

DODO WREN IS HERE AGAIN!

SPARKLING NEW SERIES BY
IRIS HOLT BEGINS INSIDE

The SCHOOLGIRLS' 2^D OWN

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EVERY TUESDAY.



**The Girl Bunny Befriended
— IS SHE A THIEF ?**

A dramatic incident from this week's long
complete Morcove School story.

"THE MORCOVE SECRET SOCIETY" : Complete Tale Within

The "Disgrace" Bunny Trevor Brought on Morcove Was Just the Excuse Some Girls Wanted to Form—



THE MORCOVE SECRET SOCIETY

CHAPTER I.

"Bunny's to Blame!"

"O II, she's out—clean bowled!"
 "What, another wicket down!"
 "Yes, bai Jove!"
 "Bekas zat was Betty's middle stump, zat was—sweindle!"
 "Never mind, Betty!" and clapping, as the latest victim of some very expert bowling came away from the pitch.
 "Yes, bravo, the cap—good old Betty!" And the clapping continued. "A useful 15, Betty!"
 "But it won't save us," muttered one Morcove girl who had been dismissed for a modest 6 only a few minutes ago. "If only Bunny had turned up!"

This was madeap Polly Linton, making no disguise for her "poor old Morcove!" feelings, as she waited by the shade-trees for Betty Barton, captain of the Form and captain of the team, to come in out of the blazing sunshine.

Betty was smiling—not proudly, but stoically. And quite suddenly that smile of hers—one that meant: "We'll manage yet!"—took heartening effect upon her followers.

"Hurrah!" a dozen voices dinned, whilst Polly, in a sudden access of loving admiration for the "cap," rushed to pound her on the shoulders.

"Thirty-six for nine!" someone called out who was standing by squatting Biddy Loveland, the Morcove scorer.

"Last girl in!" was the next outcry. "Now, Naomer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You wait ze beet!" was the retort of Morcove's dusky royal scholar, the girl-queen of Nakara, as she took the bat from Betty. "Bekas I feel like making some of zose Grangemoor fellows sit up and take notice—yes! Zey will be thirsty firlows before I have done with zem!"

Meantime, Naomer hastily applied her lips to a glass of lemonade, obtained from a crystal jug standing on the turf. The "refresher"—preliminary to what she was confident would be the innings of the day—ended with a satisfied smack of the lips. "Gorjus!"

"Hooray!" some factious cheering started; and then Betty and one or two others cried "Shame!" but only mirthfully.

There was no ill-nature in the derisory applauding of Naomer, as she marched out to the wicket, flourishing her bat. Rather was the mock-cheering quite a usual mode of proclaiming affection for the dusky one, as being the pet of the Form—and its comic strip.

The visiting team, its innings yet to come, was from Grangemoor School—that famous Public school for boys which had many reasons for being in close association with equally famous Morcove.

It was a former Morcove mistress who had married a Grangemoor Housemaster—Mr. Challenor. Also there were Morcove girls who had

BUNNY TREVOR

Continues to Help

"THE GIRL NOBODY LIKED FOR LONG."

By Marjorie Stanton

brothers at Grangemoor. Madcap Polly's fun-loving brother Jack was out there on the field, at this moment, waiting to bowl Naomer—first ball, as it was his rascally intention to do!

Judy Cardew's brother Dave—quiet, serious Dave—he was there, as one of the fielders; so was Bunny Trevor's brother Tom—at present squatting on the ground, chewing a stalk of grass.

Tubby Blot—but he had no sister at Morcove—he was mechanically feeding chocolates to himself whilst the field waited for Naomer to get to her wicket. And, since mention is being made of some of the Grangemoor visitors, Jimmy Cherrol, keeping wicket, can be pointed out.

Jimmy, again, was without a sister—not only at Morcove, but anywhere else in the world.

As compensation, however, he did find in tall Pam Willoughby—out for a miserable 2; this afternoon—a very favouring chum.

Betty murmured to chums who were close to her, in the shade of the trees, whilst Naomer drew another great cheer by shrilling a demand for "centre!"

"Thirty-six for nine, girls. No match is lost until it's won, anyhow!"

"Gosh," fumed Polly, "I'd just like to bowl that brother of mine for nix presently—I would! He's been an absolute wretch, sending down such hot ones."

"Towwible!" sighed Paula; who had been out for a duck. "I weally didn't see the ball coming!"

"Oh, you—you never do," chuckled the madcap. "And now—all the fuss that kid is making, as if she were going to make a century!"

Other girls gurgled. "I wish she could," Etta Hargrove smiled wistfully. "But now—"

Half a dozen of them winced, emitting a hissing "Ooo!" as they saw Jack send down one of his "specials." Quite obviously he regarded the last girl in as being the fitting recipient of a "duck."

Nor could Morcove blame him for feeling that the sooner his side went in to bat, the better.

But Naomer—somehow she dealt with that ball. Blind swipe or whatever else it may have been, there was a mighty crack of the bat, and Polly Linton was loudest of all in her shout:

"I say, look at that! Hurrah! Boundary! Four—four!"

How the girls looking on cheered and clapped! Meaning it, too! Accordingly, Naomer—not having needed to run for the boundary hit—turned round at the wicket and bowed.

"The darling," Madge Minden said ardently. "Bai Jove, most gwatifying! Bettah than I— In fact, considerably bettah!" Paula fairly-mindedly acknowledged.

"But four—four, first hit!" Polly gasped incredulously. "Oh, if only she could hit up a few more like that! I'll buy her chocs. I'll buy her the biggest box of—"

The rest was a sort of groan, as Jack, like a demon, sent down another fast one. Polly and others shut their eyes.

"Smack!" And all the eyes came open, staring. "What!" And all the eyes came open, staring. "Again? Hooo-rah! Naomer—bravo, kid, bravo! Stuff to give 'em, Naomer!"

"And now—I know what it'll be," Polly next moment groaned. "Jack'll send her down a slow one. Whew! Why ever I had a brother to come here to-day and make us look so silly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Sure enough, Jack merely trundled the next ball down the pitch. It seemed to be ages, traversing

the few yards, and there was time for onlookers to see how wickedly it was designed to make Naomer step out and so get bowled or stumped or l.b.w.d.

And, after all—Naomer played it! Morcove onlookers went wild then. But this—this was something too wonderful for words! Was the dusky one to pile up such a score of her own as would give the visitors something to think about, if they were to win, after all?

"Over!"
"Oh! Um!"
It was one of those moments for suffering the most mixed feelings—of relief, and suspense, and fearful anxiety. It might be just as well that Naomer was to have a rest, her batting partner, Judy Cardew, having to face the bowling again. "Judy's kept her end up, anyhow," Betty admiringly murmured. "Even if she hasn't made many.—She's a good partner."

"What are we now? Forty-four—um! Dash," Polly grimaced. "Those chaps will get their equaliser, third man in!"

"You don't know," Betty smiled. "Cheer up, Polly! If only Naomer can— Hallo!" as Judy's wicket was suddenly played by a tricky ball from Jimmy Cherrol. "What's that?"

"That's out, that is!" groaned Polly. "Out, all of us, for forty-four—wow!"

"Ah deah; extremely twying—yes, wather!" Paula sighed. "Howevah—bwavo, Naomer; hoowah, bwavo—"

The kid—burrah!" was the general applause for the Form's dusky imp, as she came prancing towards the trees, "carrying her bat." Nor was Judy forgotten. In her case, there were particular congratulations from the saner section of the Form. She had only 5 runs to her credit; but, by managing to stay in, she had done her best to help others get the runs—if they could.

Although the coming-in of the Grangemoor fielders now helped to make it a babel of chatter and laughter at the favourite lounging place, there was a good deal of activity.

The visitors were going to take their innings at once. So rapidly had the home team's wickets fallen this afternoon, it was still an hour short of tea-time. The first "men" in clapped on leg-guards; quantities of lemonade came on offer; for every bantering cry from Grangemoor, there seemed to be a defiant retort by Morcove.

But Betty—she had no time for levity. As captain, she had to bestow a grave word here and another there; whispered tactics to various girls who would be fielding, in the hope that somehow the match could yet be pulled out of the fire.

And suddenly for Polly—the touch of her captain's hand upon a shoulder, and the quiet suggestion:

"You'll take the bowling this end, Polly dear?" The madcap was looking glum again. She could not get over that paltry 44!

"If you want me to—O.K., Betty. But—Dash!" And a furious stamp of the foot. "It All comes of Bunny not turning up! Beastly un-sporting, I call it. The girls are frightfully fed up—"

"Sh! Polly dear—"
"You warned her that she would never be back in time, and neither was she! She would have been good for a dozen runs—and now I've got to go on to bowl this end, instead of her."

"It's—annoying."
"Annoying! Gosh, I like your word for it," Polly fumed, and then visited her petulance upon her own brother Jack as he confronted her, bat in hand.

Betty had given Polly the ball. Jack chuckled as he saw Polly pretending to be ready to shy it at him.

"Oh, not now!" he jested. "And don't be cross, Polly-wolly!"

"Ass!" she stigmatised him, with a look in her eyes negating the scorn. "You can expect some leg theory, I warn you!"

"Wow! Here, Tom," as his batting-partner came by, "you can take the bowling, just to give you Polly's first ball. I don't like the look of Polly."

"I don't mind," grinned Tom gaily. "I can stand any of them, bar Bunny--and she's not here!"

"I suppose you know," Jack further jested to his pouting sister, "Tom bribed Bunny to stay away? Oh, and it has answered splendidly. Forty-four! Well, chaps, 'bye for now," to loungers under the trees. "Come on, Tom, and we'll show the neighbours!"

The Morcove team had already gone on to the field to take their places. At the last moment before "Play!" Jack, at the wicket, from which Polly was going to bowl, made some teasing remark to her. She gave him a look--and such a look!--then stood back for the run that was to help her launch a furious overarm.

Down the sunny pitch flashed the ball, a second or so later, and--smack!--away it went, past a sprawling Morcove fielder. Boundary!

"Goodness!" laughed Betty. "That's how they've started!"

CHAPTER 2.

The Wanderer's Return

AS for the way Grangemoor ended--a win by five wickets took place nicely in time for tea.

And then:

"Look, Betty!"

That was Polly, with a directional nod, as she was walking off the field with the captain and the rest of the side.

"There's Bunny," Polly added grimly.

"I'm going to speak to her; don't come with me, any of you," Betty requested quietly.

Diverting her steps, she walked briskly over the deserted part of the games-field to meet the schoolmate who, a few moments since, had walked in by the main gateway.

The rest of the Morcove players trooped for the trees and the crowd around the scorers; but Betty, out of the corners of her eyes, could see what disgusted over-the-shoulder glances were being directed towards the afternoon's absentee.

Then Betty realised that Bunny Trevor, who had set off by bicycle directly after dinner, had returned on foot.



Naomer leapt out to meet the ball, and, with a lucky swipe, sent it to the boundary. Grangemoor looked surprised, but there were cheers from Morcove's supporters. Was Naomer going to save the game?

"Where's the bike, then, Bunny?"

"Oh, I haven't got that now," came with Bunny's usual coolness.

"How do you mean? Had a smash, or something?"

"Oh, no! Nothing like that," Bunny smiled.

If she had cared to do so, she might have explained what had happened to her machine; how it had been borrowed by Alf, Kathy Turner's brother. She might have explained, too, how, in his cowardly way, Alf had locked her in a shed, thus causing her to miss the match.

"But, no!" thought Bunny. "After all, it's my own affair."

Aloof, she added:

"How's the game going? One innings just ended, I suppose?"

"Both innings are ended, Bunny. The match is over, and we've lost. By five wickets."

"Five? As bad as that! How rotten," Bunny grieved genuinely. "Well, Betty, I'm frightfully sorry that I didn't get back in time, after all. It really wasn't my fault."

"You remember, I said you wouldn't?"

"Oh, yes, and I said I would, and I was wrong. Is the crowd over there getting ready for tea, or for my execution?"

"Oh, Bunny, but why did you?" the captain exclaimed, more in sorrow than anger. "We can't talk now, but I feel bound to warn you--better keep away from the others for a bit. They're feeling fed-up with you. Your brother's

here, and, of course, you must see him. I—I wonder if I can contrive—”

“Don’t you worry about that, Betty—thanks all the same,” broke in Bunny with quite her usual sparkle. “I say, you’re frightfully decent not to play steam with me. I take it that we’d have lost in any case; but that makes no difference. I was down to play, and I didn’t turn up.”

“I don’t think we would have lost, Bunny, had you done your bit. You’ve come on as our very best bowler, and you could have stood up to your brother’s bowling as none of us others could. We’re not used to him; you are.”

“But this,” cried Bunny, smiling, “is absurd! You were a grand team, Betty, before ever I—”

“Ah, it’s no use,” the captain exclaimed, losing a little of her carefully preserved patience.

“Frankly, Bunny, your staying away has—has made the others a bit fed-up. But you look—tired. You’d better go in and get some tea by yourself, and I’ll send Tom in to you.”

“Oh, no; I’ll just have a look at the score-book, anyhow.”

And Bunny sauntered on again, making straight for the lively crowd of girls and boys over by the trees. The bell for tea had yet to sound, so time was being found for plenty of chatter and not a little larking about.

Betty, who was going in step with errant Bunny, could see Naomer strutting about, wearing Tubby’s blazer, in which the dusky imp was almost lost.

Then there was Jack, trying to waltz his sister into a good humour, he himself supplying the very effective imitation of a dance band, as he whirled her around on the turf.

Tom came out of the crowd to meet his sister Bunny, but not with any particular haste. Her cool:

“Hallo, Tom!” was matched by his unconcerned:

“Back, then?”

“But don’t go,” she pleaded demurely. “I would like one relation to be at my funeral.”

“I didn’t come after you, Bunny.”

“Which accounts for your side winning the match? How many wickets did you take?”

“As a matter of fact, only three. What’s all this, Bunny, about your fussing over some poacher’s daughter?”

“I’ll explain presently,” she smiled, and then moved on to where Biddy Loveland, the Morcove scorer, was still plying a stubby pencil, with at least half a dozen other girls to keep her from going wrong over final intricacies.

Bunny had still a step or two to go when some of these girls glanced round at her. Then they ringed more together around Biddy and her scoring-book. A plain hint! “You can be off, Bunny!”

This display of “edge,” however, left her quite unabashed. Calmly she took her stand close behind two of the girls who were showing her their backs. She peered over their shoulders to get a sight of the ruled page with all its pencilled figures, several round-O’s, and sundry hieroglyphics.

Next moment one of the girls in front of Bunny glared round at her. It was Helen Craig.

“What do you want, Bunny Trevor?”

“I’d just like to see who made the best score.”

“You didn’t, anyhow!” said Helen, witheringly. “But show her the book, if she wants to see it, Biddy.”

Then one of the other girls almost snatched the book from Biddy, to slam it into Bunny’s hands.

“There you are, then—since you’re so keen!” Bunny had a way of smiling provokingly when stormed at.

“Thanks,” she said, for being allowed to handle the book; and took her understanding look at the afternoon’s record. In a moment or two she had grasped all important details, and then politely she handed back the book to Biddy.

The tea-bell rang. It was the signal for an immediate marching away from Bunny, leaving her noticeably “cut” by that particular batch of schoolmates. And elsewhere, now, other members of her Form were pointedly ignoring her as they went by in twos and threes.

She was aware of Jack Linton being inclined to come towards her for a jocular word of greeting, and of his being deterred by a frowning Polly. So he merely hailed her—Bunny—from fifty yards away.

This struck Bunny as being rather comic. In fact, numbers of the Grangemoor boys amused her by their obvious desire to accord her a chummy word or two, only in all cases they were with girls whose bleak expression said: “No, don’t!”

In the case of Tubby Blood—and he always so ready to be hail-fellow-well-met!—it really was a laughable thing to see him being literally towed away to the schoolhouse by Naomer, whose artless nature made her shrill:

“Bekas, come on—te now, Tubby, and never mind HER! Bekas I am disgusted with Bunny! Ze whole Form is disgusted!”

As a set-off to this, if it had hurt Bunny—but it hadn’t, nor was it going to make the slightest difference to her regard for the dusky imp and her young “squire”—there was Pam’s graceful way of letting Jimmy say at least a shy: “Hallo, Bunny!”

Pam and Jimmy had found each other in the recent crowd, and were now sauntering together to the schoolhouse. Unmistakably, Pam herself was displeased with Bunny; but her natural serenity compelled the Swanlake girl to put no check upon Jimmy’s inclination. He was not her bother.

But in the end Bunny found herself being left all by herself just where, a few moments ago, there had been such a jousous throng.

CHAPTER 3.

The Scorn of Them All

SUDDENLY her brother came darting to her. He had not seen her in such a state of significant solitude until he finished buckling a cricket-bag and rose up from his knees.

“Here, what’s this, Bunny!”

“This is me, Tom,” she smiled.

“But—”

“It’s quite all right. I deserve it, they think. Tom dear, you want your tea. Let’s go in.”

“You mean—you don’t mind sitting down with all the others? But, Bunny—”

“If it were a special tea for the players only, then, of course, I’d keep away. But it’s laid for all the Form, and you boys, in the dining-hall, I know. And I suppose I have still a right to be fed by the school?” Bunny submitted silkily. “Tea first; execution afterwards!”

They moved off together, seeing all the rest of the girls and boys dawdling in by the front porch. Every tongue going, and there was plenty of laughter.

“I don’t know what you’ve been up to, Bunny, this afternoon, but I wish you wouldn’t do these

things," Tom sighed. "If you're down to play in a match, why can't you turn up for it?"

She might have said: "Oh, don't you begin!" But she didn't. If anything caused her smile to fade just then, it must have been the sight of Betty, running back from the schoolhouse to speak to her.

"Here's the cap, Tom—going to a lot of trouble on my account; I wish she wouldn't! But that's like Betty."

There was just time for him to nod appreciatively; then he and Bunny had Betty within speaking distance.

"Look here, you two, I'm sure it will be all right," the captain said rapidly. "I haven't asked Miss Merrick, for it would mean going into details, and I don't want to do that. I'll take the responsibility. You two can have tea in Study 12."

"Sweet of you, Betty; but—no," Bunny coolly declined. "It's not necessary. I wouldn't dream of keeping Tom to myself. You run back now."

She did not want Betty to be seen going in with her and her brother. It was all right, of course, for Tom to stand by her; but the captain—no!

Betty, however, at the risk of being criticised for doing so, walked with the pair of them to the schoolhouse. They got to the threshold after most of the girls had passed to the dining-hall; but there were a few stragglers to look round and notice the three of them.

"You want a wash, Tom; so do I!" Bunny very emphatically added.

The plea served as a welcome means of leaving Betty, and Bunny even hoped that it would result in her going into the dining-hall, after Tom had found his way to the seat reserved for him. But she found him, a few minutes later, waiting about for her in an otherwise deserted hall.

"Feel all right, Bunny?"

"Yes, why?"

But she knew! He was concerned for her, having to pass to her place at the long table—specially arranged for the occasion—where sat so many schoolmates of hers with whom she was in disgrace.

"Don't be silly, Tom. Come on!"

And in they went together. From the dining-hall's doorway, they had a momentary sight of the whole tea-party, presided over by Miss Merrick, who was too busy to put any check upon all the jabber-jabber and laughter, even if she had felt that it was rather too much of a riot.

Then came a burst of ironical cheering—obviously due to Bunny's appearance upon the scene.

The Form-mistress, seized with wonderment, forgot to watch the turned-on tap of the tea-urn. It was Bunny who, calmly advancing to the table, noticed hot tea overflowing, from a cup under the running tap, all over the cloth.

"Er—Miss Merrick," Bunny said demurely, and pointed.

"Oh!"

Bunny sat down, smiling. It was amusing her to see how rattled some of the other girls felt, because she, ignoring the mocking cheers, had even been able to enjoy the joke of the spilling tea—at such a moment!

The presence of so many Grangemorian, all in hearty spirits, considerably lessened the Form's opportunities for twitting Bunny over her great default. But remarks as ironical as the recent cheers had been were not lacking.

Nor could she fail to notice looks which plainly

said: "You wait!" Here and there a girl seemed to be, like the captain, more sad than angry; but the general mood was a very condemning one for what was considered to be Bunny's unsporting action in failing to take her place in the team.

Presently, popular Miss Merrick became less occupied, and then she offered some rueful comments on the Form's defeat.

"I'm sure I don't know why you made such a poor show this afternoon, girls!"

"But WE know," Bunny could read in faces across the table.

"Bekas," came the startling yell from Naomer, who never could keep a still tongue in her head. "eet all ze fault of— Ooo, yes, thank you, I will!" she broke off, being hastily offered a platter of macaroons by Tubby.

"Don't make too big a tea, Naomer; I know what you are," Miss Merrick playfully spoke down to the dusky one. "It may be that you girls only lost—"

"Not bekas of me—what ze diggings!" Morcove's royal scholar protested. "Bekas I made eight, I did; two boundaries, gorjus. "Zat," Naomer proudly claimed, carving the macaroon, "is bekas I keep fit."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then whose fault was it?" the Form-mistress only playfully persisted. "Perhaps the captain can say?"

"Nobody's fault, Miss Merrick."

Bunny saw several girls setting down their cups, giving Betty an astonished stare. Nobody's fault? How COULD the captain say such a thing!

Nor did it surprise Bunny that those who looked most scandalised were not the ones to be feeling the defeat at all acutely. The odious Denver sisters, for instance—what did they care, ever, whether the Form did well or badly!

They had not played in this afternoon's match. Yet they now claimed the right—oh, rather!—to scorn her, Bunny. And this, before she had had a proper chance to plead any excuse for her absence from the match.

"Unless, too, I'm greatly mistaken," ran Bunny's mind, "the captain is considered to be letting me off unfairly. As if there has been time yet for Betty to deal with me!"

MISTAKEN, Bunny was not!

In a certain study, shortly after tea, some eight juniors got together for a debate, during which her name was hardly mentioned more often with indignation, than was Betty's mistrustfully.

The study was Fay and Edna Denver's. As these two girls had collected half a dozen others who were not given to thinking things out for themselves, it was easy to turn the debate into a thrilling conspiracy.

Fay and Edna propounded a plan that their listeners regarded as splendid. Such fun it would be! Oh, and they were quite entitled to do it, too! In fact, "the captain being what she was," the honour of the Form, etc., etc., demanded it!

Thereupon, the eight conspirators got busy. From one source and another a quantity of black dress-fabric was collected, and out of this material eight black hoods were easily and speedily fashioned.

Snip, snip, went the scissors, cutting almond-shaped holes—a pair to each hood, so that the wearer's eyes could see out quite clearly.

Fay's hood was finished first. She at once put it on, craftily guessing that the sight of her, thus arrayed, would add to the other girls' eagerness.

Sure enough, there was huge excitement; a

general yearning to act as a masked and fear-some-looking tribunal without delay. "That Bunny—before we've done with her!" was the gist of the exultant whispering.

A minute or two later, Edna darted to the study-window, to send a seeking look over the sill. She soon nodded and smiled.

"Yes, we shouldn't have to wait long now," was her gleeful comment. "The boys are just off. I can see Bunny Trevor, saying good-bye to her brother, down at the gate."

"Think we can get her, though—away from her chums?" questioned Eva Merrick.

The elder Denver sister grinned confidently. "You can leave that to me," she chuckled. "I know how to work it. That Bunny will do anything for the poacher's daughter. I'll make it a message—from that cottage girl. You others get away now—you know where! Whilst I—"

And, sitting down at the study-table, she started to use a pen as if she were practising a disguised handwriting.

CHAPTER 4. The Message

BUNNY TREVOR came upstairs presently to go to Study 12.

She knew that Polly and others, now that the Grangemoor team had gone off in their own school bus, were minded to get some tennis. But she expected Betty to come seeking her in the study, for a serious talk as between captain and "culprit."

To her amazement, there was a note lying upon her blotter, in the study, addressed to "Miss Anne Trevor."

The envelope was a cheap and soiled one, and she did not think any schoolmate of hers would spell her Christian name with an "e." She could not imagine any schoolmate, indeed, addressing her other than as "Bunny."

So, even as she snatched up the note and set a finger to rip it open, she was conjecturing: "Something to do with Kathy Turner?"

Out came an equally cheap and soiled scrap of writing-paper, on which a clumsy hand had scrawled:

"Please, miss, go to cave on beach at once, very important. I mean the one you come to first after you git down zigzag. Sorry to trouble you, please."

Bunny, reading these lines over and over again, frowned perplexedly.

A fake? Some of the girls, intending to hoax her? There was that possibility, of course. Only, as it happened, Kathy might be wanting urgently to meet her, and even meet her in secret at a place like the cave.

"That bike of mine!" jumped Bunny's mind. "Her brother Alf took it to ride away upon. Has she got it back somehow by now? But how, if this message is from Kathy—how did it get to this study?"

A simple explanation, the girl might have called at the back door and handed it in to one of the servants. Go down now and inquire amongst the maids?

"Oh, hang, no—not worth the trouble," Bunny speedily decided. "If the note is from Kathy, then I ought to go to the cave. If it isn't—I shan't mind!"

In those last words, and the shrug which accompanied them, there was Bunny's habitual readiness to allow for the fondness of other girls for a joke.

It became her calm conviction that, at the cave, she would find either Kathy herself, or an absurd dummy dressed to look like the poacher's daughter—with sundry girls of the Form lying in wait behind the seashore rocks, to enjoy the fun of "guying" her.

But the cliff-path, when she was descending it presently, offered her a bird's-eye view of the foreshore, for several hundred yards in both directions, and there was not a sign of life down there.

She believed she could have detected any would-be jaspers crouching close to masses of rocks rising out of the sand and the shingle.

"Anyway!"

And with that happy-go-lucky murmur, she hurried down to the cliff-walled beach, to let clashing steps take her towards the first cavern.

"She's coming!"

Far enough in the cave to be beyond the reach of daylight, the Denver sisters and their six accomplices saw the last of one another's faces as the black hoods were hastily donned.

Candles were burning steadily in the still air of the cavern. Some were simply set upright in the dry sand flooring the cave; others were stuck by their own melted wax to ledges in the rock-walls.

It was Fay Denver who had thought of the cave as being so very suitable for proceedings requiring to be invested with a sombre character.

Edna, in deciding that candles would be necessary, had also decided that there could not be too many. And the lavish yet primitive illumination certainly was supplying its own suggestion of mystery to the weird scene.

Fay, who had whispered the warning just then, now gestured to her sister to creep back with her towards the mouth of the cavern.

The remaining six, wearing their black cowls, took up their appointed stations, becoming three girls to either side of the candle-lit part of the cave. In this position, they started to giggle and titter, whilst waiting for the victim to be brought in.

If there was a somewhat nervous, even frightened, note, in some of the half-suppressed laughter, that was not to be wondered at. The cave, the candles, and the cowls—all combined to make the girls feel scared of one another.

Suddenly there was a muzzling of several voices and the sentinel-like six could tell that Bunny was being brought in, after being pounced upon by Fay and Edna.

The sisters' voices, uttering stern warnings to the victim, were suitably disguised. Bunny, however, was not making the protesting outcry which had been expected. Her voice was calm, even obliging; and the tribunal felt annoyed.

Where was the quaking state of fear into which they had hoped to find the victim plunged?

"The candles!" said Bunny. "Quite pretty!"

"Silence!" hissed one of the Unknowns. "Stand here."

A sign was made to a couple of the lined-up members to stand on either side of Bunny, as custodians. Fay and Edna were not going to play such minor parts as that.

Leaving the captive safely guarded, the sisters glided, with suitable solemnity, to positions facing her.

In a deep, disguised voice, Fay began:

"Now, Ann Trevor, you are here to answer to us, the Morcove Secret Society of Justice Dealers, for to-day's betrayal!"

"My what?"

"Your base conduct of this afternoon," the cowed ringleader spoke on sternly. "Whereby the Form lost its match against Grangemoor. You cannot deny but for you, Ann Trevor, the Form would have won!"

"Very kind of you to think so highly of my play. I'm not so sure myself, but don't imagine that I hold myself excused."

"Little would it avail you with us," murmured the leader, "to plead excuses. They may serve you all right where the captain is concerned."

"Urr, the captain!" murmured the whole secret society scornfully. "Bah!"

"To us you stand condemned!" spoke on the leader fiercely. "And, therefore, Ann Trevor, we intend to deal with you. The honour of the Form demands it! If the Form is to be saved, you and such as you will have to reckon with US, and not with the weakling captain!"

"Careful what you say about Betty Barton," Bunny warned with a change of tone. "She is—"

"A friend of yours—yes! And so we get the unfairness which it is the purpose of this secret society to STAMP OUT! We know Betty Barton. We know—all!"

"For my part, I know who most of you are—"

"Silence!"

"Idiots!"

"You are in our power," the leader hissed on.

"So, then, Ann Trevor, be careful. If you would escape the full measure of that punishment which you deserve, at the hands of justice, you will throw yourself upon our mercy."

"Do what?"

"You will tell us—all!"

"But I thought you said you knew—all?"

"Ann Trevor," said the leader in a voice that quivered with passion, "listen! Either you will tell us how and why you failed to turn up for the match, so that your own confession can be recorded in the minutes of our society, or else—"

"Now, look here," Bunny exclaimed freshly. "I've had enough of this fooling. I'm going to answer to the captain for what happened this afternoon. As for all of you silly goops—"

"The captain cannot be trusted to deal with you!" raged the leader. "It is one law for her favourites and another for the rest!"

Some of the cowed figures groaned against the captain.

"Did we not hear her say, at tea: 'Nobody's fault'?" muttered the leader. "Nobody's fault, forsooth! When all the Form is convicted, Ann Trevor, that you—you were to blame!"

"I regard it as a waste of time to argue seriously with you," Bunny remarked coolly. "But I don't mind

explaining—what girls who are not such cats as you are must have realised at the time—Betty felt justified in saying it was nobody's fault. I had told her that I hadn't been able to avoid missing the match, and I suppose she—"

"Yes, and there it is! She accepted that—"

"Only for the time being—"

"Bah! But no more!" cried Fay, aware of a restiveness amongst the rest of the society. She herself, indeed, was finding it rather a stifling business to go on breathing with a black cowl over her head.

"Members of the Morcove Justice Dealers!" she addressed her confederates in a hollow voice. "You have heard the prisoner! Has she said anything, has there been one word—"

"Not one!" came in a gloomy chorus. "Guilty!"

"Prepare, then, Ann Trevor, to suffer the sentence of the society!"

At those words, which must have been the agreed signal for doing so, the two girls who stood on either side of Ann seized her firmly, whilst one of the other cowed figures darted towards her with a handkerchief for binding about her eyes.

It became a moment for Bunny to rue the time when she had walked into this trap. When first pounced upon, at the mouth of the cave, she had felt only amused, and had not troubled to offer resistance. Now she realised that the personnel of the secret society was made



Helen glanced up, to see Bunny Trevor standing near. "What do you want?" she asked frigidly. "I'd like to see who made the best score," answered the girl who had missed the match. "Well, you didn't!" was Helen's chilly retort.

up entirely of girls who might very easily pass from pure nonsense to ill-natured violence.

But it was too late for her to offer resistance. Fight to one! The best she could hope to do for herself now was to submit to the blind-folding, with an idea of taking the whole batch off their guard. The more passive she appeared to be, the better would be her chance for a sudden dash.

One of her captors, after binding the handkerchief about her eyes, gave careful tuggings to the front of the bandage, to make sure that she, Bunny, could not see.

Nor was Bunny able to see at all, whilst being spun round and round half a dozen times. Giddily at a standstill, after the turning, she really could not tell in which direction she was facing.

But she was joyfully aware of the bandage having eased a bit already, as the result of some violent working of the muscles of her face.

Could she hope to cause the bandage to drop away from her eyes in any moment when she decided to start a sudden furious struggle? If only she could do that! And perhaps—perhaps it might be possible, by rubbing one's bandaged head against somebody's shoulder.

Suddenly her bandaged eyes found relief from the blackness. A chink, as it were, of golden light came in under the bottom edge of the bandage. Candle-light!

The cowed girls were crowding about her now—she could tell. It seemed to her that some of them must have taken up each a candle, to hold it. So strong was the light penetrating beneath her cheeks and the bandage, it could only be from combined candles.

"Now—march, Ann Trevor!" the leader commanded fiercely. "Advance!"

She was still being held firmly by a girl on either side. On each of her shoulders was a gripping hand, and as her left arm was held tightly, slightly drawn back, so was her right.

In such an overpowered state, she had to walk forwards whether she wanted to or not. To hang back was only to be hustled violently. Relying upon the chance for a sudden, furious dash at any moment now, she made a point of setting off very submissively.

And now, as she took faltering steps—so as to appear utterly cowed—she was able to see straight down to the sandy floor of the cave. The candles were going with her and her captors to light the way. Evidently, then, she was being taken farther into the cave.

For what purpose? Impossible to guess! She only knew that the farther she was taken, the farther she would have to rush, with lightning speed, if—if she succeeded in breaking free.

Suddenly the yellow of the candle-lit sand, at her feet, gave place to a gleaming something—water!

She had been brought to the very edge of a pool, whose still surface took on dull, oily reflections from the held candles.

She was, she realised instantly, to be treated to a violent, malicious push that would send her headlong forwards, floundering in the shallow but icy water.

And instantly she registered a mental "No!" and made a now-or-never effort.

They had believed her to be all-unseeing and quite resigned to her fate. So much greater was their surprise when she suddenly gathered all her strength and used it just as if she had the use of her eyes.

Instead of starting to struggle with the girls

who actually held her, Bunny put all her energy into a lunge at one of the other cowed figures. She did not know which one it was, but she hoped it might be Fay Denver.

At any rate, Bunny succeeded in butting into that particular figure with a ducked head, and then shouldering into it so violently that the girl, whoever she was, lost her balance and toppled into the pool.

She yelled as she tried to recover her balance in the foot-deep pool. Then, as one floundering leg plunged knee-deep—over she went completely.

SPLOSH!

And Bunny, by that bit of head-and-shoulder work, had caused the bandage to slip down from her eyes. She lunged and struggled again, and was suddenly free.

Free!

It was a thing she never could have done, only the sight of one of their number coming in for such a tumble into the water had demoralised the rest. They had not known, in that confusing moment, who might be the next.

So Bunny, taking swift advantage of the general panic, fled for the way out. Expecting a pursuit, she knew she ought to save all her breath for running, yet she had to laugh. She yelled her laughter as she streaked towards the cave-mouth and the evening sunshine.

A few seconds, and she was emerging upon the seashore. And no one, after all, was coming after her. She could pause for breath, hear the gulls crying above the tumbling waves, and hear also much spluttering and squabbling amongst the various members of the Morcove Secret Society, far back in the depths of the cavern.

Fay, the one who had come in for that drenching? "Oh, I do hope so!" chuckled Bunny.

Then in the act of going on again to get back to the school, she saw what a nice smooth patch of sand there was in front of the cave. Except for a few footprints, it was one of those smooth expanses which simply ask to be written upon.

Bunny stooped and wrote, in huge letters, using a forefinger as a stylo:

YOU NEED TOWELS—NOT COWLS!

Then she went on again, at a quite leisurely pace, climbed halfway up the zigzag path, and waited, giving her mirthful eyes to the shore below.

Presently she saw the eight girls coming along from the cave; but they could not see her. She was nicely ambushed amongst the crags.

The members of the Morcove Secret Society were, as was to be expected, no longer wearing their cowls. Perhaps they had retained them, to use them another time?

Meanwhile, one of the "Justice Dealers" was in such a sopping state as to suggest the need for a special secret society to smuggle her back to the schoolhouse.

And that bedragged girl was, to Bunny's unbounded joy, Fay Denver, after all!

CHAPTER 5.

Given Her Choice

JUST before Big Hall, that evening, Betty Barton walked into Study 12, where Bunny was writing a letter.

"Can you leave that for a moment, Bunny? It can't go off this evening, anyway?"

"Oh, no, it's quite all right. I was only writing to mother, asking for a sub."

By that word did Morcove imply a "grant in

aid" from parents, otherwise, a supplementary remittance from home.

"Whilst we've a minute to ourselves, Bunny," said the captain, closing the door, "I feel I must put one or two things pretty plainly."

"Go ahead," nodded Bunny. "Of course, as captain you can't pass over what I did this afternoon. I've been waiting for you to start in."

"You know that the Form is very sore about it all, Bunny? Even your best chums—"

"They've a perfect right to be. Surely they don't imagine that I'm not wild with myself at having failed to turn up for the match? I could still kick myself. And when I did get back, and you told me that we'd lost—"

Bunny's voice became slightly lumpy.

"It isn't like me to want to let down my side, Betty. But I suppose my not getting back in time did cause you to lose. Never mind what I'm worth in the team, if I'm worth anything at all; there was the—what's the word I want?—psychological effect, eh, Betty? I'm not joking—"

"I can see you're not, Bunny. As a matter of fact, that was the effect upon the rest of the team. Girls like Polly got a bit rattled, and that put them off their form."

"I know; I can quite understand. And I'm terribly sorry that it was my fault that the Form lost. Only it was not my fault, Betty, that I didn't get back in time."

"I warned you that you wouldn't be!"

"I know."

"But did you really hang about at the cottage where the Turners live until you found you were so late for getting back, you might just as well stay away for the rest of the afternoon? If so, Bunny—"

"But it wasn't so, Betty. Something happened—I am not going to say what—that absolutely prevented me. I was furious. It took me more than a solid hour to get away—"

"Do what? How do you mean—'get away'?"

"Oh, dash," grimaced Bunny, "I shouldn't have said that. The fact is, then, Betty, whilst I was visiting Kathy Turner at the cottage, her brother Alf turned up, and the police were after him—what for, I still don't know. He took my bike, to use it to get away from the police. I ran after him. So did Kathy. It ended in his shutting me up in one of those quarrymen's sheds, on the moor, and then going on again—on my bike."

Betty was looking more and more aghast as she listened.

"But, Bunny! That was simply awful—"

"Oh, I don't know! Only awful, in that it made me miss the match. Of course, you couldn't expect him or—Kathy—to think about that. He ordered her not to let me out for a long while; but she did have the decency to unfasten the shed-door after about an hour. Then I walked back to the school, and that's all."

The captain's brows, after being raised so high in amazement, became drawn down in a heavy frown. She took a turn about the study, then stood still again, looking at Bunny very gravely.

"I owe it to the Form, Bunny, to see that there is no upset for the team next match-day, due to

your going on like this: We've an away match next week, at Grangemoor, and I want you to be in the team. But I am not taking any chances—that wouldn't be fair to the rest. You want to play in the next match, I take it?"

"Of course! D'you suppose I don't regard it as an honour, Betty?"

"Very well, then. We must settle it now, Bunny, for if you're not to be relied upon I must have time to arrange accordingly. Either you promise me now, Bunny, to give up doing things for that Turner girl, or else—you can't play for the Form at Grangemoor next week. One thing or the other."

Bunny was already shaking her head.

"I'm not going to stop taking an interest in that girl. I can't, Betty. It wouldn't be right."

"Bunny—"

"It's no use, Betty. I've thought it all out."

The captain made an advancing step.

"Have you realised this, Bunny? What happened to you this afternoon only proves that it isn't right for you to be going on with the girl. I and others have admitted—you know we have!—that it does you credit to want to help a poor girl. But we warned you that this particular case is not the sort for you to deal with. You're biting off more than you can chew. The father's a poacher, the boy's a waster. You've just said the police were after him to-day—"

"Yes, and doesn't that make it all the more necessary for someone to help Kathy?"

Betty sighed loudly.

"Am I hard-hearted, Bunny? Are the rest of your chums—Polly and Pam, Madge and Paula? But you happen to have come upon a difficult case; one that needs someone much older than—"

"And she doesn't get anybody older," Bunny rather flashed. "That's where it is; she gets passed over—missed. I tell you I see everything quite plainly, Betty. It's up to me! Drop her now? Not likely! She's had enough of being dropped. 'Nobody ever likes me for long'—her own words. There's a lot about her that I don't like. I can't stand her at times! But don't you see, the worse she is, the more she needs to be helped."

"Yes, Bunny; but you simply can't—"

"Oh, can't I? That remains to be seen. But I do see that I can't expect to have it both ways, Betty. So, as you seem to think it will lead to my mucking up the next match—no place in the team for me, that's all."

"Bunny, that means you're giving up a great deal! Only think—"

"But I'd rather not—think," said Bunny, turning a sharp wince into a smile.

There came a sudden pounding of feet in the corridor. Then Naomer burst in—just up from the field, with Polly and Pam and the rest coming on behind.

"Bekas—before ze bell goes for Big Hall," panted Naomer, darting to the corner-cupboard to fetch out lemonade and glasses. "And you can have one, too, Bunny, bekas—I forgive you!"

It was evident enough to Bunny that all her chums, at any rate, were forgiving her. She sensed a general desire to "keep off Kathy." Even headstrong Polly, usually so outspoken, had nothing to say. Evidently, these girls had decided amongst themselves that Betty, as captain, could be trusted to deal with the affair.

Well, so Betty had dealt with it, and the result—no place in the team for her, Bunny! Unkind of Betty to have forced her to choose between the one thing and the other? Oh, not a bit!

SCHOOLGIRLS
WEEKLY

Every Wednesday - - - 2d.

Perfectly fair, in fact. As captain, Betty could not afford to run risks. The Form must come first with her.

Nor was Bunny going to feel that hers had become a "hang the Form" attitude, simply on account of her protégée. When the time came she would be available, right enough, if they wanted her for the team.

She would never think of missing next week's match as an onlooker, anyhow. And very likely Betty, finding her on the ground along with others who had come to see the match, would decide to play her. If not, well, it would show that they could do without her, after all.

"Hang the Form"? Nothing like that about Bunny. But, in the night, she remained awake, thinking a great deal about Kathy Turner, and somehow the urge to go on befriending that hapless girl was greater than ever.

Now it seemed just as well that the ugly business of Alf and the police had rather involved her—Bunny. An eye-opener as to the adverse conditions which were poor Kathy's.

A poaching father, and a brother fast going to the bad. "And no mother!" Bunny added to herself, distressfully. "Really, it's pretty awful. And here am I, with just about everything a girl could want. I'll never see that bike again, I suppose, and do I need to care?"

No. That was what it was to be Bunny Trevor, of Morcove School, instead of a Kathy Turner—tending to become one of life's throw-outs.

There would be money from "mumsie" in a day or two; the big sub that had been requested, and no questions asked. One would go into Barncombe and get a new "bike"; that was all.

But although in due course the large money-order did come to hand from doting "mumsie," Bunny was fated not to walk into Barncombe to choose a new machine.

In the very moment when she was setting off for the town, on foot, at the close of school on the following Tuesday afternoon, a new bicycle was due to be handed over to her!

Talk about the unexpected! Never in her life had Bunny come in for a bigger surprise.

She was trudging along the road to the town, having got only half a mile from the school gateway, when suddenly she beheld Kathy Turner, riding towards her on a brand-new bicycle.

Kathy—with a machine that was the latest model, its plated parts simply flashing in the summer sunshine!

But the climax to Bunny's astonishment was still to come. As she watched the poacher's daughter riding towards her, she was only amazed that a girl in such circumstances should have acquired such a fine new "bike."

Then Kathy hopped down from the saddle to make a first remark which left Bunny utterly flabbergasted.

"Here you are, miss, this can be your'n now."

"Wha-a-at!"

"It's fer you—yers, miss," said Kathy, with a queer smile. "I—I've just bought it for you, to make up fer the one Alf took and must have lost or chucked away."

Bunny gasped.

"You—you've bought me a new bike, Kathy?"

"Yers, miss; I fought it only right to, as Alf took your'n. This machine is as good as the other, I hope? An' so, will you just take hold, and then I kin git back home."

The Morcove girl looked Kathy up and down. Still as untidy-looking as ever; still a bit of string serving as a lace for one shabby shoe!

How could there have been any sudden affluence, enabling her to purchase the bicycle?

"What about Alf, Kathy?" Bunny questioned anxiously. "Did the police get him?"

"No, miss!" a little proudly. "I hain't seen him since. He's keeping away."

"I hope, Kathy, if only for your sake, he—he is all right."

"Oh, he'll be all right, miss. He don't mind a bit o' sleeping out and that like—not this weather."

"Then—about this bicycle. I can't possibly let you make me such a present, Kathy! How on earth did you find the money to pay for it?"

"Oh, I only had to find a few shillings deposit, miss," was the smiling answer which left Bunny again robbed of breath. "I got 'un, you see, on the hire system. In Barncombe—Mr. Mather's shop—you pays weekly."

Heavens! thought Bunny.

"So I'm going to pay—half a crown weekly, which I find I can do out o' th' egg-money, wangling it a bit."

Bunny's mind was working swiftly now. It leapt, in fact, to a decision. Take the "bike"; take it now, and ride into Barncombe with it—and pay for it, straight away!

"Kathy dear," Bunny said rather emotionally, "you meant well. Oh, it was fine of you, Kathy, to want to make up the loss of my other machine! But it was wrong, Kathy, to—"

"Wrong, miss? How?"

"Even if you hoped to be able to find the weekly instalments, don't you know that you mustn't part with anything obtained on the instalment system, until all the instalments are paid?"

"No, miss, I didn't know that!"

"Did you sign a paper?"

"Yes, miss, but I never read 'un. The print was so small. Mr. Mather, 'e was very nice. I reckon Mr. Mather were only too glad to sell me a machine."

Quite likely! In the belief, of course, that the machine could always be recovered, if the instalments fell seriously in arrear. But here was Kathy, fully intending to make a present of it! Suddenly Bunny's eyes sparkled.

"Well, Kathy, all I can say is—thank you ever so much! I'll take the bike—"

"And you're not really cross with me, then, miss? I mean," Kathy almost whimpered, "I fought you said just then I'd done yerr agin? Like you seem to find I'm allus a-doing!"

"I can make everything all right, Kathy—luckily. I can go straight to the cycle-shop now—"

"Ooo, I wouldn't do that, miss; not if I wasn't supposed to give it away. Then Mr. Mather might be cross!"

"He won't be, Kathy. Listen. You won't have to pay the instalments. I am going to buy this machine outright, straight away. And I'll get him to return you the deposit, by post."

"But, miss, at that rate, you'll still be—"

"Oh, I can't stop now, Kathy. Good-bye, I must see about it all at once!"

Bunny hoped the girl didn't think it rude to be closing the talk so abruptly, but it seemed the best course to follow. The more one said, the more one would upset Kathy by making her understand the enormity of what she had done.

"Poor soul!" Miss said to herself, riding the new machine as fast as possible towards the town. "And heaps of good in her, too!"

All the same, it seemed advisable not to mention the incident to Betty and others. They, whilst recognising the good intention, would be



Eight girls were quietly filing out of the dormitory. Eight—the same number that constituted the "Morcove Secret Society"!

horrified over the what-might-have-been. "Supposing you hadn't been able to pay for the machine yourself, Bunny?"

So Study 12 only knew, by-and-by, that she had acquired a brand-new machine, thanks to a doting mother who was indulgent enough to give her almost anything she asked. In all this, there was something for Bunny to laugh about to herself, although another night found her lying awake in bed, her mind a good deal exercised about Kathy as a "case."

It was not that Bunny was losing heart over the poor girl. But bed-time and darkness—they served somehow to engender a more anxious state of mind than was ever Bunny's by day. "Supposing, after all, I hadn't had the money to pay for the machine?"

And again:
"She did a thing like that; what will she do next, I wonder!"

CHAPTER 6.

At Dead of Night

SUDDENLY, after the school chimes had ding-dong'd half-past eleven, Bunny came in for a sensation.

It began with a faint stir in the dormitory, due to a strange, simultaneous restlessness of several girls.

Next moment, from several beds the coverings were thrown back to let various occupants rise up.

The summer night was bright enough for Bunny, who kept quite still, to see how these other girls first exchanged grins with one another. Then, stealthily, each got out of her bed and sought dressing-gown and slippers.

Bunny counted eight of them. Eight—the same number that had constituted the "Morcove Secret Society!" And these—yes, these must be the very girls! At any rate, Fay and Edna Denver were distinguishable during the swift and silent preparations for midnight activities.

But this, Bunny said to herself, was just lovely!

Apparently, in spite of certain "biter bit" results of its first act of "justice dealings," the secret society had not dissolved.

Quite obviously to-night had been chosen for a solemn meeting—cows! to be worn, of course!

"And they've not the faintest idea that I'm awake!" mused Bunny.

Another minute, and all eight girls had stealthily filed out of the dormitory.

Bunny gave them a few moments' start, then got out of bed and put on her dressing-gown and slippers.

Strong was the temptation to wake up Betty and others at once, letting them into the fun; but she decided to leave them still fast asleep. If she roused her chums, there must be a lot of whispering, and that might result in a number of other girls waking up.

So, all by herself, Bunny padded away from the dormitory. At the staircase-landing she stood perfectly still, straining her ears to pick up hoped-for sounds which would tell her which way to proceed. She was not taking it for granted that the eight had gone downstairs. There were always the attics!

In the semi-darkness she cast her eyes upwards to the attic-landing, thinking: "I shouldn't wonder! As a secret society which had resorted the other day to a cave, and candles and cows, the justice dealers might well be feeling that a cobwebby attic was just the place for to-night's solemnities."

Then suddenly Bunny heard very significant sounds from a floor below—a faint flurry such as some nervous flitting about might create, and then at least one whispering voice—a girl's.

That decided Bunny. She very stealthily went down two flights of stairs to the landing serving the study corridors. All was now dead silence;

but those sounds of a few moments ago had convinced her that the eight had turned into the Form's passage on this lower floor.

Inch by inch she advanced until she could peer round the edge of the wall, and thus see right down the corridor.

No one!

Did this mean that the secret society had passed into one of the studies? A midnight conclave in the Denver Sisters' study, perhaps? Or was the society even now carrying out some act of "justice"—say, by ragging Study 12?

Bunny decided to creep down the passage, listening as she went by one closed door after another. The Denvers' study was midway along the corridor. She heard no whispering, no sound, however faint, whilst proceeding as far as that study, and she heard not a sound when she was there.

Then—almost as she had begun to expect by now—there came a sound from the far end. Study 12!

She went non-stop to the end of the passage, convinced that mischief was being done in the famous study. Her intention was to listen for only a few moments outside the closed door, then flit away—back to the dormitory, to rouse Betty and Polly and others, after all.

Outside the closed door, however, she listened for several moments without hearing the faintest sound: Were the eight really in there? She could never have believed that so many girls could keep as silent as this.

Of a sudden—oh, an extraordinary sound, a horrible sound for her to be hearing, considering the comedy it had all been up till now. A kind of sniffing sob, such as a girl might give, trying to stop crying!

What did it mean? Bunny twisted the knob and sent the door round, peering in.

Will Bunny Trevor Lose All Her Chums at Morcove School?



Her Fateful Friendship

BY MARJORIE STANTON

which appears in next Tuesday's issue of *Schoolgirls' Own*, tells how Bunny faces the biggest crisis of her career at Morcove.

DON'T MISS IT!

She heard a dismayed gasp, saw only one girl in the study, and knew her instantly.

Kathy!

THERE, in the semi-darkness of the summer's night, in this study, was Kathy Turner, the poacher's daughter.

The girl from the cottage—with no right of any sort to be here in the school; yet here she was, shrinking back in a guilt-stricken manner now that she had been taken by surprise like this.

A moment of dramatic silence; then Bunny gave her dismayed gasp.

"Kathy! Oh—my goodness, what—how—why—"

Then, realising the need for silence, the horrified schoolgirl broke off. She closed the door and moved towards the cottage girl, intending to stand much nearer for the purpose of whispering.

After the first step, however, Bunny stood arrested by the sight of an open drawer of the table. She knew it to be a drawer in which Polly kept, amongst other belongings, a money-box.

That cashbox—was it there? Bunny felt impelled to look and see—not ask Kathy.

This caused her, Bunny, to go to that side of the table—and instantly the cottage girl darted to the door, whipped it open, and was in full flight up the corridor.

Not for a few moments did Bunny move to go in pursuit. Quick-wittedly she was realising that if she overtook the unhappy girl anywhere on this floor, there might easily be a disturbance, rousing the whole school.

Kathy had been once to the school before; but she did not know her way about the place well enough to be able to rush this way and that, in the darkness, without making a noise. To know that she was being hotly pursued might cause her to go headlong down a whole flight of stairs!

But, after waiting those few moments, Bunny hurried away from the study, glimpsing the fugitive as she ran clear of the passage at its upper end.

On tip-toe Bunny nipped along the corridor, and went racing downstairs, clawing hold of her dressing-gown to save her feet from catching in it.

At the ground floor, she picked up a sound from the far end of a side passage. There was, Bunny knew, an outer door there. She rushed to it, and found it closed, but unlocked.

She opened the door and peered out into the starlit garden.

Kathy was a receding figure, fluttering away as fast as her feet could take her.

WITH a shaking hand Bunny closed that outer door in the passage, then turned the key and silently shot the bolts.

"But how awful!" she was quavering to herself. "How simply terrible all this— and Polly's money-box—is it still there, or not?"

Silently she returned up the dark staircase, to the Form quarters, and padded again to Study 12.

If there was one thing to offer relief, in such a crisis as this, it was the absence of any sound which might have warned her that the secret society had come downstairs.

In her slipped feet, once more she crossed the threshold of Study 12 and came to the pulled-out drawer.

And the money-box was GONE!

[END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]