

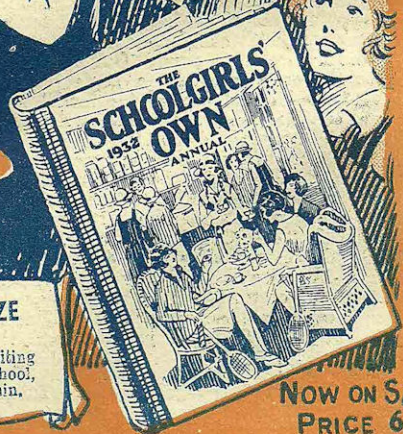
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The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2^d



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FOR JUDY!**

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End-of-Term Thrills and Unexpected Surprises in This Splendid Tale of Morcove School.

The Luck Judith Deserved!



Prize-Day at Morcove.

"**B**ETTY, I've seen them!"
"Seen—"

"The prizes! But, Betty," said Polly Linton, in a tone of sheer rapture, "they're ab-so-lutely wonderful!"

"I mustn't get too interested in them," laughed the Fourth Form captain of Morcove School. "They might make me feel jealous of other girls!"

"For my part," joked back the madcap of Study 12, "I'm glad I've had just a glimpse of them before they are all given away—to other girls! They're better than ever this time, Betty!"

"So they should be, Polly. I'm sure all the girls have been better than ever this term. It's been a jolly term, anyhow."

"It has!"

"Yes, wather, bai jove!" beamed Paula Creel, who could hardly have known what the talk was about as she came floating into Study 12. "Most gwatifying, wather!"

"What is?" asked Polly Linton, with her usual pretence of being exceedingly scornful of the Form's adored duffer.

"The weathah, bai jove—what? So pwomising for the hols!"

By
Marjorie Stanton

"Betty and I were just talking about the prizes," continued Polly, with mock gravity. "Agreeing that it's not to be wondered that she and I aren't in for any. When we've had to put up with you and Naomer—well, I ask you!"

"Fwivolous as evah!" chuckled the elegant one, subsiding into her favourite armchair. "Bai Jove, I heard a wumour that Study 12 had done wather well this term. Yes, wather!"

"You always do believe anything you're told," was the madcap's scathing retort to that. "If you were told that you yourself had won a prize—you'd believe it!"

"I should not be supvised—no!"

"Then I'm sorry for you," sighed the madcap.

Betty Barton grinned.

"How about school reports—has anyone seen those?"

"Oh, help!" said Polly, and she appeared to be on the verge of a sudden faint. "Don't talk about reports! My only hope is that dad and mother will lose sight of my report until after Christmas! They may," she mused aloud hopefully, "if it gets mixed up with the Christmas cards."

*Excitement is rife throughout Morcove School during the last week of the term. The thrill of Christmas shopping, the prospect of parties, dances, and the promise of seasonable weather enhance the joyous outlook. But Judith Grandways— Such eager anticipation is not for her! And then, as the sun bursts through rain-filled clouds, so came the greatest happiness a girl could wish for—
—the Luck Judith Deserved!*

At this instant another junior dashed into the study, skipped across to the corner cupboard, opened it, and darted behind the door, whereupon Polly jumped up.

"Naomer!"

No answer from the cupboard.

"Naomer, come out of that!"

"No, bekas—"

"Come out! When it's not half an hour since you had breakfast!"

"What ces all ze fuss about?" protested that dusky imp, Naomer Nakara, who was Morcove's royal scholar, and the proud possessor of a right royal appetite. "I am only looking at him!"

"Looking will lead to—we know what!"

"Yes, wather! Bai jove, though," added Paula as Naomer popped out of the corner cupboard, bearing a fine, iced Christmas cake on a large plate. "it is worth looking at—weally it is!"

"Look at him, then!" urged Naomer ecstatically. "Ooo, isn't he a good one? Ze lovely little fluffy robin, with ze holly in his beak, and all ze sparkling frost! Ooo, queek! Where is ze knife?"

"Hold! Desist!" cried Polly, in her best dramatic vein. "This must not be! Girl, do you realise that in five minutes we have to go to class?"

"All ze more reason—"

"As a shareholder," said Polly, and she took up the cake and returned it to the cupboard—"at the right time, Naomer!" She turned the key. "This afternoon."

"I am not going to work to-day, so don't theenk it!"

"Who is?" laughed Betty. "But we've got to go into class—for the last time! Hurrah! Hallo, Madge! But why lobkest thou so solemn?"

"When you know, Madge, you have got two prizes for music," said Polly.

Madge Minden was a quiet girl, but at a joyous time like this she was naturally looking a little less serious than usual.

"I've just seen Judy Grandways, girls," Madge explained gravely. "Judy seems awfully unhappy again, I'm afraid."

"Poor old Judy!" murmured Betty feelingly.

"Gweat shame! Yes, wather!" Paula joined in the murmurs of sympathy. "It's all her sister's doing, of course."

"That beastly, hateful Cora!" exploded Polly. "Ugh, how I do wish she could go away to-morrow, and never come back to Morcove any more!"

"She does lead Judy a life, and no mistake," Betty nodded. "There's been another row, evidently. We all thought Judy seemed to be so much brighter—quite jolly, in fact—over the week-end."

"But I noticed this," rejoined Polly. "Her spirits seemed to go pluit again directly Mrs. Grandways turned up on Sunday afternoon, taking both daughters by surprise. It does seem a funny state of affairs that a girl should not be glad to see her own mother!"

"Well, I don't blame Judy!"

"Oh, no!" Madge hastily agreed with the captain. "It simply means, as we have known all along, that home is not really like home to Judy, and her parents are not—well, rot as kind to her as we would expect them to be."

"Very distwessing," Paula commented softly. "I'm afraid, geads, Judy is in for a pwetty wotten Christmas altogether."

"If only she could be with us!"

"Yes, bekas—"

"Ah, it's no use wishing it," was Betty's rueful cry. "As it is with Cora, here at Morcove, so it is with Mr. and Mrs. Grandways during the hols. Can't do a thing themselves to make Judy happy, and yet if anybody else wants to—oh, no!"

It was like Betty Barton to add, a moment afterwards:

"Anyhow, I'll see if I can find Judy. Let's do our very best for her, girls, right up to the last moment."

Passing out of Study 12, Betty encountered Pam Willoughby and Helen Craig, just coming in. These two girls looked full of that happy excitement which was everywhere in the school to-day—except in the heart of Judith Grandways!

Simply to see such brightness and looking forward to the "hols" in the faces of Pam and Helen only made Betty feel all the more concerned for that one girl in the Form whose path was so hard.

Going round into the lobby, on to which only one door opened—the door of that odd study which was shared by the Grandways sisters and Hetty Curzon—the captain gave a formal tap.

Next second she was being asked by Cora, in that girl's customary rude tones:

"Well, what do you want?"

"I'm looking for Judy."

"She's not here!"

"Do you know where I can find her, Cora?"

"No, I don't! Yes, I do," the girl laughed harshly. "She's probably trying to get a look at the prizes she's won! I suppose there are a few going to Judy—or has Study 12 collared them all?"

Betty drew back, pulling the door shut smartly between herself, and the jeerer and her toady.

Instead of returning to Study 12, the captain flitted by its wide open door, and as she did this she was aware of much fun going on—one of those delicious bits of skittishness on the part of Polly and Naomer, involving Paula Créel, with dire consequences to Paula's personal appearance. And Paula did so like to keep herself spick-and-span!

Girls belonging to other studies were also in bounding spirits. Betty had never known quite so much dashing in and out of rooms and up and down stairs. Every step suggested a happy mood this morning, every word was so full of goodwill.

And yet it was amidst such cheering scenes as this that she had to quest Judith Grandways, finding her at last in the library, all alone.

"I've been looking for you, Judy."

Judith Grandways paused to look round, in the act of fitting two or three books back into their places on the well-stocked shelves. She gave the captain a smile.

"Not taking out another book, Judy?"

"No, Betty; only putting back ones I've had."

"I was going to say! But, you know, Judy," the captain changed to an earnest tone, "we can't help noticing that you are unhappy—not a bit as you were over the week-end! What is it this time, Judy? Just the same?"

"Oh, you shouldn't bother about me, Betty, although it's good of you," was the tremulous response. "Yes, I suppose I was awfully happy at the week-end; but, then, see what reason there was! Who could fail to be happy when—you know, Betty! It was so lovely at Cliff Edge bungalow on the Saturday, and—all the rest."

"Ah, yes," nodded Betty, at the same time

throwing an arm about Judith's shoulders to draw her away from this solitude. "You mean how nice it was to see Dave Lawder with his own mother when up to a few days ago we all regarded him as an orphan. That certainly has been a wonderful thrill, Judy. And isn't Mrs. Cardew a dear, too! She must be gloriously happy to find Dave after not seeing him since he was a tiny tot!"

"I think her— But there, I can't say!" broke off Judy, with a sigh. "She has been so awfully nice to me, Betty."

"And I should just say she has to the rest of us, too, Judy. Have you heard? It's practically settled—we shall know for certain before the day is out, anyhow. Mrs. Cardew is going to have us all for Christmas!"

Judith stood still, giving the captain a full look.

"Going to have—"

"Polly and her brother Jack, and Mr. and Mrs. Linton, of course, and Madge Minden and her father; Paula Croel, Pam Willoughby, Helen Craig, Tess Trellawney—myself," cried Betty gaily. "Oh, we shall be a jolly crowd! Mrs. Cardew has heard of a big country house that can be rented furnished for the Christmas holidays, and she wants to take it to have us all there!"

Betty pause.

"You see, this is the first Christmas that Dave and his mother will have spent together. Dave has nearly always spent his holidays with the Lintons, so this year Mrs. Cardew wants to repay all the kindness, and she is the one to do it, too. We all go up to London first from Morcove for the shops, and then—"

Betty suddenly put a check upon her eager chatter. Delight over anticipated joys had run away with her, but now the increased wistfulness in her listener's eyes had brought her back to the poignant fact—none of this pleasure was to be Judy's!

"Judy, I'm so awfully sorry! I feel a pig—"

"Oh, silly!" laughed Judy bravely. "Go on! Tell me some more, Betty. I—I like to hear all about it—what you are going to do at Christmas."

"And you won't be with us!" Betty deplored. "Not like you were last Saturday, at the bungalow, Judy, and we could tell how you were enjoying yourself, too!"

"Never mind," was the smiled remark. "I shall come back to you all after the hols."

"That's all very well, Judy, but Christmas is Christmas!"

"I must have the address of that country house, so I can send you all cards," said Judith, sauntering out of the library with Betty. "One for Dave's mother, too—and one for Dave himself." She laughed. "He has said he would send me a card at Christmas, you know!"

"Dave thinks a lot of you, Judy. Look here!" spoke on Betty eagerly. "Is it any use Mrs. Cardew trying to get your people to let you come too for the hols? Your mother is



At the tops of their voices the Juniors chanted: "No more work, no more play! Morcove School is breaking up, Hip, pip, pip—HOORAY!"

putting up in Barncombe for a day or so, isn't she? It would be as simple as anything for Dave's mother to call on Mrs. Grandways, and—"

"Oh, Betty, the things you suggest!" broke in Judith, smiling. "No, there can be nothing like that. So don't say anything more about it—please!"

In any case, nothing more could have been said then. It was time to go into class. The bell had rung, and the two girls stepped together in the direction of the class-rooms, to find school-mates of theirs giving full play to the breaking-up mood, so that a seriously spoken word would have been altogether lost amidst the hurly-burly that it was.

"Betty!" And the hand of Miss Everard, Form mistress, falling lightly upon the captain's shoulders, turned that girl about.

"I have to see about such a heap of things, Betty. You must take charge for the present. I'll just see the Form started, and then—"

"And then," thought Betty, "what a time I'm going to have, with the girls in this state! Well, it's not all honey being captain!"

Last Time in Class!

"NOW, girls—"
Bang, crash!

"Wowp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Girls—girls!"

"Last time in class! Hooray!"

"Pick up that blackboard, some of you! Naomer!"

"Wiz ze greatest of pleasure, Mees Everard! Wiz ze complements of ze season, in fact! Come on, Paula, lend ze hand!"

"Considering it came down on my foot," pro-

tested Paula, hopping about on one leg. "I considah I might be—Owp!" as a paper pellet flicked past her ear. "Weally, do dwop it! Yarough!" she howled. "Now you've dwopped it on my other foot, Naomer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Miss Everard rapped loudly for order.

"Every girl to her desk—this instant!"

"Wiz ze greatest of pleasure," said Naomer, leaving the fallen blackboard.

"Last time in class, girls, so make it the best," she pleaded chummily. "I am leaving Betty in charge, for there are a hundred and one things for me to see to. You now have fifty minutes in which to write an essay on "How I am spending Christmas." "

"Ooo!"

"Naomer, what did I say?"

"You said, plis, an' essay on 'How to spend ze Christmas-box.' "

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are asking to be kept in, I can see," said Miss Everard. "See they behave, Betty!"

Impossible task for the captain!

Juniors gossiped away in their desks. Trips to the stationery cupboard were made, for the sake of being able to hang about at the windows.

"Sit down! Get on with it!" pleaded the captain time after time, and all in vain.

The Form was always going to start work, but never did.

Ultimately two or three of them began to hum a Christmas carol. Polly promptly supplied a subdued accompaniment, imitating a brass band.

Betty, standing in front of the unruly class, did not know how to keep from laughing as much as the perpetrators themselves. The balls of paper became ammunition for a paper-pellet light—East Side versus West.

"You'll all be kept in, you know," Betty warned the Form.

"Shall we? How s-s-sad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Then suddenly Naomer supplied a variant to the fun. She had dropped out of the paper-pellet battle and had been tearing up an exercise-book, raining the tiny pieces of paper into a basket. All in an instant she rushed with the basket back to her desk, where Paula was a near neighbour.

Standing on the seat, Naomer poised the waste-paper basket above Paula's pretty head.

"Queek, look, everybody! Zis is Paula on Christmas Eve, out in ze jolly old snow!"

Naomer turned on the "snow." A thousand tiny scraps of white paper descended upon the duffer's luckless head, smothering its glossy crown and then falling, mostly over shoulders and into her lap. But some scraps went down her neck, giving Paula all the more reason for a protesting:

"Wow!"

The Form shrieked its laughter.

"Here, that's enough!" objected Betty when at last she could make herself heard. "Now, girls, do do a little work! Naomer, pick up all those scraps of paper! Pick 'em up!"

"Wiz ze greatest of ze pleasure," said Naomer.

"But you can't expect me to do zat and an essay!"

Yet the dusky one finally became as busy with her pen as any girl in the class-room. The subject set had seized Naomer's fancy. Betty had only to give a glance to the dusky one, and she could scarcely refrain from laughing. Naomer's tongue-tip was going round and round her lips as she drove her pen along, and her dark eyes sparkled with delight.

From this, what a change to notice Judith Grandways, obviously finding less pleasure in this task that had been intended for a pleasant one. The thought came to Betty:

"Judy should have been asked to write 'What I would like to do at Christmas.' Poor Judy! It's not much of a Christmas she is going to have, I'm sure!"

At last Miss Everard came back, and, needless to say, she did not inquire of the captain how the Form had behaved. With an air of being beset with a hundred and one end-of-term matters, the mistress carelessly sent the Form out for "break," picking upon Judith to remain behind and go round the desks, collecting the alleged essays.

"I may look at them later on," Miss Everard smiled, going off again.

In an abstracted manner, Judith began to pick up the essays, looking faintly amused at their showing such signs of scamping. If there had been anyone else in the class-room, however, Judith would have, perhaps, been seen to pay close attention to some of the literary efforts.

Whenever she picked up an essay that had been penned by a member of Study 12, she at least skimmed it through. In one or two instances she read every word, with a wistful interest that was pathetic.

In due course she came upon Naomer's enthusiastic screed, and this again, however much its quaintness might amuse Judith, was going to give her poignant feelings.

There she stood, amongst all the deserted desks, alone in the great class-room, reading:

"HOW I AM SPENDING CHRISTMAS.

"BY NAOMER NAKARA.

"Christmas comes but wuns a year, but when he comes he brings good CHEER!"

"Well, this Christmas I am going to stay with Betty and the rest, who are going to stay with Mrs. Cardew and Dave, and Polly's brother Jack will be there. Of course!!!

"But let we go up to London for shopeing, to buy all our prezents and have a gorjus time at a posh hotel, and late dinner, and brekerfast in bed eef if you want him, bekas I beeliv in extra bed in ze hols.

"And then we go down to a grate big howse in the country, and let's hop it will be snowing! Bekas that is ze fun.

"Anso, on Christmas Day, turkey! Anso, plum-puddingk. But I forgot to say we shull all hang up our stockinses, bekas Father Christmas, hooray!

"Anso, I am sure we shall all have a gorjus Christmas, which I wish everyobdies else, I am sure. Trusting you will all have a good appetite, bekas that is the great thing! (Yes, wather!!!)

"Anso three cheers for Christmas, ze best time in all the year!!!!"

Judith, putting this "essay" along with the rest, was smiling. But behind the smile was a mind that was different from any other girl's in all Morcove to-day.

The holiday—Christmas gaities! Even now, by her solitariness in the class-room, she was being made to feel that she was never to know the joys that other girls knew!

Stacking the collected essays upon Miss Everard's desk, she wandered to one of the windows and watched her schoolmates for as long as they were in the open air, some at games, others strolling about in chummy batches.

Then they all came trooping back into class, and the rest of the morning was spent in more orthodox manner. Miss Everard was in charge, and she insisted upon certain last lessons being taken seriously, although it still wanted five minutes to twelve when she gave the welcome "Pens down."

"And I want this class-room to be left quite tidy," remarked the Form-mistress, with a good idea of the traditional demonstration that was about to take place. "Any disorder, and some of you must stay behind to clear up! Also, every girl must be in her place in Big Hall, at half-past two, for the prize-giving."

"Wiz ze greatest—"

"Naomer! I shall have an opportunity of saying good-bye to you all as a Form—my own Form—on the day you break up," resumed Miss Everard. "Meantime I merely say, girls, that it has been a very happy term for me, as I am sure it has been for all of you. Both in work and at games you have done excellently. For the present, then, and for the last time this term, you may—dismiss!"

"Hurrah!"

This was the moment for which the Form had been saving its breath. This was the moment for almost every riotous junior to jump up, cheering madly, throwing books and primers high, catching them as they fell, and then throwing them higher still!

"Hooray! The hols! Christmas! Hurrah!"

"Come on, girls!" vociferated madcap Polly.

"Yes, bekas—all together!" shrilled Naomer, and she started the deafening chant:

"No more work,
No more play!
Moreove School is breaking up.
Hip, pip, pip—
HOORAY!"

"Rah-h-h!" the prolonged cheer became as the mad young things stormed away, leaving more than half their schoolbooks scattered over the floor.

"Disgraceful!" commented Miss Everard, but without looking either really surprised or shocked. "Well, someone must clear it all up—every bit! Judith!"

For Judith was only now dawdling out after all the rest had gone.

She nodded and smiled her perfect willingness to perform the necessary service, and Miss Everard, needing to hurry away, laughed a grateful word or two.

"By the way, Judith, what are you doing at Christmas?"

"I—I shall be at home, Miss Everard."

"Oh, will you? I wondered—your mother being in Barncombe at present—whether she would be taking you and Cora and Hetty Curzon somewhere else for the holidays."

"No; we shall be at home."

"And after all, Judy, there's no place like home, is there? Especially at Christmas! Well, I hope you will have a very happy time!"

Miss Everard hastened away. For a minute Judy was quite alone again in the class-room, picking up all the litter of books, whilst she heard other Forms cheering now that they were being dismissed, and boisterousness going on everywhere.

Then Betty, Polly, and a few others came back, to take a share in Judy's job.

"Many hands!" cried Betty gaily. "And now Judy, come along out with us, for a last game!"

"Yes, Judy, you must."

Her smile implied that she would, but they were to find that she had given them the slip when, two minutes later, they had flocked into the open. And then a diversion occurred, causing Betty & Co. to forget Judith for the moment.

To the delight of the chums of Study 12, the mother of Dave Lawder was coming up the drive, having left her car at the gateway.

A Mother's Heart.

THE girls had never even seen her looking more charming. This morning Dave's new-found mother was wearing tweeds, and altogether she looked so sportive that Polly lost no time in offering a hockey-stick.

But Mrs. Cardew declined it.

"No, thanks, when I've been getting a round of golf on the links instead of staying in to write letters! But it's all right about that country house for Christmas, girls. That's fixed up, anyhow."

"It is!" cried Study 12. "Hoo-ray!"

"Ze stuff to give 'em! What do you say, Paula?"

All Paula said was "Wowp!" as she found herself caught in another excitable embrace by the dusky one, to be waltzed round once again.

"That's all I looked in for," Dave's mother added lightly. "Now I must get back to the bungalow and really tackle those letters. Grange-moor School is breaking up to-day. Dave and Jack will be turning up presently."



"Of course, when I discovered that Judy had parents living—I just had to give up my idea!" Mrs. Cardew said with a catch in her voice. Betty Barton nodded understandingly. How she wished, for Judith Grandways' sake, that Mrs. Cardew had been right!

"And no letter-writing then!" laughed Betty. "Why aren't you girls breaking up to-day?" was the remark which drew from Polly a mock-disgruntled:

"Why aren't we, Mrs. Cardew? Because boys always come off better than girls!"

"Do they?" laughed Dave's mother. Then, with a sudden serious look, she said softly: "Perhaps they do—sometimes."

It was as if, as suddenly as all that, a heavy train of thought had been started in her mind, for she turned to go back to her car at the gateway without implying that she would welcome the chums as an escort.

Then she returned round, beckoning Betty.

"Something I want to ask you, Betty," was said gravely as soon as the captain had run up. "How about Judy Grandways?"

"And Christmas, do you mean?"

Mrs. Cardew nodded.

"Why, that's what is rather troubling us," Betty said earnestly. "Poor Judy is down in the dumps again to-day, and you can't wonder! There is so little for her to look forward to over the Christmas."

"She goes home?"

"And it's no use beating about the bush, Mrs. Cardew. Judy is not happy at home," sighed Betty, going in-step with Mrs. Cardew down the drive. "Her people are rolling in money, of course; but what Judy wants is—well, something that money doesn't buy."

Mrs. Cardew received this with attentive silence.

"We were saying in Study 12," Betty continued softly, "if only Judy could be with us in the hols! Her mother is staying in Barncombe, as perhaps you know."

"Is she?" exclaimed Mrs. Cardew, looking startled. "No, I was not aware of that!"

"Mrs. Grandways came down by car on Sunday, to stay a few days in Barncombe and take her two daughters and Hetty Curzon home with her tomorrow, when Morcove breaks up. "I—I even suggested to Judy," faltered Betty, "that perhaps you might see Mrs. Grandway and arrange something. But Judy said it would not be a bit of use, and I'm afraid she's right. I hope it wasn't check on my part, Mrs. Cardew?"

"My dear, it does you credit," the lady said gently. "I do think it is fine of you Study 12 girls to be so concerned for Judy Grandways at this time. Lots of people can have a thought for others when they have not much else to think about. But for you girls to be able to spare a thought for Judy amidst all the excitement of the coming holidays—"

"Oh, well," demurred Betty, "she's one of us, Mrs. Cardew—and one of the best, too. We know she could be so happy with us if only—"

"Ah, yes," murmured Dave's mother, very feelingly, "if only things were different. I wonder if it was Mrs. Grandways playing on the Barncombe links this morning?" she mused aloud. "A very tall woman!"

"Haughty-looking," Betty supplemented the description, "and grand. I always say Mr. and Mrs. Grandways may well have that name. It describes them."

"It must have been she," Mrs. Cardew decided. "But tell me, Betty, can you think of something that Judy would like for Christmas?"

"Oh, Mrs. Cardew—"

"You know what has happened just lately, Betty, to make me feel that a magician has waved his wand. I have found my own dear son again, after all these years, so I feel I would like to

make all the happiness I can for others. Especially," she added, more to herself than to her listener, "for Judy. That girl— Ah, I mustn't explain. But she—she interests me greatly."

They were almost at the car by now. Betty thought of something, hesitated, then decided to mention it.

"You imagined, didn't you, Mrs. Cardew, that Judy might be an orphan when you first met her? Did she interest you—it suddenly occurs to me—because you had a daughter who would be about Judy's age now? That daughter who is still lost to you, although you have had the wonderful luck to find Dave, anyhow!"

"Sh!"

Mrs. Cardew was more than agitated. She seemed to have changed instantly to that more serious woman she had been up to a few days ago.

"Betty, it is true I did have certain fancies about Judy, as foolish as they were fond," she whispered, after looking round to see that no one else was within earshot. "But as soon as I discovered that Judy had parents living—why, of course, I had to realise! And now, Betty, it would never do for a word to be said."

"I shall not say a word, trust me," responded the Form captain. "Only between ourselves, Mrs. Cardew, I do wish that such a wonderful thing could have been! For then—oh, it would have been marvellous for Judy!"

Betty added pensively:

"It's such a shame! Somewhere in the world your daughter is growing up—without you."

Mrs. Cardew was taking her seat at the steering-wheel of her car. She tried the starter, but couldn't get it to act the first time.

"It's a wonder my old runabout goes at all," she commented lightly. "And isn't it in a state, Betty? Not been washed for a month! I noticed Mrs. Grandways—if it really was she at the links—looking disdainfully at it. Oh, well," giving another thrust to the starter, "it helped me to find my boy, anyhow!"

"I hope it'll help you to find your daughter as well, Mrs. Cardew—in time for Christmas!" said Betty, and not jokingly either, for the words came from the depth of her heart.

"There's not much time left is there?" said Dave's mother. "Well, bye-bye for the present!" She let in the clutch and drove away.

Nonsense From Naomer!

"NOW Naomer deah, are you going to help me or not?"

"What ze diggings! I am helping you!"

"On the contwawy, Naomer, it seems to me you are only fwivolling about. Yes, wather!"

"Eet you, Paula! You want to get ze jerk on!"

This little argument, taking place on a top landing, was followed by some further handling of a very large but empty trunk.

There was a certain attic at Morcove School to which a good many travelling-trunks and bags were consigned at the start of the term, to lie there until wanted again at the approach of the "hols."

Hence it had become the painful necessity of languid Paula Creel to extricate this particular huge trunk of hers from the dump, and get it to a handy place for packing. The extrication had taken a good ten minutes, if one includes pauses for altercations between Paula and her "helper."

"Gwacious! Is that a quarter-past two striking?"

"Never mind; get on!"

"But we have to be in Big Hall by half-past, Naomer! Weally, I must have a few minutes in which to make myself tidy for the' pwize-giving. Look at me now!"

Naomer refused to do anything of the sort. She gave a push to the big trunk that imparted a jolting movement to Paula, standing between it and the stairs. Paula, falling backwards and finding no foothold, emitted a terrified squeal.

"Yeowp!"

"Well, go on down with him!"

Paula went on down the attic stairs with a precipitancy that was likely to satisfy Naomer. Hardly knowing whether she was pulling the trunk behind her or whether it was avalanching after her of its own accord, Paula slithered and stumbled.

Flop! Bump! Slither! Bump!

"Wowp! Healp! Gow——"

"Hooray! Zat is ze way, bekas——"

"My gwacious goodness!" gasped Paula.

"Oh, deah, wheah am I? What are you doing, Naomer?"

"I am lending ze hand. And after zis I shall want a refresher, yes!"

Paula, dishevelled and breathless, struggled up from this lower landing-floor.

"I think you should be going in front, Naomer."

"No, bekas, it's bettah for me to push!"

"On the othah hand, it is extremely awkward for me to pull and at the stame time see wheah I am going. Yes, wather! Er—I ppropose that we leave it, Naomer, for the pwesent."

"No, bekas he is in everybody's way!"

Paula groaned.

"Dweadful—dweadful! It is beyond my stwength, Naomer. I am not stwong."

"Zen you better run and find somebody else," suggested Naomer, with a sudden roguish idea.

"Bai jove, that is a bwiliant inspivation! Yes, wather! I might do that, Naomer."

"Zen do it!"

It was at this juncture that the familiar voice of madcap Polly was heard, calling loudly:

"Paula! Naomer! Do you want to miss your prizes?"

"Ah, there's Polly!" brightened Paula, and she began a run downstairs.

Three seconds later, Naomer had the lid of the trunk thrown right back and was getting inside.

She easily found room for her roguish self, huddling down as she drew over the lid. A final wriggle and squeeze, and she was able to let the lid right down over her bunched shoulders and tucked-in head.

"Thanks, Polly, deah, if you will," said Paula, returning with the madcap. "The twuth is that wascal of a Naomer—But wheah is she now, bai Jove?"

"Oh, never mind about Naomer! Why you can't manage this trunk yourself, I don't know!" cried Polly scornfully. "As light as anything, these wicker—at least—"

"Bai jove!" gasped Paula, now that she had taken fresh hold of the trunk. "No wondah it wather cwashed down on me just now! Er—this surpriseme me, Polly!"

But Paula's surprise was only just beginning. Polly had suspected instantly. Paula hadn't.

"I thought you said it was empty!" protested the madcap very indignantly. "I am not going to bother with a——"

"Polly deah, don't leave me!"

"Must! We're due for the muster!"

"Dweadful! Polly—Polly!" pleaded Paula, but the madcap was going away. "Naomer, wheah are you? Naomer!"

"Prez-zent!" shouted the dusky one, the lid flying open to let her bob up like a Jack-in-the-box.

"Wowp! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally," Paula palpitated, "you did give me a turn, Naomer!"

"And now I shall do you a good turn! Bekas here is Polly, to lend ze hand! Queek, Polly, you are ze one!"

Polly was the one—from Naomer's point of view! She joined with the imp in rushing the empty trunk downstairs and along to Study 12. Paula, following, soon had her relief at being saved further personal exertion considerably marred by the game the girls were having with the trunk.

At least a dozen juniors hailed the appearance of Paula's mammoth hold-all with cheers and sportive interest. They all joined in to "help." They had such fun with it that they became quite tired and had to sit upon it for a rest. Those who could not actually sit upon the basket sat upon the laps of others who had found a few inches of space.

The wickerwork creaked protestingly, but not until the lid began to cave in, causing sudden shrieks of mock dismay, did the nonsense come to an end.

Then the fun-lovers scooted, remarking that they could not waste any more time helping Paula. They had prizes to receive, if she hadn't!

"A week—a wuinn!" lamented the adored duffer, gazing at the now unshaped trunk. "And so, bai jove, am I!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nor did poor teased Paula come to her place in Big Hall until the very last moment.

"I zink," Naomer offered the opinion softly, "she has been having a refresher on ze quiet, bekas to be ready for all her prizes."

"Naomer, do you want to be given lines on prize day?" inquired the Form-mistress in a whisper.

Naomer's saucy smile seemed to imply that what she expected to be given on prize day was a prize! If not several prizes!

"And you wait, Polly!" the dusky one still had the cheek to whisper.

"Sh!" said the Form-mistress again.

A door at the upper and raised end of Big Hall

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had opened. Morcove's assembled girls saw the half-dozen great personages come to the chairs that were set for them at a large table that was stacked with prizes.

Give Them a Cheer!

AND now it was the moment when inevitably every girl who had pretended not to care a rap about prizes wished in secret that she were about to receive one!

An impressive, thrilling moment, the whole life of the term that was now ending flashed through girlish minds, so that everything seemed to be recalled vividly.

So, too, with all but a few of the bigger girls, it had become a moment for heartfelt thankfulness that this was not to be anyone's last term.

Even Judith Grandways, although she knew that next term could hardly fail to hold less misery for her than the current one, was glad that she would be returning after the holidays.

It would mean returning with her sister Cora and Hetty Curzon; it would mean being in the same old study with that merciless pair, and so there would be the old, old torment. All the same, she would still be in touch with girls like Betty & Co. She would at least be their Form-mate, even if happy friendship with them were out of the question.

Only a few days ago, and she had rejoiced in the positive belief that happiness had come after all. Putting two and two together, it had seemed to her the marvellous yet indisputable fact that there need be no more suffering on account of Cora. She and Cora were not sisters, after all! She, Judith, was not really a Grandways—only a girl who, in infancy, had been adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Grandways, and so—

But she must not let her mind stray to all that now, shattered dream that it now was. She must attend to this speech that the headmistress was making.

"Our numbers continue to be maintained, and Morcove is—full! (Cheers.) Our waiting list is as long as ever, girls, but I cannot say that I want any of you to leave, to make way for others. (Laughter and cheers.) And now, coming to the prizes—"

The headmistress paused to take up the prize list. In the body of the hall, lined-up girls nudged one another. Some big breaths were being drawn. Now!

Miss Somerfield had already commented upon the presence of those distinguished ladies who were members of the Board of Governors. Morcove had accorded them a cheer, but there was to be a very different sort of cheer for Lady Lundy, when she took her stand beside the headmistress, to be the one from whose hands the girls were to receive the prizes. For Morcove thought all the world of Lady Lundy, of Barncombe Castle, the famous country seat so near to the school.

"Hurrah!" Clap, clap, clap!

Lady Lundy very charmingly expressed surprise. She was afraid Morcove was cheering at the wrong moment, for she had won no prizes!

"But perhaps," she blandly added, "there are some that have been owing to me ever since the day when I myself was at school! I never received any then, and I always had a feeling that there must have been an oversight!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Starting with the Sixth Form," Miss Somerfield sent her voice ringing across the hall. "My own special prize for General Efficiency—Ethel Courtway."

A terrific burst of cheering. It was the school's ever popular head girl who had won the coveted honour.

"Bravo, Ethel—bravo!" as she went up for it, looking so tall and attractive, her way of bowing as she accepted the prize an example to all who would be coming after her.

Followed all the valuable prizes for well-deserving seniors, some of whom had gone in for special subjects the very naming of which left juniors agasp. As for Paula Creel, she felt like swooning at the prospect of being a senior herself some day and of having to "gwapple" with such "bwainy" tasks.

Then came the prizes for the Fifth Form, and the mood of the Fourth Form was to "give 'em a clap!" just to show there was no ill-feeling, for the never-ending feud between Fourth and Fifth was only a good-natured one.

"And now, girls," Miss Somerfield was saying ten minutes later, "we come to the Fourth Form. "Our noble selves!" said Polly, in a stage whisper.

"Here again the prizes have been well worked for and well won. Throughout the term Miss Everard has kept me constantly advised of the zeal for work shown by the Fourth Form. I mention this," added the headmistress, "to correct any mistaken idea that the Fourth Form never does any work!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" And a good deal of clapping, even the Fifth Form being in the mood to concede for once that perhaps the headmistress was right about that!

"In the Fourth Form, girls, the prize for English Literature has again been won by Polly Linton."

"Hurrah! Polly—good old Polly! Bravo, Polly!"

"Yes, bekas zat is number one for Study 12!" yelled Naomer. "Who says we can't get prizes? bravo! Gorjus!"

This was followed by the usual hush as Polly went to the platform, where the particularly delighted Lady Lundy was ready to hand her the prize.

"And you have won it, Polly, I am told, in spite of great handicaps. It is something indeed still to have secured the prize, although you were absent from school for part of the term. Well done, Polly Linton! The school, I am sure, has a special pride in you!"

"Hear, hear-r-r-r!" Betty led the Fourth Form. "Bravo, Polly!"

"Yes, wather!"

"Bekas— But who is ze next?"

"For needlework, plain and fancy—Judith Grandways!"

"Good! Good!" dinned the Fourth Form, and those who could, clapped Judith on the back as she walked out to receive the prize, which had come as a complete surprise to her. "Bravo, Judy!"

"Yes, bekas set make another book to read, Judy. But where, do I come in?" Naomer began to wonder aloud.

"You?" said Miss Everard. "You'll go out, Naomer, if you don't keep quieter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Madge Minden went up for the prize for Music: a foregone conclusion, but the whole school cheered her none the less. Tess Trelawney was another junior who had been a "cert."—in her case for Drawing. Then:

"Botany—Judith Grandways."

"What, again? Judy!" cried her Form-mates. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eet all very well," Naomer remarked plaintively, "but I have not ze time to go in for things like that! You wait, though!"

"Junior Grade in Maths," the headmistress read aloud from her list a minute later—"Etta Hargrove!"

"Bravo, Etta!"

"Elocution—Polly Linton!"

"Hurrah-h-h!"

"Bekas, ze famous actress!"

"Yes, wather!"

"But I zink it time I got a look in! What ze diggings! Eef I have only come here to cheer other girls, I soon want a refresher. Bekas, eet thirsty work!"

It certainly was, the way Naomer did her share in the cheering.

"First Aid, prize for the best-written test," called out the headmistress, "the captain—Betty Barton!"

"Betty! Betty—bravo!"

There could be no doubting the genuineness of Betty's astonishment. Up she went for a prize in connection with a course that had been given during term by the school's trained nurse.

"But you wait!" Naomer still counselled those standing to right and left of her. "Eet be my turn next!"

But it wasn't!

"Highest marks for Conduct—Judith Grandways."

"Well! Ha, ha, ha!"

"What ze diggings!"

"Bwavo, Judy! That makes thwee!"

"And I have not got any prize yet!" shrilled Naomer. "I am disgusted! I zink I go up and ask them what ze diggings they mean! Bekas—"

The rest was lost in the deafening applause for Judith Grandways as she stood before Lady Lundy for the third time!

"Splendid, Judy!" was her ladyship's congratulatory cry. "If any girl deserves a Happy Christmas, I'm sure you do! Well done!"

"Zat is all very well!" muttered Naomer.

"Jolly good luck to Judy, bekas we know she deserves prizes. But you wait! Get ready, Paula, bekas ze next is sure to be for me—you see!"

"I twust so, Naomer dear! Yes, wather! And you may wely upon my—"

"Encouragement Prize—"

"Ooo, zat's mine, queek!"

But Naomer, bolting out of the line, had to come back, whilst the Form shrieked with laughter. Paula, not Naomer, had been awarded the Encouragement Prize!

"Go on, zen, and take him!" exploded Naomer.

"Bekas he is only a book, after all! Eet not as if he were anythingk you could eat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eef zey gave boxes of chocolates, that would be some sense! I am disgusted! After ze way I have worked, too! But you wait! Ze next—"

There was to be no "next," however, for the Fourth Form. To Naomer's increased annoyance, the headmistress had now come down to the Third Form.

Nor did it exactly soothe the dusky one's ruffled temper when she got to Study 12, about half an hour later, to find this flaring placard upon the closed door:

**"PRIZEWINNERS ONLY
ALLOWED
IN HERE!"**

"What ze diggings!" yelled Naomer. "Not

"Prez-zent!" shouted Naomer Nakara, bobbing up like a Jack-in-the-Box in answer to Paula's worried call.



ze bit of eet! Zey have taken all ze prizes, and now they are going to eat all the cake!"

And she might have started to batter upon the door, but just then Judith Grandways came by on her way to the study round the corner, and she smiled the remark:

"You are wanted downstairs, Naomer, by the headmistress."

"What, me? Ooo, zat is better! I knew zere had been a mistake. Queek—queek! Eet is a prize for me, after all!"

And she pranced away.

What Happiness Can Be Hers ?

JUDITH was only going to the study which she shared with Cora and Hetty to put her prizes aside. But she could not show her face for the few moments that this simple act required without having Cora's tongue let loose upon her.

"All stand!" jeered Cora as Judith entered. "Oh, look at the lov-erly prizes!"

"Three!" grinned Hetty.

"And still she's not satisfied—huh! Smile, Faceache, can't you? How many more did you expect to get, when you must know that Study 12 must be specially favoured!"

Hetty tittered.

"You do say such things, Cora!"

"The truth, the whole, truth, and nothing but the truth!" laughed the handsome Cora harshly.

"First pick to Study 12 always! Then the remainder to girls who have liked to swot and read, read, read! Yah! Well, I prefer not to win prizes on those lines. But do let me have a look at them, Judy! Oh, how per-fect-ly swee-ee-eet!"

"Books!" was Hetty's disdainful comment.

Cora had taken all three volumes from the shelf on which Judith had placed them.

"Yes, more books! And so now, Judy, you'll have plenty to read over Christmas. He, he, he!"

Judith was turning away to the door when Cora deliberately let all three prizes drop to the floor—flop!

"Oh, so sorry! He, he, he! Oh, has it burst a binding? Never mind, Judy, don't cry!"

"You do tease her!" said Hetty, in the tone which always incited Cora to go on doing so.

Showing not the least sign of tears, but with deliberate composure, Judith picked up the three books from the carpet. One was badly damaged now, but she said nothing until she had returned the volumes to the shelf. Then:

"If you touch them again, either of you," she said fiercely.

"Well, what?" inquired Cora, with her wide grin.

But Judith would say no more. How could she when one of these tormentors was Cora? From no other girl would she, Judith, have stood a tithe of such provocation, but there it was—the old, old constraint upon her spirit. "This is my sister!" That thought must still be Judith's. "How can I go against my own sister?"

Then, in the corridor again, her personal sorrow was charmed away by a pleasing sight. Naomer was careering along from the stairs, hugging a dainty box of chocolates.

"A prize—a prize for me, after all!" shrilled the dusky one. "So what did I tell you? Hooray! Look at him, Judy!"

"But how nice, Naomer!"

"Yes, bekas zero was a mistake, after all! Zey did not know that cook had offered a prize to ze girl who made ze best home-made sweets ze other day. Eef zey had known, zey would have given him out in Big Hall. But I not mind so long as I have got him—a gorjus prize! Hooray!"

"Well done!" said Judy, with perfect sincerity. "You deserve a kiss, Naomer!"

"Zank you! And now I give you one—no, I give you three kisses, bekas you won three prizes!"

Dashing on again, Naomer yelled after Judith:

"And don't forget you are to come to tea presently!"

Then her royal highness, the girl queen of Nakara, was at the door of Study 12.

Bang! Kick—bang—thump!

"Bekas—hi, Polly, all of you!"

"Read the notice!" shouted the madcap playfully.

"But I have got a prize, I tell you. So queek, open ze door, or I jolly well eat all my prize myself!"

The door opened. In rushed Naomer, to do a prance round the study-table, waving her prize, much to the disturbance of those chums who were laying tea.

"Yes, look at him! Look at him!"

"Well, let us look, then!"

"Yes, wather!"

"Ah, bah, you can't see him until I open him!" said Naomer, hastily stripping away a satin bow, to remove the lid of the chocolate-box. "Ooo!" She chose a chocolate, popped it into her mouth and munched. Her eyes closed as she did so. "Gorjus!"

"Howevah, don't spoil your tea, Naomer," Paula said gently.

Polly calmly took possession of the box.

"They'll do nicely," she announced in a motherly tone, "for Christmas!"

"So you see I can win prizes!" protested Naomer. "What is more, I can make sweets better zan any of you!"

At this moment a masculine voice near the door startled the girls. It inquired in a lordly tone:

"Can you tell me which is Study 12?"

Polly flew across to the doorway, then drew back.

"Jack! Oh!"

"Afternoon, all!" cried Jack Linton gaily as he stood disclosed at the threshold. "Here we are, Dave! We shall get that free tea, after all! Found—found, at last! And just in time!"

"Well, I don't know," demurred the madcap. "But I suppose you must!"

"Can't get into the room for prizes! Is that it?" chuckled the madcap's brother. "I say, you girls have been busy, haven't you?"

"Yes, bekas—"

"How about Judy?" cried Betty. "Have you boys heard? Three prizes to Judy! Isn't it fine?"

"We haven't heard," said Jack now that he and Dave were in the study. "We broke up at Grangemoor only a couple of hours ago, got to the bungalow—twenty minutes since, wasn't it, Dave?"

Quiet Dave nodded.

"And thought we'd look across in time for tea! Dave's mother wanted a message brought to Morcove, in any case. Dave has got it."

The girls turned to him eagerly.

"For Judy," he said, and that was all.

"Oh! Well, so much the better," Polly commented. "That gives us a reason for making Judy come to tea with us. She can't have the message unless she does!"

"That's the idea!" agreed Jack blithely.

"Well, girls, so we all go up to town to-morrow?"

"Cheers!"

"Look like having a jolly Christmas, don't we?"

"We do!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove!"

"Gorjus! Bekas—"

"Here, you get on laying the tea," Polly admonished the imp, "whilst I go and find Judy!" She fitted, and then Pam, Madge, and others worked their way into the somewhat crowded study.

"But where are your prizes?" demanded Jack, after an exchange of very gay greetings.

"Oh, you don't want to see—"

"I want to see the prizes," insisted Jack. "To see if they are as good as the ones I haven't won. But, talking of prizes—"

He indicated Dave, and held up four fingers.

"But don't say anything, girls! Dave is rather quiet—for once!"

Dave smiled at this, but there was a sudden dramatic interruption, changing the scene from gay to grave. Polly had dashed back, her face aflame with indignation. In her hands were several large volumes.

"Just look how Hetty and Cora have treated Judy's prizes!" she cried.

"What!"

"I went round to their study, to find Judy. She was not there, and her prizes had been put outside. Look at them!"

"Shame!" frowned Betty, and others murmured to the same effect as they saw how the new-looking books had been damaged.

"Disgwaceful!"

"It's a bit thick!" muttered Jack, whilst Dave mutely took the worst-damaged volume and inspected it.

There had been only a moment's silence when Betty took back that book from Dave, so as to have all three again.

"I'll report this," said Betty, very calmly and quietly. "I'm sorry, but there must be a limit. Shan't be long!"

She went out, leaving the study in renewed silence. Slowly, however, faces were clearing.

"Betty will now get that pair only what they have asked for a hundred times over!" exclaimed Polly. "Why—why was Judy ever doomed to have a sister like Cora to put up with?"

"Could I find Judy—"

All turned to Dave, quite startled.

"Yes, you can, no doubt," Polly responded eagerly. "She must have gone downstairs—alone, as usual. Dave, will you find her?"

For answer he walked out, and the many girls who were going to and fro in the corridor were to find him only gravely smiling a response to their cordial: "Hallo, Dave!" But they were not taken aback by his seriousness. All Morcove knew him so well—quiet, reserved Dave!

"Judy?" returned one of two Morcovians whom he addressed when he had got downstairs. "You're looking for Judy Grandways?"

He nodded.

"She's just gone out by the front door," said another Morcovian. "Can't have gone far."

Dave nodded again—a mute "Thanks!"—and went on towards the porch, the two girls remaining still for a moment to gaze after him.

"Funny he should be looking for Judy," one remarked at last to the other. "For there is something about Dave that always reminds me of her!"

So Like a Brother!

IT would be a glorious winter's day to-morrow for Morcove's breaking-up. Judith could see the sun going down like a ball of fire as she sauntered about in the open air.

There was no wind, and she could drift about, bareheaded and uncoated, without feeling chilly. Yet there was going to be a hard frost by-and-by.

"Judy, just a minute!"

She flashed round at the quiet voice of Dave took her by surprise. He was coming towards her with a leisurely step, and yet it seemed such a resolute one.

"Congrats on those prizes, Judy," was his first remark on reaching her. "And you're wanted in Study 12 for tea."

"Oh, Dave, I—I know the girls want to be as kind as ever, but I am not going to join them for tea. I don't feel that I should. Enough without me!" she added, with a plucky smile.

"Unless you come to Study 12, I shan't give you my mother's message," he said.

Her eyes dilated upon him with a quickened interest.

"Sorry if I'm officious, Judy——"

"You're not that, Dave." And Judith meant it.

There was all the difference in the world between the domineering of Cora as a sister and the big-brotherly sort of masterfulness of this boy.

"It simply means, Judy, I'm like a good many others—tired of seeing you miss all the fun. At a time like this, too! But you are coming along now?"

"What was the message, Dave? Please!"

He shook his head, then turned towards the schoolhouse, ready to put himself in step with her.

"But you'll have to tell me!" she insisted, smiling half sadly, "or your mother will be cross with you!"

Again he shook his head.

"My mother and I aren't going to fall out—least of all over you, Judy. She'd quite approve, I know. Are you coming?"

"If you'll tell me first, Dave."

"Oh, I'll do that, because I know you'll come then. It's this, then, Judy! Mother wants you to send word by me whether you'd like her to see Mrs. Grandways about Christmas? About your coming to us instead of going home, you know."

Judith stopped dead, but Dave could tell that this was only due to perplexity. She was not thinking of hanging back now that he had delivered the message.

"No, please," she faltered nervously, after the brief silence. "I am sure it would never do, Dave, if you will thank your mother all the same? But how wonderfully sweet of her!"

"You just let her be as kind as she wants to be—to you, Judy."

"But why should I? How can I?" Judith's hopeless little cry followed the question. "No, Dave, I'll have to go home with Cora and Hetty. It's no use my pretending that I am looking forward to this Christmas. At the best of times I—I don't seem to fit in at home. And at present mother is feeling rather annoyed with me, I know."

Dave turned his eyes upon Judy, then touched her arm detainingly.

"No hurry to go indoors for a moment, Judy. Let's take one more turn out here. You were saying——"

"But I have nothing more to say beyond that, Dave. It is something I could not tell you nor the girls."

"Right-ho!" After glancing at her again, however, he added: "But you want to tell me, Judy?"

"Oh, no, Dave!" she again declined, in still greater agitation. "Please let's say no more. And shall we go up to Study 12 now?"

"All right. There'll be skating at Christmas," he predicted, taking a last look at the early-setting sun. "Of course, it'll be much harder weather where we are going—inland. Never do get much frost or snow in these parts, do you?"

Judith did not answer. Somehow, now that he had chivalrously changed the subject, she felt an overwhelming desire to confide in him.

"It was like this, Dave," she found herself blurting out huskily. "A few days ago a rather silly idea was put into my head. At least, I call it that now, although at the time it did seem as if—as if—oh, I don't know! That there was every reason for believing it there! Mrs. Grandways—I should say mother—when she turned up at the school last Sunday knocked that idea on the head. It's why

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she was cross with me. And what I want to make quite clear is this, Dave—if your mother went to Mrs. Grandways about me, it might seem as if, after all, I am still inclined to—clinging to that belief. But I am not—I mustn't think about it any more—ever!" Judith added sternly.

"I get you," he nodded. "Since your own mother said that it was all bunkum, that settles it?"

"Well, doesn't it?"

"Yes, Judy, it does."

In secret, she sighed.

"Yes," she agreed, in a dull tone of resignation.

"I saw that at once. Mrs. Grandways—I mean mother again—would have a perfect right to be very angry with me if I doubted her word, of course. As a matter of fact I don't, of course. I haven't for a moment, Dave. Oh, no, and it's all over," she spoke on, rather incoherently. "The subject is never to be mentioned again, and even now I—I haven't told you what the idea was, have I?"

"You have not, Judy, and you needn't tell me you know."

"No," she agreed. "You're a good sort, Dave, for if you had started to persuade me, I feel I might have— Oh, look, though," she broke off, forcing mirth into her voice—"there's Naomer up at Study 12's window!"

Judith gave a wave, but that did not satisfy the owner of that dark, glossy head, high up there at the window. A shrill yell came down:

"Be queek, you two! Bekas—tea! And we are going to cut ze special cake, Judy! Queek, before Jack eats Dave's share!"

Dave and Judith laughed as they saw Naomer, now that she had voiced that aspersion upon Jack Linton, have her roguish head drawn back, evidently by a playful pull at her long black hair.

"Well, Judy, I'm awfully sorry," Dave emitted now that he and she were footing it briskly back to the schoolhouse. "Er—I was going to send you a card at Christmas."

"Yes, Dave. But—don't trouble—"

"Er—how'd you like a dog, Judy?" he took her breath away by asking, with sudden shyness.

"A dog?"

"I guess there's nothing better than a dog for a present if you're—well, inclined to be lonely. I'd like to send you a nice little pup that would grow up to be a real pal for you, Judy."

"Oh, Dave!" she said joyfully. "But no; it wouldn't do! I couldn't have him at school, and I'd hate to leave him at home. No, Dave, you see how it is! But it is good of you to think of such a thing."

Going upstairs with him, and then along the old familiar corridor, she saw him coming in for smiles from all those girls who were flitting about. And so into Study 12.

"At last!" Polly greeted them. "We began to think you'd gone home to the bungalow for tea!"

Only one of the madcap's flippancies, and yet what a pang it gave Judith. Home to the bungalow to tea! Home!

"Will you take that chair, Judy," said Betty lightly. "And you next to her, Dave."

"If he doesn't mind having me upon his left?" rejoined Polly. "Would you rather have Naomer, Dave? Only say!"

"You have Polly, Dave," urged Jack. "I don't want her shoved on to me! The cake being on this side—my side—Naomer is going to sit next to me. Aren't you, kid?"

"Ladies and gentlemen, pray be seated!" cried the captain gaily, whereupon Jack and Naomer made more noise with their chairs than did all the

rest put together. This, and some acting about by the couple in question at the very start of the "spread," caused Polly to eye them across the festive board grimly.

"You come here because you have the honour of being my brother," she censured Jack severely, "and all you do is to disgrace me! And just look, girls, at the slice of cake he's got!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's the slice Naomer cut for me," Jack explained.

"And just look at the slice she's got!"

"Bekas he is the one Jack cut for me! What ze diggings!"

"Kindly pass the cake!" requested Polly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wouldn't have any if I were you, Polly," said Jack, looking hesitant about passing across the cake. It's very rich."

"Idiot!"

"Ooo, don't you pass her ze cake!" shrilled Naomer, taking it away from Jack. "Not when she call you names like zat, no!"

Betty and others gave another peal of laughter.

"If I come round the table!" threatened Polly.

"Come on, zen!"

With well-acted fury, the madcap jumped up and came rushing round; but Naomer, jumping up just as quickly, dived under the table, taking the cake with her, on its plate.

Then Polly dropped down into the chair which had been Naomer's—"to make you behave!" she informed her brother, whilst Naomer crawled out on the other side and took Polly's former chair.

"Hey, Betty!" Jack appealed to the captain. "Naomer's gone off with the cake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor boy! But here's your tea!" said the captain, sending down his cup.

"Very strong for you," commented Polly as the cup passed through her hands. "Betty is forgetting that you are still only a small boy. But keep quiet now, and don't look to see what you can have next, and you'll be allowed to stay."

"Hallo, Dave!" Jack suddenly took notice of his chum across the table. "And do you greatly mind if I shift the cake a bit more this side?"

"No, bekas—"

"Then I can see Dave better. Ah," said Jack, having got the mammoth cake right in front of himself again, "that's better!"

Polly, her eyes sparkling, glanced at Judith, whilst the other girls were laughing.

"What would you do if you had a brother, Judy?"

"Hey, Dave, what would you do if you had a sister?" Jack hastily interposed the question.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Treat 'em rough, my motto," said Jack, but he subsided under a smack on the head from his fond sister.

"Now perhaps you'll let me speak!" said Polly sweetly. "Would you put up with a brother like Jack, Judy?"

"Yes, I think I would," smiled Judy, looking really caught up in all the gaiety of the tea-party.

Betty chuckled.

"I can hardly imagine Judy having a brother like Jack. Can you, girls?"

"No, bekas—"

"The pwobability is," beamed Paula, "if Judy had a bwothah at all, bai jove., he would be like Dave."

"Exactly!" agreed others.

"But that's no reason," cried Polly, "why Naomer should get the cake over her side again! Hey! Hands off!"

"No, bekas—"
 "Br-r-r-r!" was the sort of sound Polly made to scare Naomer off.
 But the dusky one, above all the shrieks of laughter, vociferated:
 "Ze dear little robin on ze top is looking as if he wants to eat ze crumbs! Do let me have ze crumbs and pertend to feed him!"

This harmless request being conceded, Naomer raked quite a quantity of fragments from the rim of the cake plate on to her own. Then she demonstrated how to feed an imitation robin. You first offered a bit of icing or a morsel of cake to the very spry cotton-wool robin, and then you ate up the crumbs yourself, "pertending" you had a beak.

Polly's disgust had to become vocal.
 "And that," she said, "is the girl who is coming away with us for Christmas!"
 "Dweadful!" agreed Paula, being far enough away from the imp to make the remark with safety.

"But need we have her?" cried Helen Craig.
 "Dave's here. Shall we send word by him to Mrs. Cardew not to have Naomer?"

"Hands up!" the madcap appealed. "Those in favour of having Naomer?"

Jack and Dave put up their hands, but the girls jokingly kept theirs down.

"Well, you boys don't count," the madcap coolly informed them. "So that's that! I shall now propose a formal resolution."

But before Polly could carry the fun as far as that, there was an unpleasant interruption. The door opened in front of Cora Grandways, whose eyes went direct to Judith.

"Come out of this!" said Cora curtly.

The Old, Old, Strife!

"JUDY—wait! Don't go!"
 That was Betty, starting to her feet like all the others. She turned to the obnoxious girl who had intruded with such studied insolence.

"Can't you leave Judith alone for five minutes, Cora?"

"She's not going to mix with you and your lot—not whilst she's my sister!" flashed back Cora. "Come away, Judy, this instant!"

"I must go, girls," was Judith's murmur.

"No, bekas—"

"Yes," Judith insisted as they murmured dissuadingly. "We can't have any scene—not a time like this."

Cora, in the doorway, laughed brazenly.

"Quite right for once, Judy! And see how good I am being, when I might be going for Betty about sneaking against me! But I can wait! I'll pay you out in time, Betty Barton—with interest!"

"So long as you clear out now," said the captain calmly, "leaving Judith to—"

"I must go! Oh, it's no use!" exclaimed Judith, moving round to the door. "Good-bye, Jack, if I don't see you again before Christmas. Good-bye, Dave! And a happy Christmas to you both!"

Dave remained silent, whilst Jack only said something throatily, looking just as serious as his chum. Like

Polly, Jack had a very serious side to his nature, in spite of his love of fun.

"Come to our study," said Cora, stalking away in front of Judith, and next moment Judith found Dave close behind her, closing the door behind her.

She cast him a quick glance, meeting his eyes for a second, but not a word more passed. She passed out, and softly he closed the door behind her.

"Now," Cora turned upon the younger girl as soon as they had reached their own study, "sit down!"

"I am not going to—"

"Sit down!" stamped Cora. "I've had enough of you, Judy, for one day! How dare you treat me like this!"

Hetty was present. She got up from an easy chair, to take part in the conversation.

"Really, Judy," she said reproachfully, "I do think you might be more considerate. Is it being really sisterly to go mixing with those Study 12 girls when one of them has been doing all she can to get Cora into a row!"

Judith stared incredibly.

"In the last half-hour," blazed out Cora, "that precious captain of reports has been reporting me to Miss Everard. 'Reporting' Betty calls it. I call it sneaking—showing all the spite she can!"

"Oh, no!"

"I don't tell the truth, then!" panted Cora. "Ask Hetty if it isn't true! Betty has been saying that I damaged your prizes, and that has got me a punishment task for the hols—which I don't mean to do, anyway. But the fact remains that's the girl Betty is! The girl you go hanging about from morning to night—and you're my sister!"

"You know very well, Judy," put in Hetty.



Cora Grandways laughed spitefully as she deliberately let the beautiful prizes fall to the floor. "Oh, so sorry!" she mocked, to Hetty Curzon's vast amusement.

"your sister never damaged the prizes on purpose."

"She did! Not that I wanted Betty to report it," Judith added. "I didn't want any of them to know. It was one of those things—that I'm always hoping the Form won't get to know about."

"Oh, yes!" sneered Cora. "But say the rest! Since Betty did butt in, as usual, you're not surprised she made a complaint against me!"

"She is captain—"

"Do I want to be reminded of that!" flared out Cora again. "Ugh, I could give you such a shaking, Judy! You had better be careful! There has been enough of your cheek just lately! You were either fool enough to believe it when we kidded you, for fun, that you weren't my sister; or else you were glad to believe it, because it gave you the excuse for being independent! But mother has told you that it was only a lot of bunk, and so—no more airs, my girl!"

"I am not going to stay here to be bullied and nagged at, whether you are my sister or not," Judith protested indignantly.

"Won't you!" struck in Cora savagely. "Isn't this more of her impudence, Hetty? You're a witness! So you can bear me out when I tell mother. Judy is still behaving as if she had a right to believe that we're not sisters after all! And won't mother be furious when I tell her!"

"Bound to be," shrugged Hetty. "It amounts to an insult, doesn't it?"

This was too much for Judith. She took a stride towards Hetty, exclaiming fiercely:

"You! The less you say the better, Hetty Curzon! It was you who started the whole thing, and since it was all a pack of nonsense you've nothing to be proud about. But for you, Cora would never have led me to believe that we were not sisters!"

"That will do!" Cora interposed sharply. "I am not going to stand by, hearing you slang Hetty. She's not to blame if anything she said was incorrect!"

"She is to blame!" insisted Judith hotly. "I say it to her face! She could have had no real right, no proper reason, for what she said! You yourself, Cora, have just called it a bit of kidding. And since it was nothing more than that, it was a wicked, cruel story to spread about! I have not been the one to hurt people's feelings—"

"Yes, you have! You began about it at once to mother last Sunday!"

"Naturally," Judith answered. "A thing like that had got to be gone into, surely! But the moment she assured me that there was not a word of truth in it I said: 'Very well!'"

"But you're still behaving as if—"

"I am not! I'm not!"

"I say you are!" stormed Cora. "And I'll not put up with it—so there! This is your study—just keep to it! You know how little love there is lost between me and Study 12, and yet you must be everlastingly hanging round Betty & Co.! Sit down now, and—"

"I won't Cora! You may compel me to avoid the other girls, but you shan't chain me here, just to be— Oh," Judith cried out, sweeping a hand across her eyes, "I can't stand it any longer—I can't! I shall—"

Cora made a lightning-like rush and gripped Judith.

"Sit down"—she stood over her, after thrusting her violently into a chair—"when I tell you!"

"Cora," said Hetty, and when the girl looked round there came a nod, directing her attention to the door.

It had quietly opened. Betty was there, with her chums of Study 12 and the two boys.

"So you are at it again, Cora!" the captain said quietly. "You want me to report you again, do you?"

"And wouldn't you love to, eh?"

"I shall not have the slightest hesitation—"

"No doubt! Go on, then—report away! I go home to-morrow, anyhow. So that for you!" laughed Cora, snapping her fingers within an inch of Betty's nose. "All Morcove can go to the wind for all I care! I hate the school! I hate the whole lot of you!"

Judith suddenly rose up from the chair and came towards the crowded doorway.

She made a pleading sign to be allowed to go away alone, and so they let her pass—in silence.

Cora meanwhile continued to return Betty's stern look.

"Well?"

"I am going to put a stop to it," Betty said tensely. "You've been given a long rope, Cora. Time after time I have been silent, feeling that to strike at you only meant striking at poor Judy. But you being what you are—"

"Her sister—yes," nodded Cora, with a wide grin. "Hasn't she been telling you that she is not my sister? We know that she had that silly, cranky idea for a few days!"

"Cora!" gestured Hetty, but Cora laughed again.

"Oh, what harm in saying it now! We've a right to say it, I think, just to let them know what sort of a girl their 'poor' Judy really is! After the way mother and father have cared for her, she only wishes there were some truth in that silly fancy, huh!"

"Not your sister?" gasped Betty astoundedly.

"No. That is," chuckled Cora, "if you choose to do as she did, and allow yourself to be kidded! But if you would be so kind as to believe what my mother says, it's pure nonsense! Judy is my sister, and as my sister she has got to put up with me whether she likes it or not! Got that, all of you? Very well, then! Clear out!"

Hetty gave a burst of laughter, which was charged with more relief than real amusement.

The captain's chums, whilst supporting her by their presence, had left her to do any talking. Now, as she turned to retire from the study, they themselves turned away. A few moments, and Betty was with them again in Study 12.

There was no sitting down to resume tea. The tragedy of Judith—for they knew it to be nothing less than that—had laid this check upon all merrymaking.

"You heard what Cora said?" Betty ended a great silence by saying, at last. "Strange!"

"If only—oh, if only there could have been some truth in it!" broke from Polly. "I wonder—"

"No! Polly, you mustn't start that," her brother said, grave for once. "We don't know how it arose, but we have been told that Mrs. Grandways herself says it was pure nonsense."

"I know what Jack means," murmured Madge. "You can't get over what Mrs. Grandways herself has said."

"All I can say, then, is—dash!" exploded Polly. "Ugh! And if this is how it takes me—takes all of us," she spoke on, "can't you imagine how it has served Judy? For a few days she must have hoped—hoped and believed—that it was true!"

Another pause.

"We must be going," Dave remarked, causing the spell to break. "Jack—"

"Yes, I suppose so," the madcap's brother assented. "But not to school, anyhow."

"And to-morrow!" added several of the girls, the joy of breaking-up in their minds again.

"Yes, wather! The hols, bai jove! A nice, westful time!"

"Restful!" laughed Polly. "Hark to Paula! We'll let her rest, won't we?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Two or three of the girls said their good-bye to Jack and Dave in the study, intending to stay and clear away the tea-things, so finally there were only Betty and Polly to wait in the front hall whilst Jack and Dave sought hats and over-coats.

The two boys came back in a few moments, winding their Grangemoor scarves. The front door came open to the early darkness of a bitter-cold evening, while over the fields from several miles away, came the ding-dong of Yuletide bells. Ringers were practising on their lantern-lit platforms under church spires.

"Makes you feel how near Christmas is now, then—until to-morrow! And then——"

"But," murmured Polly, "poor Judy!"

Betty was saying good-night to Dave.

"I don't worry about next term for Judy," exclaimed Betty. "I can adopt a different line with Cora. I simply must. But think of Judy—what she'll have to endure all through the hols!"

Dave nodded, and it was certain that he was thinking of her even now with that sympathy which was always his.

The Night Before "To-morrow!"

WHOA! Now, Naomer, where are you off to this time?"

"To get ze cake what is left of him, Polly! Bekas——"

"Can't allow you to go after the cake alone," said the madcap grimly.

But she changed her mind instantly. It was such a fascinating scene that she and Betty were taking in, now that they had come to the music-room doorway, catching Naomer just as that excitable imp was dashing out.

"Go on, then!" said Polly. "But mind, Naomer—we know just how much was left!"

"What ze diggings! Do you zink I am as greedy as all that?"

"I do! Dancing, is it?" cried Polly, after Naomer had pranced away. "Oh, come on, Betty!"

And away they went, taking the floor together. Miss Everard, looking in presently, found almost all her Form here. It had begun as a bit of

impromptu jollity on the part of only half a dozen girls or so, with Madge at the piano. But as soon as juniors upstairs heard the music, they had come rushing out of studios, had abandoned packing for to-morrow, and let everything go!



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wather!" Paula beamed at Polly, without knowing in the least what skittish remark the madcap had made, as they bumped into each other on the crowded floor. "Bai jove—owp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Paula had suddenly lost a shoe whilst dancing, but her partner refused to stop on that account, and other couples were starting clever footwork with the stray shoe, making adroit dabs at it.

"Goal!" said Polly as she succeeded in shunting the unfortunate shoe into the fireplace. She caught Miss Everard looking at her and smiled.

"Shocking!" laughed the Form-mistress. "Do other Forms carry on like this?"

It seemed that they did. First some seniors came upon the scene, to get into practice for Christmas parties, and then the Fifth Form arrived en masse, so that it was a marvel how the room held so many girls. Miss Everard stayed on, and perhaps it was as well she did so, for Naomer's ultimate return with the famous Study 12 Christmas cake caused quite a riot.

There was hilarious talk amongst the Fifth of seizing the cake and dividing it amongst themselves, whereupon the Fourth Form said very expressively what they would do if the Fifth tried any games of that sort!

Miss Everard kept the peace, but there was a general understanding that there must be a final "scrap" of the term, Fourth versus Fifth, before this last evening ended. "Bed-time!" was whispered amongst the juniors, and bed-time they made it.

Going up to the dormitories, last thing of all that night, Morcove's sprightly juniors were singing gaily. As fast as the girls got to their dormitory, they armed themselves with pillows and bolsters.

Betty, as keen as any for the bit of fun, took command. Great alertness was shown, for it was thought that the Fifth Form might be anticipating a raid.

The Fifth Form had, as a matter of fact, not only anticipated a raid, but had counter-planned against it.

To Betty and her band it seemed as if the Fifth Form dormitory was going to be taken completely by surprise.

They all came creeping to the half-closed door of that great room, to hear much chatter and light laughter going on. But this was only a blind. Not more than half a dozen girls were in the dormitory, talking and laughing to make it sound like a score. The rest were—ah, little did

Betty & Co. suspect!

"Now," whispered the Form captain, ready to lead the charge. "Once round the room and out again, girls!"

"Just to show zem zere is no ill-feeling!"

Some tittering was checked by Betty's giving the word:

"Go!"

Bang, crash!
The Fifth Form dormitory door



flew wide open. In surged the Fourth Form, pillows and bolsters whirling; but where were all the heads that should next moment have been swiped at?

Some five or six Fifth Form girls were all the invaders saw, and even those few had made themselves secure from attack.

The Fourth Form had one moment in which to get over the surprise of seeing only those few girls—and those few half out of sight behind a barricade of bedding. Then it became known that the main army of Fifth-Formers was about to attack from behind!

So now the juniors were badly caught. They did not go into any panic, but nothing could be done according to plan. It was for all of them to biff and battle their way out of this dormitory back to their own—if they could!

Never had Morcove School known such a set-to between its two rival Forms! It was a pillow fight that would live in the history of the school. All previous conflicts of the same skittish nature were mere conflicts compared with this!

"Come on, girls!" Betty panted. "Don't let them beat us! At 'em again!"

"Hurrah!"

"Wowp! Ow, wheah am I?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's better!" cried Polly. One of the last to retreat, she was now foremost in the counter-attack with Betty. "Now, girls—now!"

Less than a minute more, and with what breath that was left to them, Betty and others could give a cheer of final triumph. Victory was theirs, after all! Now it was the Fifth Form that had retreated, with every sign of having had enough! The glory of the Fourth was undimmed, its honour unbesmirched.

At last Miss Everard came up to see if all the girls were in bed—and they were. That satisfied the Form-mistress, and she had not a word to say about the din that had been going on up to a minute ago.

Like the sport she was, Miss Everard had no eyes for all the feathers, strewing the floor.

"Get to sleep, then, girls, at once, remembering that you have long journeys to make to-morrow. Good-night!"

"And ze compliments of ze season, Mees Everard!"

"Same to you, I'm sure!" laughed the Form-mistress as she clicked out all the lights. "Hark! There's something to lull you all to sleep, girls—the bells, sounding so prettily from far away!"

The bells were pealing faintly, sweetly. Judith could almost fancy they were sounding across miles of snow-mantled fields.

Perhaps all the other girls were fast asleep at last, but there would be no sleep for her yet awhile. It was very quiet after all the tumult which had gone on right through the day. Jolly day it had been for the girls, and she was so glad that none of them had cause to fear a joyless Christmas.

The bells pealed again, to remind Judy of those that would be sweetly chiming on Christmas Eve in the depths of the country for the chums to hear, sitting round a log fire in that fine country house which Dave's mother had taken for the holidays.

And now the bells were growing still fainter,

making her feel that remoteness from festive scenes which would be her fate during Yuletide.

The bells gave a last slow ding, dong and stopped.

Judith turned upon her side and closed her eyes.

Hurrah for the "Hols!"

"WHAT sort of a morning, girls?"

"Grand! Topping, Betty!"

"Terrific frost in the night!"

"There was, Polly? Oh, hooray!"

And Betty, half a minute behind others, threw aside warm bedclothes and fairly bounded to the floor.

"Now, Naomer!" cried Polly, for she could see the dusky one nipping across to Paula's still occupied bed, carrying a thin piece of ice taken off a basin of water.



There came an unpleasant interruption to the jolly tea-party. "Come out of this," Cora Grandways said rudely to Judith. "You're not going to mix with Betty Barton and her lot!" How Judith wished she were in the position to defy this spiteful girl!

"Yes, bekas breaking-up day! And yet even zis morning she must go on sleeping. "Hi!" Naomer yelled, at the same time holding the piece of ice ready. "A refresher, Paula!"

"What's that? What? Bai jove!" said Paula, starting to smile as she opened her eyes. She thought she was in for an early morning cup of tea. "Wheah?"

"Here!" And she was invited to take a bite at the cake of ice.

"Wowp! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You wetch, Naomer! Take it away before it—Groogh! Yah! Healp!"

"Wiz ze compliments of ze season!" chuckled Naomer, letting the ice fall upon Paula's head. "Hooray, everybody! Breaking-up day!"

"So I understand," said Betty. "And has it been snowing in this room in the night, or what?"

"They're feathers," Helen gravely explained. "And it's a great mystery how they come to be here. We must suppose that Naomer has bought a fat goose for Christmas, and got up in the night to pluck it."

"Anyhow, Miss Everard has been in," Polly carried on the fiction, "and not one girl is to leave for home until every feather has been picked up. Well, Paula, darling! At last the great day has come!"

"Yes, wather! Bai jove, how are you, geals, this morn'ing? Merry and b'right, what? It's how I feel myself—yes, wather!" Paula was declaring when something made her give a fearful yelp of alarm.

That something was a clockwork alligator, let loose by Naomer. It came straight for Paula's bare feet, and if Paula's yell was as loud as any she had ever been known to give, so likewise was the Form's shriek of laughter a record-breaking one.

Thus the Fourth Form began breaking-up day, and thus it continued. Highest spirits while dressing, with attendant peals of laughter; then hclter-skelter downstairs, some to the studies, others to

o'clock, that she was the victim of a jape. For the third time Polly and others had sent Paula off again to hunt for what she had lost, declaring that they didn't know anything about it; and for the third time she came back, breaking in upon all the chatter.

"Naomer, deah, wheah is that hand-bag of mine? I've found the hat-box, but—my hand-bag!"

"Oh, bozzer you and your hand-bag!"

"Yes, Paula, 'do give us a bit of peace!"

"I'm sowwy, geals, but weally! Look heah, geals, a joke's a joke, but I can't go without that handbag!"

"Good job, bekas zen we can go without you! Hooray!"

"Polly deah, have you—"

"How many more times! No!"

"I wealise how fwivolous you geals can be, but—"

"Girls," came Betty's interrupting cry as she whirled into the study, "I've just been told that we can get away as soon as we like as we have to go across to the bungalow before going to the station."

"Hip, pip! Hurrah!"

"Ooo, queek, get ze jerk on!"

"All the luggage will go direct to the station," Betty rattled away. "So we've nothing to worry about."

"My hand—"

"Well, find it!" Polly dinned at Paula.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We must all get our things together," Betty remarked. "Oh, and I particularly want to see Judy about something!"

So the captain dashed off again. It was the same with most of the girls this morning. No sooner had they scampered to their studies than they were scampering away once more. There was an incessant running up and down stairs and a taking of flying leaps over luggage dumped here, there, everywhere.

"Judy," panted Betty, coming upon the solitary one in a ground-floor passage, "we're all going off directly. Don't let us miss saying good-bye to you. We have to gather at the bungalow, you know, and then we go on to the station with Mrs. Cardew and the boys."

"Up to London, Betty?"

"For a few days—yes. Then we go to that country house which Mrs. Cardew has taken, in time for Christmas."

"I'll be about on the drive, Betty, when you're leaving."

"Right-ho!"

As soon as she was left to herself again, Judith made for the open air. Her own packing was done, and time was even hanging upon her hands. Perhaps she was the only girl in the school who had nothing to do but wait, but, then, none of the jollity of the last rush round applied to her. Thus the Christmas holidays were coming to Judith—dully, tragically!

She turned again in her solitary pacing and walked farther down the broad drive. It was becoming very hard for her to look towards the schoolhouse without a dimming of her eyes. Life at Morcov School had been made needlessly and cruelly hard for her by Cora, but still the school was the dearest place on earth to her. It should not have been so, of course. Other girls, much as they loved Morcov, loved home better, but she—



see if by any chance the post was in, others out into the frosty open air.

The gong went for breakfast, and the girls simply would not come to table. "I'm packing!" "I must get this present ready for the post!"

But it was after breakfast that the real rushing about to find things set in.

Then, as usual, those girls who had been preparing days in advance seemed to have most reason for fearing that they never would be ready in time for their train. Paula was one of them. She had lost this, she had lost that, and now it seemed as if she were going to lose her head.

Nor was Paula's frantic state lessened by the suspicion which she formed, round about ten

A sudden burst of cheering from back yonder at the porch, farewell cries and laughter! She could not trust herself to look round and remain dry-eyed. Very likely Betty & Co. were coming now, and that happy uproar meant a high-spirited exchange of good-byes with other girls and their Form-mistress.

But a minute later Judith simply had to turn round, for she had been right in her conjecture. The chums of Study 12 were coming to her on the drive, in hop-skip-and-run fashion.

She saw them all through a film of tears that she hoped would not be too noticeable—Betty and Polly, Paula and Naomer, Madge and Tess, Pain and Helen. Here they were, going off for the "hols" at last! Except that Naomer carried a paper bag which probably held the remnants of the famous cake, and that Paula had found her hand-bag after all, they were unhampered.

"Judy!" was the affectionate cry from all as they came running up to her.

"You're going now? Good-bye then, girls, and I do hope you have an awfully jolly time. But I'm sure you will," she said steadily. "With Jack and Dave, and Mrs. Cardew, and so many of your own people."

"We wish you were coming with us, Judy!"

"Yes, wather!"

"Bekas eet is going to be jolly rotten for—"

"Sh'rrp!" Polly silenced Naomer's well-meaning but tactless tongue. "Judy, you are going to hear from us often. We've got your address at home."

Home!

"And write to us, won't you, Judy, as soon as you've got our address?" pleaded Betty. "And next term, Judy, you'll be back, and so shall we! Oh, next term we're going to see much more of you, Judy!"

"Yes, wather! And er—er—ow, sowwy, geals" pleaded tender-hearted Paula, suddenly fumbling out a handkerchief. "I must have got a cold coming! I—I— So distwessing, bai jove, but—"

"You've all been awfully kind" said Judith, pretending not to notice Paula's sudden tears. "I don't know how to thank you sufficiently. Yes, I'll be glad to write. And so—I mustn't keep you waiting, must I?"

"Oh, that's all right, Judy!"

"Ye-ye-yes, wather! No gug-gug-gweat hwwy, gug-gug-geals, is theah?" Paula fairly blubbed.

"But good-bye, girls," Judith said resolutely, and she began the handshakes. "Good-bye, Betty—Polly!"

"Bye-bye, Judy," gulped Polly. "Oh, dash! Hallo, though!" She changed from sadness to surprise. "Here are the boys!"

Every other pair of eyes flew to the gateway. Jack and Dave had come running in, and now they were sprinting hard, obviously delighted to find the girls so close at hand. Jack's cap was off, his uplung hand waving it gaily.

Polly and her chums instinctively hastened to meet the boys, and in the excitement of the moment they did not notice that Judith was hanging back. They would soon have been looking round for her again, of course; but before there was time for her to be missed by her schoolmates they found Dave acting most strangely.

Ignoring them more or less, he kept on running until he had reached Judy, standing all alone. And then, as Betty and the others turned about to stare after him, they saw the ever serious school-boy clasp Judith by the shoulders, draw her to him, and kiss her!

Sister—Brother!

"WELL!" gasped Polly.

"Yes, wather, bai jove! Er—"

"What ze diggings! Bekas—"

"It's all right," chuckled Jack. "He knows what he's about."

"After all," laughed Betty, "it's—well, it's Christmas, and Judy—"

Jack chuckled again. "Hi, come on, girls—"

"Why—what, Jack!" Polly turned to him, in greater amazement than ever. "What's the joke, then?"

"The joke is," Jack exploded, "Dave is Judy's own brother!"

The chums of Study 12 almost collapsed with surprise. Paula dropped her hand-bag, and forgot to pick it up again.

"Wha-a-at!" screamed Polly incredulously.

"Dave and Judy—"

"Brother and sister—yes!" insisted Jack gaily.

"Oh!"

"Bai jove!"

"Gorjus!" capered Naomer. "Ooo, hooray! Ooo, hip, pip, pip—hooray! Ze jolly old donkey ran away!"

But all this, whilst being proper to the occasion, did not help to explain matters. Betty & Co. did a sudden rush, with Jack, to where Dave was in talk with Judith. And oh, what a look there was in Dave's face—what joy in Judith's!

"Dave, will you explain, or shall I?" cried Jack.

"Morning, 'girls," said Dave, just as calmly as usual. "Yes, Judy's my sister."

And he seemed to think that sufficed!

"Phew!" Polly marvelled. "Wonders will never cease! But—but—"

"By the way," said Jack, "Judy's coming with us for the hols, of course! Say, Dave, are you going to explain, or shall I?"

"You're a nice one, Dave!" cried the madcap. "Now, look at Judy!" For Judith was suddenly in tears.

"Joy never kills," Dave remarked calmly. All the same, he stood close to Judith again, an arm going about her shoulders. "She's my sister, and I'm—well, I'm thundering glad," she said simply. "You want to know how it came about?"

"Yes. Well, it would be nice to know!" smiled Pam.

"Bekas—"

"Sh'rrp! Go on, then, Dave!"

"All that happened when we were at tea in Study 12 yesterday," Dave said crisply, "the row with Cora—that set me thinking. Mrs. Grandways had said that it was all nonsense, and that, of course, made it out of the question for you girls to do anything. You could no more question what Mrs. Grandways had said than could Judy herself. But it was different in my case; at least, so I decided. Back at the bungalow I had a talk with my mother. This morning she's been to see Mrs. Grandways, at the hotel in Barcombe."

"Well?" jerked out Polly, for Dave paused.

The Very Thing!

To give your chum for a present is this year's

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"You must excuse me," pleaded Dave. "I— I must just look after Judy. She's got to come with us—at once. Judy, let me take you first to the headmistress, may I?"

"Much better," cried the madcap, "than asking if you may send cards at Christmas! Oh, but how lovely, girls!" as Dave went off with Judith.

"How splendid!"

"Bai jove, marvellous, what? Wcally and twuly, goals."

They were all watching brother and sister, going slowly towards the school-house. Judith was feeling almost numb with joy, that was certain; but Dave was giving her his steadying hand.

"It's like this, girls," broke out Jack, in his lively fashion. "Mrs. Grandways gave Mrs. Cardew the same denial at first that had been given to Judith. Story all bunkum, and all that, Course, when Judith was told it was all nonsense, she couldn't say another word. But Mrs. Cardew was pretty desperate, knowing that she had a daughter somewhere in the world who would be just Judy's age, not to mention a certain scar on the arm!"

"Oh!"

"And so, Jack!"

"And so," he answered the clamour, "Mrs. Cardew simply said that she would expect proof from Mrs. Grandways. Simple enough to provide if Judy really was Mrs. Grandways' daughter, and quite reasonable for Mrs. Cardew to demand the proof!"

"You mean a birth certificate?" said Betty.

"Yep! And the long and short of it is, Mrs. Grandways could not supply that one simple proof, and had to admit it. Mrs. Cardew stuck to her guns, threatened to fetch in the lawyer, and in the end Ma Grandways went to bits. She told the truth at last. Judy was only an adopted child."

"But in that case," cried Tess, "why on earth had Mrs. Grandways wanted to keep up the pretence?"

"Yes, bekas eet not as if zey were fond of Judy!"

Jack became serious.

"There was a reason, but it's one that we are not to talk about too much. Mrs. Cardew has agreed to let Mrs. Grandways save her face. The Grandways, of course, are in a big way now, but time was when they were getting a living mostly by their wits. They only adopted Judy because it was made worth their while. There was money in it. Not much, but it was enough money to put Pa Grandways on the road to the fortune that he has made. They didn't want all that to become known now."

"I certainly agree," said Pam. "The less said about all that the better!"

"Only," exclaimed Polly furiously, "what a shame! If they owed so much to their having

adopted Judy as an infant, they might have been kinder to her!"

"Yes, wather! Howevah——"

"Just like the Grandways," sighed Betty. "But never mind, for I'm sure Judy won't now! Now that she has found her own true mother—Dave's mother!"

"So that Judy will be done with the Grandways for good and all!" Polly joyfully realised. "No more of Cora's nagging and bullying! Next term——"

"Bozzer next term!" shrilled Naomer. "What about Christmas?"

"What about it!" shouted Jack, throwing up his cap to catch it as it fell. "Cheers, girls! Loud cheers and hearty!"

"Hooray! Hip, hip!"

"Yes, wather! Owpl! Ow, Naomer!"

"Bekas," said Naomer, using Paula for a pick-a-back, "eet all make me rather egsited! So gee-up, Paula! Goo hun!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How long will they be?" fumed Polly a minute later. "Not long, surely! Judy will want to fly across to the bungalow to her mother. Just fancy, girls, what a moment that will——"

"Here they come!" cried Betty. "Dave and Judy—and half the school!"

"Half? The whole school, surely!" laughed Helen.

Her estimate was nearer the mark than Betty's, certainly. The news must have spread like wild-fire through Morcov's great schoolhouse. Dave and Judy, in haste to get to the bungalow together, had scores of Morcovians mobbing around them as they ran down the drive. Mistresses, too! A wilder, more joyful scene the school never had provided.

"Judy! Judy!" the chums of Study 12 joined in the happy cries. "Dave and Judy—hurrah!"

"Come on!" the madcap vociferated. Then she felt her sleeve being plucked at by Betty.

"Look, Polly—up at that study window!"

"What! Oh, Cora and Hetty!" snorted Polly as she sent a glance in the direction indicated. "They may well be where they are! They're not wanted here!"

"Boo!" said Naomer, making a face at that distant pair of heads.

And then Cora and Hetty were forgotten by the imp—forgotten by all the chums in their delirium of delight at seeing Judith again.

Their Judy, all the old sorrow banished from her looks as it had been banished from mind and heart alike—for ever more!

At the bungalow, Mrs. Cardew had run down to the gate several times to see if they were coming. She was all of a dither—and no wonder! Now,



Christmas Cheer!

Next Tuesday's Grand Christmas Number of the Schoolgirls' Own

contains a host of good things, including a lovely, long school story by MARJORIE STANTON. It's entitled

"Morcov's Christmas Fairy"

Don't miss it.

Ask for the Schoolgirls' Own—2d.

having seen them coming, she had withdrawn to the bright sitting-room of the hired residence, fighting hard to keep calm.

The murmur of many excitable, happy voices grew louder. A few moments more, and she could hear the rush of many feet on the gravel path. Hark! That was her son's voice as he brought his new-found sister into the dwelling. And now boy and girl were calling softly, eagerly, as with one voice:

"Mother!"

She tried to answer, but her tongue failed her. She tried to go across to the room door, but her knees seemed to give way.

The door flew wide open.

"Mother," cried Dave, "the others are all outside, and here—here she is!"

"My darling girl—my precious!" sobbed Mrs. Cardew, throwing her arms wide for Judith to rush to them.

And Judith, as she flew to those loving arms that had been longing to hold her through the years, said all that was in her happy heart when she voiced the one soft word:

"Mother!"

THE END.

"MORCOVE'S CHRISTMAS FAIRY" is the title of next week's long complete story—by MARJORIE STANTON, of course!

Amateur Cooks, keep these recipes by you. They'll be invaluable at Christmas—

FOR THE HOME DANCE

YOU are sure to have a little dance at home this year, and the refreshments are very simple to arrange, so ask mother to let you carry out this part of the programme for her.

Special Sandwiches.

Dancing and games are strenuous work, so a substantial and cooling buffet will be appreciated. Dainty sandwiches will be just the thing.

Make the sandwiches in various shapes—round, triangle and diamond. Cut the bread very thinly and remove the crusts. The round shapes can be cut with rim of an ordinary tumbler.

Various sorts of filling can be used; fish, tomato, cucumber, meat, egg and cress, or cheese are all suitable. A novelty sandwich can be made by using three slices of bread instead of the usual two; two slices of white and one slice of brown bread in the centre. Use two different fillings for these sandwiches. Place a little name label on each plate of sandwiches.

Honey Sandwich.

Make these with brown bread. Spread with thick honey, sprinkle over a few seedless raisins, add a few finely chopped nuts, cover, and cut the sandwiches into fancy shapes.

Orange and Banana Sundae.

Peel some oranges, divide into sections, remove the skin and pips and put the fruit into a basin. Peel and slice some bananas thinly and add them to the orange fruit. Add enough castor sugar to sweeten, a few drops of flavouring, and stir gently together. Arrange the fruit in tall glasses, add a spoonful of ice-cream topped with whipped cream and a sprinkling of finely chopped nuts.

Jelly Trifle.

Split some sponge cakes open, spread them with jam, press together and arrange in a fancy dish. Make a red packet jelly, pour it over the cakes and allow to set. Make a custard, pour it over the cakes, and stand aside until cold. Decorate the top of the trifle with chopped pineapple, glacé cherries and whipped cream.

Hot and Cold Drinks.

All the following drinks will prove very popular at a dance. Tea and coffee, of course, must be provided. Iced and home-made lemonade should find a place on the buffet table.

Mixed Fruitade.

This is a truly delicious drink.

Squeeze the juice from six oranges and two grapefruits into a jug. Dissolve enough sugar to sweeten in a little hot water and add it to the juices. Chop some tinned pineapple very finely, add it, with the juice, to the other fruit juices and mix. Stand until cold.

Put small pieces of ice in tall glasses, pour in some of the fruit mixture and fill the glasses with soda water.

