

Meet Eileen the Elusive and Wanda of the Woodlands—Inside!

SCHOOLGIRLS' WEEKLY 2¢

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EVERY WEDNESDAY.

June 1st, 1935.



Suddenly Valerie tensed. Someone was just disappearing down a corridor!

An exciting moment from this week's grand LONG COMPLETE Girl Detective Story:

"The Clue of the Satin Slipper!"



THE SILENT HOUSE!

"MISS DREW, will you please come to Rhoadley Hall as soon as possible? I'm nearly worried out of my life by all this mystery!"

Valerie Drew, the famous girl detective, gripped the telephone receiver more tightly as she listened to that urgent, quavering voice.

An appeal for help—an appeal that never fell on deaf ears where Valerie was concerned!

"Certainly, Sir Anthony!" she answered briskly. She was thrilled already by the strange details she had heard. "I will repeat what you've just told me. Your daughter, Jessica, is having her twenty-first birthday party to-morrow. A number of the presents that have arrived for her have been stolen already. Where are they kept?"

"In a locked room, Miss Drew."

"Are they safe now?"

"No, Miss Drew. They keep on going every day—two or three at a time!"

Valerie Drew whistled softly under her breath.

"Are you sure of the servants, Sir Anthony?" she asked.

The warmth of the elderly gentleman's response amazed her.

"They are absolutely trustworthy, Miss Drew. They have all come from the houses of my friends, and have long records of honest service. I cannot understand how these thefts are being carried out."

Valerie's violet eyes narrowed. Here was a truly amazing mystery—one worthy of her keenest efforts to solve it.

"I will come immediately, Sir Anthony!" Valerie decided. "My car should get me there before ten o'clock."

"I am immensely obliged, Miss Drew! I will tell the housekeeper to prepare a room and wait up for you, in case you are delayed."

With a smart, decisive movement Valerie rang off.

Flash, her adoring Alsatian, had been standing at her side whilst she was speaking. His ears were erect, his knowing old head cocked intelligently on one side.

"Is it another case already?" his green eyes seemed to be inquiring.

"Yes, old boy. We're off immediately," said Valerie, stooping to give his head a pat. "The week-end case, please—as snappy as you like!"

With a delighted "Whoof!" Flash bounded across the room, readily understanding that Valerie wanted the travelling case she always kept ready packed for emergencies.

But half-way across the room Valerie herself suddenly stopped, to glance with new interest

the party, inviting all his old friends. And now—

With a smile, Valerie looked down as she felt something gently prod her side. It was Flash with her week-end case, its handle gripped firmly in his powerful teeth. His bushy tail was waving with energetic impatience. His green eyes, as he blinked them at her, suggested his thoughts:

"Don't you think you spend enough time reading those silly newspaper things without wasting time on them now?"

Within five minutes they were well away from the house. Valerie's blue sports car was always maintained in perfect trim, and soon they had reached the Great North Road and were humming along at top speed.

Valerie had said ten o'clock, and she liked to keep her word. But it proved a longer drive than she had anticipated, and the quarter past the hour had struck from the tower of a neighbouring church as she turned in between granite gate-posts at last and brought the car to rest outside Rhoadley Hall.

Just a dainty bed-room slipper and yet it put Valerie Drew on to the solution of the most amazing mystery she had ever investigated.

at the very page of the paper she had been reading as the telephone-bell rang. A queer coincidence, indeed! Here, vividly described by a Society reporter, were the actual details of the coming-of-age party at Rhoadley Hall.

Even the circumstances of this forthcoming party were romantic and unusual.

For several years, on account of financial difficulties, Rhoadley Hall had been closed, inhabited only by a caretaker. Jessica had spent those years in South Africa, whilst her father, distressed by a painful eye affliction, had lived in the pure air of the Rocky Mountains.

Things had suddenly come right again. The family fortune had been recovered, and the elderly knight's sight was fully restored. Jessica had arrived home a few days before her father to supervise the reopening of the old home. Sir Anthony had started to arrange

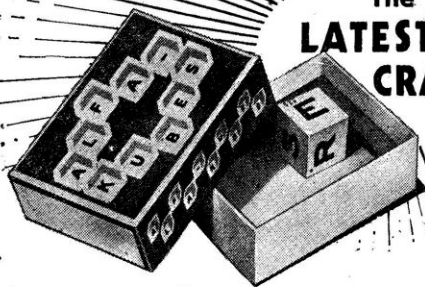
It was a lovely old place of grey stone, but to Valerie's surprise, there was no light or sign that the place was even inhabited. A strange hush fell as she switched off her engine and alighted, Flash bounding eagerly at her side.

Steps led up to the front door, set within its wide portico. Valerie pulled the handle of an old-fashioned bell, and waited whilst its clanging echoes rang through the house.

Suddenly there was a faint sound within the house—the shuffling of footsteps which Valerie's keen hearing quickly recognised. To her surprise, however, still no light appeared.

The great door moved slowly inwards, just enough to enable someone to look at her around the edge of it. It was so dark under the porch that Valerie could only see a shadowed face of a girl or woman whose features she could not recognise.

The LATEST CRAZE



New Novelty Word-Making Dice Game

ALFA-KUBES

Fun from A to Z—Witty, Wise and Wheezy—Easy, Too!

Can you spell? You don't need to be a first-class speller to enjoy the new and breezy game of making words and scoring points with ALFA-KUBES, but the better you spell—and the more quickly—the bigger will be your score. ALFA-KUBES are six square dice, each with six different letters, and each letter is given a numerical value from one to six.

The game is just to throw your ALFA-KUBES as you would ordinary dice, and then make up a word quickly from the letters turned up. You score by adding together the "pips" on each letter of the word you make. That's where skill comes in again. Different words have different value, and those who jump quickest to the highest scoring combination win the game.

Simple, isn't it? And you can see plenty of fun in the offing! It's a game you can enjoy at any time and all your friends can join in. It costs 1s. only, and the excitement and thrills you can get out of it will be worth that modest sum many times over. ALFA-KUBES will cast its spell on all who play it. Why not invest in a set to-day?

Trade Enquiries to THE CHAD VALLEY CO. Ltd., Herborne, Birmingham.

ALFA-KUBES

1/-

At all Newsagents, Bookellers, Stores and Toyshops.

"What do you want?" a voice called huskily.

Valerie was amazed at this astonishing question. Sir Anthony had telephoned her so urgently that she had naturally expected something far different from this.

"I am Valerie Drew—"

"Gracious!" her strange interviewer interrupted her before she could get further. "Didn't you get Sir Anthony's message?"

"What message?" gasped Valerie, in growing bewilderment.

"He's changed his mind. He'll wait for you if he wants you here! You'd better hurry to London again!"

And the door, before Valerie could utter a word of protest, had slammed in her face!

From amazement Valerie Drew's reactions swiftly turned to keen indignation at this brusque and discourteous reception. But she was not the girl to let anger get the better of her reason. It was sometimes said that Valerie had a "sixth sense," and it guided her now.

She scented a far greater mystery than the one she had originally set out to investigate.

Valerie was a shrewd judge of human nature. Sir Anthony's tones on the telephone had been tremulous and urgent. It was incredible that he would countermand such instructions within an hour or two of giving them. He had been courteous, too; he would never leave such a rough and off-handed message to be given to her.

It meant that there was someone apart from Sir Anthony who certainly didn't want Valerie in the place.

"It's a clue to the mystery already, old boy!" Valerie whispered thrillingly to her pet. "Now I've got to find some way of getting into the house in spite of having the door slammed on me. But how?"

That, certainly, was a problem. Intriguingly mystified, almost gratified to have received such an odd but thought-provoking reception, Valerie started quietly to encircle the spreading old house.

So still—so dark! She couldn't decide, as yet, whether the place was all or in some manner vaguely sinister. All those windows, and not a gleam from one of them. Even here, at the back of the house—

Valerie checked her thoughts abruptly. It wasn't exactly a light she had seen, but just a faint, reflected glow that had suddenly caught her attention. Instantly intrigued, Valerie approached the window from which it proceeded.

As she looked through the panes she made a surprising discovery. The room was apparently a kitchen, and the faint light illuminating it did not come from a lamp one could see, but was reflected down from a square aperture in the centre of the ceiling.

With parted lips, her lower jaw thrust slightly forward to intensify the effort of listening, Valerie tried to catch some sound.

Yes, there was something that sounded vaguely like a human voice. But what was it? The noise in the window was so thick that it was quite impossible to distinguish words.

"Flash! Fetch my case!" Valerie whispered tensely.

He shot off instantly, joyously clearing flower-beds, delighted to be of assistance. And what a time-saving factor he always proved to be at a time like this.

The case was quickly laid at Valerie's feet. Opening it, she extracted one of the many unusual things that often proved of such assistance on her cases. It was a doctor's stethoscope.

Placing one end against the window-pane Valerie applied her ear to the other. And instantly, the vibrations magnified at once, she heard a voice appealing:

"Miss Jessica, please! I'm stuck in the loft! The ladder's fallen down, and I can't possibly jump. I shall catch my death of cold if I stay here, Miss Jessica!"

It was enough for Valerie. With a "Stand firm, boy!" she placed one foot on Flash's powerful back, and, with a nimble jump, sprang to the window-sill. The blade of her knife swiftly threw the catch of the window



Fiercely Flash shook the bag this way and that—scattering the contents wildly. Valerie stood amazed. What was her clever pet trying to do?

...the door had led to her father's room. Valerie called. "It's me—Miss Drew. Open the door, please. I'm in a hurry." She called. "It's me—Miss Drew. Open the door, please. I'm in a hurry." She called. "It's me—Miss Drew. Open the door, please. I'm in a hurry."

...Flash had not been told to do so. He didn't like his beloved Valerie. In this strange house unaccountable things happened.

...Miss Drew, what a mercy you came when you did!" the little woman exclaimed. "Mrs. Towle is my name, and I'm the housekeeper. Miss Jessica that thought you had gone off to bed quite forgotten to tell me to see exactly what stores were in the loft. I'd hardly got up there when the ladder fell down by accident."

...Valerie began, and checked herself abruptly. On the point of questioning that "accident," she decided to keep her own counsel.

...Anthony asked you to stay up and receive me when I arrived?" Valerie decided to inquire instead.

...Yes, Miss Drew. He was most anxious that I should make you as comfortable as possible for the night. If I hadn't got trapped in the loft I should have answered the door the moment you rang."

...Then Valerie's shrewd suspicions were confirmed already. The mystery figure who had opened the door had led to her father's room.

...What sort of girl is Miss Jessica?" Valerie asked, the question of how tones doing nothing to betray the keen interest that lay behind the question.

...The housekeeper laughed nervously, throwing an apprehensive glance over her shoulder, as though she feared to be overheard.

...Well, it isn't me that should criticize her, especially as dear old Sir Anthony thinks the world of her!" came her low-voiced answer. "Between you and me, Miss Jessica's not at all the sort of young lady I expected to find here, and I think she's a great disappointment to her father. But I mustn't get talking now, miss—I expect you're tired after your long ride and would like to get to bed."

...Not a bad idea," Valerie replied. Actually she already had her own ideas as to what her next activities must be, but she intended for the moment to keep them to herself. She was safely inside the house, in spite of the slammed front door, and that was what mattered most.

...Her bag was brought in, and the window refastened. Apologizing for the fact that the electric light plant was not working, Mrs. Towle lit a candle for herself, and another for Valerie, and led the way.

...What a mysterious old house-it appeared by the flickering light they shed! There were vast, vaulted corridors, and massive oaken doors to the rooms.

...Valerie caught a shadowy glimpse of a fine old hall, with polished armoured figures and gilt-framed portraits on the walls, ere they ascended the main staircase to the principal rooms.

...Long, deceptive shadows danced everywhere, strangely like gaunt, black figures running away at their approach. At the top of the stairs there stood a pillar, and one could almost imagine—

...Sharply Valerie caught her breath. Had her eyes played her an amazing trick? Was it just a shadow she had seen, or something more than a shadow, that leapt away from behind the pillar and fled into the darkness?

...G-r-r-r! came a soft growl from Flash, confirming that something had startled him as well.

...Who is about the house now, Mrs. Towle?" Valerie asked tentatively.

...The elderly woman looked at her in a puzzled fashion and shook her head.

...No one, miss. Evidently Miss Jessica, like all the others, has gone to bed. We keep early hours here because of Sir Anthony."

...Valerie compressed her lips. She had a strange sensation that something mysterious and furtive, something that most properly belonged to darkness rather than the light, was in the air.

...They reached the head of the staircase, turned to the right, and came, at another turn,

to a long corridor. Valerie reached it first. In an instant she came to a startled stop, standing as though petrified with amazement at what she had just seen.

...In the aperture of the end doorway on the right she was positive she had seen the flash of a skirt as though someone had darted hastily into the room on her approach.

...Who uses the room which has the open door?" she demanded, in a tense whisper.

...Mrs. Towle looked at Valerie with blank incredulity on her face.

...Miss Drew, how ever did you guess it?" she exclaimed. "Why, that's the room you're sleeping in yourself to-night!"

...My room?" Valerie asked, blankly.

...And, even as she asked the question, a startling sound came to her ears—a sound that gave her the sensation that her hair was trying to stand on end.

...Not a loud sound at all, but clearly a girl's voice—like the voice of a girl struggling against a hand held over her mouth, a terrified girl trying to cry for help!

...Just that sound and then silence—until Valerie, with a swift order to Flash, raced at top speed along the corridor to find out who had uttered it!

STRANGE AWAKENING!

"MY goodness!" Valerie had reached the room in a few seconds, but her candle, unluckily had blown out. Her swift striking of a match relit it. With eyes that grew wider and wider with astonishment she found herself gazing around a room devoid of human occupants!

...For a moment or two Valerie had a temptation to pinch herself to make sure she wasn't dreaming. Then something touched her hand. She had forgotten Flash, who had dashed into the room whilst it was still dark. Eagerly, trimly, he was trying to give her something. With returning excitement, she took from him—a torn fragment of dark green cloth.

...Good old boy!" Valerie breathed admiringly. "Quick! Where did you get it?"

...He looked at her intently, his knowing head on one side, anxious to discover what she wanted. But it was clear to Valerie in an instant that Flash had been baffled by the darkness himself.

...With an uneasy "Whoof!" he started to run round the room, sniffing eagerly but indecisively. Knowing him so well, Valerie

realized with intense reluctance that he had told her all he could for the moment.

...Miss Drew!" the startled voice of Mrs. Towle intervened at that very moment. "What ever happened. What made you run as you did?"

...With a quick gesture, Valerie handed her the dark green fragment.

...Who wears clothes like that?" she asked tensely.

...Mrs. Towle stared at it, and her face only expressed increasing bewilderment.

...Nobody that I know of, miss, and I handle most of the clothes worn in the house," came her disappointing answer.

...Was she lying? Valerie didn't think so. The woman seemed too transparently honest. But her answer, if true, was an astounding one.

...Did you see someone dart into this room?" Valerie pressed.

...Me? No, miss!" The housekeeper looked amazed. "But how could I, when there's nobody here but us and the dog?"

...Didn't you hear a cry?"

...Mrs. Towle suddenly clasped her hands together with a nervous gesture; a look of fear came over her face.

...Oh, Miss Drew, what a dreadful mistake I've made!" she quavered. "I've often heard of the haunted room, but I never knew until now that this was it!"

...Valerie's brows contracted.

...Do you believe in haunted rooms, Mrs. Towle?"

...Oh, yes, Miss Drew—at least, the one here!" I'll move your things immediately. Some people don't see the ghost at all, they say, but evidently you're different. If you think you've seen something, and heard sounds as well—

...Don't worry, Mrs. Towle," Valerie interrupted, before the agitated woman could get farther. She thrust a hand through her luxuriant red-gold hair, and even smiled whimsically. "I'm not at all afraid of ghosts—in fact, I'd rather like to meet one. You couldn't give me a room more to my liking."

...Reluctantly, after further unavailing protest, the housekeeper gave in, and Valerie and her pet were left alone at last.

...Valerie closed the door carefully, and her



Valerie's fingers tightened on the tell-tale slipper. The door had opened and Jessica stood pointing accusingly. "What have you got there?" she snapped.

violet eyes narrowed as she stared at the fragment of green cloth that Flash had given her—the only tangible clue to the amazing happenings that were still such a mystery to her.

"See it, old boy!" Valerie murmured, as she placed it on a table near to one of the panelled walls. "That's your work-to-morrow. You're going to follow the scent of that. You're going to do some tracking. Understand what that means to us, Flash!"

And Flash, one ear erect and one drooping, his left eye twitching almost as though he was winking at her, gave a half-suppressed whimper of eagerness.

Almost complete silence in Valerie's room—the faintest sound of Valerie's breathing, and just an occasional little snore from Flash as, in dreamy fancy, he bounded joyously through field after field, happily obeying the most night-marish orders that his adored mistress gave him when he was asleep. Just those gentle sounds, and then—

A click!
But it was so faint, so cautious, that even Flash did not stir from his restful attitude at the foot of Valerie's bed.

Blissfully asleep between the lavender-scented sheets of the lovely old four-poster bed, Valerie little guessed the astounding thing that was happening.

Slowly, inch by inch, a section of the panelled wall was swinging open like a door!

Even more furtively a pallid, anxious face looked into the darkened room; ears were strained to catch the slightest sound that might startle her to retreat.

But all seemed well. Valerie was sighing

gently. A tired, happy snore came from Flash. The intruder produced a tiny electric torch. A ray of light leapt tremulously before she could really make up her mind that its use was safe.

Across the bed went the shaky, uncertain ray. It travelled across the walls and over the floor. For a few seconds it dwelt upon the sprawling, contented shape of the sleeping dog. Abruptly it moved—dogs were such wakeful creatures.

The light travelled on. And suddenly, on a fragment of green material lying on a little table, the ray of light came to rest.

But Flash had stirred. Abruptly his eyes opened. A light—who was using it? He blinked, dazzled by the brightness, seeing the beam but not the hand that directed it. And then—

"Whoof!" roared Flash, with all the indignation of which his mighty voice was capable.

He had seen a hand—a quick, clutching hand that snatched at the bit of green stuff! His bit of green stuff—his prize that Valerie had told him to guard at all costs.

Like an object impelled by a powerful spring, he launched himself in fury at that hand.

In the same instant Valerie awoke with a terrible start. The bark had startled her. All was dark again. She heard a thud, a yelp of pain, the frantic scuffling of her pet. Almost scared out of her life by the startling awakening, she snatched an electric torch from under her pillow and shone it across the room.

And she saw only Flash—poor old Flash leaping at the table, pawing incredulously at its surface, growling and whimpering with rage and disappointment.

The piece of green material had vanished!
"Flash, what happened?" Valerie demanded incredulously, as she leapt out of bed.
"Where's it gone, old boy? Find it! Seek it out!"

And his ears drooped dejectedly, his tail hung between his legs. It had gone—he knew not whither. In the darkness it had been impossible for him to observe the open panel in the wall.

Flash had seen only a hand—a hand, for all he knew, that might have been suspended in midair. He had snapped at that hand, but it had eluded him.

He had failed in his trust!

"Poor old chap!" Valerie murmured compassionately, so moved by his obvious distress and disappointment that she could not think of being cross with him. "My goodness! We're up against someone pretty smart here! The next move has got to come from Valerie Drew!"

HANDS OF MYSTERY!

VALERIE was up early on the following morning; she stood before the glass, brushing her red-gold hair, but her thoughts were far from the actual task in hand.

She was not merely disturbed about the strange, uncanny theft of that scrap of material from which she had hoped she might, with Flash's clever assistance, learn so much.

This was the day of the great garden-party. Presents to Jessica, which everyone would expect to find on view, had vanished mysteriously during the last few days, and Valerie was here to find out where they had gone and recover them in time to be put on exhibition.

The task still remained to be tackled.

It might prove easier, Valerie shrewdly reflected, if only she could explain the amazing events of last night.

Rapidly she reviewed them in her mind. Firstly, a mystery figure had tried to turn her away from the house, and she had still to find out who had actually answered the door to her. Then the "accident" to Mrs. Towle, the house-keeper—that had obviously been arranged—to make certain Valerie would not be admitted. But most disturbing of all was that muffled cry for help, the very recollection of which gave Valerie a queer, uneasy qualm.

Just before she heard it, Valerie had been sure some mystery figure was fitting secretly about the house. Following the cry, Flash, in the darkness, had torn a fragment from someone's dress.

Mrs. Towle had shown that fragment, had declared it must belong to a garment she had never seen in her life. Someone else had realised the deep significance Valerie saw in her clue, or that audacious robbery in the middle of the night would never have taken place.

"Come quickly!" A startling, distressed voice that Valerie did not remember had caused Valerie to set her hair-brush sharply down. "The presents! More have been stolen in the night!"

Valerie, with her equally excited pet at her side, was across the room in a moment. Breathlessly she ran along the corridor to the open doorway from which the cry had come. "Sit, Anthony!" Valerie asked the agitated, elderly gentleman she discovered in the room. "I am Valerie Drew—I arrived late last night as promised. Please tell me exactly what has gone."

She took an instant liking to his kindly face, with its greynish hair and refined features. And her heart went out to him in sympathy as she noted his obvious distress.

In trembling words he told her that, from amongst the lovely presents still displayed in the centre of the room, a jewelled manicure set and several other valuable articles had vanished since he locked the door with the only key to it last night.

Even as she asked shrewd, pointed questions, Valerie was making swift investigations. The windows were fastened, and it was clear the catches had not been forced. She scanned every foot of the polished floor, hoping to disclose some unusual footprint, but the surface told her nothing. She had turned her attention to the table and was searching keenly for finger-prints when a fresh voice spoke behind her.

"Daddy, it can't really be possible!" a girl cried incredulously.

"We ought to have left someone on guard, dearest," the elderly gentleman quavered. "But thank goodness we have Valerie Drew here now. Valerie is Drew, please meet my daughter, Jessica."

"How do you do?" asked Jessica.

"Pleased to meet you, Miss Jessica," Valerie murmured.

She gave a slight bow and gazed into a face that was pretty in a hard, bold way. There was an instant challenge as their eyes met.

So this was Jessica, who had ordered Mrs.

FULL OF FINE STORIES

The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2d

Every Tuesday.

...that had been stolen right before his eyes. A malicious artful sidelong glance he gave Valerie as he saw her deep in conversation with her host; with silent stealth he rose and crept to the door. Unobserved! A triumphant whisk of his bushy tail and he had escaped.

To follow an investigation entirely of his own!

Ten minutes passed. Sir Anthony was giving full details of all the losses that had been sustained. Valerie was listening eagerly to all he said, when—

"You brute!" A shrill, startling cry rang out. "The dog! Help! He's attacking me! Get a gun—someone! Shoot the savage beast! Come and call your horrid dog off!"

"Please call him off!" she cried, in a petulant voice. "I detest that treacherous breed at the best of times. I don't see there was any need for you to bring a dog here."

And Jessica, to her father's obvious distress, soon found on her heels and swiftly left the room, still without having given Valerie more than a fleeting glimpse of her hands.

"Why? Was there something about her hands she didn't want Valerie to observe?"

astounding! thought Valerie. She had been sitting at the breakfast-table for a few minutes chatting with Sir Anthony, waiting for Jessica to join them.

Flash, who had been approved by the elderly knight as "a lovely old chap," was sprawling lazily in a corner. Here came Jessica at last, and those hands in which Valerie had suddenly found herself so keenly interested were—encased in gloves!

A very astonishing situation indeed—until Jessica, to Valerie's amazement, abruptly produced an even greater one.

"What is this, daddy?" she cried, her shapely "plucked" eyebrows rising as though in sharp dismay. "You never mean to say that Valerie Drew is to have breakfast with us?"

Valerie, glancing swiftly at her host, was dismayed to see the pained surprise that that disconcerting question caused him.

"Why, of course, my dear—"

"But she's only a detective!" Jessica broke in indignantly. "She's not a guest—she's here as a servant. She should dine with all the other servants!"

Valerie compressed her lips. This was either intended as a deliberate insult, or Jessica's feelings were running away with her—she had some desperate reason for wanting to see as little of Valerie as possible.

"Jessica, my dearest!" pleaded the distressed father. "We both wish to talk to Valerie. This is an excellent opportunity—"

"I wanted to talk to you alone—I told you so!" Jessica flung petulantly at him. "You know I hate the shame of having any sort of detective in the house at all. I'd much rather lose the presents than be so humiliated. Thanks for nothing. I'll have breakfast sent to my room!"

And, with her little handbag clasped under her arm, Jessica swung round on her heel for the second time and left for breakfast. He had been shamed by his daughter, and Valerie could see that he was clearly hurt. But he would not hear of her suggestion that she should withdraw to preserve the peace.

"Jessica does not mean it, poor girl!" was his forgiving explanation. "She is really terribly worried, and tries to bottle her feelings up too much."

Valerie felt intensely sorry for him. He was so sweet and courteous—as Mrs. Towle had hinted last night, in those impulsive words that burst from her, he really deserved a far nicer daughter than Jessica to be worthy of the love he showered upon her.

The meal was served, and such was the disturbance that Jessica's rudeness had created, that even Valerie, for once, forgot her pet, and failed to observe the sudden curious conduct of Flash.

He had been told to lie in the corner. Ordinarily Flash was a most obedient dog, to-day his own little concerns were troubling him sorely. He had been robbed in the night; he had not forgotten the thing, so precious to

him, that had been stolen right before his eyes. A malicious artful sidelong glance he gave Valerie as he saw her deep in conversation with her host; with silent stealth he rose and crept to the door. Unobserved! A triumphant whisk of his bushy tail and he had escaped.

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BEHIND THE SECRET DOOR!

WITH a backward jerk that nearly overturned her chair, Valerie leapt to her feet.

Before Sir Anthony could even realize what was happening, she had run from the room.

At the end of the corridor she saw Jessica and Flash. The worst, most incredible fears that had sprung into her mind were happily unconfirmed. Valerie could never imagine her pet actually attacking a girl, and he certainly was not.

But he was doing something very startling and unusual.

Evidently Jessica had cried out as Flash leapt to seize the handbag clasped beneath her arm. Now, with the bag in his teeth, he was worrying it savagely, sending papers, keys, powder-puff and compact flying in all directions.

"Flash, drop that instantly!" Valerie ordered, as she rushed to the spot.

He obeyed her—reluctantly. The worried bag lay at his feet. With pleading, almost wounded eyes he looked up at her as though to say:

"Please let me give it just another shake or two."

But Jessica, with a sharp, desperate snatch of her gloved hand, was quick to retrieve her property.

"Disgraceful!" she cried. "I told you all the time he's a savage, untrustworthy beast out of control! He came to my room. He started to follow me everywhere. Wouldn't go away. And look at my bag! It's ruined!"

"Flash—to heel!" Valerie ordered.

She hated to say it—hated to see the puzzled hurt in his faithful old eyes as he obeyed so reproachfully and reluctantly. But, though her mind was almost spinning with the excited thoughts that filled her, she had to pretend that Flash had astonished her.

"Has Jessica been hurt?" Sir Anthony asked anxiously, as he came hastening to the spot.

Valerie did her best to explain the alarm away as tactfully as she could. It was just a little mood of excitement on Flash's part. Valerie declared that she should have kept a sharper eye on him. She had an old handbag at home which he often played with, and Jessica's must have closely reminded him of it. Sir Anthony smiled with relief at the explanation.

But Jessica, hard-eyed and tight-lipped, was not so easily convinced.

With cold disdain, a spiteful challenge in her eyes, she looked at Valerie Drew.

"If you want my opinion, you can have it!" came her dramatic reply. "Valerie Drew's a fraud, and her dog is just a savage, uncontrolled brute! I demand, father, that you send them away from this place immediately!"

Valerie was walking in the grounds of Rhoadley Hall—gay grounds, bright, with sun umbrellas, and decked with bunting, the lovely setting for the picturesque garden-party to be held to-day to celebrate Jessica's coming of age.

Valerie had not, after all, been dismissed from the case. Sir Anthony, though his confidence was obviously shaken by Jessica's angry challenge, had not actually yielded to her request.

But Valerie was very anxious when she thought how little progress she seemed to be making with her unusual case.

Flash had helped her; but he had blundered, too.

In the startling moment when she discovered her pet worrying the bag, an astounding suspicion, which reflection had fully confirmed, had leapt into Valerie's mind.

There was something in that bag that Flash was most anxiously determined to get. In Valerie's opinion it was nothing less than the piece of green material he had been told to guard last night. His keen scent, telling him where it was, had led him to throw his usual caution to the winds.

Was Jessica's, then, the secret hand that had stolen that precious clue during the



Silently the panel opened and a hand holding a torch appeared. All the time Valerie and Flash slept on.

night? Valerie's lips hardened. Flash had undoubtedly made a snap at a thiefing hand. Jessica, since then, had first refused to show her hands, and now kept them encased in gloves—even when she intended to eat a meal.

There was some strange, amazing mystery connected with Jessica, the girl whose presents had been so astonishingly stolen; but so far she had been too clever to do more than arouse Valerie's suspicions.

What was the mystery? Why was it that her father, though he was too proud to admit it, should be so bitterly disappointed in her.

Keenly, whilst Flash trotted loyally, but perplexedly at her heels, Valerie reflected on the facts as she knew them.

Years ago, when father and daughter had lived here together before the financial crash, Sir Anthony had been nearly blind. He retained little more than sweet memories of the younger girl Jessica had then been.

During the years of separation he had hugged that memory jealously, longed with all his heart for the moment when his sight might be restored, and he could see her as she really was. Perhaps he had hoped for too much. Perhaps—

—he said, in that case, father," a voice angrily exclaimed, "that you're simply an old fool to talk like that to me!"

Astonished and dismayed, Valerie pulled up sharply, aware that she had almost walked into Sir Anthony and his daughter, hidden behind the laurels she was approaching.

She heard Sir Anthony make some startled, pleading protest. Then, before Valerie could think of making a tactful retreat, Jessica's bitter voice went on.

"You've promised me a money present of five hundred pounds to-day!" she declared, in furious tones. "You've got to keep your promise. I've got a reason for wanting the cash, and not a cheque. You can easily phone the bank for them to send a cashier just with it. I tell you, if you disappoint me, and won't do what I ask, I won't attend the rotten garden-party at all!"

In horrified dismay at those callous, brutal words to her dotting father, Valerie listened as a running-step told her that Jessica had gone petulantly away.

Then, impulsively, she broke through the bushes. She was engaged as a detective; but she had her human feelings, too—feelings she could not, for the life of her, repress at such a poignant moment.

Sir Anthony stood still, a stricken look on his pallid face, his lips working, tears of bitter dismay starting to his gentle eyes.

"Poor Sir Anthony!" Valerie murmured, with intense feeling.

He took a step towards her. Almost in a consoling motherly way she grasped his shaking hands. And Sir Anthony instinctively realised that it was true compassion—knew immediately that Valerie was his real friend to whom he could confide the emotions of his breaking heart.

"My daughter! It was my own daughter who spoke to me like that!" he choked, in his distress. "Oh, Miss Drew, why was I given back the precious gift of sight, only to be mocked like this? I would have been happier if I had stayed blind!"

A feeling of intense compassion moved Valerie at those bitter, but justified words. The burning anger and contempt stirred within her for the heartless girl who could so callously wound this lovable old man—a girl unconscious of all his sweetness, mocking his devotion, trampling his gentle affection heedlessly underfoot.

"I can't believe Jessica meant it," she tried to assure him.

She felt his grip tightening convulsively on her hands.

"If only you were my daughter, Miss Drew," he whispered brokenly. "I'm a stranger to you and yet you understand a father's feelings so deeply. I never believed I could have such a heartless daughter."

Valerie tried for some minutes longer to comfort him as much as she could. And all the time a strange, startling thought was at last slowly emerging out of the baffling mist of doubt in her mind.

An astounding thought! At first it seemed impossible—sheer fantasy! But when the elderly knight had returned to the house

Valerie found the suspicion raging more and more furiously in her brain.

An entirely new line of inquiry was in her mind. With the aid of Flash—

Startled, she looked round. Flash should have been sprawling on the ground just behind her. For the second time he was showing a most unusual disobedience. He had vanished yet again!

"Flash!" she cried urgently. "Flash, where are you?"

Three or four seconds elapsed. Then a sudden bark answered her—a bark so unusual and remote that she was disturbed by it.

"Whoof! Whoof!"

She looked for her pet everywhere—amongst the bushes, over the distant flower-beds, past the tennis courts and bowling green, until another "Whoof" seemed to say:

"For goodness' sake look up and see how clever I've been!"

And there, high up, on the very edge of the flat roof that surmounted the old house, she saw Flash, strangely diminutive in appearance, his excitedly waving tail silhouetted sharply against the skyline.

"My goodness!" Valerie murmured, in amazement. "How ever did he manage to get up there?"

With a cry of "Wait up there, old boy!" Valerie ran towards the house.

In one of the passages, meeting Mrs. Towle, the housekeeper, she asked a few breathless questions.

"The roof, miss?" the housekeeper replied, in wonder. "No, miss, there's no direct staircase to it. There's a ladder on the top floor that swings into position when you pull a cord, but it wouldn't be in place now."

Thanking her, Valerie hastened on. More amazing than ever! Her first startling suspicion appeared to be confirmed already. Flash, clever though he was, could not be expected to manipulate a cord whose use he did not even understand, and lower a ladder that led to the roof.

But fears were stirring within Valerie, brutal to her, a sensation of anxiety for her pet's safety. Flash was impetuous and plucky, a bad enemy. There might be secrets of this old house it would be highly dangerous for him to investigate unaccompanied.

If he'd only wait on the roof until Valerie got there, and then show her how he had made such a thoroughly unexpected appearance—"Whoof!"

It was Flash's voice; a muffled bark that caused Valerie to pull up sharply just as she had reached the floor on which her own bedroom was situated. Her eyes dilating with amazement, she stared at him as he raced joyously towards her, tail wagging with frenzied excitement, a small, black object held tightly in his jaws.

As he surrendered it Valerie saw that it was a girl's satin slipper. Wonderingly she turned it over to examine it more closely. Her fingers suddenly tightened, her arm became rigid with amazement, as she looked at the sole.

There was lettering on it—vague, straggling lettering such as might be made with an old, soiled piece of chalk. And it read:

"E.L.P."

Swiftly Valerie moved nearer to the light. Had there been another letter on the sole, one that Flash had inadvertently rubbed off as he scrambled with the shoe through some narrow aperture? Had the word originally been "Help"?

"What have you got there?"

Sharply Valerie spun round as that voice spoke. Silent and unsuspected, Jessica Montrose had come to see what Valerie was looking at.

"A slipper!" said the girl detective, and her violet eyes now shot a searching challenge at the girl who confronted her.

"Y-es." Only that momentary hesitation, only that second when Jessica's eyes wavered, as though she knew not what to say next.

"It's mine," she declared easily. "If you'd only keep your interfering dog outside the house, as I ordered, he couldn't go rummaging in my room and playing with my things!"

Valerie's stern gaze did not waver. She had felt this challenging enmity for Jessica from the moment they first met. After the remarks she had so recently overheard in the garden,

Valerie did not intend even to pretend to be polite to Jessica any longer.

"I want to have proof of that statement," she said crisply.

"Will you wait here?" Jessica retorted, almost impudently.

"Yes. For two minutes only," said Valerie pointedly.

"That will be more than sufficient."

Jessica turned away. Valerie watched her for a moment, then turned her attention to the shoe in hand.

"Help?" Valerie said. "E.L.P."—did it really mean "Help"? But who could possibly be a prisoner in the old house? Who could try to send such a strange, desperate message by Flash?

"Who gave it to you, old boy?" Valerie whispered.

Flash looked up at her with adoring, dog-like tail waving. Anxiously he kicked his hand, and whimpered softly. Poor chap, he couldn't speak—he could only tell her things in his own doggy way. And this, it seemed, was a case where words were essential.

"Here we are, Miss Valerie Drew!"

It was Jessica's triumphant voice. She came along the corridor with a black slipper in her hand, Valerie took it with a slight start; she felt a strange inward misgiving as she looked at the object that the other girl had given her.

Save that it had been made to be worn on the opposite foot, it was identical with the one Valerie held in her hand. They were a perfect pair.

Slowly Valerie turned them over. A glance at the soles and heels and suddenly, with a sharp gesture, she handed them both to Jessica.

"Thank you very much," said Valerie. "I'm quite satisfied."

Jessica turned to walk away, and it was then that Valerie's eyes suddenly shone with excitement as she watched.

There had been one difference in the slippers on which she did not remember. The heel of one was good; the other was badly worn over. Only an uneven Walker could cause such unusual wear. Jessica walked very well indeed!

Either the shoes were not really a pair, or they certainly did not belong to Jessica as she claimed. Were there two similar pairs in the house, and one shoe had come from each pair?—Flash, where did you get it? Valerie breathed, the present Jessica had vanished from sight. "Find, old boy! Seek him out! Show me where you've been!"

Flash sniffed the air eagerly, then turned to lead the way. In a few moments Valerie found herself actually outside her own bedroom door, Flash constantly glancing back to see that she was following.

Her own room! And it was from here last night that that fragment of green material had vanished so mysteriously.

A thrill of excitement suffused Valerie as she felt more sure than ever that she was on the track of the real mystery at last.

Eagerly Flash ran round the room, sniffing all over the floor, returning more than once to one particular part of the panelling. Each time he whimpered anxiously, and looked around at her as though waiting for her assistance.

Just as he did when he wanted her to open a door for him.

"My goodness! It's within a few feet of the place where the table was standing last night!" Valerie breathed. "Flash, you mean that there's a secret panel in the wall here! There must be a passage that leads somewhere, and you found it—you slipped through and got up to the roof that way!"

That there was a secret passage to be found there could now be no doubt. Flash, in his own doggy way, had done his best to tell her all about it. Now he went bounding away on investigations of his own. Valerie did not notice that he had gone. She was too keen on her examination of the piece of panelling she suspected.

With a practised hand she ran sensitive finger-tips over its surface, then tapped it thoughtfully, sizing intently to find some means of opening a secret spring that controlled a hidden door.

It was not easy, even for an expert. Fully ten minutes had passed in that thoughtful tapping when suddenly, seeing a half-hidden

Flash had been quite wrong when she so confidently reassured herself that Flash did not understand. Being a dog-hater, she could not know how a dog's mind worked.

Flash was following her, even as she moved amongst the guests, but never for a moment did he let her become aware of the fact.

Crouching amongst the bushes, slinking like a golden shadow behind groups of people, Flash kept her constantly in view, but hung back sufficiently far for her to remain quite unaware of his burning, suspicious regard of all she did.

And at last his hopes quickened, a more confident feeling actuated him as she turned towards the house.

Valerie, without a doubt, must be somewhere in there!

Jessica entered. Flash crept in after her. An instinct that came from his wild ancestry served him now. He slunk quite naturally in the shadows; he moved with soft, soundless steps.

And how justified he was! Fear for his mistress' safety had implanted a greater caution than ever in him, and outwardly he manifested no excitement at all as he saw Jessica actually enter his mistress' room.

Like a green-eyed ghost, Flash looked around the open door. Another door was open already—the secret door—a door through which Flash had already been when he chanced to find it open. But there had been no one about then. Jessica was present now.

With silent steps Flash crept into the room and hid under the table. Jessica moved. In an instant Flash knew that his chance had come. For a second or two she was not watching the secret opening in the wall.

With a silent bound Flash was through, safely inside the secret passage that led through the heart of the walls.

Startled by the slight scraping sound that ensued, Jessica spun round. She had seen nothing of the dog at all.

"A rat, I suppose!" she muttered, with an impatient shrug of her shoulders. "I'm getting nervy now we're nearly through with it."

She entered the secret passage herself. But Flash, creeping ahead of her now, did not even glance back.

"Well, my dear, the great moment has come," Sir Anthony announced, as Jessica smilingly faced him, and a dozen friends clustered eagerly round to watch the presentation. "My own personal present to you, on this happy day, is the sum of five hundred pounds. At your own special request, I am going to hand it to you in notes."

"Oh, thank you, daddy!" Jessica answered, and with a radiant smile, she bestowed the wad of notes from his hands.

"And now, Ivy Stubbles," a stern voice dramatically cried at the very same moment, "hand that money back again!"

With an astounded cry "Jessica" whirled round—to fall back with consternation in her widening eyes at the sight she beheld.

Not only Valerie Drew and tail-waving Flash, but another girl as well—a girl who bore a marked resemblance to herself! And such a visible horror filled "Jessica" at the appalling vision that the bundle of notes simply fell from her grasp, handy for Flash simply to pounce triumphantly forward and pick them up.

"Miss Drew!" Sir Anthony cried out, in bewilderment. "This is too astounding for words! I believed you had gone—"

"I was in a great difficulty—actually a prisoner!" Valerie's grim reply came. "If Flash had not come to the rescue with his strong teeth I might still have been with your real daughter, a fellow-captive in the secret room."

"My real daughter?" Sir Anthony cried.

"Yes, Sir Anthony," Valerie replied. "This is Ivy Stubbles, daughter of the woman who was caretaker of the house during your absence. They were both here when Jessica returned from abroad. They noticed the resemblance of Ivy to her, and immediately hatched this cunning scheme to keep poor Jessica a prisoner whilst Ivy took her place. Ivy not only stole the most valuable presents by means of a duplicate key, but planned to get away with your generous gift of money as well!"

"My Jessica—my darling!" the father cried, his arm joyously extended to welcome her. "Praise be for the precious gift of sight that was not restored to me in vain, after all! And this dreadful woman Stubbles—"

"We know where to find her again, daddy—we left her locked in the secret room!" the real Jessica explained softly. "Valerie has done everything for me. I nearly escaped last night, but they were just too quick for me. Though Flash actually tore at my skirt—"

And, yes, the knowing old fellow seemed to understand exactly!

The real Jessica was wearing a dark green frock from which a fragment had been torn.

Flash ran to it and sniffed it triumphantly.

He had followed his own clue—his case was completed. He had found not the fragment but the frock itself. With his bushy tail proudly waving, he announced his satisfaction to the world with one loud and joyful:

"Whooof!"

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

"CORAS' 'DOUBLE' TURN!"

Called an Impostor where she was due to appear!
Forced to Perform where she wasn't due to appear!

So Cora Appeared at Both Places!

There you have the intriguing theme of next Wednesday's magnificent LONG COMPLETE Circus Story by Elsie Trevor; a story in which—

Cora, the Girl Animal-Trainer

—reveals herself to be as ingenious without her animals as she is daring and resourceful with them in the circus ring.

You simply
must read

"CORAS' 'DOUBLE' TURN!"