

But with the help of Colin Forrest, a surprising new master, they were able to persuade the Head, Dr. Roxford, to allow them to enter.

One day Gwynne heard two unknown people talking in the boat-house. It seemed they were plotting against the Co-ed regatta team.

Gwynne & Co., with Mr. Forrest's help, were going to enact the Viking invasion at the forthcoming regatta. But because Colin was continually clashing with Mr. Kestrel, Dr. Roxford decided to put the senior master in charge of the regatta arrangements instead of Mr. Forrest.

That surprising master continued to help Gwynne & Co., however. He left some books for them in a summer-house, and the chums had just found them when Gwynne saw a shadowy figure disappearing through some bushes—and immediately suspected it must be the team's mystery enemy.

GWYNNE'S exclamation had an electrifying effect on the two boys. While the other members of the river team stared in bewilderment, Derek sprang for the door, Peter at his heels.

"Where?" Derek demanded, glaring round.

"Don't see anyone!" gasped Peter. "He—he went into the bushes—just there!" Gwynne's voice was shaking slightly. "Someone tall and muffled up—in a dark raincoat or something. He was spying on us—"

"Good enough!" jerked Derek. "Mystery enemy or not, I'm not standing for snoopers! You take the left path, Peter—I'll cut through the bushes. The rest of you boys stay here with the girls," he added, as a murmur arose. "It may be some trespasser who broke into the grounds from the towpath—you get some queer types hanging around the river. He might double back on his tracks if he hears us coming."

Peter was already off, sprinting along the winding path; Derek plunged into the bushes. Gwynne was following him when she felt a hand slipped through her arm.

"I don't know what it's all about, Gwynne," said Maureen breathlessly, "but I'm not letting you go on your own."

Gwynne, despite her agitation, smiled at her chum's determined expression.

"All right, Maureen—let's follow Derek!"

But following him was impossible in that maze of scattered bushes. They soon lost sight of the two boys, though they could hear Derek calling to Peter, and that boy's reply in the distance.

The pounding footsteps grew fainter, and the two girls found themselves hurrying on their own through a little copse that skirted the grounds.

Here the sunlight was almost shut out by the overhanging branches of the trees. Gwynne's excitement was mingled with a slight tinge of apprehension as she remembered the unknown enemy's ruthless tactics.

It was comforting to think that the boys were within hailing distance—and she was all keyed up to give the alarm.

Then she heard Maureen gasp, and her chum's hand tightened on her arm.

"Gwynne—look!" whispered Maureen. "There's someone lurking over there, behind that bush. I—I saw him move!"

Gwynne caught in her breath, staring at the bush her chum had indicated. It was a tall, thick bush growing close to the private gate that led to the river towpath. Now she felt almost certain that Maureen was right—that someone was standing concealed by the bush.

Her fears gave place to swift indignation as she remembered the way the enemy had already struck at their plans; indignation coupled with a burning curiosity to discover the trickster's identity!

But if they shouted to attract the attention of the boys, the elusive trespasser would escape. There was only one thing for it—and Gwynne's pulses quickened at the daring thought. They would have to grab the enemy first—and shout for help afterwards!

After all, it was broad daylight, and plenty of people frequented the towpath. Someone would be bound to come, even if the two boys did not immediately hear them.

Maureen looked a little startled as Gwynne whispered her plan, but she nodded gamely.

**Mr. Kestrel Pooh-pooed
The Idea That Anyone
Was Plotting Against
The Regatta Team, But
Gwynne Knew Better.**

By RENEE FRAZER

"I'm with you!" she breathed.

"When I give the word, we'll both spring out at him—and shout at the top of our voices!" whispered Gwynne. "But wait for it!"

Cautiously, hearts pounding, they crept towards the bush, their footsteps almost noiseless on the thick carpet of leaves.

Unmistakably, now, they could see a figure standing motionless in the shadows, just beyond a bright patch of sunlight.

Gwynne's hand tightened on Maureen's arm.

"Now!" she gasped.

Together they darted forward, momentarily dazzled by the sunlight. Gwynne heard a startled ejaculation as her fingers closed tightly on someone's sleeve.

"Derek—Peter—help!" she called. "Gwynne Arnold!" rasped an unpleasant voice. "Kindly explain the meaning of this outrageous behaviour!"

Gwynne felt as though every drop of blood had drained from her heart as she stared into the angry features of Mr. Kestrel! She heard Maureen's dismayed gasp, and her nerveless fingers relaxed their hold on the master's sleeve.

With an impatient movement, Mr. Kestrel straightened his gown, coldly regarding the two dumbfounded girls. He had some books under his arm, and he had evidently just returned from his usual mid-morning stroll.

"Am I to suppose," he remarked, his tone bitingly sarcastic, "that you girls have both taken leave of your senses?"

"N-no, Mr. Kestrel," Gwynne gulped, desperately seeking an excuse. "We—we thought you were—someone else."

"Indeed?" remarked Mr. Kestrel, eyeing her searchingly. "Might I inquire why you called for help?"

Gwynne darted a warning look at Maureen. She was afraid her chum would try to explain about the unknown enemy. That would lead to awkward questions. Why had Mr. Kestrel not been informed about the supposed "enemy"; exactly what was he supposed to have done?

Mr. Kestrel might even insist on accompanying them back to the summer-house—and that would never do! The lemonade and cakes—to say nothing of the illustrated books which bore Colin Forrest's name on the fly-leaves—would at once give the game away!

The young master had disobeyed orders to help them with their pageant and Mr. Kestrel would

relish the opportunity to report him to the Head.

"We—it was a kind of game," Gwynne blurted out. "We were rehearsing for our pageant."

Mr. Kestrel regarded her sharply. "Really?" he murmured. "This pageant of yours appears to be exercising a strange influence on the Form's general behaviour—both in class and out! I shall not fail to mention the matter to the headmaster. Meanwhile, you two girls will accompany me back to school, and I will set you a task to occupy you for the remainder of your break."

The chums exchanged dismayed glances. Not only would they miss the unfinished treat waiting for them in the summer-house, but they would lose their chance of helping in the exciting search for the mysterious enemy.

"Come!" snapped Mr. Kestrel, turning.

Rebelligiously, not daring to protest, the two girls started to follow him; but just then there came the loud tinkle of a bicycle-bell, and a voice hailed Mr. Kestrel from the tow-path.

Gwynne's heart gave a bound as she caught a glimpse of the cyclist. It was Mr. Forrest!

READY FOR THE REHEARSAL

THE young master, hatless and wearing flannels and blazer, had pulled up outside the gate.

"I say, Kestrel," he called, "I've been looking for you!"

A cloud crossed the senior master's face.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"I've just seen the Head," said Colin. "He'd like to have a word with you about the new time-table. As you'll be taking over some of my—or—duties, there'll have to be alterations. Would you pop round to his private house right away?"

Mr. Kestrel bit his lip.

"Very well," he said shortly. "You two girls will go straight back to school and wait in the class-room till the bell rings. Where are you off to, Forrest?"

"Just going to put the old bone-shaker away," said Colin, with a wink at the girls. "So long!"

He pedalled away, trilling the bell. Mr. Kestrel watched the two girls take the path that led back to the school; then, gathering up his gown, he strode off to keep his appointment.

Gwynne drew a quick breath of relief as she halted.

"Maureen, I believe Mr. Forrest purposely came to our aid," she declared.

"But—but how did he know?" asked Maureen incredulously.

"A-ha!" said a voice from the other side of the low fence that bounded the school grounds.

Both girls whirled.

"Mr. Forrest!" gasped Gwynne.

The young master was leaning over the fence, a broad smile on his face. "Ahem! I just wanted to make certain that you girls were obeying orders," he remarked.

Gwynne and Maureen darted forward.

"Then—then you only invented that message from the Head?" Gwynne gasped.

"Tut, tut!" rejoined Mr. Forrest in shocked tones. "As a matter of fact, the Head mentioned the matter—but I made it sound a little more urgent. You see, I wanted a word with you. Did you find everything O.K. in the summer-house?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Forrest, and thank you a million times!" Gwynne's eyes shone. "Those books are just wonderful—the very things we need!"

"But someone—someone was spying on us!" Maureen blurted out. "The mystery enemy—"

"Eh—what's that?" The young master eyed them sharply. "Mystery enemy?"

Gwynne took her courage in both hands. If there was one person in whom they could safely confide—one

person who would not laugh at their fears—that was Mr. Forrest.

Excitedly she blurted out everything that she had told the boys—about the voices in the boathouse; her suspicions about the drifting log; and the reason for the damage to the Viking armour.

Mr. Forrest's blue eyes were grave as he listened. It was impossible to say what he was thinking.

"Have you reported the matter to Mr. Kestrel?" he asked at length.

"Oh, no!" Gwynne shook her head. "He—he'd probably say I was making it all up."

Mr. Forrest nodded, smiling a trifle grimly.

"Perhaps you're wise," he said. "Better not report the matter officially till you have more proof. Meanwhile—don't worry!"

"But—" Gwynne began.

Mr. Forrest raised an admonishing finger.

"Don't worry!" he repeated. "Just push ahead with your plans for the pageant—and let me handle the mystery!"

"You, Mr. Forrest?" Gwynne's eyes lit up. "But—but—" She

for the unknown spy; and there were gasps mingled with delighted chortles as Gwynne gave a spirited account of their meeting with Mr. Kestrel, and Colin Forrest's intervention.

The distant trilling of the school bell caused the little party to disperse in haste, Gwynne carrying the precious books.

That evening the rowing team met to discuss their plans more fully. As elaborate preparations would not be possible for the first rehearsal, it was decided to concentrate on a few simple costumes and properties—such as helmets and shields for the invaders, bows-and-arrows for the defenders.

Derek would be in charge of the "Viking" crew, while Peter would lead the "Saxons" in their efforts to repel the landing-party. For this purpose the boys decided to construct a simple yet massive raft of logs—a floating platform from which they could give battle to the invading galleys.



Indignantly Gwynne faced Mr. Kestrel. "The figure I saw was real," she protested, "and it's not the first time someone's tried to wreck our plans."

coloured, slightly. "Mr. Kestrel said—"

"That I'm in disgrace, eh?" Colin grinned. "In a manner of speaking, I'm in the Head's bad books—and I've an idea that Mr. Kestrel means to keep me busy correcting senior exam papers in my spare time. But a little thing like that needn't upset our plan!"

His eyes twinkled as he met the girls' anxious, puzzled stares.

"But—but—" Gwynne faltered.

"There are surprises in store," said Colin gravely. "But we needn't go into that now. Cut back to the summer-house and help finish up those cakes before the bell rings; Mr. Kestrel won't return yet awhile. Oh, and you might give the boys a message. When they come to the mock battle on Saturday, they'll need helmets and shields to protect them from the arrows of the enemy. I understand that Trimble has got a useful stock of cardboard in his office and plenty of gilt paint. 'Nuff said!"

With a smile and a wave of his hand, the amazing young master disappeared behind the fence—and they heard the cheery tinkle of his bicycle bell as he rode away.

DELIGHTED though mystified by Mr. Forrest's guarded hints, the two chums hurried back to join the others. Derek and Peter had already returned after a fruitless search

After the meeting had broken up, amid general enthusiasm, a smaller, more serious conference took place. At this only Gwynne and Maureen were present, with Jean Carter, the Form-captain, and Derek and Peter representing the boys.

This conference had been called by Derek to discuss the question of the mystery enemy.

Derek was anxious not to start a general scare, though Peter was all for taking precautions. In the end it was agreed to form a "watch committee" of four, responsible for keeping check on any mysterious activities that seemed to threaten their plans.

Nothing was to be said to the rest of the team; no rumours allowed to spread.

"But if anyone starts any funny business," declared Peter, his hands clenched, "he'll get more than he bargained for!"

For Gwynne and her chums the next two days passed all too quickly—every minute of their spare time being taken up by exciting preparations.

The only cloud on Gwynne's horizon was that they saw so little of Mr. Forrest. Once or twice she caught a glimpse of him in his study, surrounded by piles of books and exam papers; and indignation filled her as she realised that Mr. Kestrel was deliberately keeping the popular

young master busy with supposedly urgent talks to prevent his coming into contact with the juniors outside school hours.

It was on the Friday evening, after prep, that Gwynne was reminded, with a sudden shock, of her almost forgotten fears.

Everything was in readiness for the rehearsal. The cardboard armour had been made; the canoes and punts had been decorated to resemble Viking galleys and were set out in the boathouse. Everyone had been drilled in his or her part in the lively skirmish—and Gwynne herself had been chosen to act as pageant-master.

Her mind busy with the exciting arrangements, she hurried across the quadrangle towards Girls' Side. Then abruptly she halted, her heart missing a beat.

Through the trees she saw a red light flashing—once, twice, three times. And the mysterious signal came from the direction of the school boathouse.

Gwynne thought swiftly. She had stayed after prep, chatting to Derek and Peter, and would probably be late for call-over in any case. But that mysterious signal could not be ignored—with so much at stake the next day.

With sudden decision Gwynne retraced her steps, hurrying as fast as she could along the path that led to the river.

Her heart was beating quickly as she approached the boathouse—and the next instant her premonition was confirmed. For the door stood slightly ajar.

Gwynne halted, her hands clenched, her ears strained to listen. At this hour of twilight the towpath was deserted. She could hear only the lapping of the river and the whisper of the wind in the rushes.

Then she heard another sound—a faint, metallic sound that came from inside the boathouse. Someone was tampering with the boats!

A wave of anger swept aside any lingering fear as Gwynne sprang forward, flinging open the door.

Then a scream broke from her lips.

A tall figure in a dark coat, a white scarf concealing his face, was stooping over one of the newly painted "galleys." He spun round as Gwynne entered, and before she could realise his intention he had leapt at her, seizing her by the arm, while his other hand was clapped over her lips, stifling her cry for help.

AN AMAZING DISCOVERY

Gwynne fought desperately, pluckily, to break from her assailant. But she was helpless in his powerful grasp.

"Keep still!" he hissed, and his voice was too muffled to be recognisable. "If you try to give the alarm, it'll be the worse for you!"

For an instant the hand was removed, and Gwynne felt a scarf whipped round her mouth and tied securely before she could call out.

She was no longer conscious of any fear for herself; her blood was boiling with helpless indignation.

As the other caught at her wrists, she commenced to kick out spiritedly—and she heard her captor's stifled ejaculation as he drew away.

Breaking from him, Gwynne made a wild dash for the towpath, the mystery enemy at her heels. He caught her before she could reach the bank, and together they stumbled against the newly painted motor launch drawn up outside the boathouse.

Sobbing for breath, Gwynne tried to call out—but the scarf effectually muffled her cries.

Then, like a gleam of hope cutting through her despair, Gwynne remembered something. The Klaxon that Peter had attached to the motor-launch!

One of her hands was free, and as she struggled Gwynne groped desperately behind her.

The next moment a harsh, deafening sound broke the peaceful stillness of the riverside, clamorously awaking

the echoes and sending a flock of startled birds wheeling up from the trees.

"You—you little vixen!" breathed her captor harshly as he caught at her wrist, dragging her back towards the boathouse.

But Gwynne had heard something that sent her heart leaping; the swift creak of oars, as a boat rowed by powerful, determined hands, skimmed swiftly round a bend in the stream, heading for the bank.

With a desperate twist of her head, she managed to loosen the scarf.

"Help!" she called brokenly.

There came a deep, answering shout. With a furious ejaculation Gwynne's captor released her and made a dive for the bushes, vanishing from sight as a tall figure in flannels leaped on to the bank.

Half-fainting, Gwynne found herself supported by a strong, reassuring arm, while the muffling scarf was dragged away from her face.

"Gwynne, what happened?"

"Mr. Forrest!" Gwynne almost sobbed in relief as she stared up into the young master's pale, stern face. "He—the mystery enemy—was in the boathouse. I—I managed to give the alarm—"

"Good for you, Gwynne!" There was admiration in Colin's tone, though his blue eyes were grim in the faint light. "Could you describe him?"

Gwynne shook her head.

"His face was hidden—but he was tall—as tall as you, and strong. I'm certain he was out to damage the boats. He—he went that way!"

Mr. Forrest nodded, starting towards the trees. From the distance came a sound of running footsteps and excited voices. The young master's face cleared.

"Here come the boys! The sound of that Klaxon must have reached the school. You'll be all right now, Gwynne. Wait here with the others till I come back!"

And, releasing her, he made a sudden dive for the trees.

A moment later Derek and Peter came pelting up, followed by several of the other boys.

"Gosh, Gwynne, was it you who sounded that Klaxon?"

"What happened?"

"We thought there'd been a fire or something!"

A whistle of alarm and anger went up as Gwynne unsteadily explained.

"Phew, a bit of luck for you that Mr. Forrest came along when he did," said Derek. "Who can the blighter be—and what's his game?"

A crisp footstep sounded on the towpath, and the excited voices were suddenly hushed.

"Cave—Hawkeye!" breathed Peter.

Mr. Kestrel came striding from the path that led to the school. He was wearing his mortar-board and gown, and had evidently been making his customary evening rounds when he had heard the Klaxon.

There was an angry gleam in his eyes as he bore down on the uneasy group by the boathouse.

"Doyle—Martin—Thomson"—his darting gaze scanned the group of boys—"what are you doing out here after call-over? And what was that hideous clamour I heard?"

Gwynne started forward impulsively in defence of the boys, and Mr. Kestrel halted in his stride.

"Gwynne Arnold!" he exclaimed ominously. "So you're mixed up in this, too? Miss Primley will have something to say about your absence—"

"Please, sir," Peter cut in boldly. "Gwynne came down here because she saw a light flashing, and she was worried about our things in the boathouse. She jolly well caught the mystery enemy at work—"

Gwynne trod hastily on Peter's foot, but too late.

Mr. Kestrel turned his steely gaze on Gwynne, his lip curled a trifle sardonically.

"I must congratulate you, Gwynne!" he said. "Your imagination does you credit! A few days ago you and Maureen attacked me in the school grounds, making some

lame excuse about a game. I presume this sinister figure lurking in the boathouse was part of the same fanciful game?"

"The figure I saw was real!"

Gwynne breathed.

Mr. Kestrel raised his eyebrows.

"Have you any witnesses, Gwynne?" he demanded.

"Why"—Gwynne's heart gave a sudden bound at the recollection—"it was Mr. Forrest who scared him away, and—"

"Forrest!" Mr. Kestrel's face darkened. "Trust that—that meddling wool-gatherer to stir up trouble! The whole thing was probably a figment of your imagination—and you've sent Mr. Forrest on a wild-goose chase—"

"Pretty hefty goose!" commented a pleasant voice—and Mr. Kestrel whirled, with a start, as the young master appeared behind him.

"Why are you creeping round like that, Forrest?" he barked.

"Stalking a wild goose, Kestrel," replied Mr. Forrest. "But this one wore boots, and left footprints in the mud."

"So?" Mr. Kestrel spoke icily. "From your flippant remark, I take it that you confirm Gwynne's fantastic story?"

"Sure thing!" nodded Mr. Forrest.

"An ugly-looking customer—from the fleeting glimpse I had of him. I fancy he must have doubled back on his tracks, for I lost trace of him after a time."

Mr. Kestrel took a torch from his pocket, flashing it on the boathouse.

"Probably a loitering tramp," he said shortly. "I see no signs of any damage. You boys had better inspect your craft."

Excitedly the boys made their inspection, to report that there was no damage of any kind.

Mr. Kestrel's lip curled.

"You see, Gwynne. Your dangerous 'enemy' was some unfortunate tramp seeking shelter for the night, after finding that the boathouse had carelessly been left open. The rest was a combination of your girlish fancy and overstrung nerves. In view of your responsible position in to-morrow's rehearsal, I shall report the matter to the Head, with a view to making certain changes."

Gwynne's heart tightened suddenly.

"Mr. Kestrel," she blurted out, "you don't mean—"

"I mean, Gwynne," interrupted Mr. Kestrel coldly, "that as the master in charge of the river sports it is my duty to make arrangements for the security of all concerned. I will say no more now. Forrest." He turned abruptly to the young master. "Kindly see the boys back to the school, and report them to Mr. Holmes, their Housemaster. I shall personally escort Gwynne to her Housemistress." He turned about. "Come, Gwynne," he ordered.

Reluctantly she followed his tall figure as he strode along the winding path that led through the private gardens to the Girls' Side.

They reached the school gardens, and Mr. Kestrel turned to wait for Gwynne. The breeze was fluttering his gown, giving him rather the appearance of a great bat waiting to swoop down on her.

Gwynne smiled unsteadily at the thought—and then the smile was frozen on her lips.

She was staring at Mr. Kestrel's dark jacket, revealed now beneath the fluttering gown. Across one side was a smear of white paint—obviously still wet.

White paint! Gwynne's thoughts were racing. The launch against which she had stumbled with the mystery enemy had been painted white!

And as she stared at the streak of paint, the horrifying conviction turned her blood cold.

The mystery enemy and Mr. Kestrel were one and the same!

Here is a startling development. What will Gwynne do now? There will be more surprises in next week's dramatic instalment.



The GIRL STOWAWAY'S MYSTERY QUEST

By JANE PRESTON

A DARING THING TO DO

"I HAVEN'T the courage," Molly Fairlie thought to herself. "I—I daren't risk it."

Her face was flushed as she gazed up at the towering side of the s.s. Kardonus, and she did not realise that her eyes were agleam with excitement. All about her was a scene of tremendous activity, for the big Atlantic liner was almost due to sail. Passengers were still hurrying aboard.

"I—I daren't risk it," Molly told herself again. "And yet—I can't let Alan down."

Deep within herself she knew that she really was going to carry out the plan she had decided on that morning. All she was doing at the moment was putting off the moment of decisive action.

She saw a taxi draw up near one of the gang-planks. An elderly man alighted, followed by a dark-haired girl of about her own age, and then by a cheery-looking boy with tousled red hair and a freckled face.

A couple of porters descended upon the small group and they took charge of the luggage. They started towards the gang-plank, with the three passengers following behind them, and they passed quite close to Molly. It was then that she made up her mind.

She fell into step almost behind the girl and boy and went up the gang-plank with them. It was her hope that if any of the ship's officers saw her they would think she was a member of the little party.

They stepped on to the deck, and immediately a steward came forward to take charge of them.

"This way, sir," the man said. "I was beginning to fear you'd left it too late."

The three hurried away after the steward, and for a moment Molly stood in indecision. That was almost her undoing, for she was noticed by another steward standing near the head of the gang-plank.

"Pardon me, miss," he called, "just a moment!"

Molly forced a quick smile to her lips.

"It's all right," she answered, and she went running after the three passengers, turning the corner so quickly that she ran right into the red-headed boy and sent him staggering. "I—I beg your pardon," Molly gasped.

She caught a glimpse of the boy's very surprised face. Then, because she was sure that the steward had started after her, Molly entered the first open door she came to. She found herself in one of the first-class suites, and, to her tremendous relief, the spacious cabin was empty.

She tried to steady her nerves then.

She was on the Kardonus—she had done what she had set out to do. Deliberately she was stowing away on a liner that was bound for New York.

As though her courage needed something to bolster it up, she opened her handbag and took out a letter. She could memorise almost every word of that letter; but even as the excitement in her eyes became more vivid, her determination stronger, as once again she read it.

"Dear Sis.—When the Kardonus arrives at Southampton I shan't be on board. At the moment I'm in hiding in New York and you're the only one who can help me. Because of something that happened on the last trip I was forced to leave the ship in a hurry.

"When I last took you over the Kardonus I showed you a secret compartment in my cabin which had been made by the previous occupant. I've reason to believe there's a similar compartment in the cabin of Boyd Newton, the assistant purser, and in that compartment is hidden away the proof of my innocence.

"This letter is only a preliminary warning. By a trustworthy messenger I'm sending you much fuller instructions so that it should be fairly easy for you to find this proof for me.

"This letter in the greatest haste.

"Your affectionate brother,

"ALAN."

That letter had come as a terrible shock to Molly. Always she had been proud of Alan—never so proud as when he had first obtained a berth on the Kardonus. And now—he was in trouble with the police.

What further instructions had Alan intended to send to her? What did he mean by stating he would make it easy for her to search Boyd Newton's cabin?

Morning after morning she had waited for Alan's messenger, but he had failed to arrive.

That morning the daring plan had come to Molly. Her brother was in trouble—he was in New York and he was hiding from the police. The only proof of his innocence was aboard the Kardonus, and he had asked Molly to try to get that proof for him.

Unless she did something that very

morning the chances were that Alan would never be able to prove his innocence.

And now—she was actually aboard the Kardonus.

She jumped then, for the voice of a woman came to her from an inner cabin.

"It's going to be a busy trip," the voice said. "We're carrying another full complement of passengers."

"I've one empty cabin," another woman's voice answered. "Nobody's turned up to claim cabin A 36."

Molly realised that two stewardesses must be in the inner cabin. Even as she turned they appeared in the doorway, and both looked at her in great surprise.

"I beg your pardon," one of them said, "but what—"

Molly was already in the doorway. "I'm sorry," she said, and she managed to smile. "I made a mistake in the number."

She was out in the corridor then, and now her excitement had mounted a little more. Cabin A 36 was empty. If nobody came aboard to claim A 36, then perhaps she would be able to hide in it all through the voyage.

Having been on the ship before she knew exactly where to look for A 36. She even started towards it, but abruptly changed her mind. Every corridor was filled with a flood of passengers, who were settling into their cabins, and all the stewards and stewardesses were on duty. She dare not go near A 36 yet, for if she was seen entering it questions were bound to be asked. She must wait until the ship was well under way and the ordinary routine of the voyage had begun.

But where should she hide in the meantime?

On board a bell was ringing and the ship's loud-speakers were giving a raucous warning—"All ashore who're going ashore."

If only she could remain undetected for the next half hour or so. On this busy liner there must be some place where she can hide in safety.

She suddenly realised that everybody was hurrying back to the deck. Evidently they wanted to take their last view of Southampton and to wave to the friends who had come to see them off. The rails would be

An Atlantic Liner Provides The Setting For This Week's Thrilling 'Long Complete Story

packed tight with passengers—and the best place for anyone to hide was in the heart of a crowd.

Molly managed to find a place at the rails, and several times she waved as though in answer to a wave from the quayside. Yet all the time she was gripped by anxiety. Would a hand suddenly fall upon her shoulder and would she be hurried back down the gang-plank?

She held her breath when she saw that the long gang-planks were being wheeled away from the ship's side. The huge liner was about to cast off; already tugs were fussing about her. There was a blast from the ship's siren and then a lane of water began to appear between the Kardonus and the quayside.

The voyage to New York had begun. And on board the Kardonus was a girl stowaway.

Molly still stood among the crowd lining the rails as the huge vessel slid by the Isle of Wight. And then the thing she had feared actually happened. A hand suddenly touched her lightly on the shoulder. Despite herself, she turned with a startled gasp.

"Hallo!" said a cheery voice. "I thought it was you. I hope you didn't hurt yourself when we bumped together."

It was the red-haired, freckle-faced boy who stood alongside her. Molly almost gasped her relief, and then she was answering his smile.

"It was all my fault," she said. "It served as an introduction, anyhow," he went on quickly. "I'm 'Breezy' Smith, and this is my cousin Eva."

Molly saw that the dark-haired girl was with him.

"I—I'm Molly," she answered. It would be better if nobody on board learned that her surname was Fairlie. If the assistant purser heard that someone named Fairlie was on board he might begin to put two and two together.

The dark-haired girl nodded rather indifferently, and there was no friendly smile in her eyes.

"This is our first trip to America," Breezy went on. "We've been looking forward to it for months."

And then—Molly was catching her breath.

"I say, have you heard the news?" he went on excitedly. "A girl stowaway is supposed to be on board. One of the stewards spotted her coming up the gang-plank and she bolted. A little later two of the stewardesses found a girl in one of the luxury suites. It must have been the same girl because she bolted as soon as they spoke to her. Anyway, some of us have got together, and we've been asked to search the ship," Breezy added. "What about coming with us, Molly?"

Molly saw then that half a dozen young people were standing close behind him. No matter what happened now she must show no sign of fear.

So they knew she was on board and they were searching for her. In that case the best thing she could do was to help join in the search. The hunted would run with the hunters.

But Molly knew, if she took part in the search, she must keep her eyes wide open. On the few occasions when she visited the Kardonus in Alan's company she had met one or two of the ship's officers. If they saw her again they would be bound to recognise her.

At that moment a young ship's officer appeared at the back of the crowd. Instantly Molly's heart missed a beat. Thank goodness that it was not anyone she knew.

Eva Matlock had also seen the officer, and she turned excitedly.

"Oh, Breezy," she exclaimed, "here's Mr. Newton, the assistant purser, who's taking charge of the search."

For the moment Molly stared hard. So this was Boyd Newton, and he was her brother's enemy. That could be the only explanation of the statement in Alan's letter. Yet there was nothing of the villain about him—he looked particularly handsome in his

blue and gold uniform, and he was smiling in a friendly fashion.

"The search won't take long," he said in a pleasant voice. "There are few places on the Kardonus where a stowaway will be able to hide."

In an excited body they pressed after the young assistant purser, Molly going with them.

They went through the large dining-rooms, the smaller restaurants, and then through the main dance-hall. They searched every corner of the big recreation-room and then all the cubicles around the swimming-pool.

Molly was glad indeed that she had made no attempt to hide away. The longer the search continued the more convinced she became that it had been a brain-wave on her part to join the crowd of passengers at the rails.

But she quickly realised that she was making an enemy. Several times Eva Matlock called to Breezy when she was searching some corner or the other. But Breezy insisted on remaining with Molly, who was quick to see dislike creep into the eyes of the other girl.

The search continued, but at last Boyd Newton was forced to confess that they had drawn a blank.

"She may have gone down to one of the lower decks," he said. "They're all being searched, and for all we know she may have already been caught."

"I jolly well hope so," Eva said. "It will soon be time for lunch, and I've just remembered something I want to do."

She hurried after Boyd Newton, who was striding off down the deck. Breezy turned and smiled at Molly.

"Talking about lunch, we're in the Tudor dining-room," he said. "I hope you've got a table close to us."

Molly knew she was up against her first real difficulty.

"I—I'm not sure," she began.

"Why not have lunch with us?" Breezy invited. "I know there's a vacant chair at our table—Eva's brother was unable to make the trip at the last moment. I can easily fix it, and I'm sure your people won't mind just for once."

Molly knew she would be taking a risk. And yet, after all, was it so much of a risk? The more she was seen mixing with the passengers the less likely it was she would be suspected of being a stowaway.

"Thank you," she said quickly. "It's very kind of you. I—I'll be glad to. There isn't much time, so I'd better hurry away and get tidied up." It was fortunate that she knew her way about the ship. Now was her chance to go direct to cabin A 36. With luck it would be her hiding-place for the whole of the voyage.

There was something else she must do, too. She had come aboard wearing a costume, but she could not continue to wear the costume all through the voyage. That in itself would arouse suspicion. Thank goodness, all her savings were in her hand-bag and that there were many shops on board the Kardonus. Some time that day she would make a few simple purchases, and one of them must be a frock that she could wear in the evenings.

The ship's corridors were deserted, for most of the passengers were getting ready for lunch. Nobody saw her open the door of A 36.

One glance inside was sufficient to show her that the cabin was unoccupied. When she had closed the door behind her Molly heaved a great sigh of relief. She could make herself quite comfortable here.

She had just placed her hand-bag on the bunk when she heard footsteps come to a halt outside.

"Here we are, Miss Matlock," a voice said. "This is cabin A 36."

The voice was that of Boyd Newton, the assistant purser. Molly felt a tremor run through her, for she knew that if he came into the cabin he would know she had no right to be there. If he questioned her she would have to tell him her name, and then he would not only

know that she was the stowaway, but that she was Alan Fairlie's sister.

It seemed that her exciting adventure was over almost before it had begun.

MOLLY MAKES A MISTAKE

DESPITE the unexpected shock Molly did not waste a moment.

Even as the door-handle began to turn she snatched up her hand-bag and stepped into the empty wardrobe. No sooner had she closed the door behind her than Boyd Newton stepped in, carrying two heavy suitcases; and behind him was Eva Matlock.

"This is a much better cabin than the first one I was given," she said. "I'll be much more comfortable here. Thank you so much, Mr. Newton, for allowing me to make the change."

"A pleasure, Miss Matlock," he said in his easy, pleasant voice, and went out of the cabin.

Molly bit her lip. What rotten luck that Eva Matlock had been dissatisfied with her cabin.

Now Molly knew she would have to find some other hiding-place—if she wasn't caught before she had a chance to look round. For how long could she remain undetected in the wardrobe?

The bunk shook as Eva lifted one of the heavy cases on to it, and there was the sound of the lid being opened. Obviously she was going to start unpacking. She would take out her frocks; would hang them in the wardrobe.

At that moment there was a knock on the door.

"Come in!" Eva said, with a touch of irritation in her voice.

It was Breezy who stood in the doorway.

"Heard you'd changed cabins, Eva," he said, "though I didn't see anything wrong with Number 72. I'm fixing up some games for this afternoon and I want your advice. Can you come up on deck now, because we want to get everything fixed before lunch?"

"All right," Eva said unwillingly.

No sooner did the door close behind them than Molly scrambled out of the wardrobe. Thank goodness Breezy had turned up at such an opportune time. The way was clear now for her to leave the cabin.

And she still had a hiding-place. If Eva had left cabin Number 72, then she—Molly—would take up her quarters in 72.

Having decided she would wait until after lunch before visiting the new hiding-place, Molly tidied herself up as quickly as she could and then went out into the corridor. She still had a little time to kill before lunch, and she was about to turn into one corridor when she suddenly pulled up.

Ahead of her a door had opened, and Boyd Newton had stepped out. She saw him go hurrying away.

"That must be his cabin," flashed through her mind. "This is a stroke of luck!"

She went slowly past the cabin and saw there was no number on the door, only the letter "M."

Already part of her quest had been accomplished—she had located the assistant purser's cabin.

It needed courage of a very high order to walk down the wide staircase into the great expanse of the Tudor dining-room.

Most of the passengers were already at their tables, and there seemed such a bewildering number of them.

But Molly no sooner reached the bottom of the staircase than she saw Breezy stand up and wave to her. Quickly she crossed to the table, and she saw that the only other occupant was Eva.

"Dad's not turning up," Breezy grinned. "He's such a poor sailor. He always sticks to his cabin for the first day or two."

Eva Matlock had no welcoming smile for Molly, who realised that the other girl resented her presence at the table. It must be because Breezy had struck up such a quick friendship with her.

Instead, Eva turned and smiled at a tall figure crossing the room. Molly's heart missed a beat when she recognised Boyd Newton. He was obviously heading in their direction, and she realised that she must be sitting at the assistant purser's table.

"Any news of the stowaway?" Eva demanded the moment he sat down.

"None yet," he answered, "but she won't be free much longer. The search is still going on."

Molly felt a surge of excitement. It was thrilling to know that she was the stowaway who was being discussed, and that they had no suspicion of her. If only she could keep it up!

Boyd Newton proved to be a delightful host, and he told them many stories of other Atlantic crossings. Molly thoroughly enjoyed the meal, and then the assistant purser had to get back to duty.

Molly wondered what her next move should be. Should she go at once to Cabin 72 and remain in hiding for the rest of the day?

But Breezy had other ideas. "Let's go up on the sun-deck, Molly," he said.

Again Molly saw dislike flash into Eva's eyes. She obviously resented the fact that she had not been asked to join the party.

Molly and Breezy went up to the sun-deck, where they sat in comfortable chairs for the best part of an hour. Breezy did most of the talking—he told Molly of his school and of the exciting holiday he expected to have in New York. When Molly admitted her destination was New York he became more than ever enthusiastic.

"We mustn't lose touch with each other," he said. "With luck we'll do our sightseeing together."

It was Breezy who led Molly down to the big recreation-room. Here quite a number of young people were gathered, and a strenuous table tennis match was in progress.

Eva came hurrying forward. "They're starting a competition, Breezy," she said. "If we play together—"

Breezy smiled and shook his head. "Sorry, Eva," he said, "but I've already fixed up to play with Molly."

Molly gave him a quick glance. This was something new to her. And again she saw the dislike in Eva's eyes.

Molly was glad she had played a great deal of table tennis, for Breezy proved to be an expert player. They played through two rounds of the tournament, and they won each time. Then Boyd Newton walked into the room.

"I hope you haven't forgotten I'm taking part in the competition," he said.

Eva almost ran to meet him.

"You're playing as my partner, Mr. Newton," she said, and gave Molly a quick glance of triumph. Evidently Eva considered it a feather in her cap that the assistant purser should be her partner.

But Molly's heart leapt. This was her chance. If Boyd Newton was going to take part in the tournament then he would be tied up for some considerable time. What better chance could she have for going along to "M" cabin? If she could find the secret compartment right away, and if she found the proof that Alan expected her to find, then it would not matter if it came out about her being a stowaway.

She made a quick excuse to Breezy the moment Boyd Newton picked up a bat.

A little later and she was approaching "M" cabin, making sure she was unobserved. Molly went into the cabin and quietly closed the door behind her. Then she gave a gasp of dismay.

She had made a mistake—this could not be Boyd Newton's cabin. A woman's dress was lying on the bunk, and a woman's toilet articles filled all the space on the small dressing-table. When she had seen Boyd Newton he had been leaving one of the passengers' cabins—not his own.

And then—panic flared up within Molly, for the cabin door was being opened. She whirled round as a rather sharp-featured woman entered. The woman stared at Molly with surprise and suspicion.

"What are you doing in my cabin?" she demanded.

"I—I'm so sorry," Molly gasped. "I—I thought this was Mr. Newton's cabin."

She slipped past the sharp-featured woman as quickly as possible, and she seemed to feel the woman's suspicious gaze following her all the way down the corridor. Molly hurried on. She pushed by a ship's officer without giving him a glance, and then she heard him stop behind her.

"Why!" he exclaimed in tones of great surprise. "It must be Molly Fairlie. I'd no idea you were one of our passengers—"

The one thing she had dreaded had happened. She had been seen and recognised by an officer she had met before. The shock robbed her for the moment of the power to think, and without making any answer she turned the nearest corner and then ran blindly.

Chance brought her to a line of

once that she was not on the passenger list, and he would be alarmed because he would realise she was Alan Fairlie's sister.

She tried to keep her voice calm. "Where do I find his cabin?" she inquired.

It was probably her imagination, but Molly thought that Eva gave her rather a strange look.

"I'll take you along to it," Eva answered.

Molly knew she must find some excuse to get away. She had no intention of obeying the summons. And then—Breezy came hurrying on to the scene. He gave Molly a quick smile and then turned to Eva.

"I've just fixed up a game of deck quoits, Eva," he said, "and you're to be my partner. If we don't hurry the other won't wait for us."

Molly saw Eva hesitate, and then the dark-haired girl shrugged.

"All right, Breezy," she answered. "It's about time we played together. Boyd Newton's cabin is A 12," she added to Molly.

Breezy hurried Eva away, and Molly was left wondering what she should do. She decided to risk going to the shops.



Molly drew back in alarm as she heard the woman declare her pearl necklace had been stolen. The girl stowaway realised that everyone would think she was the thief.

cabins, all of which were in the seventies. She remembered then that Eva Matlock had left Cabin 72. By sheer chance she had come to her hiding-place.

Molly opened the door and stepped inside the empty cabin. It was smaller than A 36, but otherwise there was nothing wrong with it. Eva Matlock must be a very hard person to please if she had been disappointed in this cabin.

Molly sat down on the edge of the bunk. For the moment she was safe, but she could not remain shut up in here indefinitely. As soon as possible she must find out the number of Boyd Newton's cabin. And if she was to appear amongst the passengers again she must visit the shops before they closed for the day.

She waited until the afternoon was well advanced, and then she once again ventured abroad. She would visit the shops, make her purchases, and then return and remain in hiding for the rest of the day.

She had almost reached the line of shops when Eva Matlock came running up to her.

"Oh, Molly," she exclaimed, "I've been looking for you everywhere. Boyd Newton wants to see you in his cabin."

Molly caught her breath. There could be only one reason for this unexpected summons. Boyd Newton must have met and talked with the ship's officer who had recognised her. The assistant purser would know at

At the dress shop she bought a day frock, and was also tempted into buying a fancy dress, for the assistants told her that a masked, fancy dress ball was being held on board next evening. Molly's mind was quick to realise the possibilities of a masked ball.

With her purchases under her arm she went hurrying back to Cabin 72. She turned a corner, only to pull up abruptly.

Ahead of her several passengers were blocking the corridor, and they were being addressed by the sharp-featured woman from Cabin "M."

"My pearl necklace has been stolen!" the sharp-featured woman was shouting. "And I know the thief. I'm sure now it must have been the girl stowaway for whom everybody is still searching."

Molly gave a gasp of horror as she heard those accusing words. Quickly she turned on her heels, and she did not breathe easily again until she was safe inside Cabin 72. There was bound to be further excitement now, and she decided that she had better not venture out of the cabin any more that day.

"THERE'S THE STOWAWAY!"

THE early morning sun awoke Molly. For a moment she lay gazing round the small cabin in perplexity, and then immediately it all came flooding back. She was a

stowaway on board the Kardonus, and she was still undetected.

She wondered about breakfast. She could not go down to the dining-room for she had no table. And it was most important that she should not be seen by Boyd Newton. But somehow she would have to eat that day.

Molly waited until long after breakfast, and then she decided she would take the risk of going along to one of the small rest-rooms. In these it was always possible to purchase snacks.

When she left Cabin 72 she was wearing the frock she had bought the night before.

She turned into the corridor and ran right into Breezy.

"Why, Molly!" he exclaimed. "I've been looking for you everywhere. Some of us are going down to the pool for a swim. What about joining us?"

Molly's eyes sparkled, for she loved swimming. Then she remembered that she had no swimming costume, but Breezy dismissed that excuse with a grin.

"You can always hire a costume," he answered, "or you can buy one down at the shops."

Molly realised that if she wore a bathing cap and tucked her fair hair completely out of sight beneath it she would not be so easily recognisable.

"I'll buy a costume," she said.

The swimming-pool was well patronised by the young people on board, and Molly enjoyed herself so much that she forgot she was a stowaway.

And when they had changed again Breezy grinned at her.

"The sea air gives me an appetite," he said. "Let's go and find something to eat."

It was the one thing Molly desired to do. And so they sat on stools at one of the snack bars, and soon Molly was making quite a meal. They had just finished when Breezy suddenly slid from his chair.

"Oh!" he exclaimed quickly. "Here's Eva. I expect she's looking for me—I'm due to play deck tennis now." And he gave Molly a searching glance. "I'll be looking for you directly after lunch," he added.

"I—I may not be free after lunch," she answered. "But I'll see you at the fancy dress ball to-night."

"Good enough," he answered, and he was off like a shot, just as though he wanted to stop Eva and Molly getting together.

Molly went back to her cabin. She had had a meal, and with that she must be content. When the evening came she would put into operation the plan she had already formed.

It was a long and wearisome day for Molly. Every time she heard footsteps in the corridor outside, she held her breath. On several occasions she got ready to dive underneath the bunk, but nothing happened.

At long last she heard the call to dinner.

It was two hours later that Molly walked out of Cabin 72 clad in a simple, yet colourful gipsy costume and wearing a black mask. For this evening at least she would be safe from detection.

When she entered the big dance hall the floor was crowded, and everyone was masked and in some kind of a fancy costume. She soon picked out the younger people, and she was sure she recognised Breezy, despite the fact that he was wearing Arab costume. It was his walk which gave him away.

Molly danced with several partners, and still she failed to see the man she was looking for. Finally, there was a Paul Jones, and after several times round the floor Molly found herself facing a man dressed as a highwayman.

"Enjoying yourself?" he asked, and immediately Molly's heart jumped. Luck was with her. The highwayman was Boyd Newton—his voice had given him away.

When the Paul Jones was over Molly kept close to Boyd Newton, with the result that he asked her to

partner him in the waltz that followed—just as she had hoped he would.

"I know you," she said quietly. "You're the assistant purser." It's your voice that gives you away."

He smiled behind his mask. "I'll admit it," he said. "I'm only sorry I can't make a guess about your identity."

Molly laughed, and went on to talk about the sea, asking Boyd Newton about his duties. And finally she learned what she wanted to know, for he told her that at twelve o'clock he would be going on duty for the rest of the night.

That night there would be nobody in Cabin A 12.

Molly now decided to give herself up to the pleasure of the evening. She lost no time in finding Breezy. They danced together, and before they were half-way round the room Breezy identified her.

"What luck!" he exclaimed. "I've been searching for you ever since the dance started."

Breezy seemed to be a boy with an exceptional appetite, for the moment the dance was over he suggested that they should go along to the buffet and eat. And so Molly obtained her second meal that day.

Back to the ball-room then, and now the fun became fast and furious. Molly forgot the passage of time, and she was the most surprised girl in the room when there was a sudden roll on the drums.

Then one of the bandsmen beat out the hour of midnight on his chimes.

"Unmask!" went up a shout. "Everybody unmask!"

Molly gave a little gasp of dismay. Like Cinderella, she was caught at the ball. But Cinderella had managed to get away, leaving only a slipper behind her. It was too late for her to get away now.

All about her people were unmasking, and cries of recognition were going up everywhere. Breezy unmasked, and Molly bit her lip. She dare not retain her mask—if she did so she would attract the attention of everyone in the ball-room, and they would wonder why she was still keeping her mask on.

The mask must come off.

Molly's fingers trembled slightly as she pulled it away. Breezy caught her arm then, and once again he seemed to do exactly the right thing.

"It's time we went out on deck for a last breath of fresh air," he said.

They had almost reached the main staircase when suddenly a woman's shrill voice rang out—the voice of the sharp-featured woman from Cabin "M."

"There's the stowaway," she cried. "There's the girl who stole my necklace!"

THE SECRET OF THE CABIN

IN that moment Molly almost lost her head. What could she do now?

Once again it was Breezy who suddenly took charge. All in a flash he was hurrying her up the staircase.

"Where is she?" many voices demanded. "Where's the stowaway?"

Breezy did another surprising thing. Suddenly he was shouting at the top of his voice.

"There she goes! There she goes!"

He raced Molly up the staircase as though they were in chase of someone. They came to the deck, and then Breezy pointed to the other side of a pile of steamer chairs that had been folded up and neatly stacked.

"Dodge down behind those!" he hissed. "I'll hold up the chase, and then you slip away as soon as the coast's clear!"

With a thankful gasp Molly obeyed. Even as she crouched down behind the chairs a rush of figures appeared along the deck, led by a ship's officer.

"After her!" yelled Breezy. "I saw her—she went that way!"

"But we've just come from that direction—" began the officer.

"Then she must have dodged you somehow!" said Breezy excitedly.

"Come on!"

And he led the group back along the deck, and Molly heard him still shouting as, with fast-beating heart, she slipped away and safely regained her cabin.

For a full hour she waited, fearing every moment that the cabin door would burst open. But nothing happened.

And as she waited she thought of Breezy. He knew she was the stowaway—and he had helped her!

Then another thought took possession of her. Boyd Newton was on duty, and so his cabin was empty. This was the opportunity she had waited for.

Some few minutes after one o'clock Molly left the cabin. She found A 12, and, to her joy, the door opened immediately she turned the handle. Reaching inside, she switched on the light, and knew that this time she had made no mistake. This was indeed Boyd Newton's cabin, for his photograph was staring at her from the dressing-table.

She remembered the cabin that Alan had shown her on her last visit to the ship. Its occupant had been arrested for smuggling. He had cunningly made a secret cubby-hole behind the wash-basin. It had seemed to be part of the basin itself, but when the bottom corner of the secret compartment had been tapped a tiny square of wood had eased itself out showing a space behind it.

Would she find such a compartment behind the wash-basin in this cabin—and would it contain the proof she sought?

She was almost at the wash-basin when the door crashed open behind her. Molly turned, with a startled cry, to see Boyd Newton was standing in the doorway.

And Boyd Newton smiled at her. "Good-evening, Miss Fairlie," he said with a sneer, "or is it good-morning? I'd an idea that you might visit my cabin to-night."

Words were beyond Molly.

"You're very clever," he went on. "I was in the ball-room when you were denounced, and I knew then why you'd asked me so many questions. You made sure of discovering that I would be on duty to-night. And so, remembering your questions, I decided to mount guard over my cabin."

He strode inside and caught her roughly by the arm.

"And now," he grated, "you'll tell me why you stowed away on board this ship and why you're so curious about my cabin?"

Molly forced herself to meet his angry gaze.

"I—I've nothing to say," she answered.

Just for the moment she saw doubt in his eyes. He was obviously wondering how much she knew.

"All right," he said then, "you can explain to the captain. This way, my girl!"

Molly was dragged out of the cabin and along the corridor. They turned the corner, and then there was a sudden rush of feet.

Breezy and another boy appeared, and it seemed to Molly that a blanket was thrown over Boyd Newton's head as he was pulled to the deck.

In a flash Breezy was up again and grinning at Molly.

"We seem to have made a mistake," he gasped. "We've tackled the wrong man. We'd better beat it, Molly!"

He dragged Molly away at top speed.

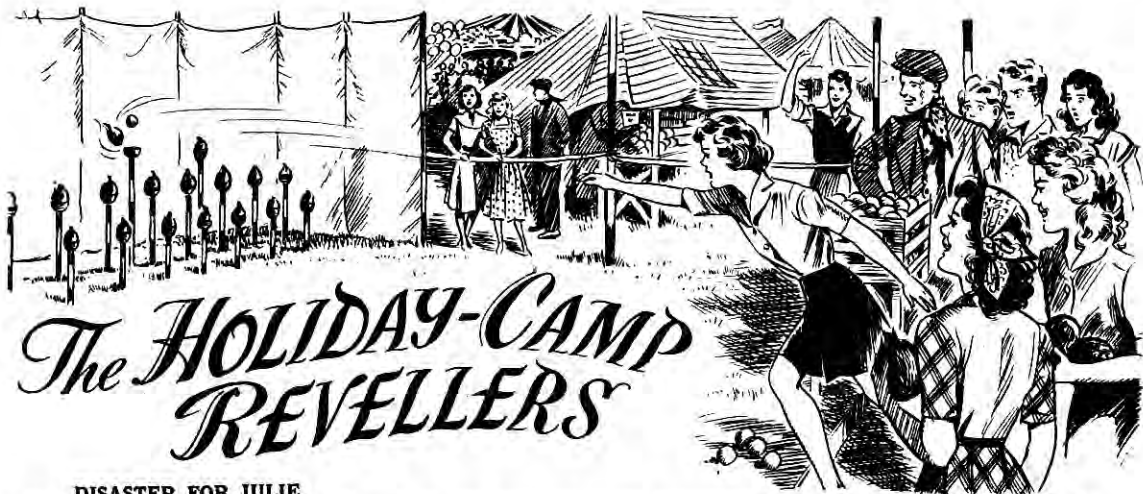
Only when they were out on the deck and standing in the dark shadow of one of the lifeboats did Molly have a chance to get her breath back. She looked at Breezy then.

"You know about me, don't you?" she asked.

Breezy chuckled in the darkness. "Of course, I know," he said.

"When you first came aboard I heard the steward shout after you and realised that's why you were running. When I heard there was a stowaway on board I put two and two together."

(Please turn to the back page.)



The HOLIDAY-CAMP REVELLERS

DISASTER FOR JULIE

JULIE DELMAR received an invitation to spend a holiday at Haley Holiday Camp with a Miss Paget.

But when she arrived at the camp she learnt that no booking had been made for her, and Miss Paget had not arrived. It was only thanks to the generosity of her chums, Wendy Rayland and Kay and Gerry Briscoe, that she was able to remain at the camp.

She discovered that a mysterious man and his unknown girl confederate in the holiday camp were after the secret of a fan which Miss Paget had sent her.

By putting together the fragments of a torn letter, Julie & Co. learned that Miss Paget had gone to St. Malo, in France.

Julie refused to borrow any more money from her chums when they suggested they should all go to St. Malo. Wendy had an idea for giving Julie the money in such a way that she wouldn't know it had come from them, however, and was telling Kay about it when they discovered a man in Gerry's chalet. It was Julie's secret enemy—searching under the floorboards for the fan which was hidden there.

"KAY, look! It's the mystery man! And he's taking Julie's fan!"

The words came from Wendy Rayland in a quivering gasp as she stared into the chalet. Kay's eyes almost popped as she followed her chum's gaze.

For as the black-hatted mystery man leapt to his feet and confronted them they saw that the fan which had been hidden in the suitcase was gripped in one hand.

For a tense moment the man and the two girls glared at one another, then Wendy leapt into action. Swiftly she slammed to the door and turned the key in the lock.

The thief was trapped!
"Kay—quickly! Get help!" she cried. "Fetch Gerry—Julie!"

From inside the chalet came a cry. Then footsteps pounded across the floor. Grimly Wendy clung to the knob as the locked door was wrenched furiously from the inside. She heard the man's grating voice.

"Open the door!"

"Not a chance!" Wendy retorted.

The door rattled again. Kay, running faster than she had ever run in her life before, had rushed off towards the Information Office. Another minute, thought Wendy, and desperately raised her voice as the door was savagely kicked from the inside.

"Help—help!"

But there was no immediate reply. With the attraction of the newly-opened fun fair and the swimming pool drawing their occupants, the chalets were completely deserted.

The door savagely rattled. For a second Wendy thought the lock would snap; there was a crack as some plank splintered. And then,

from the direction of the Information Office:

"Hold him, Wendy! We're coming"

It was Gerry's excited voice. There was a rush of feet as he, Kay and a quivering Julie came dashing towards the scene. Joyfully Wendy called back; fiercely she clung on. Then Gerry was at her side.

"O.K." he said.

He turned the key, flinging the door wide. Into the chalet the four chums jumped, only to come to an abrupt standstill. Julie gave a cry.

"He—he's gone!"

They all stared, for a moment completely flabbergasted. The chalet was empty. The prisoner had flown—and with him the fan! Then they saw that the window at the other end of the room was wide open.

"That's how he escaped," Wendy cried. "Oh, goodness, why didn't I think? But quick! He can't be far away!"

They pelted to the rear of the chalet. This brought them into the alley which divided one row of chalets from the other. And at the bottom of the alley, just vanishing round the corner—

"There he is!" shrieked Kay.

"After him!"

The hunt was on with a vengeance then. Down the alley they raced. At breakneck speed they whizzed round the corner—to see their quarry plunging through the bushes that screened the Haley Holiday Retreat—the flower-scented garden in which the older holiday-makers, the sun-bathers and the more restful spirits spent their hours of ease.

The peace and serenity of the Retreat was rudely shattered as the black-hatted figure, running at a surprising speed, crashed across the flower-bordered lawns. After him, in a tensely excited group, whizzed the four chums.

Then Gerry, who was leading, came a purler over a flattened deckchair lying in the grass. Unable to stop themselves, Julie & Co. with a yell, went piling on top of him.

"Ow!"

"Crumbs!"

"Get up!" panted Kay.

They scrambled to their feet. The

By ELISE PROBYN

Retreat was in an uproar now. The mystery man, with fifty yards lead, was in the act of crashing through the gate.

Again they took up the pursuit. But that man could certainly run, and he was still maintaining his lead when they sped through the gate and saw him racing alongside the toddlers' playground, beyond which was the entrance to the fun fair.

"He's making for the fair!" Gerry shouted. "The rotter hopes to lose himself in the crowd. Keep him in sight, whatever you do!"

There was no need for that advice. Desperately their quarry plunged through the entrance. After him, hearts thudding anxiously now, pelted the chums.

The fair, a blare of music, loud-speakers, dust and moving holiday-campers, was confusing. For a moment it seemed hopeless to think of keeping in touch with anyone. Then Kay spotted the mystery man. "There he is—sloping through the amusement park. And—look! There are a couple of empty sociables."

The crowd was thinner in the amusement park, which lay immediately to their right. Most of the campers were gathered round the stalls, throwing darts or playing hoopla or sporting odd coins on the roll-a-pennies and the Derby racers. Stranded in the middle of the alley were two of the chummy-looking three-wheeled bikes with their double seats, side by side.

Obviously they belonged to somebody, but that didn't worry the man-hunting chums. While Julie and Gerry scrambled into one, Wendy and Kay smartly mounted the second.

"After him!" yelled Kay.

"Stop that man!"

With a whizz and a ringing of bells they shot away. Julie's heart was hammering now. For the last few minutes she had been the victim of sick, anxious despair, knowing that her precious fan had been stolen; that in that fan was the great, vital link to the puzzling mystery which surrounded her.

Now, with a rush, hope came back. With the advantage of the sociables it seemed that they would at last succeed in overtaking the desperate thief. Who was he? Would they succeed in capturing him at last?

"Whoops, we're gaining!" Gerry whooped.

They were—no doubt about that. People turned, grinning and cheering, unconscious of the terrific seriousness of the chase. They imagined that this was just another high-spirited Haley holiday game. For an instant their hunted quarry turned. They saw his face, grim and desperate.

This Week Julie & Co. Embark On A Desperate Chase Through The Camp's Fun-fair. At All Costs The Thief Must Be Prevented From Getting Away With The Mystery Fan.

"We've got him!" Gerry yelled jubilantly.

It seemed that they had. With the amusement stall closely packed there could be no dodging off at a tangent. And ahead, fifty yards away, the alley was blocked by a white-stone edifice which brazenly invited:

"TAKE A TRIP BY THE GHOST TRAIN INTO SPOOKEYLAND."

Madly they pedaled. With every second the gap decreased. It seemed that the capture of their quarry was a mere matter of seconds when—

"Hey, of all the nerve!"

"Running off with our sociables!"

Three indignant figures had suddenly darted into their path—the figures of the yellow jerseyed Larry Billies—the yellow jerseyed Larry Curtis, with Audrey and Sidney Potter. Furiously and violently the Hill-Billies laid hands on the two machines, capsizing a yelling Gerry into the dust and dragging Kay and Wendy to an abrupt halt.

"Please, please—" protested Julie.

"We want our machines!"

"And what about the coconut contest?"

"Oh, go and milk your coconuts!"

Gerry fumed, as he leapt to his feet. "Now you've spoiled it all, you idiots! Quick! After that man!" he cried. "He's bolting into the ghost train station."

"But what about—"

"Come on!"

There was no time for argument. For even as they turned they saw the mystery man diving into the dark tunnel which was the entrance to the ghost train station. Leaving their gaping rivals in bewildered possession of the sociables, they sprinted on.

Would they be in time?

They reached the station just as there came a hollow shriek from the ghost train's siren. Breathlessly they pelted into it. And then they all stopped dead, and from Julie went up a despairing groan.

For the ghost train was already disappearing into the greenly-lit tunnel, and in the rear coach, grinning back at them in triumph, was the mystery man!

LOST ON THE GHOST TRAIN

THERE was a deep and heartburning silence as the baffled chums stopped, listening to the ghost train rumbling away into the spooky distance. It was broken by Gerry.

"We—we've lost him!"

"And thanks," Wendy said furiously, "to those Hill-Billy chumps. We—" She looked at Julie who, in spite of the desperate fight she was waging for self-control, could not disguise her poignant disappointment. "Julie, I'm frightfully sorry."

Julie tried to smile. It was a wan effort. She was thinking of all that fan might have meant to her. She was thinking of the importance with which her unknown benefactress, Miss Paget, had invested it.

She had been directed to take care of that fan. She had been told, in the fragments of Miss Paget's letter which she possessed, that it would direct her to find something of vital significance. Now—

"Well, and what's the next move?"

Kay asked. "We can't follow, I suppose—"

"No," Wendy said. "We can't follow because there's only one ghost train. But—" She looked at Julie again. "We can wait till it comes back. There's just a chance he'll still be on it."

They waited, but with no bright hope. Presently they heard the train rumbling stationwards again, accompanied by shrieks and shouts from its passengers. By common consent they spread out along the platform, determined that not a single traveller should go unexamined. But when the grinning passengers stepped out there was only one they recognised.

That was—Vera Bickley.

"Hal-lo!" Wendy breathed, and at once all their suspicions became sharp. "Now fancy meeting you," she said, stepping forward as Vera, with a toss of her head, would have passed. "What happened to your friend?"

"My what?"

"You know! The fellow who jumped in at the last moment."

"I don't know," Vera said disdainfully. "And I haven't the faintest idea of what you are talking about—if you are talking about anything. Anyway, don't detain me. I'm on my way to the manager's office."

"Why?"

"My business!" Vera sniffed and walked off.

"Now what," Wendy said softly, "does that mean? There's something in this. First Vera—or so we suspect—got the hint that the fan was hidden in Gerry's suitcase. You know, Gerry, you really shouldn't be so talkative."

"Sorry," Gerry mumbled, reddening. "But how was I to guess Vera was anywhere near?"

"Then, Wendy went on, 'we found Mr. Mystery Man in the act of pinching the fan—which, of course, all points to the conclusion that Vera tipped him off immediately.'"

"And then," said Kay, "we find Mr. Mystery Man and Vera travelling on the same ghost train. It's fishy to say the least."

"They all agreed on that point. But still Wendy was questioning."

"It's suspicious," she said, "but how could Vera possibly have arranged to meet him on the ghost train when it was us who chased him on to it?"

They pondered the point. Gerry scratched his head.

"Give it up," he said. "But we know that Vera is hand in glove with him, and if you ask me it was she who jolly well helped him to escape. And talking about that," he added, "how did the blighter escape? Gosh, do you think he might be skulking about in these tunnels, waiting to shoot off as soon as our backs are turned?"

"That's an idea!" Wendy said. "Gerry, you and I will take the next train and keep our peepers peeled. Julie, you and Kay stop here just in case. Come on, Gerry, the train's ready to start again."

She and Gerry clambered into a coach. A minute later the train shrieked off, leaving Julie and Kay on the little platform.

Julie felt a little more cheerful now. She knew, if the mystery man was skulking along the ghost train's spooky route, he would not escape the vigilant eyes of Wendy. What grand chums these were, she thought again. How marvellous they were in their endeavour to help.

With an impatience tinged with hope she and Kay waited. But when at last the train returned she saw by the expressions on Wendy's and Gerry's faces that they had had no luck.

"I'm afraid we've lost him," Wendy said. "The train stops at one place for a minute—a place called Graveyard Station. A darkish hole with skeletons and ghosts made up to look like spooky porters, and with an entrance leading into the open—in case, I suppose, some nervous passengers don't feel like finishing the trip. That entrance," Wendy added, "is near a main road, because I caught a glimpse of telegraph poles and a bus as we went through. And that must have been where our mystery man got out."

Julie felt utterly despondent; they all were. Then suddenly, breaking above the blend of music, voices and the whirl of swings and roundabouts, an announcement came over the loud-speaker.

"Haley campers, attention, please. Attention."

The chums listened, though not particularly interested. But they stiffened with a jerk as the announcer went on:

"Has anyone lost a fan—a purple fan of Oriental design?"

"Julie!" breathed Wendy.

"This fan has been found and is in the office of the fair manager at the camp gate. The owner is invited to claim it at once."

"Whoopee! That's it!" Gerry cried. "The man must have dropped it while we were chasing him—"

"Unless," Kay said, "it's another fan."

"Soon settle that," said Wendy.

"Let's go and see!"

Julie was quivering now, torn by hope and uncertainty. Could it really be true? Was it possible, after all his desperate scheming, that her mystery enemy had accidentally lost his stolen prize?

She felt she dared not hope too strongly as, with her chums, she raced off to the manager's office. But when she had blurted out a description of the fan to the manager himself—

"Well, that certainly fits it," he said smilingly, and then plunged a hand under his desk and placed an object on its surface. A simultaneous shriek of delight went up from all four of them as they recognised it.

"Julie, it's your fan!"

Julie's eyes shone. Her hand shook in happy relief as she grasped her stolen treasure. What wonderful luck!

"Thank—thank you," she gasped to the manager. "Yes—yes; it is mine. But—" and then she thought of something else. "But where was it found? Who found it?"

"Your fan was found," the manager said, "on the ghost train, and—he gestured towards the door—"here is the young lady who found it."

The chums turned, then gasped as they recognised the girl who came sauntering into the office.

"Vera Bickley!" Julie stuttered faintly.

THEIR GREAT MISTAKE

"VERA!"

"Great snakes!"

"So—so it was you who found Julie's fan!"

Almost trance-like they regarded the dark, thin-faced figure which stood now before them—Vera! Vera, the girl they had suspected for so long of being the secret helper of Julie's unknown enemy!

They couldn't take it in all at once. It just didn't make sense.

But there was no pleasure on Vera's face.

"Yes, I found it," she said. "But I'm bothered if I'd gone to the trouble if I'd known it belonged to you lot!"

"Sweet," murmured Wendy. "But really, Vera, we are truly grateful. If you'll only allow us to thank you—"

Vera, however, had turned on her heel, and huffily she strode out of the office.

"I gather," the manager observed dryly, "that Miss Bickley is not a friend of yours. Ungracious—very." He frowned a little. "Anyway, I'm pleased you've got it back," he added heartily.

In spite of her joy, Julie was still feeling dazed.

"Did—did she give any particulars, as to how she found it?"

"Oh, yes," the manager nodded. "Naturally we take all details when lost property is deposited here. According to the girl a man jumped on to the ghost train at the last minute."

"We know," Gerry said grimly.

"He vanished, apparently, at the Graveyard Station. Miss Bickley was sitting near him and then discovered this fan. She wasn't sure whether it belonged to the man or not—she thought not, I gather, for fans are not things men usually carry around."

That was all. It cleared up none of the confusion in the minds of the chums. Still with a sensation of being on their heads rather than their heels, they went back into the fair, Julie now thrusting the cherished fan deep into the pocket of her shorts. But gradually the astounding truth was beginning to dawn on all of them.

"Well," Gerry said, breaking a long silence, "it's cleared one thing up, anyway. We've been barking up the wrong tree thinking Vera was that man's accomplice—and that she has been after Julie's fan."

"Right enough," agreed Wendy. "But somebody's helping him, and if it isn't Vera—"

"Then who?" Julie asked.

They all felt baffled. All felt, indeed, a little humiliated thinking

of the shattering mistake they had made. Vera's companion, obviously, had been actuated only by a spiteful dislike of Julie. It was some other holiday-maker in the camp who had been working against Julie—some girl as unknown now as the mystery man himself.

"Could it have been—Brenda Cole?" Kay asked.

Doubtfully they looked at her. The same thought was stirring in all their minds. But Wendy vigorously shook her head.

"Oh, don't let's do any more guessing," she said. "We know Brenda isn't too friendly—but that's because Vera has turned her against us. We've no real proof against her—and a jolly sight less cause for suspicion than ever we had against Vera. There's one thing we can do—"

"And what's that?" Gerry asked. "Keep our eyes open—and our ears. Whoever it is, is bound to make some slip before long and then we shall know. And the mystery man must be getting desperate to have attempted that robbery himself and in daylight. Julie, I suggest that as soon as we get back to the camp you put that fan in the camp's bank."

Julie nodded. Nothing now should ever part her from that fan until she had solved this mystery—or had seen Miss Paget, who had so mysteriously left the relic in her trust.

What was the secret of the fan? If only she could have seen this mysterious Miss Paget, she thought. If only, as Gerry had impulsively suggested, they could have gone on the air trip to St. Malo! Once there, Julie was convinced, they would track Miss Paget down in a very short time. From the fragments of her letter they had deciphered most of her address. All that remained to do now was to find the right Rue de Val—

But that trip, of course, was impossible. Julie had no money, and even though her chums were ready and willing to lend her the fare, Julie's pride and her uncertainty as to the future would not allow her to accept it.

"Gosh, here's old Canary Curtis again!" Gerry suddenly chuckled as the yellow-jerseyed leader of the Hill-Billies was seen bearing down on them. "He's still chasing us about that coconut contest. Come on, let's get it over."

And off they went with Larry to the coconut-shy. There Sidney Potter, Audrey and another Hill-Billy were awaiting them.

"O.K.," grinned Larry. "Five balls each! Toss who goes first!" he added to Gerry.

The toss was made and Gerry lost. With a grin Larry beckoned to the new Hill-Billy—a cheery, freckle-faced youth who was introduced as Sammy Longfield.

Sammy took his stand, measured his distance and energetically threw. There came a whoop from the Hill-Billies as the first coconut toppled in the dust.

"One to us! Who says a lovely bunch of coconuts for the Hill-Billies?"

Sammy threw again. Another coconut. A third ball—still another nut. The fourth hit but failed to dislodge its target, but the fifth, delivered with gusto, smashed its object to smithereens.

"Four to us!" cheered Larry. "I forgot to mention that Sammy Longfield is the champion skittler of Somerset!"

"Give me those balls," Gerry said grimly.

He did his best and lustily he threw. But Gerry only got two.

The Hill-Billies were cock-a-hoop now. Larry followed, also getting two. Then came Kay—one; and Audrey, following her, got two. The Hill-Billies were crowing now. They had a lead of five!

Then came Wendy, throwing balls all over the place. She never even saw the nuts she knocked down, but by two magnificent flukes she reduced the lead to three. Then came Sidney Potter's turn.

Sidney aimed carefully and well, but what Sidney gained in accuracy he lacked in force. Three times he shook his target, but no coconut came rolling off its rest. The lead still remained three.

"And Julie's our last man in," Gerry grimaced.

Julie smiled. She hadn't much hope, but she was keen not to let her side down. She threw. Whang! and off fled a coconut. She threw again—and missed. Oh, goodness!

Third ball. Another coconut. Fourth ball and Julie missed. She put everything she knew into the fifth ball, and they all watched with bated breath as it flew on its way. Then from Gerry came a yell.

"Julie, you wizard! You've got two! Who says the Jack and Jill's can't smother the Hill-Billies?"

For Julie's ball had not only floored one coconut, but, bouncing off, had brought another toppling with it. How the chums yelled then at the stupefaction on their rivals' faces!

In great good spirits they gathered up their winnings. Triumphant they marched off. But outside the fairground, Wendy, with a quick look at Kay, paused.

"Julie, you go and deposit that

turns these chums of hers had done for her, was diving into her case. She did not see the look of grinning delight that passed between Wendy and Kay. She did not notice the wink they threw at the amazed Gerry.

She found the dress still wrapped in its cellophane coverings and hopefully she shook it out. As she did so a little pearl-embroidered, black silk bag fell out of it. And out of the bag fluttered—

"Gee, a five-pound note!" Wendy breathed as she picked it up. "Julie—it's yours!" She gazed joyfully at the dazed Julie, who was staring at the note as though it couldn't have been real, and never suspecting that Kay and Wendy had benevolently planted it there. "Julie, don't you see? Miss Paget must have left it for you—"

"That's it," Kay said solemnly. "Maybe she thought you'd need an extra spot of cash if you went dancing and—oh, golly!" she added, with a whoop. "Julie, this means, after all, that we can go to St. Malo!"

Julie literally jumped. So stupefied had she been by her unexpected windfall that for a moment she had not thought of the possibilities it opened. But now—



"Here is the young lady who found your fan," said the manager. The chums gasped, for it was Vera Bickley who stood in the office doorway. The girl they had believed to be their biggest enemy!

fan," she said. "Gerry, you go with her. Kay and I will take the loot. See you at the chalet." Take the loot.

They parted, Kay and Wendy shedding coconuts as they went. At the camp bank Julie and Gerry relievedly went through the formalities of depositing the fan, got the receipt and went out again. As they did so the loudspeakers began to blare.

"Calling all intending St. Malo trippers!" it said, and Julie stopped still. "There are five seats left for Friday—five seats only. Hurry—hurry if you want to go!"

Julie knew a fresh pang of disappointment. If only she had had the money to make that trip! But she hadn't, and that was that.

They reached the chalet to find Wendy and Kay rather dolefully looking at two evening frocks they had dragged out. Kay was pouting.

"I simply can't wear that old electric blue for the tango competition," she said. "And that oyster silk of yours slips off my shoulders, Wendy. Julie, come and tell us what you think."

"Wait a minute!" Wendy cried. "Gosh, I believe I've got it! Julie, Miss Paget left you a black evening dress in that luggage, didn't she?"

"So she did," Julie said. "And I've never even unwrapped it. Oh, Kay, I wonder if it would fit you? Would you like to borrow it if it does?"

"Wouldn't I?" Kay breathed fervently. "But really, Julie—"

Julie, however, only too anxious to repay in some small measure the good

"That's it!" she cried. "Oh, goodness, yes, yes! We can go! We will go—on Friday. We'll spend Miss Paget's money in finding Miss Paget. And then we'll get to the bottom of this mystery once and for all. But hurry! They've only got five seats left!"

She flung the black dress across the bed. Excitedly she rushed through the door, her grinning chums following. Her heart was singing now. At last, it seemed, her dearest wish was to be granted.

"Oh, golly," she grinned as they hurried along. "Perhaps my luck's changed with the finding of that money—for so much depends on finding Miss Paget. And fancy that money being there all the time, and I didn't know!"

Her two chums glanced at each other, but said nothing, happy in the knowledge that they had cheered Julie up considerably.

They reached the excursion office and rushed up to the counter.

"Hullo," cried Julie. "Please, we'd like four seats for the St. Malo air trip on Friday."

The booking clerk shook his head. "I'm sorry," he said regretfully, "but every seat is now booked for St. Malo. A young lady took the last—all five of them—not three minutes ago!"

Can the chums overcome this setback? Can they find some way of getting to St. Malo? There will be more thrills and excitement in next week's chapters.



THE TELL-TALE KEY

WHILE on holiday near Riversea, June Gaynor, the girl detective, learned that Alona Simms, a girl who had been at school with her, was in danger from a master-crook known as the Masked Jester.

Alona was taking part in a rowing race, and her boat was capsized in mysterious circumstances. Afterwards she discovered that a key, left in her possession by her uncle, Stephen Kerr, had been stolen.

Noel Raymond, June's famous detective uncle, suspected that Mr. Kerr had been kidnapped by the Masked Jester—as had four other men, all of whom were interested in Egyptology and had possessed scarabs shaped like a cat's head.

After an examination of Mr. Kerr's room at the Palm Bay Hotel, Noel told June that they were going to take up residence there—because he believed that one of the guests there was the Masked Jester.

JUNE GAYNOR drew in a thrilled breath. "The Masked Jester living here, Nunky—in the Palm Bay Hotel?"

Noel Raymond nodded. "I'm certain of it. That's why we must make this place our headquarters. Come along, my dear. We'll interview the manager right away."

June's heart thumped as she followed the famous detective out of the suite and walked with him along the short, private corridor leading to the lift.

She was burning with impatience to start work on the strange mystery which centred around the vanished owners of the cat-headed scarabs. But mingled with her excitement was a feeling of grim anger. She could not forget that the evidence seemed to suggest that one of the kidnapped men had been Alona Simms' uncle.

Her eyes grew misty as she thought of her ex-school chum, tossing and turning in bed in the nearby room. What a shame it was that her holiday at Riversea should have been so cruelly spoilt! Poor Alona! She had had a terribly distressing day, though, fortunately, as yet she did not suspect the truth about her uncle.

"And she shan't know," June vowed fiercely, as she and Noel descended in the automatic lift. "We'll keep the news from her somehow. She's been upset enough already, without the knowledge that her uncle's been captured by the Masked Jester."

Emerging from the lift into the spacious foyer, gay with softly glow-

ing lights and flowers, the girl detective looked about her curiously.

It was nearing dinner-time and already the guests were beginning to assemble in anticipation of the summons of the gong.

Which of them was the master-crook?

Intrigued, speculative, June's gaze went from chair to chair. Most of the guests seated there looked ordinary enough, but here and there her attention was arrested.

By one of the windows stood a short, broad-shouldered man, smoking a cigar. His clean-shaven face looked grim and sombre, and there was something about his manner which suggested ruthless determination.

And in a nearby alcove, talking to Mr. Wentworth, the white-haired cripple in the wheel chair, was another burly guest, whose bristling eyebrows and loud voice suggested an aggressiveness which instinctively made June dislike him.

Could either of them be the mysterious Masked Jester?

She shook her head a little impatiently. It was silly to go by first impressions. It was quite possible that the man they sought was not in any way distinctive. He might even be that benign old gentleman offering sweets to the two giggling children, or that foppish young man smiling fatuously at the attractive girl seated under the palm tree.

"Come along, my dear. No time for day-dreams."

Noel's gently reproving voice cut into her ruminations, and with a hurried word of apology she followed him into the manager's office.

The manager—a plump, dapper little man immaculately dressed in a short black coat and striped trousers—was horrified when he learnt of the robbery, but he quickly offered his co-operation when he learnt of the detective's identity.

"Of course you and your niece can have the use of Mr. Kerr's suite," he declared. "Mr. Kerr is an old friend of mine, and I am certain he would approve if he were here. You say that the thief used a key in order to enter Mr. Kerr's suite? But that is impossible. There are only two keys, and Mr. Kerr took both away with him."

The Masked Jester Is The Most Baffling Crook June And Noel Have Ever Encountered.

By PETER LANGLEY

Noel smiled a little dryly.

"Usually one hotel lock is very much like another," he pointed out, "and frequently the keys are interchangeable."

The manager frowned.

"That is true, but before the season opened I had new locks fitted on the doors of Mr. Kerr's suite. Mr. Kerr himself insisted on it. It was almost as if he feared he might be robbed, so I am afraid—" The manager broke off and snapped his plump fingers. "There is one other room which has a similar lock—No. 47. The key of that might fit."

June and Noel exchanged quick glances. The same thought had come to them both.

Could this tenant of Room No. 47 be the Masked Jester?

"Who occupies that particular room?" asked Noel quietly.

The manager crossed to the door of his office, looked out into the crowded foyer, then pointed across to one of the alcoves.

"That is him—Mr. Julius Streiner. In the register he described himself as a financier. He only arrived here last night."

June felt her heart miss a beat, as she followed the manager's glance. He was pointing to the burly, aggressive man bending over the invalid's chair—the guest to whom she had taken an instant dislike!

Noel nodded and took a step forward.

"We will have a word with him, if you don't mind," he said.

The manager looked anxious. "But you will be discreet?" he pleaded. "I cannot have my guests disturbed. This unfortunate robbery will do my hotel no good as it is."

Noel smiled sympathetically and crossed the foyer, June at his side. As they reached the wheel-chair Mr. Wentworth looked up and smiled genially, but his companion glared, his bushy eyebrows bristling.

"Well, and what might you require?" he barked.

Noel produced a business card and silently held it out. Julius Streiner almost snatched it, glowered down at it, then let it flutter to the carpet.

"A detective!" he snorted. "Surely there's no occasion for a person of your sort to intrude in a holiday hotel!"

"I am afraid there is," Noel's voice was apologetic. He never allowed rudeness to disturb him. "You see, one of your fellow-guests has been robbed—a Mr. Stephen Kerr."

"Stephen Kerr!" It was the white-haired invalid in the wheel-chair who echoed the name, and his watery

brown eyes took on a look of concern. "My dear sir, I am distressed to hear that. Since I came here to recuperate Mr. Kerr has been very kind to me, and I have grown very fond of his young niece. A charming girl, Mr. Raymond—charming."

He smiled pleasantly, but his companion was still glaring aggressively at Noel and June.

"Even if there has been a robbery, I don't see why you should interrupt our conversation," he snapped. "Neither Mr. Wentworth nor I can be of any assistance."

"That remains to be seen, Mr. Streiner," put in the detective.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, by a curious coincidence the key of your room also fits the lock of Mr. Kerr's suite."

And the thief gained entrance by unlocking the door in the ordinary way," added June, her keen eyes never leaving the self-styled financier's red, leathery features.

He straightened up with a jerk, his whole body quivering.

"By thunder, but this is the limit!" he barked. "My girl, are you daring to suggest—"

"We are suggesting nothing," cut in Noel quickly. "We are only wondering if you would be kind enough to let us examine your key."

Julius Streiner shook his head. "There's nothing doing," he snapped.

"You mean, you refuse, sir?"

"I mean that I couldn't show it to you even if I wanted to," was the bad-tempered response. "I lost my key this afternoon."

"Lost it, sir?"

"Lost it or had it stolen! I don't know which. I only know that it's gone. I've been hunting it for over an hour. Now, if you've quite finished with your cross-examination, I'll bid you good-evening."

And, as the gong boomed out and the other guests began to move towards the dining-room, the financier went striding out of the alcove.

June knew a bitter disappointment. It looked as if her suspicions had been directed against the wrong man. If Julius Streiner had really lost his key, then he could not be the mysterious Masked Jester.

With a sigh the girl detective turned to Noel.

"It looks as if we've been barking up the wrong tree, Nunky," she said. "If Mr. Streiner's key was used, then—"

But that was as far as she got, for suddenly her uncle gave a stern, commanding shout.

"Just a moment, please, Mr. Streiner," he ordered.

The financier swung round. "What is it now?" he demanded irritably. "Look here, my man—"

He finished with a cry of anger, for without warning the detective had darted forward, one hand flying to Julius Streiner's right-hand pocket.

From one corner protruded a looped cord. Only Noel's keen eyes had noticed it, and like lightning his fingers closed on it.

"If you lost your key, then what's this doing in your pocket?" he asked.

He gave a pull, and out flew a metallic object tied to the end of the cord.

Mr. Wentworth, craning forward in his wheel-chair, gave a startled gasp, while June's eyes lit up with thrilled delight.

For the object which Noel had plucked from the financier's pocket was a key—and the tab attached to it revealed that it belonged to Room 47!

THE MASKED JESTER STRIKES AGAIN

"WELL Mr. Streiner, what explanation have you to offer?"

Sternly Noel Raymond regarded the financier.

The financier did not reply. All the bluster seemed to have gone out of him. He licked his lips with a nervous tongue and stared at the tell-tale key with goggling eyes.

"You don't deny that this is the

key of your room, do you?" asked Noel.

Mr. Streiner shook his head.

"N-no," he mumbled dazedly. "That's my key right enough, but it beats me how it got into my pocket. It wasn't there half an hour ago. Of that I'm certain. All I can think is that the thief, having borrowed it, secretly returned it."

Both June and Noel regarded the man sharply. Was he telling the truth, or was this a piece of clever bluff, put on in order to wriggle out of an awkward situation?

"If the thief did slip the key into your pocket without your knowledge," Noel commented, "he must have been very close to you. Who have you been with since you became aware of your loss?"

The financier frowned.

"No one—except Mr. Wentworth here." He nodded down at the white-haired cripple, then gave a sudden start. "Ah, yes. I had a drink with someone in the bar, and I remember he brushed against me when he was collecting his change. He could have put the key in my pocket."

Noel's face was impassive; there was no hint there of what he was thinking.



Grasping the letter he had stolen from Noel Raymond's letter-box, the intruder swung round, and June realised that she was face to face with the Masked Jester.

"Who was this person?" he asked. "A fellow named Philip Manners. Don't know anything about him. Never met him until—"

Breaking off, Julius Streiner suddenly stabbed out with an angry finger. "That's the chap—just going in to dinner," he declared.

Both June and Noel looked across the foyer, and the girl detective caught in her breath as she saw the short, broad-shouldered man just passing through the glass doors of the dining-room.

It was the grim, sombre guest she had noticed smoking a cigar by the window—the man she had decided was ruthless and determined enough to be the Masked Jester!

"He's the rascal you're looking for—must be," cried the financier.

"Better question him—not me!" And, mopping agitatedly at his brow, he went striding away.

At that moment a hotel attendant approached and looked inquiringly down at the invalid in the wheel-chair.

"Excuse me, Mr. Wentworth, but are you ready to go upstairs?" he asked.

The cripple nodded and smiled apologetically up at June and Noel.

"Please excuse me, but I have to go to bed very early. Doctor's orders, you know. I hope by the morning this unfortunate affair will be cleared

up. It's distressing—most distressing."

And, shaking his head sadly, he allowed the attendant to wheel him across to the lift. When he had gone June caught excitedly at Noel's sleeve.

"Well, Nunky, what do you think?" she asked. "Was Mr. Streiner telling the truth?"

The detective's grey eyes narrowed thoughtfully.

"He may well have done," he said slowly. "He's an unpleasant type, but that's not to say he's the scoundrel we're looking for. It would have been simple for a clever trickster like the Masked Jester to have slipped the key back into Streiner's pocket."

"If that's so, then Philip Manners must be the Masked Jester!" cried June.

Her uncle smiled and shook his head.

"Not necessarily. We mustn't jump to conclusions, my dear. I'd like to make one or two inquiries about Manners and Streiner. While I'm doing so, perhaps you'd take a taxi back to our cottage and pack a bag or two. I'll join you as soon as I can."

June nodded, and so they parted.

The back door had a glass panel in it, and through the glass came the glow of a light.

Someone was inside the cottage. But who could it be? Before leaving she had left the place locked up.

Putting her hand on the knob, she turned it. To her astonishment the door instantly swung open. The lock had been tampered with. Then it must be a thief who was in the house!

The girl detective was used to facing danger, yet it was a little nervously that she stepped into the kitchen. The door leading to the hall stood ajar. It was from beyond there that the light was coming.

Hardly daring to breathe, she crept forward, peered round the doorway.

It was to see that the oil-lamp on the hall-stand was glowing brightly, and beside it stood the stooping figure of a man. He had just opened the wire cage fastened to the back of the letter-flap and was now extracting from it an envelope.

June's grey eyes grew round with wonder.

This was no ordinary thief. The unknown had evidently broken in for the express purpose of stealing a letter which had been delivered by the evening post.

But why should he be interested in June or Noel's mail? And what could the letter contain? As far as the girl detective knew, neither her uncle nor herself was expecting anything of importance.

At that moment the thief straightened and June caught in her breath.

For suddenly she realised that he was masked and that he wore a black beard which looked suspiciously false; realised also that on his head he wore a high, pointed hat like a dunce's cap. A hat on which were sewn a number of tiny, tinkling bells.

Her heart gave a startled leap, for obviously the intruder was the Masked Jester himself!

THE VITAL LETTER

INVOLUNTARILY June shrank back out of sight, an icy shiver running down her spine.

Suddenly she remembered that this man had been responsible for kidnapping five men—and she was alone with him in this isolated cottage!

It was a nerve-racking thought. And then, as the Masked Jester peered down at the letter and began ripping open the envelope, a puzzled, intrigued frown appeared between the girl detective's eyes.

Who was the master-crook? Could he be Philip Manners, the man whom Julius Streiner had accused of stealing his key? It was impossible to say. That white crepe mask and black beard made an effective disguise. But the intruder was broad-shouldered and about Manners' height. He might easily be him; might, for that matter, equally be Julius Streiner.

Suddenly from the hall came an exultant chuckle.

"Got it! Now I shall learn the secret!"

It was the Masked Jester, and an indignant flush dyed the watching June's cheeks as she saw him about to extract the letter from the envelope.

Abruptly her fear faded; it was replaced by a burning anger.

She didn't know whom that letter was from—couldn't even begin to guess what secret it could possibly contain—but the realisation that a crook was impudently stealing something which belonged either to Noel or herself made her blood boil.

"He shan't get away with it," she told herself fiercely. "He shan't discover what that secret is."

And recklessly she tiptoed through the doorway, began to steal down the hall, in darkness save where the oil-lamp cast a pool of orange light around the Masked Jester.

Her heart was pounding as she crept forward. If the master-crook should look up nothing could save her from discovery, and that would mean—

But what would happen if the

ruthless master-crook caught her did not bear thinking about.

Nervously, apprehensively, she tiptoed on. Suddenly her hand went out and at that moment the Masked Jester swung round. At sight of the girl detective he gasped.

"June, Gaynor!" he exclaimed. "Why—"

But that was as far as he got, for like lightning June snatched the letter from his grasp.

The Masked Jester, utterly unprepared, could only stand and gape. June, the precious letter clutched triumphantly between her fingers, turned and went fleeing back down the hall. From behind her came a sudden furious roar.

"By Harry, but you shall pay for this!"

And frantic footsteps thudded after her. Desperately June increased her speed. Blindly she plunged across the kitchen, went flying out into the garden. From close at hand came another savage bellow.

"Come back! Give me that letter—you little fool, you'll soon learn that it doesn't pay to defy the Masked Jester!"

The girl detective sprinted on. Panting, she dived through the wicket-gate leading to the riverside and went racing along the towpath.

To her dismay it was deserted. There was not a soul in sight. Useless to call for help. Only her own legs could save her from the furious man who was pursuing her.

Ahead there was a gap in the bushes lining the towpath. It was the entrance to a twisting lane which led to the main road. Frantically June went pounding up it. If only she could gain the main road she might be able to hail a passing motorist.

Behind her now was silence, save that ominous thud-thud of racing feet. The Masked Jester was saving his breath for running. He did not shout any more threats, but behind his mask his eyes were cold and deadly. It would go hard with the girl detective if he caught her.

On the chase went through the fading light. Once June slipped and almost fell. She recovered just in time to elude a grabbing hand. On she sprinted again, nearly exhausted now. A scared glance over her shoulder showed that her pursuer was only a few yards away, and still gaining.

But ahead she saw the main road; saw, too, in the distance the lights of an approaching car.

"Oh golly, if only I can attract its attention!" she gulped. "If only—"

But that was as far as she got, for suddenly brutal fingers closed on her shoulder and dragged her to a standstill.

"Now you little trickster!" snarled a harsh voice, and she saw the Masked Jester glowering at her. "I'll teach you to defy me, but first—let me have that letter."

"No! You shan't have it!" panted June, and frantically she clung to it.

As they struggled there for possession of the letter, the approaching car drew near and its headlights lit up the startling scene. There came a startled shout from the athletic figure behind the wheel.

"By thunder, but that looks like June!"

It was Noel Raymond. Having failed to gain much information about either Philip Manners or Julius Streiner at the hotel, he had kept his promise to follow his niece to the cottage. But now, as he glimpsed those struggling figures, he clapped on the brakes and brought the powerful sports car to a skidding halt.

But even as he leapt out there came a despairing cry, and June tottered back while her shadowy attacker went pounding back down the lane, stuffing something into his pocket as he ran.

"My dear what's been happening? You are not hurt, are you?" Trembling a little, June shook her head.

"That was the Masked Jester!" she cried.

The famous detective gave an alarmed cry. June nodded, then clutched at his arm.

"I'll explain later, Nunky! No time now!" she gasped. "We must go after him—get back that letter!"

And frantically she went plunging down the lane. His face unusually angry, Noel followed, and side by side they sprinted on. As she went they both kept a sharp look-out, thinking the fugitive might try to escape across the fields, but, though they could not see him, the sound of his flying footsteps still came from straight ahead, showing that he was keeping to the lane.

"We're gaining on him!" she panted suddenly. "Quick, Nunky, the towpath's just round the corner."

Breathlessly they pounded round the corner, only to pull up in startled bafflement.

For there was no sign of the Masked Jester on the towpath, and thick thorn bushes made escape across the fields impossible.

"He must have had a boat waiting for him," declared June.

Noel frowned and peered down at the ground. A trail of footprints across the towpath—the imprints of rubber soles ornamented with an unusual diamond pattern. Neither June nor Noel wore rubber soles, so the newly made prints must belong to the Masked Jester.

Wonderingly they both followed them with their eyes. The prints went straight to the water's edge then came to an abrupt end.

June felt herself shivering.

It was uncanny; unbelievable.

There was no boat—no sign of any swimmer. Then what could have become of the Masked Jester when he had reached the riverside? It was just as if he had dissolved into thin air.

"What's the answer, Nunky?" she whispered. "How does he manage it?"

Noel lit a cigarette and puffed at it. "It's difficult to say. But what was in this letter he stole from you?"

Swiftly June related all that had happened.

"A letter!" Noel exclaimed. "I wonder whom it could have been from? A pity that scoundrel got away with it. Still, it can't be helped. Would you like to walk back to where I left the car, my dear, or would you prefer to go on to the cottage?"

June elected to accompany her uncle, so together they set off up the lane. They had reached the top of it when suddenly Noel paused and June saw him stoop in the darkness and snatch something up.

"What is it, Nunky?" she asked.

"A piece of paper, my dear. It may be just a scrap blown here by the wind. On the other hand—"

He paused, and June's pulses began to race.

"Or it might be part of that letter!" she cried. "Oh golly, wouldn't it be simply wizard if in his haste the Masked Jester has dropped it! Come on Nunky, let's see exactly what it is."

But by now it was too dark to examine the paper Noel had picked up. So, slipping it in his pocket, he led the way back to the car. It took them less than a minute to drive to the cottage, and when they had arrived June lit the lamp in the cosy little lounge.

"Now, Nunky, let's examine your find," she urged breathlessly.

Noel laid the paper on the table and June caught in her breath as she saw that it really was part of a letter—and addressed to her uncle.

"The Masked Jester did drop it!" she exclaimed. "I'm sure of it, and—"

She broke off, her eyes ablaze with excitement and amazement, as she read the first few lines.

"Oh, Nunky, look!" she gasped. "Just look! See what is says! My golly, but this is the biggest surprise yet!"

What has the fragment of letter revealed that June should be so excited? Be sure to read next week's thrilling chapters.



JOY- The Girl With a 100 Voices

By IDA MELBOURNE

THE MISSING RADIO SET

"THERE you are, miss! There's your portable radio set, all correct and in working order again."

The man in the radio shop was speaking to Joy Oliver, the girl with a hundred voices. But so far as he was concerned, Joy was just an ordinary customer with a rather cheery and perhaps cheeky face.

"Thank you," said Joy paying the bill. "My grandfather wants it urgently to hear a broadcast. I'm glad it's ready."

The radio set, as she lifted it from the counter, had something to say, too. It said:

"Thank you."

"Hullo, must be switched on," said the man astonished.

He did not realise that the words had been spoken by Joy, who was a ventriloquist and mimic; and she chuckled to herself as he frowned at the control switch and tested it.

Joy then switched it on, turning the knob to a wavelength where there wasn't a station broadcasting.

"Hullo, hullo!" she said in a thin voice. "Radio Honk Konk! Muchee nice weather report. Rain, rain him goee Spain!"

The voice seemed to come from the loud speaker grille, and the wireless man's eyebrows shot up.

"Great Scott, that can't be from China. Must be a comedian from a British station," he frowned.

"This Honk Konk ally lightee," answered the radio indignantly.

Leaving the puzzled radio man to think it over, Joy assumed a look of innocence, lifted the radio set down and made for the door.

"Just a minute, miss," said the man suddenly as she was leaving the shop. "A word of warning—several portable radio sets have been stolen lately. There's a rascal going about looking for people at bus stops and outside shops who put their sets down and don't watch them."

Joy smiled, and shook her head. "I'll watch this one," she said.

"Ah, don't take it too lightly," he frowned. "This fellow works the hollow suit-case trick. He has a large suit-case which he puts down over the wireless set when the owner isn't looking, and when the crook lifts his case by the handle special clamps inside grip the set."

Joy gave a soft whistle. "What a cunning trick!" she gasped.

She thanked him for the warning and then looked about her warily as she left the shop. But she saw

no sign of anyone with a suit-case as she went to the bus stop.

Putting down the radio set, she gave it a wary look now and then while waiting for the bus.

Into sight came a bus, but before Joy could decide if it was hers or not, her attention was suddenly distracted by a man who walked past her, stumbled and fell.

Joy ran to his aid, and helped him up. He thanked her, and with a nod walked on.

Casually, Joy turned back. Then her heart jumped.

The portable! It had gone! It just wasn't there.

And then suddenly she saw a man with a large suit-case. He stood at the kerb, and until the bus pulled up the case had been concealed largely by his mac, swung carelessly over his arm.

"Just a minute," she said grimly. The man had a dark, rather flabby face, and keen bright eyes.

"Something on your mind, little girl?" he asked.

"My radio set," said Joy fiercely. "Your what?"

"My radio set. It's gone!"

"Indeed, I'm sorry. Nothing to do with me, he said casually. "Stand aside, please, while I get on the bus."

Pushing her aside, he climbed on to the bus, and Joy stooped down to get a look at the underneath part of the case. As the man mounted the stairs she saw that the bottom of his case had a very odd look—it was partly open.

"Golly—it is!" she told herself with a thrill.

That large suit-case was the trick one she had been warned about. And the suspicion came to Joy that the man who had fallen was a confederate. He had deliberately done so to distract her attention.

Joy sprang to action. The bus was just moving, and although it was not

going in the right direction for her own journey, she boarded it.

If that rascal thought he could rob her of her set, he had another guess coming!

"My golly, I'll show him," Joy muttered grimly. "I'll get that set back—and I know how! Wait till he hears his suit-case talking."

BOTHER ON THE BUS

JOY climbed to the upper deck of the bus and took the vacant seat in front of the man with the suit-case, which he had put on the seat beside him.

"Ah! You have given up the hunt for the radio?" he said with a faint sneer.

"No. I've come to keep close to it," retorted Joy.

"If you suggest that I've got a radio set in this case—"

At that most opportune moment Joy went into action with her ventriloquism. A voice suddenly seemed to come from the suit-case.

"This is the B.B.C. Home Service," said the well known voice of the announcer, muffled, but recognisable.

Joy looked fixedly at the man, who turned quite pale, and gave the case a violent jab.

"Do you still say you haven't a radio set in that case?" asked Joy.

The man knit his brow and scowled.

"Of course I haven't. You heard a loud speaker in a shop we passed."

Joy had just seen the conductor come on deck to collect fares.

"We'll see what the conductor says," she answered.

And then with more clearer ventriloquism Joy made shrill whistles and shrieks come from the suit-case.

The conductor was naturally not allowing that kind of thing.

"Hey, hey—pack it up!" he said. "This is the B.B.C. Home Service," said the set again. "Here is Inspector Oliphant to give his talk on Crime Never Pays."

"Not on this bus he won't," said the conductor. "No radio sets allowed to operate, mister."

"I haven't got a radio set."

"There's one in that suit-case. Must be," said the conductor.

"I say there isn't."

"Do you think I'm barmy?" said the conductor wrathfully.

Joy giggled softly, but she had the good sense to make the giggle seem to come from the man.

"Wise guy, eh?" said the conductor darkly. "Well, skip off this bus and take that talking suit-case with you."

The man glowered.

"I'm not getting off."

"Crime," said the suit-case in a gruff voice, "never pays. Consider, for instance, radio set stealing. This

Everyone On The Bus
Thought The Voices Came
From A Portable Radio
Set. They Didn't Know
That Ventriloquist Joy
Was One Of The Pas-
sengers!

is all the rage now. Artful crooks with oversize suit-cases plonk them on top of portable sets, and nip off with them."

The conductor gave a startled exclamation.

"Maybe you're one of these wide boys, eh?" he commented.

Joy saw the man's baffled, alarmed expression, and looked to the front.

"Reckon I'd better call an inspector," said the conductor.

He went to the stairs, and Joy cleared her throat. As she wanted to force the man to open the suit-case, the best thing would be to make noises so that the conductor would become furious. The man would either have to admit there was a radio, or open his case to prove there wasn't—which he was obviously reluctant to do.

Joy made some really shrill whistles and shrieks, and chuckled softly as she heard the conductor's voice again.

"Pack it up!" he yelled. "Here—inspector—hark at this." And then he came up and tapped Joy on the shoulder. "Where is it?" he asked her.

Joy turned—and then nearly collapsed. The man with the suit-case had gone.

"Oh! Where's my wireless set?" she yelped.

"Where's your wireless set?" demanded the conductor. "That's what I'm asking for! It was you all the time, not him, with the radio!"

Joy sprang up, but the conductor barred her way. She realised that while she had been looking ahead making the shrieking noises, the man must have crept to the staircase and gone down.

"The man said it was you," frowned the conductor. "Said you've got a pocket radio set."

"I want your name and address," said the bus inspector sternly. "I shall have a letter of protest written to your parents. You deliberately tried to make trouble by letting the conductor think the man had the set in his case."

Joy was momentarily in a panic. The man had escaped—he would have jumped off when the inspector had boarded the bus—and he had taken the radio set with him. She might never see him again, might never catch up with him.

Instead of answering the conductor she looked out of the bus window.

"There he goes!" she gasped. There the man was, hurrying along the pavement—and, as she watched, he went through the gateway of a house.

Hoorah! If only she could get off the bus, she could catch up with him.

Joy made to hurry away, but the conductor and inspector barred her path.

"Just a minute," said Joy. "Are you sure there isn't a radio set in that seat?"

"In the seat?" exclaimed the inspector. "What twaddle!"

"Well, listen," said Joy excitedly.

Joy threw her voice. There was no doubt that it seemed to come from the seat, muffled though it was. "I feel proper poorly," said the seat.

The inspector looked at the conductor.

"This is the explanation all right. Someone has left a small portable here. Must be under the cushions."

As they started to examine the seat, Joy hurried down the stairs of the bus; she pressed the bell, and then alighted.

Running all the way, Joy was breathless when she reached the gate through which she had seen the man disappear. Did he live here?

Joy surveyed the building and saw that it was a house divided up into flats, as the name plates on the door showed. The main door was open, so she walked just inside.

She had not far to search. At the end of the corridor, in full view, was the large suit-case.

Joy gave a glad cry, ran forward and seized it. But when she lifted

it up she staggered. Prepared for the weight of the radio set, she had used excessive strength and the light case had come off the ground with startling speed.

The set had been taken out. Where was it? And where was the man?

As Joy looked right and left she suddenly heard his voice coming from the new opened door of a flat near by.

"You will find it a perfect portable radio set, madam—perfect," the man said.

THE TRICKSTER TRICKED

HE had sold her set! That was what those words meant.

Joy hurried forward just as the door of the flat closed, and she almost bumped into the man who had carried the suit-case.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, thoroughly startled.

Joy held him by the arm.

"Was that my set you sold?" she asked fiercely.

"Take your hands off me," he snapped, brushing her aside. "I'm in a hurry—"

"I bet you are," said Joy. "But you're not getting away."

The man dodged her and seized the suit-case; then mockingly he laughed and went hurrying into the street.

Joy, in two minds, did not know whether to chase him or go into the flat. If she let him go, she might never find him again, but if she followed him what charge could she bring, what proof had she?

If she stayed, however, she could identify her radio set.

Joy let him go, therefore, and hurried back to the flat, and banged on the door.

A pleasant-faced woman with grey hair and shining simple blue eyes blinked at her.

"Not to-day, thank you," she said. "I haven't come to sell anything."

Smiled Joy. "I've come about your new radio. It's stolen property."

"Stolen—oh, no!" wailed the woman.

She opened the door. Joy entered the flat, and went at once to the table on which stood her portable radio set.

"But I've just paid the man ten pounds for it," the woman cried.

"Oh, the cheat! I—" And then she looked at Joy. "How do you know it is stolen?"

"Because," said Joy, "it happens to be mine!"

The woman frowned in disbelief.

"Prove it!"

Prove it? Joy hadn't thought of that difficulty. It was a standard portable like many others. Could she identify it?

She looked at the set closely, and gave a glad cry.

"See that mark?" she exclaimed, pointing to a slight dent at the corner. "That's where I bumped it into the table once. And now let me see—my cousin Percy scratched the leather—ah! There it is!"

Joy was convinced; she had never had any real doubt, but these marks were proof positive—apart from the matter of manufacturer's number, which the shop could prove, of course.

"I don't accept that as proof," said the woman shortly. "And if you don't go, I'll call the police. If you think you can just take this set away and leave me the loser of ten pounds—"

Joy took her arm.

"We've got to get that ten pounds from the man. Can you see the bus stop from your window?"

The woman hurried to the window and looked out.

"Why, there he is with that large case," she said.

Joy explained the purpose of the case, and the woman gasped aloud.

"But leave it to me," Joy said.

"Look, there's a policeman at that road crossing! I'll see that the next time the man steals a radio there will be an arrest."

"Next time—when will that be, for goodness' sake?" the woman gasped.

"Now," said Joy briskly, "if you'll put your hat on and take the radio down to the bus stop he'll steal it—the radio, I mean. Tell any story—say you're taking it to show to your sister. He won't be able to resist stealing it back and selling it again. I'll make the diversion."

It was a possible plan, and the woman finally agreed.

She went downstairs, carrying the radio set, and joined the man with the suit-case at the bus stop.

Just as Joy had told her to do, she spoke to the man and said she was taking the set to her sister.

Hardly had she been there a minute, however, when a most frightful commotion was heard.

Yowowowowowow! came a dog's frantic yelping.

The woman spun round at once, forgetting the radio set.

"Oh, poor thing! That sounds like a hurt dog—"

Joy, who was hiding behind a nearby tree, had produced that dog's yelp at the right moment, and she did not take her eyes off the man with the large suit-case. Everyone but Joy was attracted by the fearful yelping—Joy, and the man!

Calmly and swiftly the man lifted his trick case and lowered it neatly over the radio receiver.

When the woman turned back again—the set was gone.

"You've stolen my radio! Help—police!" she shouted and, as planned by Joy, she seized the case by the handle.

"Let go!" stormed the man, pushing her away.

"Help!" shouted Joy.

The policeman was on the scene in a moment.

"What's all this?" he demanded.

"This woman says I stole her radio set," snapped the man.

"Not at all," said Joy. "He's got a small child in that case."

The thief gaped at her.

"Ridiculous!" he snapped.

From the case came a pathetic cry.

"Oh, oh! Let me out—I can't breathe! Let me out—Ooooo!"

It was a most realistic cry, and the dazed thief did not know where to look.

"It's a fake—a joke," he gasped.

"There's no kid in that case—"

"There is! You're a wicked uncle!" cried the shrill voice.

The woman was surprised and perplexed, and looked at the policeman.

"I don't think it is a child—it's my radio set," she said.

"Help—help!" cried the voice.

The policeman looked at the man.

"Open this case," he ordered.

"You say it isn't a radio set, so it must be a child!"

"I refuse, and you can't make me," snapped the man.

The policeman stooped to the case, and as he did so the man turned to run; but Joy was ready for him and thrust out her foot. As the man sprawled in the roadway the policeman grabbed him.

Next moment, Joy seized the case. An experiment or two and she found a small catch that enabled the case to be lifted clear of the radio set—and there on the pavement the radio set stood exposed.

"Thief!" cried Joy. "Now deny this is my set!"

"Give me back my ten pounds," demanded the woman.

But although Joy did get her set back, and the woman got her ten pounds, too, it was not until all three had gone to the police-station.

When at last, an hour later, Joy turned for home, carrying the set, she did not put it down even for a moment. But, at the expense of weary arms, she did get it home safely!

"Phew!" the radio set seemed to say as ventriloquist Joy dumped it on its usual small table. "Am I glad to be home safe and sound from kidnappers!"

"You're telling me, Porty!" said Joy. "Phew!"

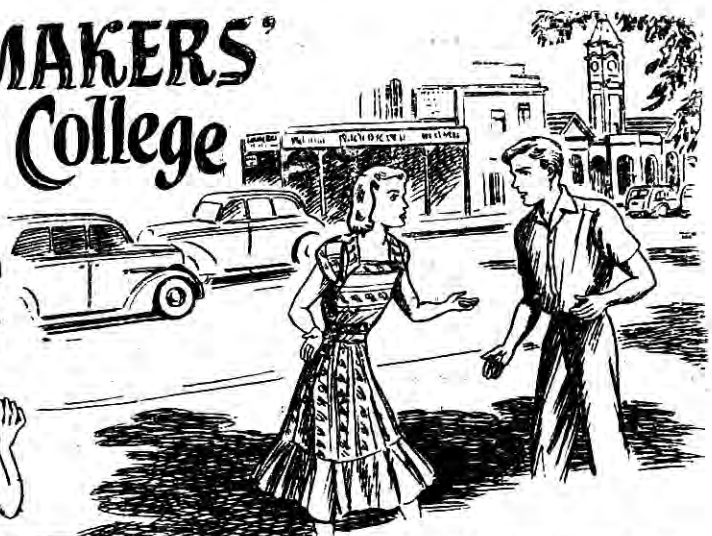
(End of this week's story.)

Another amusing story featuring Joy and her ventriloquism in next Friday's

GIRLS' CRYSTAL.

GIRLS' CRYSTAL—15-7-50

The MERRYMAKERS' Island College



By DAPHNE GRAYSON

JOHNNY RECEIVES A SHOCK

"GEE, I'm bored with this!" said Johnny Briggs, stifling a yawn. "What about you, Don?" "Can't say I'm all that interested," murmured Don Weston. "Ssssh!" hissed Sally Warner and Fay Manners.

The four chums from the International College—situated on Waloorie Island, Australia—were seated in the Palace Cinema in Sarneville.

The main film had been thrilling, but the one showing now wasn't at all to Johnny's liking. "Autumn Fashions for the Teen-Ager" might suit Sally and Fay, but he didn't give it any marks at all.

He moved restlessly in his seat.

"Think I'll go out," he said. "Tell you what, I'll bag a table in the cafe, and then you can come straight up."

"That's a lovely idea!" whispered Fay. "We'll be along as soon as this film is finished—it's the end of the programme."

So Johnny wandered off through the exit. Don was tempted to go with him, but, being on the other side of the girls, he didn't like to disturb them.

The Roof-Top Cafe, whither Johnny now made his way, was a charming place, with its gay tables under brightly striped umbrellas, and the fountain playing sparkingly in the centre of the floor.

The Merry-makers—as the four chums were known—often went there, and Johnny smiled with satisfaction as he saw somebody moving out of one of the alcoves. It was their favourite position, for it was enclosed on three sides by trellis-work smothered with climbing pot-plants, giving the occupants the maximum amount of shade.

Almost before the present occupants had risen, Johnny had skimmed across the floor, seated himself in one chair, and deftly tipped up the other three. Then, with a triumphant grin at a party of four whom he had just pipped on the post, he relaxed with a sigh of relief.

"Hope Sally and the others buck up," he was muttering to himself, when his attention was attracted by the murmur of voices from the next alcove.

"There's no time to waste, I tell you," said a man's voice urgently. "If Fay's willing to take the risk—"

The voices died down to a low mutter. Johnny grinned. Fay, eh? That name had a familiar ring. But these unseen men, of course, weren't

talking about Fay Manners, his girl chum.

"Look, we're in this thing together," said the voice so vehemently that Johnny jumped startled. "See here—Fay doesn't realise that she's in deadly danger, that she's being tricked, that everything will point to the fact that she's the guilty one—"

Johnny pursed his lips. The unknown Fay, he thought wisely, was going to land herself in a jam if she didn't watch her step.

"Oh, bother it!" said another slightly husky voice. "If only we were nearer to the college, or Fay could get out a bit more often, the thing would be over and done with by now. I'm getting nervy—"

Some chairs scraped back; there was the thud of feet on the marble floor. But Johnny scarcely heard. Open-mouthed, wide-eyed, he was still flinching under the blow he had received. Fay—the college! The International College was the only one hereabouts, and there was only one Fay at the college—that was Fay Manners!

But what was this? What did it mean? Fay was in deadly danger—going to be tricked into something. Gosh, Fay didn't even know these men—or did she?

Suddenly Johnny remembered various things about Fay lately which had not struck him at the time. Her unexplained absences; the guilty way she had tucked away some papers on two occasions when he had come upon her suddenly.

Johnny jumped to his feet. Just leaving the pay-desk were two fair-haired men, one with a black patch over one eye, the other with a limp. With them was a slim, dark-haired woman.

As they stood for a moment putting away their change, a gay call echoed through the cafe:

"Coo-ee! Johnny!"

It was Sally who, with Fay and Don, had just entered the cafe. Johnny saw the three unknowns turn and start as they saw Fay. One of the men took a step forward, but the woman put a hand on his arm, shook her head. Next moment they disappeared through the swing doors.

With the world seeming to swing around his ears, Johnny sank back in his chair. Something sinister was going on, something involving his girl chum, and it was only by accident that he had stumbled upon it.

"Shall we order," asked Sally with a twinkle in her blue eyes, "or shall we wait until Johnny comes out of his trance?"

"Better order," smiled Fay as Johnny still sat glassy-eyed and rigid. "He's miles away, and if his looks are anything to go by he won't be back for weeks."

"He's been hypnotised," said Don, passing a hand in front of Johnny's staring eyes, "and they've forgotten how to bring him to."

"Eh? Stop flapping your hand in front of my face, you ass!" said Johnny, coming back to earth with a jerk, wondering for one dazed moment whether he could have dreamt all he had just heard. "Fay," he gasped, suddenly clutching at his girl friend's arm, "you're here?"

Fay blinked bewilderedly.

"Of course! I say, Johnny," she added worriedly, "are you feeling all right?"

"Nun-no—I mean yes—Fay!"

"Yes, Johnny?"

"Oh—oh, nothing!"

Just in time Johnny, who had been about to blurt out what he had heard and ask Fay to confide in him if she was in any sort of scrape so that he could help her, bit back his words.

With a thoughtfulness unusual in him, he realised that Fay might not want Sally and Don to know what was going on, that she might be upset when she knew that Johnny had accidentally discovered something in which she was involved—innocently, of course.

"This is the brilliant sort of conversation I really enjoy!" said Don sarcastically. "I don't know why we bother paying money to visit a cinema when we can listen to Johnny for nothing. Try this, old man," he added, placing a tall glass of iced passion-fruit juice in front of Johnny. "It might bring you to."

Eagerly Johnny took the drink, but his gaze was still glued so queerly on Fay that she began to fidget under his scrutiny. He was almost looking at her as if she had committed some crime.

Usually Fay And Johnny Are Staunch Chums, But This Week A Bitter Quarrel Threatens To End Their Friendship.

"Johnny," she said uneasily, "is anything wrong with me?"

"You ought to be able to tell me that!" returned Johnny promptly, with a heavy significance it was impossible to overlook.

Fay looked puzzled.

"I haven't the slightest idea what you're talking about," she said a little crossly. "And I don't think you have, either."

"Yes, what's biting you suddenly, Johnny?" asked Don.

Johnny could bear it no longer. He'd got to know what was going on and warn Fay of the danger into which she was running.

"There were two men and a woman in the next alcove," he blurted. "They were talking—about you, Fay!"

Fay seemed to stiffen. She gave Johnny a sidelong glance.

"A-about me?" she said carefully. "What did they say?"

"I didn't hear it all, but it was something about your being in deadly danger, about your being tricked."

Fay, he added exasperatedly as he saw the twinkle in Fay's eyes, "it's not funny!"

"Sorry, Johnny," said Fay in her old sweet way. "Did—did you hear anything else?"

Sally glanced at her sharply. She, too, was definitely intrigued by now, and she was sure that there had been more than casual interest in Fay's voice as she asked that question; that a look of relief leapt into her eyes as Johnny shook his head.

"No, the blighters went off," he said gruffly. "But it's no good trying to tell me they weren't talking about you, Fay, because they started to walk towards you when you came in. Now, look here, old thing," he added, "I don't know what you've been doing, or what sort of tale those rotters have been telling you, but you'd better tell me all about it, so that I can straighten it out for you."

Sally gave a warning shake of her head. Fay might be gentle and quiet, but she had an iron will when she cared to use it. And Johnny's blunt way of speaking was not likely to invite her confidence.

"Thank you, Johnny," she said evenly, "but I'm not in any sort of bother, I promise you. It—it's just something I can't tell you about at the moment. It's nice of you to worry about me, but I really can take care of myself. I'm not a child, you know!"

But those well-meant words did not soothe Johnny. He had heard that snatch of conversation; he was convinced that some dire trouble lay ahead for Fay, and he felt unhappy and terribly worried that she should just ignore his warning in this way.

"I'll admit you're not a child," he said mulishly, "but you're giving a jolly good imitation of one! I tell you, Fay—"

"Johnny, be quiet a moment," said Sally hastily, seeing the danger signals in Fay's eyes. "Are you sure it's nothing you can tell us—that you're not in a jam of any kind? Johnny's only acting like this because he's worried about you, you know."

Fay's expression softened.

"I know, and it's sweet of you all; but, really— Oh!" She turned as the waitress tapped on her shoulder, holding out a piece of paper.

"Are you Miss Manners?" asked the waitress. And as Fay nodded: "Gentleman asked me to give this to you."

Fay took the note and unfolded it. While Johnny glowered at her, and Sally and Don exchanged baffled looks, she read it, then rose.

"Excuse me—back in a jiffy!" she said, and darted swiftly across the cafe.

For a moment the chums sat amazed, and then a flush of anxiety swept over Johnny's face.

"I'll bet that's from the precious trio that's just left!" he exclaimed. "Why does Fay have to be so obstinate? This is serious, and she's jolly well got to be made to realise it."

Next moment he, too, was striding out of the cafe.

"Sally, I don't like this," said Don

unhappily. "I don't know what's going on, but I do know those two are heading for a first-class row!"

Johnny and Fay quarrelling—it was unthinkable.

"Quick!" said Sally. "After them!"

They darted outside. A ramshackle car had just clattered off down the street, the occupants turning back to wave to Fay. Along the sidewalk strode Johnny, gripping Fay's arm and swinging her around.

"Did I hear them arranging to meet you to-night, Fay?" he asked. "Fay, you can't—you mustn't!"

"Please, Johnny, I've told you there's nothing to worry about," said Fay quietly. "Perhaps later on I'll be able to explain, but meantime you've got to trust me."

"Which means," said Johnny with a glare, "that you intend meeting them to-night? Well, you won't! Do you hear? I won't let you!"

Fay's eyes flashed. Her lips tightened.

"You won't let me?" she repeated frostily. "Really, Johnny, I shall do just as I please—without asking your permission!"

And, throwing off Johnny's detaining hand, she walked away, while Sally and Don stood staring, shaken and heartsick.

THEIR BROKEN FRIENDSHIP

"FAY! Fay, old thing, don't look like that—please!" Sally's voice was gently coaxing as she entered the chalet which she shared with her girl chum at the International College. "I'm sure Johnny didn't mean to offend you; he was worried about you, that's all. But you know what a funny old blunderer he is."

Fay turned, the frown on her face fading a little.

"It's nice of Johnny to feel concerned," she said rather stiffly, "but I've told him it isn't necessary—and he should believe me! Sally, you believe me, don't you, when I tell you there's absolutely nothing wrong?"

"We-ell, yes—I suppose I do," replied Sally slowly. "But, you see, Johnny heard—"

"Johnny heard something that could be explained away very simply—and I'd explain it right now if I hadn't given my solemn promise not to breathe a word!" replied Fay vehemently. "Goodness, I wouldn't have made the wretched promise in the first place if I'd known there would be all this bother, and—and if"—her voice took on a disappointed note—"I hadn't wanted to surprise you. But since I don't like quarrels any more than you do, Sallykins, I'll forget the surprise and ask my—my friends to-night if I can tell you everything."

Sally smiled relievedly.

"Oh, Fay, that'll be fine!" she said. "We can't have you quarrelling with Johnny like this. I'll go and see him right away—he looks so unhappy."

Fay's eyes softened as Sally hurried off. Yes, the quarrel had been horrid. But Johnny should have accepted her word and not been so dictatorial; but, as Sally pointed out, it was only because he was so worried. Well, Sally would explain, and everything would be all right again.

That was what Sally, too, hoped. Johnny listened in silence as she repeated her conversation with Fay, then:

"So she's still going to meet these people to-night?" he asked.

"Why, yes," replied Sally. "But, Johnny, don't you see—"

She broke off with a gasp of dismay. Johnny, chin jutting out, turned on his heel and strode off across the campus towards the girls' chalet. After a moment's hesitation Sally and Don followed.

Fay was standing on the veranda, and she turned with a smile as she saw Johnny. But a moment later the smile disappeared as if by magic.

"So you still think you're going to meet those—those crooks to-night?" Johnny burst out belligerently.

"You're just going to ignore my warning and let them saddle you with the

blame for whatever trick they're planning! Fay, how can you be so silly! Look here, old thing," he added pleadingly, "won't you listen to me—"

His change of tone, however, had come too late. Face scarlet, eyes flashing, Fay took a step forward.

"No, I won't listen to you," she said vibrantly, "any more than you'll listen to me! I've told you that there's nothing to worry about, but you won't believe me!" She paused, took a quivering breath.

"Well, whether you like it or not, Johnny, I'm going to see them to-night, and nobody will stop me!"

"We'll see about that!" snorted Johnny. "You shan't go, Fay! I won't let you!"

"You can't stop me!" said Fay triumphantly. "Have you forgotten you're going out yourself?"

Johnny stiffened. Yes, he had forgotten momentarily that he had managed to get a ticket for the speedway racing to-night. Strange, since he had thought and talked of nothing else for the entire week. That just showed, he thought, how much this business of Fay had upset him.

"That remains to be seen," he said. "If you can't be trusted to look after yourself, Fay, then someone else must do it for you!"

For a moment there was silence, then:

"I only hope," said Fay bitingly, "that you'll have the grace to apologise to me when I explain everything, as I will do when I return to-night."

There was a defiant emphasis on the last words that Johnny did not miss. But, to Sally's amazement and relief, he did not answer. Without a word, he swung on his heel and strode off, while Fay turned into the chalet and closed the door.

Feeling that their happy world was tumbling about their ears, Sally and Don moodily wandered off. Oh, goodness, how had all this happened? It seemed such a short while ago that the four of them had been the best of friends. Now Fay and Johnny were quarrelling bitterly, and all because both of them were so convinced that they were right; because each of them was so obstinately refusing to see the other's point of view.

And Sally had another worry now. She had seen that look on Johnny's face as he strode off—a reckless look which openly proclaimed that he had no intention of knuckling under.

Sally had read that look aright. Fay had refused to heed his warning, but Johnny was going to save her whether she liked it or not, even if it meant sacrificing his own pleasure to do so.

Keeping well out of sight, he watched the door of Fay's chalet, his lips tightening as he saw her emerge ready for going out. He followed carefully as she hurried across the campus, and then, as she drew level with the open windows of the museum, he gave a loud shout:

"Fay! Not that way! If we're going to the Ocean Dance Hall we'd better sneak out the back way. You know it's out of bounds."

"The—the Ocean Dance Hall?" stammered Fay, staring blankly. "But I—"

She broke off in dismay, for from the open window came an irate cry. "Breaking bounds! Who's that talking about breaking bounds?" it demanded, and Mr. Gruley appeared in view. "How dare you!" he snapped as he saw Fay and Johnny. "You know that dance hall is forbidden to—"

Fay looked bewilderedly from one to the other; then, seeing the triumphant gleam in Johnny's eyes, her face whitened.

But, Mr. Gruley—" she began wildly.

"Silence!" rapped the master. "Go to your chalets—at once! You will remain there for the rest of the evening! You are forbidden to leave the college grounds!"

He disappeared from view. For a moment Fay stood still, stunned. Then into her blue eyes crept a look which made Johnny flinch.

"You knew he was there!" she said accusingly. "You did that on purpose to get me gated!" Tears filled her eyes as she flung round. "Oh, Johnny, I'll never speak to you again after this!" And, with a little sob, she rushed off towards her chalet.

Sally, who had rushed on to the scene, stared from her fleeing figure to that of the white-faced Johnny.

"Why did you do it?" she asked quivering.

Johnny's hands were clenched by his sides.

"I had to stop her, Sally," he said fiercely, "and this was the only way I could think of. Well, at least she can't go now!"

In that moment Sally felt like bursting into tears. Johnny, so sure that he was doing right, had triumphed. But in doing so he had lost Fay's friendship—he had caused this split in the Merry-makers!

JOHNNY'S LUCKY BLUNDER

"IT'S no good, Don!" said Sally unhappily. "I've tried everything!" "You've talked to them both?" asked Don.

Sally nodded. She had talked until she was almost hoarse, trying to make Fay see that Johnny had only done what he had thought was right. But Fay, smarting and hurt and angry, had not listened.

"If only he realised what he'd done he'd be so ashamed," she had murmured. "Well, I'm not finished yet—"

She had paid no heed when the worried Sally had begged her not to do anything reckless, and finally, in desperation, Sally had hurried across to Johnny, pleading with him to go and apologise to Fay.

But Johnny, equally obstinate, had turned a deaf ear. All he had wanted to do was to stop Fay from running into danger. Fay would be the one to apologise, he had growled, when she realised how right he had been.

But, as Sally walked hopelessly off, he strode up and down, unhappy and restless. Gosh, it was awful to think that he and Fay were no longer friends, that all the good times they had had together were finished! And what about Sally and Don? This quarrel had not been of their making, yet they would suffer because of it.

Suddenly Johnny straightened up. Bother his pride and everything else! If an apology would make Fay feel any better, then she should have it. As soon as he made the decision he rushed off to Fay's chalet and hammered on the door. It opened under his touch; he peered in. Fay was not there, but pinned to Sally's blazer on the chair was a note:

"Have gone out. Try to cover up for me in case Gruley comes around."

It was signed "Fay," and, reading it, Johnny felt his scalp tightening with alarm. So Fay had gone! Not only was she risking severe trouble from Mr. Gruley, but she was running straight into the danger from which Johnny had tried to save her! She had, after all, gone off to keep her appointment with those crooks!

Just for a moment Johnny stood motionless, a prey to an ever-growing fear. Then he darted from the chalet across to the kennels, where his huge Great Dane fell upon him with yelps of joy.

"Come on, Buster!" he said tensely. "We've got to find her—quickly!"

And, reckless of whether or not he was seen, he darted out into the road leading to Sarneville.

"QUIET, Buster!"

Gripping his dog's collar firmly, Johnny crouched outside the door of a huge old barn in one of the paddocks bordering the road to Sarneville. His heart was thumping with excitement and apprehension, though there was a look of puzzlement in his eyes.

Buster had amazed Johnny with the speed and efficiency with which he had tracked down Fay—but what a

peculiar place it was for such a desperate gang to operate from!

The barn was near the main road, with no attempt at concealment. And inside the barn was Fay, no doubt by now quivering with fear at the terrible trap she had run into and wishing that she had listened to Johnny's advice.

Johnny could picture her terrified face, her cry of delight when he burst in. He could imagine the crooks' horror when they saw Buster, who at least gave the appearance of fierceness, even if he did not live up to it.

Now that Johnny no longer had to worry about Fay's whereabouts, he could begin to dwell happily upon their reconciliation. He wouldn't forgive her straight away, of course—dashed if he would! But maybe after a few minutes—after all, he didn't want to upset his girl chum too much—

With terrifying suddenness Johnny's pleasant musings were interrupted. For inside the barn came an agonised cry in Fay's voice:

"Oh, no—no—"

A wave of anger swept over Johnny. Buster's ears pricked back, he uttered a shrill yelp, and, as Johnny hurled himself against the



"Breaking bounds? Who's that talking about breaking bounds?" came an irate voice from the window. Angrily Fay regarded Johnny, for she realised that he had deliberately spoken loudly, so as to attract Mr. Gruley's attention.

door and it flew open, Buster leapt up, sending Johnny flying and trampling him underfoot.

Apologetically Buster wiped a wet pink tongue round his master's face, then gave an ecstatic bark of pleasure.

"Buster!" shrieked Fay. "Buster!" Somewhat dazedly Johnny stared across the huge barn to the group in the opposite corner.

One glance told him that he had been right in insisting that Fay was running herself into danger—very real danger confronted her in the shape of a masked figure holding a shotgun.

But amazingly enough the danger had not come from the source he had suspected. The two men and the woman he had seen in the cafe, the three he had suspected of plotting against Fay, were herded into the corner with her, their eyes fixed agonisedly upon another masked man—a man who held in his hand a round, flat, black cylinder.

He started back with a startled exclamation as Johnny and Buster avalanched on to the scene. The man with the gun wavered a little, and in that instant one of the men with Fay started forward, a desperate look on his face. Instantly the gun swung round, covering him.

"Stand back!" gritted the masked man.

"Johnny!" cried Fay. "The film—get it! Oh, quickly—quickly!"

Johnny still couldn't grasp what was happening, but as Fay called out the man with the black cylinder made a desperate leap towards the door at the other end of the barn. That was enough for Johnny. Explanations could come afterwards.

"Seize him, Buster!" he roared. "Grab him, boy!"

Buster didn't quite know what was expected of him, but, with a playful growl which brought a howl of terror from the fleeing man, he bounded forward. His huge paws caught the man right on his shoulders and sent him hurtling forward, the cylinder flying from his hand.

The man with the gun gave a hoarse cry, but in the split second that his eyes wavered the little group in the corner sprang upon him. As Fay and the woman darted for the cylinder there came the sound of grunts, of thudding fists, and a few moments afterwards both the masked men, looking very much the worse for wear, were sitting against the wall, securely bound.

"Oh, Johnny!" Fay, radiant with relief and happiness, gazed at her still bewildered boy chum. "Johnny,

you were wonderful! And Buster, too! I don't know how you traced me here, but thank goodness you did! Those horrible men—they were going to destroy the film—"

"Another minute and they'd have done it," said the woman huskily. "I wish I knew how to thank you—"

"That," said Johnny slowly, "is easy. Just explain what's been going on here. It's nice to be a hero, but I'd like to know why."

Fay gave a little laugh. "Well, I suppose I can let you into the secret now." She indicated the two fair men. "Meet Joe Batey and Reg Ford—and Laura Ford, his wife."

And while the three of them beamed at Johnny, she explained that the two men were disabled war veterans who had sunk all their savings in equipment to make a new type of film they had thought out while they were on active service.

"It's jolly good, too," said Fay warmly. "A sort of animal fantasy with one human character—and I'm the human character," she added with a chuckle.

"Just the type we needed," put in Laura eagerly. "I met Fay at a cafe in Sarneville. I'm sorry we had to ask her to keep the whole thing secret, but we were a bit worried about anyone finding out what we were doing and trying to get in ahead of us—"

"Besides," dimpled Fay, "I wanted to keep the whole thing as a big surprise for you, Johnny—and for Sally and Don. You see, there's a new film opening at the Palace Cinema tomorrow night, and all the big movie magnates will be present. The manager said he'd slip this film in as a novelty, and if the big-wigs like it, it will mean a great future for Joe and the others."

Johnny nodded. Everything was becoming clearer now.

"But—but those threats I heard—," he murmured.

"They weren't threats, laddie," grinned Reg. "We were just talking over the plot of the film. And as for those two beauties—"

He threw a grim look at the two trusted men.

"Unbeknown to us they slipped into the picture by accident—when they were making their getaway through the grounds of the museum where we were filming. They had

with them a nice haul of stolen property, and they realised they'd be finished if their faces were flashed on the screen, so they decided the only thing to do was to destroy the film."

"And bang would have gone all our savings!" finished Laura.

A grin curved Johnny's lips. Gosh, he'd been all sorts of a clump in thinking these three people were crooks; in not believing Fay when she had assured him that there was nothing to worry about.

But if he had believed her, if he'd let her come here on her own without following her, then nothing would have saved the film; nothing would have saved Joe, Reg, and Laura from bitter unhappiness and the loss of their great chance.

As if reading his thoughts, Fay gave a tremulous smile.

"I'm awfully sorry I got so cross with you, Johnny," she said a little huskily, "and even more sorry that you missed your evening at the speedway. But you've done a wonderful

evening's work—saved the film and caught a pair of crooks! You must be very proud of yourself—and Buster!"

Johnny seemed to swell a little at those words. It was jolly gratifying to know that he had done so much—if unwittingly. It was even better to know that he and Fay were friends again.

And the following night, when Fay, Sally, Don, and Johnny—a merry quartet once more—vigorously applauded the short film that brought loud murmurs of appreciation from the movie magnates, it was wonderful to hear Fay whisper:

"It's a success, Johnny—thanks to you and our quarrel. But we mustn't ever quarrel again."

To which Sally and Don murmured a fervent, "Hear, hear!"

(End of this week's story.)

Sally & Co. go fruit-picking in next week's entertaining story featuring the cheery Merry-makers.

THE GIRL STOWAWAY'S MYSTERY QUEST

(Continued from page 288.)

"Why did you decide to help me?" Molly asked breathlessly.

Breezy shrugged. "I don't know," he answered. "I think it's because I took a liking to you the moment I set eyes on you. That's the reason I stuck so close to you on the first day—the reason I followed you to Cabin A 36. I was alarmed when Eva suddenly turned up, but I got her out as quickly as I could, and I was careful to let you know that Number 72 was empty. You understand now why I invited you to lunch and why I was so insistent we should eat after swimming this morning and eat again to-night. To make sure that you got some food. And the blanket trick was only another dodge to get you away from Newton."

Molly thought him the nicest boy she was ever likely to meet.

Then suddenly his voice changed.

"What's it all mean, Molly?" Quickly she explained, and, despite the gloom, she saw how excited his eyes became.

"You're not going to fail," he insisted. "We'll see to that."

"Then I must get back to Boyd Newton's cabin," Molly said. "Do you think, Breezy, you can make sure that Boyd Newton doesn't go near it for a short time?"

"I'll make sure," he grinned. "You leave it to me."

And so Molly went back to the assistant purser's cabin, and again she found it empty.

Without any loss of time she went direct to the wash-basin, and she tapped the back of it as her brother had shown her. Instantly a small square of woodwork began to ease itself out. Pulling it clear, Molly saw the cavity inside and her fingers probed its depths. She drew out first a large key, and then, to her amazement, an envelope addressed to her in her brother's handwriting.

The moment she looked at the contents she realised it was the letter that should have been delivered to her by special messenger. It told her exactly what her brother's suspicions were against Boyd Newton, and how easy it would be for her to search his cabin. For that letter contained a steamship ticket, and Molly realised she was the passenger who had failed to turn up to claim A 36.

In some way Boyd Newton must have obtained the letter from her brother's special messenger.

Acting upon impulse, Molly replaced both letter and key, and then eased the small square of wood back

into place. She was almost at the cabin door when, for the second time, Boyd Newton appeared in front of her.

"So you're back again," he raved. "I guessed young Breezy Smith was working in with you—I realised he was trying to keep me away from the cabin. I'm making no mistake this time."

And this time Molly was indeed dragged to the captain's cabin.

Captain Thurlow gazed at her very sternly.

"You've caused me a lot of trouble, young lady," he snapped. "Who are you, and what's your explanation?"

Molly realised that Breezy and one of his pals had come to stand in the doorway of the cabin.

She began to explain. She told of her brother's letter, and how his expected instructions had failed to turn up. She told of her determination to stow away so that she might search Boyd Newton's cabin. At that point there was a gasp, and Molly whirled round just in time to see the assistant purser go racing out of the cabin.

"After him!" she gasped. "He's going to destroy the evidence."

Breezy and his pal raced ahead of her, and after Molly came Captain Thurlow.

Molly entered Cabin A 12 to see Boyd Newton on the floor being held down by Breezy and his pal. Lying also on the floor was the large key and Molly's letter.

"We just stopped him throwing them out of the porthole," Breezy gasped. "He took them from a secret compartment behind the wash-basin."

Captain Thurlow picked up the letter. He gazed at it for a few minutes, skimmed its contents, and then he pounced upon the key.

"The duplicate key to the main safe!" he exclaimed. "How does it come to be in your possession, Newton?"

Boyd Newton knew that the game was up. The only thing that could make matters a little easier for him was a full confession.

He told of how he had had a duplicate key made to the ship's main safe, and how he had robbed it on the previous voyage. Fearing that he might be suspected, he had hidden some of the stolen property in Alan Fairlie's cabin. This had been found, and Alan Fairlie, in order to keep his liberty, had been forced to run from the police.

The assistant purser also admitted that, knowing Alan Fairlie must be wise to him, he had burgled the cabin of Alan's trusted messenger and had stolen the letter intended for Molly. It came out later that the messenger had been too ashamed to let Molly know that he had failed in his trust.

Some time later Molly and Breezy were in the captain's cabin.

"I've already radioed the New York newspapers," Captain Thurlow said. "They'll make known what's happened here, and that means your brother will be at the dock-side to welcome you, Molly, when we dock. And now a stewardess is waiting to see you comfortably settled in your original cabin, and I'm hoping you'll enjoy the rest of the trip with us."

"Don't worry, sir," Breezy said. "It's going to be a really wonderful trip from now on."

THE END.

"The Secret of the Swiss Doll"—that is the title of next week's intriguing long complete story.

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