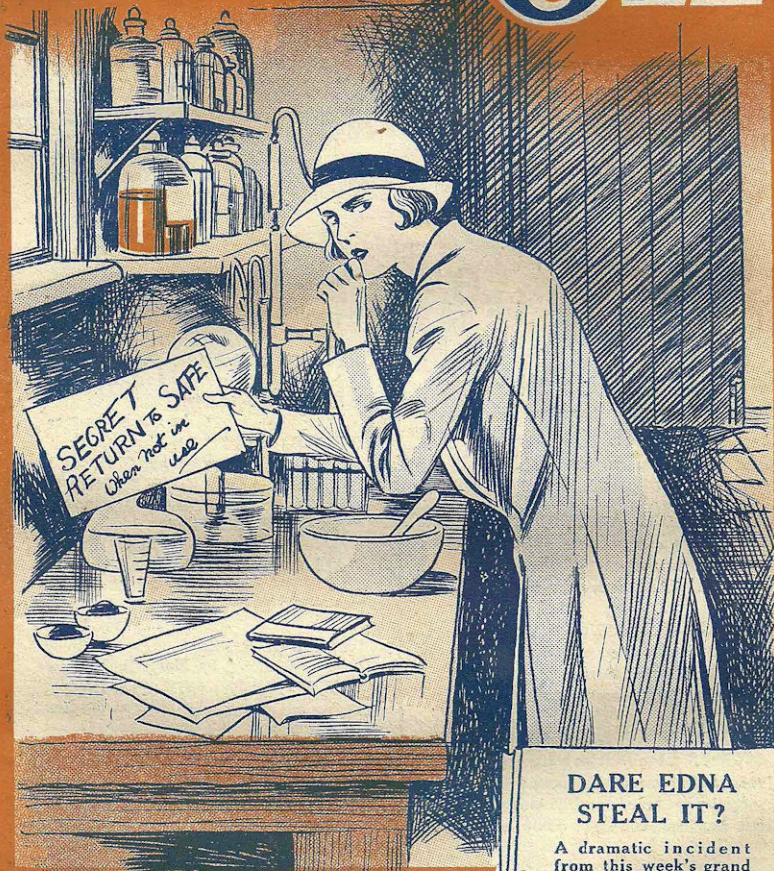


"Her Bid to Save the Ballet" COMPLETE IN
THIS ISSUE

The SCHOOLGIRLS' 2^d OWN



DARE EDNA STEAL IT?

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

No. 768, Vol. 30.
Week ending
October 12th, 1935.
EVERY TUESDAY.

Complete Story of "HER HARUM-SCARUM HIGHNESS" Inside

In an Alarming Mishap to Another, Edna Denver Sees her Great Chance to Satisfy her Burning Curiosity Regarding the Occupants of Cliff Edge Bungalow



The DARING OF EDNA DENVER



A
Gripping
Long
Story
of
Betty
Barton
and Co.

By MARJORIE STANTON

They Must Get into the Bungalow!

LOOK here, Edna; I think it is high time we found out more about those people who have come to live at the bungalow!"

"Just what I was going to say, Fay!"

"How about after tea, then?"

"And stay out, you mean—until it's dark? But can we, Fay?"

In this study at Morcove School two piles of books and primers had just been thumped upon the table.

They were the lesson-books which Fay and Edna Denver had brought away from the classroom when school ended for the day.

The sisters were behind a closed door now—alone together. Fay and Edna were the most unpopular girls in the Fourth Form at Morcove School.

Not for them any part in the friendly mixing which went on in the Form quarters at this, the most sociable hour of tea-time. Other studies might be "throwing" little parties. Other girls were, at least, disposed to use the long corridor as a gossiping-place, whilst doing much scampering to and fro. But Fay and Edna—

No! They were "above" such simple pleasures which so many of their schoolmates found extremely satisfying. They chose to believe that they could have a big following in the Form, if it suited their pleasure.

They had never really set out to test their fancied personal magnetism, being a pair who much preferred to find interests beyond the school's bounds. They might have been surprised if they had, or, on the other hand, if they had

set themselves out to please other girls, they would have been so different they might have been liked.

But Fay and Edna liked to feel grown-up and grand; and it ministered to this taste of theirs to be always "on their own." A touch of exclusiveness, don't you know!

For the same reason, they were often away from Morcove at forbidden hours—questing stolen pleasures which were only pleasures because they were stolen, and which even Fay and Edna themselves would have turned their noses up at, if they had been allowed.

"The trouble will be, Fay—getting in after hours, unseen," Edna grimaced. "We have lost that secret means we had—thanks to Betty Barton finding it out the other evening."

"I suppose she did find out, Edna? She has never said anything, though!"

"Oh, of course she found out," was the younger sister's scowled answer. "If she has kept her mouth shut, that's not to say she will not say something when she thinks she will. She rumbled the whole thing the other evening, down there in the school museum. So I am very much afraid that slipping in, after dark, through the old, disused dynamo-shed into the museum, is off!"

"Bother Betty!" Fay muttered fiercely. "It was such a splendid dodge of ours. We worked it last term, without once coming in for a scare."

"Look here, though—Oh, it has just occurred to me!" Edna exclaimed in a guarded voice. "It will be all right for us to get in late—if there is anything to make it worth while. For,

Fay dear, don't you see? If we know Betty is lying in wait, waiting for us to come in at one place—"

"We can easily slip in some other way? Is that the idea?" Fay whispered exultantly. "Just one of the old ordinary ways—"

"That's it! And safe, for the simple reason that, if we are watched for at all, we shall be watched for—in the museum! Oh, but that's going to be a real scream, Fay," the younger sister chuckled and gave a delighted clap of the hands. "Do let's do it, then!"

Fay's brows were drawing together in a serious frown as she murmured:

"I think we should, Edna. We've had that letter from dad, and we know now that it is as we guessed. The Vanderloos are the same ones who are dad's rivals over the business into which he has just put ever such a lot of money. He said he would like to come down to Morcove, but he is afraid they would suspect him of wanting to nose into what they are doing, over there at Cliff-Edge Bungalow—"

"And what are they doing—I wonder!" came Edna's quick rejoinder. "Experimenting? There's that young man who looks so like a research worker—and he has turned the garage into a laboratory. Then, too, there was that strange happening the other evening along the cliffs!"

"An explosion—as I wrote and told dad it must have been, although it's believed in the town, and here at Morcove, that it was simply a fall of rock. But it was an explosion," Fay reiterated in a deep whisper; "a most peculiar one—for eye witnesses declare there was no flash and no smoke!"

"Dad must feel a bit jumpy," Edna muttered with a hard-thing look. "It looks as if the Vanderloos had something to do with that fall of cliff. I mean, it must have been caused by a new kind of high explosive—flashless as well as smokeless! And that's the very sort of invention dad is hoping to make such a hit with. Supposing the Vanderloos' invention goes one better than dad's!"

Fay nodded. Both girls could understand that it would mean an end of their days at a school like Morcove, for their father would be ruined if the new "process" which he was backing, with almost all his money, proved inferior to a rival invention relating to the same article—high explosive.

"He hasn't asked us to do any finding out for him, if we can," Fay pondered aloud. "But I do think we should, Edna. It is keeping me awake o' nights: this feeling that our future, here or anywhere, is uncertain. Supposing the business into which dad has put so much money does get smashed up?"

"Awful," Edna responded gloomily. "Fancy our having to leave Morcove, to go to some cheaper school—or we might have to turn out to earn our livings."

"As typists." And Fay's mouth went down at either corner. "Just imagine having to become a typist, or work in a shop—ugh! Anyhow, Edna, it will be something if we can only find out for ourselves what's going on at Cliff-Edge Bungalow— Oh, come in!" she broke off snappishly as someone politely tapped at the door before entering.

It was Etta Hargrove. Etta was, at the present time, captain of the Fourth Form at Morcove School. Of course, Betty Barton was the usual captain, but the captaincy had been taken away from Betty by Miss Somerfield,

because Betty was believed by the headmistress, and some of the Morcove girls, to have broken bounds just recently.

"I have called in, Fay and Edna, to ask you, as is usual at the beginning of the term," Etta began quite cordially, "if you would show yourselves on the games field as frequently as possible."

Etta expected a rebuff, but she had felt it her duty to look in on the unpleasant sisters, as she was giving this message to everyone else in the Form.

Both sisters put on an air of aloofness.

"We never have cared for games, and we are not going to start now," Fay said insolently.

"Don't worry," Etta smiled. "I am not thinking of trying to compel you to play!"

"Glad to hear it!"

"But I've called on every other girl in the Form to ask whether they would turn up for a bit of practice—"

"Hockey? We loathe hockey," Fay shuddered.

"So long as you understand," Etta went on, "that, when you do care to come down to the field, you'll be welcome there."

"Thanks so much! Awfully decent of you!" scoffed Fay.

After the door had closed between Etta Hargrove and the sisters, the latter exchanged winks and grins.

From their study-cupboards they obtained a few biscuits and "made do" with these and a half-cupful of milk each. Then they went downstairs, put on hats and coats, and so across to the cycle-sheds.

Ten minutes later the sisters were cycling by that solitary and picturesque bungalow which graced a strip of grassland between the road and the very edge of a beetling cliff.

Furtively the two girls paid attention to the low-built residence as they peddled past its gateway. There it stood, offering itself as a charming holiday haunt for anybody needing quiet surroundings and invigorating sea breezes.

To such seekers of rest and recuperation the bungalow was usually let, furnished. But Fay and Edna could never believe that the present tenants of Cliff-Edge had taken the place for purposes as simple as that.

At this very moment the two girls could see how the Vanderloos' car was being kept in a very makeshift shelter, so that the garage itself might be put to some special use.

The garage doors were closed; but Fay and Edna had just a glimpse, as they side-glanced the whole place, of someone in white overalls, working at a bench behind the window.

"Here, Fay—an idea!" the younger sister broke out, after they had ridden a good way past the bungalow. "How would it be for us to stage a sort of smash to one of our bikes—calling afterwards at Cliff-Edge to ask if we may leave the machine there?"

Fay treated her wily sister to a brilliant smile.

"Splendid! I didn't see any sign of Mrs. Vanderloo—did you?"

"Nor of that young woman they call Elsa," was Edna's response. "But if neither of them is there, that may be all the better for your purpose. Gives us an excuse for getting a word with that young chemist-fellow, or whatever he is."

The talk lapsed. Both girls had now become eager to reach a certain dip in the road, only a quarter of a mile farther on, where the "spill" could best be staged.

The important thing was that they should have the road all to themselves, so that they might not

be observed doing deliberate damage to one of the machines.

So, as they sped along, first one and then the other would send a glance behind, because the great likelihood was that of other girls from Morocco coming along on runs into town.

A favourable loneliness prevailed, however, and Fay and Edna were able to alight at the foot of the slight hill, knowing that the road in both directions was totally empty.

"Make it my machine, Fay," her sister grinned; and with the words Edna let the bicycle fall crash to the roadway.

Then, between them, they easily managed to break a mudguard and twist the handlebars. Edna stamped on some of the spokes of the front wheel, so that the bicycle looked as if an accident had rendered it really unrideable.

Not content with this, Edna knelt to rub a stockinged knee in the road until a tiny hole came.

"How's that?" she proudly inquired of her sister, who chuckled. "Do I look as if—"

"You just about do!" Fay tittered. "So now—let's turn back and see what comes of it!"

Edna Turns Thief

EDNA limping slightly, and the pair of them wearing suitable looks of ruefulness, the Denver sisters presently appeared on the private drive leading to the bungalow's porch.

Fay was wheeling the damaged machine, so that Edna, as the "victim" of the supposed accident, had only a bicycle in proper order to bring with her.

Nobody came out of the bungalow to evince sympathetic concern at sight of two schoolgirls in such an obvious state of distress.

There were sounds from the garage telling of somebody's presence in that outbuilding; but the bungalow itself remained silent, even after the crafty pair had reached the porch.

Fay dabbed a finger against the bell-press, causing an announcing ring-ring! But the front door was not opened to them.

"Nobody indoors!" the elder sister commented.

"But, Fay dear," said Edna plaintively—on account of her "hurt" knee—"I think there is somebody round at the garage. I wonder if we might just—"

"We must, and that's all there is to it! Get permission to leave this smashed bike, anyhow," Fay said loudly, to keep up the make-believe. "You wait here, Edna, whilst I—Hallo, though here's a young lady!"

It was the one they knew only as "Elsa," coming across the garden from a gateway giving access to the open grassland of the cliff-top.

She was a very fair, young woman, tall and good-looking, and, as the sisters had seen on

previous occasions, well dressed and most graceful in her movements. But at present she looked charmingly "slummocky" in knock-about things suitable for boating on the open sea. An old "mac," gumboots, and a sou'-wester—these gave her a very rough-and-ready appearance.

"Oh!" she smilingly exclaimed at sight of Fay and Edna in their staged plight; and she hastened towards them. "An accident! But what bad luck!"

"We do hope you will excuse our troubling you like this," Fay gushed, whilst Edna continued to look very sorry for herself. "But we felt we must turn in here!"

"Of course!"

"It was at the bottom of that little hill over there, towards the town, where the accident happened," Fay said glibly. "Edna did the run down much too fast—I was warning her! Just look at her machine!"

"Did you hurt yourself badly?" Edna was asked by the fair young woman. "But let me get you both indoors."

"Oh, it's nothing," Edna disclaimed truthfully enough. "But I—I would be glad of a sit-down for a minute. What a shame, though, to—"

"Do not mention it."

With every sign of ready sympathy, Elsa was fumbling out a key from a pocket to fit into the lock of the porch-door. She got the door open and, having smiled invitingly, preceded Fay and Edna into the dwelling.

She conducted them to a small sitting-room, where a fire burned.

"Please sit down, then," she entreated, giving immediate attention to the fire. "And, if there



Between them, the Denvers soon managed to make the cycle look as if it had been involved in a nasty spill. Now they had a good excuse for calling at the bungalow and finding out what was happening there.

is any cut or graze needing attention, we have a first-aid box—"

"Oh, thanks—no!" Edna cried. "It's only that I feel—well, a bit shaken up. I only just bumped my knee a little. It's not bleeding."

"I see. Have you had tea? If not, you shall have some with me. I have only just got back in the motor-boat, after being out some hours. Fishing," Elsa added carelessly. "But I did not catch anything—no! I think you understand, we keep no servants here. So I shall have to—"

"But do let me," Fay said, rising from her chair, "be of use! It isn't fair to put you about—"

"Oh, it won't take me a minute to do everything." As she said it, Elsa was jamming a kettle upon the mended fire. "We have many meals, you know, at the hotel close by."

"Oh, do you?" Fay purred. "We know that Mrs. Vanderloo stays at the hotel, and that only you and your—the young man—"

"My brother Osbert—!"

"Oh, he is your brother! We wondered! Er— is his name Vanderloo?"

"Yes, we are all Vanderloos. Mrs. Vanderloo is an aunt of ours."

"She is so nice!" Fay gushed on. "Edna and I thought it so sweet of her, the other afternoon, to take us in to tea at the Headland Hotel! And afterwards she brought us here to Cliff Edge, to show us what a nice little place it is really!"

Elsa Vanderloo nodded.

"I was not here then to have the pleasure of meeting you," she remarked. "But now, if you will just talk to each other whilst I go to the kitchen, I will not be more than a—"

The final word of the sentence died at her lips, which remained parted in a startled way. Her pale-blue eyes, in their expression of the alarm which had seized her, were suddenly dilating.

Nor were Fay and Edna puzzled to know the cause of such sudden fright.

They, like Elsa Vanderloo, had heard a sudden, peculiar, almost eerie noise from somewhere outside the bungalow—from the garage, as they fancied.

It was largely a faint commotion such as a scuffle might cause, but along with the bumping and banging sounds there had been a gasping sort of outcry.

The sisters stood up, infected with the agitation which was causing Elsa Vanderloo to give a lift and fall of clenched hands.

"It is Osbert!" she panted. "He is— Oh, I know what it means! I must go to him. Wait—wait here, you two girls."

"But—", jerked the sisters as they saw her darting away with frantic haste.

She was gone instantly, with such an air of knowing that her brother was in desperate need of help that Fay and Edna could not think of staying there in the sitting-room.

"My goodness—what's happened, then!" Fay gasped. "That garage—"

"It's his lab, yes!" Edna whispered excitedly. "Quick—we may be able to find something out!"

Elsa Vanderloo, as it was the quickest way out to the garage, had run through to the kitchen, leaving the bungalow by the outer door of the scullery. In a brace of seconds, both girls were reaching the open air by this means. Edna was not limping now!

This dramatic upset had caused her to forget all about the pretended hurt to her knee—as, indeed, it might easily have caused her to forget a genuine injury.

She and Fay—they saw Elsa Vanderloo already

kneeling beside the huddled and lifeless-looking form of her brother.

He was lying in the garage doorway, and there was every indication of his having just managed to get the doors open before he collapsed. There had been no scuffle with anybody else; all the commotion had been due to his struggling to get outside whilst in a half-overcome state.

Elsa Vanderloo raised a white face to the two schoolgirls as they put themselves close to her and her brother; but she was able to speak calmly.

"It was some fumes," she said hastily. "He might have been killed. I must get him away from this shed."

"Let us help you to get him indoors," Fay panted. "Is there any gas or anything still escaping? Any tap still turned on in there?"

"If you will be so good as to help me carry him more into the open," Elsa said, preparing to take her brother by the arms. "Thank you."

Fay was stooping to lift his legs clear of the ground by a hold upon his ankles. There was nothing that Edna could do, so she watched during the first moment or two of their bearing him away.

"I think," Elsa said then to Fay, "if we could get him round to the veranda. There is a breeze straight from the sea, also an easy-chair that will take him."

"Right—ho, then; I'm all right, if you are," Fay breathlessly responded.

Directly after this, Edna was alone in front of the garage doorway. She set off to follow round to the bungalow veranda, and then suddenly she took returning steps.

That secret eagerness to find out things about the Vanderloos—an eagerness which had prompted her and Fay to carry out their artful ruse—it was impelling her to get a peep inside the garage whilst there was this chance.

She was not forgetting that "fumes" had been mentioned as the cause of Osbert Vanderloo's collapse; but Edna reckoned that any escaping fumes had now cleared off.

The large garage doors, having stood wide open in the last minute or so, must have made conditions quite safe in this breezy spot.

So, after a glance behind to make sure that Elsa Vanderloo was not returning, the unscrupulous schoolgirl went into the garage. She hoped that a hasty look round might enable her to notice things which she planned to describe to her father when next she saw him.

She saw that the roomy garage had been equipped with two or three trestle-tables, on each of which were some of the paraphernalia usually associated with a laboratory.

Strange appliances stood about, amongst bottles and jars of chemicals. There were test-tubes and retorts and crucibles and a mixing-mortar. In one corner were several glass carboys, bearing warning red labels.

Edna's attention flew at once to a bench in front of the windows, where evidently the young man had been at work when something must have gone wrong.

Some notebooks were there, and one or two papers, the latter under a paper-weight. Wondering instantly if a glance at them would tell her anything, she shot a wary glance sideways to the open doorway, then darted to get a close look at the documents.

She was no sooner within reading distance than her gaze fastened upon a docketed foolscap envelope. There were folded papers inside, she

could tell, and eagerly she picked it up and read the endorsement on the envelope:

"SECRET—RETURN TO SAFE WHEN NOT IN USE."

What were the papers, then—oh, what were they? Bearing vitally upon whatever the work in hand, perhaps!

Daringly she took out the folded papers. There were only two or three sheets, closely written in a man's hand.

Her excited eyes read a bold line that headed one sheet:

"FORMULA FOR NFE."

She gasped aloud.

A formula! That meant, as she was realising, that these papers gave the secret ingredients and instructions for making "NFE"—whatever those letters might stand for.

Some high-explosive, was that it? NFE—

When the Papers were Missed

BUT now—how to do a "get away?" She had the stolen formula upon her; how best to get away with it, before the theft was discovered?

To her shame, Edna remained as calm in the moment of crime as if she were innocent of any wrong-doing.

As quickly as possible she walked round to that seaward side of the bungalow where the veranda was.

Fay and Elsa Vanderloo had placed Osbert in a wicker-chair which had a footrest extension. It couched him comfortably, and he was receiving the revivifying breeze upon his livid face; but he had not yet come round.

"Is—is it serious?" Edna asked with affected anxiety. "Can I do anything?"

"Oh, no, thank you," Elsa responded. "I am going to get something from indoors that will pull him round. There is nothing for you girls to do. And besides"—to Edna in particular—"you yourself have had that bad shaking up."



Edna Denver watched while her sister and Elsa Vanderloo bore the unconscious man to the bungalow. The moment the coast was clear Edna meant to ferret out the secret of the "workshop" where the accident had occurred.

initials for a temporary name, perhaps. NFE—"Non-flash explosive"?

That was only a guess of hers; yet—it might be the very words for which the letters stood. The explosion of the other night, along the cliffs, had been attended by no flash.

Suddenly her mind was made up.

Edna returned the papers to their envelope, folded the latter so that it would go into a pocket, and then she hastily stowed it away like that.

A moment, and the daring deed was done.

She, Edna Denver, only a schoolgirl though she was, had turned thief!

In broad daylight, and with the brother and sister not fifty yards away, although certainly the brother was temporarily out of action—she, Edna, had stolen their precious formula!

"I feel quite all right now," the impostor said. "But, Fay, as Miss Vanderloo says, we can't be of any use, I think we'd better get along to the school, so as not to be in the way here."

The young woman was even then letting herself into the bungalow by way of the french windows. As she was not looking towards the sisters, Edna accompanied the words with an urgent "Come away!" with her eyes to Fay. The latter saw the sign, though, of course, she did not know yet why Edna was urging a hasty departure.

"Miss Vanderloo—we are off! Edna called in through the open french windows. "Good-bye, and we do hope your brother will soon be all right again!"

If there was any response to this, neither of the sisters heard it. Edna, with an urging nudge to

Fay, walked away. Together they went round to the porch, recovered their bicycles, and then went on foot down the drive to the roadway.

"Dash," Edna fumed, half-way to the road, "how I wish this bike of mine were all right for riding. We ought to hurry away, Fay—quick as we can."

"Why?" asked her sister.

"I laid hands on some papers in that garage," the younger girl answered excitedly. "They may be tremendously important papers, Fay. I've got—a formula!"

"A what!"

"Sssh! The recipe-sort-of-thing for making whatever it is they're making! But come on," Edna panted. "I've got the papers, and we must stick to them."

"My goodness!" Fay gasped, as full understanding came. "Oh, Edna, what HAVE you done?"

"I tell you, I have—"

"Yes, but—it's terrible! The papers are bound to be missed—"

"Of course; that's why I say—hurry! Lucky for us," Edna whispered on, "Elsa Vanderloo is thinking only about her brother at present."

"But he may come round at any moment, and then— But I suppose we can deny the whole thing, if—if we are accused?" Fay now realised.

"Of course we can! Listen, Fay; we must find a safe hiding-place for the papers as quickly as possible. Mustn't dream of taking them into the school, and we haven't time to go to the post office now and register them. We must put them in some safe hiding-place, on our way back now, and then—never mind what the Vanderloos say. If they come to Morocco and ask for them, we'll simply deny any knowledge of them. Let them make as big a row as they like about it all; we'll face it out—"

"You mean, get the papers away to dad some time?"

"That's it! The papers are probably Greek to us; but he will know what to make of them." And suddenly Edna gave an exultant little laugh.

"The formula!" she chuckled triumphantly. "The Vanderloos' secret formula—of an invention that rivals and would have ruined dad; we can be sure of that being the case, Fay, from what he said in his letter. And we've got hold of that very formula; so that now—now—"

"Yes, but better be quick," panted Fay, sending a nervous glance behind. "Oh, Edna, if we should suddenly see Elsa Vanderloo—coming after us!"

BUT Elsa, at that moment, was with her brother on the bungalow veranda, which faced the open sea. She had brought out something in a cup which she was holding to his bluish, parted lips.

Steadily she administered the restorative, until the last drop had gone down his throat. Then the anxiety in her eyes diminished as he at last showed signs of recovery.

He breathed stertorously for a few moments longer, then his chest went up and down more

steadily. Life came back into his limbs; his eyes flickered open and looked into Elsa's.

"Osbert!"

He nodded feebly in an understanding and grateful manner, and murmured the equivalent of a "Thanks, Elsa!" in their native tongue. When conversation started, they spoke in their own language.

"First time I have let myself in for anything like this," he rasped, smiling ruefully. "I must have turned on a tap of the XL can—perhaps knocked it on without noticing. But I knew, when I felt myself coming over so queer, that it was from that tap. Managed to turn it off—"

"Before you reeled outside the shed, Osbert?"

He gave a lolling nod again.

"That's it. Didn't want that tap to stay on, in case—well, if I hadn't got the doors open, and you had broken into the garage, you would have got a dose yourself. But now I'm feeling much better," he added with a strengthening voice.

"You must not stir for a little while, Osbert. I will go round and lock up the garage; you cannot do any more experimenting to-day. That XL is so deadly."

"And yet not so deadly as the other stuff that it helps to make—eh?" he grinned. "I say, I had the papers out of the safe. You must bring them away—"

"I will return them to the safe indoors, Osbert. Stay here; I will do everything."

She hastened, leaving him listless in the wicker-chair. With the wide sea spread before him, beyond the green edge of the cliff, and with the ocean breeze fanning his pale face, his condition continued to improve. His upset nerves steadied rapidly.

Suddenly an alarmed outcry from the garage made him shake off the last of his listlessness. His sister had called out; why was that?

He rose unsteadily from his chair, meaning to go to her, when she came rushing back to him, her fair face wild-looking.

"Osbert! The papers—they are not there!" she accounted for her agitated state. "The formula has gone!"

"The formula?" he jerked. He reeled where he stood with a hand upon the chair-back, for he still felt weak. "Gone?"

"Yes, yes! Oh, but why do I tell you this," she moaned distractedly, "when you are so ill—"

"No, I am all right," he panted, pulling himself together with an effort. "Do you mean they have been stolen?"

"They must have been, Osbert! The garage doors were left open, you know, whilst I was attending to you—"

"Yes, yes! But—who could have stolen them?"

Elsa started.

"I can guess!" she cried with sudden, intense ferocity. "Two schoolgirls!"

"The Denvers?"

"Yes, Osbert; they were here just now when the upset occurred to you. One of them helped me to get you to this veranda. But the other—the younger girl—I remember now; she stayed behind at the garage!"

He let out an angry cry. Like his sister he looked crushed, as well as furious, at the knowledge of the loss.

"Took the papers, did she?" he gritted. "So as to let her father have them! They have gone now, I suppose, Elsa, with their loot—"

Elsa ran to the garden gate and looked up and down the lane. She returned. "Yes, they are

not in sight," she told Osbert. "Oh, but this is terrible for us—"

"Terrible?" he echoed. "That isn't the word for it! If their father gets hold of those papers—"

He broke off and had to sit down in a collapsing way.

"The worst of it is," he gasped, "this has come—at a moment when—"

"Yes, my poor Osbert, when you are not fit!" she exclaimed distressfully. "But, now, listen to me. I will let auntie know at the hotel. I will get her to come here and be with you. I shall not come back, but go to see if I can get hold of those girls—"

"No, let us think first before we act!" he groaned. "Those Denver sisters were artful enough to take the papers; they'll be artful enough to scheme to keep them! Like their father—"

"But—"

"What will be the first thing they will do with the papers?" he asked himself aloud, sweeping a hand across his forehead. "Take them to the school, intending to get them off by post to their father?"

"Surely, that is exactly what they will do!"

"They might not do that," the brother argued, frowning hard. "They might, instead, be afraid, during the next few hours, of being taxed with the theft. Is it likely, after all, that they will simply post a letter to their father, containing the papers, at the school?"

Elsa Vanderloo moved to and fro, beating her hands together in a hard-driven way.

"What, then, would they do?" she asked. "What can we do, Osbert?"

For a few moments he was without an answer to his sister's question. He sat very still, thinking, his eyes glittering. But, at length, he smiled.

"I know! I've just thought of what we must do, Elsa. Sit down," he counselled, "and I will tell you."

Betty is Trapped

AFTER dark that evening, Fay Denver suddenly rested her pen and raised her head in a listening attitude. She and her sister were alone at their work in their study.

"Is that rain, Edna?"

"Yes. Coming down in torrents, Fay—what of it?"

"I'm thinking about those papers we hid on the moor," the elder sister spoke across the table guardedly. "We only put them under a stone."

"Safe enough," was Edna's opinion. "They'll only be there a few days at most."

"But how about bad weather—we didn't consider that!" Fay muttered. "Supposing heavy rain wets the papers bad enough to make all the writing unreadable?"

"Goodness! No, we didn't think of that!" the younger sister dismayedly exclaimed. "That's serious, Fay!"

Back went both chairs from the table to let the two girls rise. There was a moan in the wind blowing about the exposed schoolhouse this autumn evening, and the patter of rain could be heard unmistakably against the window-pane now.

Uneasy on account of the stolen papers, the sisters stepped quickly to the window. The blind was lowered. They each peered round an edge of it and saw that the rain was not so bad as it had sounded.

The moon was shining; but the night sky was

fast becoming overcast. Lumpy clouds were billowing in from the wild Atlantic.

"May be a regular soaker in the night!" Fay turned to say to her sister, looking worried. "So what about the formula, Edna?"

"Oh, dash," the younger girl scowled, "we don't want to risk a soaking by going out on the moor to fetch those papers. Besides, supposing Elsa or her brother comes to the school to lodge a complaint against us!"

Fay nodded.

"It would look bad if both, or even one of us could not be found when wanted," she pondered aloud. "Only what will be the use of those papers if they get sopped to nothing! Why didn't we foresee rain—"

"Well, we didn't," Edna snapped. "We were in a hurry to hide the papers, and we couldn't think of everything!"

"I wish they were on their way to dad by this evening's post!"

"It was too dangerous to risk, Edna," was Fay's retort, "Supposing the Vanderloos, suspecting us, turned up and kicked up a row before the school post-box was emptied? It is so serious for them, they are entitled to ask Miss Somerfield to have the school post-box examined—a letter from either of us to father opened!"

"Even if we'd had time to get the papers away to him by posting in Barncombe—"

"Miss Somerfield might have been asked to ring up the post office!" shrewder Edna took her up. "She may yet be asked to do that—if the Vanderloos turn up to see her about it all."

Then Fay looked at her wrist-watch.

"But the Vanderloos haven't come yet, Edna," was her relieved comment. "I wonder at that! If they have suspected us, I would have expected them to be across before this."

"Yep. Could they, by any chance, not have suspected us?" Edna now considered eagerly. "I mean, supposing they were aware of people—nothing to do with dad—who wanted to get hold of the formula? In that case, it's just possible that they might think somebody else stole the papers."

"Wish I could think so," grimaced Fay. "But, considering we are Denvers, and they must know that there is a Mr. Denver in the same line of business, it almost points to us, doesn't it?"

"Then why haven't they turned up by now to lodge a complaint?"

"I don't know!" worried Fay answered drearily. "There is another thing; Mrs. Vanderloo's niceness to us the other day. I'm beginning not to like the look of that now! We thought we were hoodwinking her—now I am wondering if it wasn't she who was hoodwinking us!"

"Oh, well, and even if she was—anyhow, we've come off best! We've done wonders!" Edna proudly claimed. "But there is this wretched question about bad weather and the papers. Look here, Fay; tell you what! Give it an hour from now; and then, if the Vanderloos haven't done anything, we'll reckon they are not going to make trouble to-night, anyhow."

"Slip out then—is that what you mean? But how about Betty Barton? We may be sure she is wanting to catch us in the act. She has guessed that we were to blame for her losing the captaincy."

Edna shrugged contemptuously.

"Betty be blowed! She can do her best—or her worst; she'll have her work cut out to right herself at our expense, after all this time. Anyhow, those papers must be got into some better hiding-place. We needn't both go—"

"Then, I'll be the one to do that," Fay suggested quickly.

"Thanks!" Edna smiled. She realised that the far more difficult part of a confederate, working inside the schoolhouse, was to be hers. "But, there, I don't mind!"

The hour passed, and there had been still no development such as they had dreaded. So Fay went off on another of those flittings out of bounds which she and her sister had so often indulged in, merely for the sake of escapades.

But there was a serious purpose attaching to this evening's jaunt by only the one girl. Now that Fay and Edna were so deeply and guiltily involved in this drama of the rival formulas, they had far more to think about than new ways of finding stolen pleasures.

Easily enough Fay managed to slip away from the schoolhouse. She put on some spare outdoor things, so that nothing could be noticed to be missing from her peg in the coat-room downstairs. A landing door, worked by a pushbar, let her out on to the outside iron stairway which was the school's fire-escape.

As Edna was remaining at the schoolhouse, she could silently close the push-bar doors after her sister's flitting away. Had both girls been going out of bounds they would have had to resort to different means, for a confederate was needed, in the case of the iron stairway, to work the pushbar when re-admittance was required. The doors could not be opened from outside.

Signals, to be worked by an arrangement of the study blind, had been agreed upon. Fay, when she came sneaking back into bounds, presently, would be warned whether to expect to be admitted by way of the fire-escape, or whether it was to be a case of the class-room window.

Yet another means was the one they had so gloried in regarding as their secret method—through the disused dynamo-house, where the school at one time made its electric light, into the museum.

But the sisters were for giving this means a "miss" this evening, in case of activities on the part of Betty Barton.

For a few minutes after her sister had slipped away, Edna watched from the study window; but there was very little that she could see, the moon having clouded over. Spots of rain continued to be blown against the pane, but there was no actual downfall now.

Of Fay, the watcher at the window saw absolutely nothing, and so she abandoned the eager peering out into the night. It occurred to her to go downstairs to look in at the class-room. It was likely to be deserted and in darkness, and it would not be a bad plan to get a window unlatched at once, in case of hitches later on.

She had been gone from the study only a couple of minutes when the door was tapped, and then a girl opened the door and put her head inside for an instant.

It was Betty Barton.

She had only wanted to see if the Denver girls were here—and they were not!

Where were they, then?

Not surprising if Betty, after certain bitter experiences of late, found an immediate answer to that question in the words: "Out of bounds, of course!"

So downstairs she went, knowing herself to be fully entitled to lie in wait against the return of the errant pair.

What she had suffered, in the way of disgrace and humiliation, since the start of the present term—and all because of Fay and Edna and

their mania for sneaking out! If there had been any doubt in the matter, Betty would have been ready enough to acknowledge it. But by now she had her case against the Denver sisters quite complete. She needed to do one thing only, to be able to PROVE it, and that was—catch them at their game!

Meantime, it had suddenly flashed upon Edna, downstairs, that perhaps Betty would come below in the belief that she, Edna, and Fay, were out of bounds again.

In spite of the anxiety about her sister's errand in the dark, Edna could not remain passive in regard to the ex-captain. The old animosity was suddenly as active as ever. Possible to turn the tables on Betty, if she put in an appearance down here? Yes! There was a way—oh, splendid!

Flitting to the coat-room, Fay had taken the ex-captain's outdoor things from their peg. Already the crafty girl had rushed that hat and coat to the disused dynamo-house, which could be entered from the far end of the museum.

Practice at much slipping in and out by this means had enabled Edna to do everything with lightning speed. She had dumped the hat and jacket upon the floor of the shed, clear of the disused machinery. The outer door—she had locked that and withdrawn the key, pocketing it.

A few moments, and she was back in the museum, leaving the communicating door merely closed, with a carved Indian screen standing before it, as it always did.

But Edna, quick though she had been, was now finding herself too late to be able to get away from the museum. The great room, with all its glass cases and cabinets and weird exhibits, was in darkness except for a little light straying in at the upper end from the hall.

By that dim light, she was made aware of someone's coming to the museum doorway. Betty Barton!

Not a second too soon, to avoid the encounter, Edna doubled down, and then writhed silently to a hiding-place behind one of the butterfly cases.

Crouching there, doing her best not to breathe even, she could tell that Betty, without having switched on any lights, was passing down the room to its far end.

So, then, the ex-captain was suspecting more slipping out of bounds this evening! Also, it was evident that she knew about the means of going in and out that had been such a valuable secret!

A faint scraping sound—that was the Indian screen, as Betty shifted it a little to one side. Then came a faint creak of hinges grown rusty from disuse. That was the communicating door, between the museum and the old dynamo-house, being opened.

In her hiding-place, Edna was now in fits of silent laughter. Betty, quite obviously, was going into the dynamo-house! "And so I have her—beautifully!"

The moment soon came when the crafty girl could dare to tiptoe from her hiding-place, going towards the half-screened door.

Betty, she knew, was beyond that doorway—in the dynamo-house.

One last, swift stride Edna took, and then she had that communicating door closed upon Betty—locked!

"Yes, got you, my girl!" Edna chuckled to herself as she quickly tiptoed away. "Got you nicely now!"

INSIDE the dark dynamo-house, amongst all its obsolete machinery, Betty was abruptly at a standstill.

She stood turned towards the door by which she had made her way into the place, knowing that that door had been suddenly closed upon her—locked!

But what did it mean, then? What else could it mean but that she had been outwitted—tricked!

She groped across to the outer door of the shed and tried its handle. No, locked—of course this door had been locked, and the key taken away!

Betty frowned. There she was, not a chum of hers to know anything about it. Polly and the others were upstairs in Study 12; for their own sakes she had not told them what she intended to do.

"Hallo!" she muttered to herself. "What's this!"

Her foot had encountered something of a yielding nature, lying upon the floor. She bent down, and her fumbling hands came upon a jacket and hat.

"Ah!" was her understanding gasp. "I can't see them; but they are mine—mine for a cert!"

Worse Trouble for Betty

"SWEENDLE for Betty to go away from ze study and keep away!"

"What do you mean, kid?"

"Just what I say, Polly! Bekas—"

"Do you," cried madcap Polly Linton, snatching up a round ruler, "see this?"

Whack! Polly smote the study table with that foot of ebony with which she was accustomed to menace her dusky chum Naomer—more or less playfully.

"You," said Polly scathingly, "to dare to make remarks about Betty!"

"Yes, bai Jove!" joined in Paula Creel, quite indignantly. "Downwight presumption, Naomer, for you to— Owch! Wowp, gahroop!"

"Zen you be careful what you say to me! Bekas," said Naomer, now doing her best to leave the elegant member of the chummy in a terribly rumped state, "you are not Polly!"

"Both of you!" stormed the madcap, brandishing the ruler afresh. "Order!" Whack! upon the table-edge again. "Silence! Paula, go and sit there!"

As Polly was pointing to the study's best arm-chair, Paula very gladly obeyed the mock-stern command.

"And now you, kid—sit here!"

"Not ze bit of eet! Bekas— Hi, stop eet!" squealed Naomer, finding herself suddenly taken by one ear. "I only want to see about a refresher, half-way through prep! Polly—leave go-o-o! And zen you shall have a winter warmer, a strong one!"

Even such an offer might have failed to produce the desired effect; but now the study door opened, letting in Pam Willoughby, Madge Minden, and others, for their usual evening gather-round. They were girls who reckoned themselves to be "Study 12," although they tenanted neighbouring dens.

"Where's Betty, then?" they wanted to know.



"Betty Barton has been caught by me when trying to break bounds!" Edna announced to the new Form captain. She spoke loudly so that other girls should hear. Edna was determined to complete Betty's downfall now that her scheme had worked so well.

"Must I say what I think?" the madcap sighed. "Betty, I suppose, is feeling a good deal more hipped than she wants us to see. So she has cleared off, fearing to be a wet blanket."

"But that's silly!" Pam declared, whilst her delicately lovely face expressed loving admiration for the ex-captain's supposed action. "Wouldn't we rather have Betty with a hump, than some other girls without it?"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove! Poor Betty," Paula added, very tenderly. "Cwuel shame."

"I," said Madge, "shall go and look for her. It isn't the same without her."

"And anuzzer zing," shrilled Naomer, coming away from the corner cupboard with a very crowded tray of tumblers, cordial bottles, a crystal jug, and some cups, "Betty won't get her hot drink unless she looks sharp! Bekas! I am going to make him now."

"Loud cheers," said Bunny Trevor. "Put a kick in it, kid."

"I make him so he make you lose your breff!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the syrupy concoction, when at last it was handed round, was hardly as effective as all that. At any rate, the chums had plenty of breath left for chatting away, with little pauses, now and then, due to sudden thinking about Betty.

She was still absent, and Madge had failed to account for her, after looking in at the "libe" and other likely places.

There would have been news of Betty by this

time, right enough, only Edna was doing nothing about her "capture" pending her sister's return. She wanted to let Fay in before indulging in the glorious treat that it promised to be—to "broadcast" the fact that Betty was in the dynamo-house. "With her coat and hat, too—so you can imagine!"

At last Edna reckoned that her sister was due in-bounds again. She had set the study blind in a position that would tell Fay: "Come up the iron staircase!" For that way in, Edna had decided, would be the best to-night.

Five minutes longer she waited in the study; then, putting on an aimless, innocent air, she sauntered out into the passage and along to the stairs.

Nobody else was about. Some of the usual after-prep going in and out of studies had taken place a little while since. Now the Form was nicely settled down for the rest of the dark evening.

At the stairs, Edna glanced warily this way and that for the last time; then she ran up to the dormitory-landing, off which the pushbar doors opened.

Even as she darted to work the pushbar, she saw her sister outside, her face close to the rain-bespattered glass. There was a nervous expression on her face which Edna deemed quite uncalled-for.

Silently the doors opened wide enough to let Fay slip past them. She was whipping off her damp jacket as she darted in. Then her hand claved off the glistening hat.

"Is it all right?" she anxiously questioned in a breathless whisper. "Nothing occurred—about the Vanderloos?"

Edna shook her head.

"And you got the papers?" she whispered back.

"I'll take them, whilst you—"

"But, Edna, I—I haven't got them—"

"What!"

"I couldn't find the place in the dark," Fay abjectly stated. "Oh, don't look like that; it's all very well, but you'd have been just the same! It's beastly dark, and there's a drizzle, and I just couldn't see my way about on the moor."

"Hang!" Edna muttered. "Dash!"

"It isn't as if we had hidden the papers in a shed, or anywhere like that. They were only under a stone, amongst the heather—"

"Oh, all right," grimaced the younger sister. "There they must stay, then, but it's a sickener. Quick, though; come on down," she whispered on, excitedly. "I have just about got Betty Barton on toast!"

"You have? Never!"

"Haven't I!" Edna chuckled. "You come and see!"

Only a minute was required for Fay to bundle the spare hat and coat out of the way. Then she went to the far end of the study-corridor with Edna, who did not tap before entering the room which Etta Hargrove, as captain, now occupied all to herself.

"Merely to let you know," Edna said very loudly, in excuse for her rude-bursting-in, "Betty Barton has been caught by me—when trying to break bounds!"

Etta clacked down a pen and stood up. She was as good as her predecessor at letting calmness answer insolence.

"I hope you are sure of what you are saying, Edna Denver?"

"Sure!" sneered that girl. "But if you can't believe it—go and see for yourself! There's nothing to prevent you!"

She was almost shouting, so that girls in Study 12 and other dens were bound to hear. Already, doors were being whipped open right along the corridor.

"Go down to the museum and unlock the door that leads through into the old dynamo-house," Edna noisily resumed. "There's the key!"—throwing it to Etta's table. "You'll find Betty Barton in the dynamo-house—with her outdoor things!"

"So, Etta Hargrove," Fay tartly added, "instead of being so bossy about me and my sister—look after girls who really want looking after! That's our advice to you!"

And both sisters strode away.

Study 12 is Startled

THE long corridor of studies was suddenly teeming with scholars. Many a pretty pair of brows were lifted high; many a voice was bewilderedly asking:

"What's that about Betty Barton?"

Now the new captain came from her study, passing first a batch of girls who had swarmed out of Study 12. Etta must have noticed the looks of amazement and alarm in the faces of Polly and the rest of Betty's best chums; but she did not pause to engage those girls in talk.

Nor did Etta have a word to say in answer to other girls who clamoured for information, as she went swiftly up the passage.

Her reserved state had a kind of spellbinding effect upon all the various batches; but no sooner had she passed round to the stairs than a wild rush took place to go after her down to the ground floor.

The Form, as it surged after the captain, seethed with excitement. A certain guarding of voices, so that no word of this scandalous business should chance to reach the ears of authority, only made all the jabber-jabber of talk more tense-sounding.

Polly and the others from Study 12—they kept together, speaking only amongst themselves. Their dismay on account of Betty was increased by what they heard many other scholars saying. "It must be true!" And so: "Just fancy—Betty of all girls! How disgraceful—in one who was a captain!"

Tragically the chums realised, as they took part in this general trooping down to the ground floor, that the Form needed only to find the case as good as proved against Betty, and then no word would be too had for her.

Never mind that she was no longer the captain; she had been the captain until she was found out over other breaches of discipline. Now she was to be proved guilty of having done it again to-night! What, then, had she been doing in secret, even whilst she was captain?

"It only shows!" the chums heard one girl exclaiming cynically.

"Yes," said others. "You never know what some people are like, till you have really found them out."

"But what a little humbug—impostor!"

Polly gnawed a lip. She was receiving a beseeching glance from Madge, or she would have flared out.

And now, crowding behind Etta, they were all at the ground floor; five-and-twenty girls at least, swarming behind their Form captain as she entered the museum, clicked on the lights, and then went to its far end.

There was the Indian screen to move aside—one that had been placed there to hide the rather

unightly door, which was now supposed to be never used. Then Etta turned back the key and sent the door wide open.

"Are you there, Betty?"

"Yes," the ex-captain's voice answered from the darkness of the dynamo-room.

The attendant crowd seethed again, and there was much elbow-nudging. Caught—in front of all of them like this! But what a thing to have happened; what a show up for Betty!

She came out, to be before the eyes of Etta and all of them. It was instantly noticed that Betty had an overcoat over one arm, and held a hat of hers.

Some scandalised "Oooing!" and derisive laughter started. Many of the girls were feeling "rattled" by Betty's refusal to look crestfallen. She was, it could be seen, as near to a state of fury as a girl of her equable disposition was ever likely to be; but she did not look ashamed—and the Form felt that she should!

"Were you going out of bounds?" Etta quietly asked.

"No."

"Then why had you those outdoor things with you?"

"Somebody put them there—"

Betty was allowed to get no further with a plea that sounded, to the majority of girls, so utterly rubbishy and false. Scornful exclamations over-rode her voice—until she raised it, fiercely addressing those who were loudest in their expressions of disgust.

"You don't believe me?"

"No, we don't! Is it likely?" she was answered from right and left. "Humbug! And you were our captain, Betty—shame, shame!"

"Oh, that will do!" Etta interposed. "Now, all of you, get back—"

"It won't do!" she was rounded upon fiercely by several of the girls. "This is the girl who always expected us to play the game. She was our captain—"

"She isn't now," Etta calmly remarked.

"No! And we take jolly good care she doesn't become our captain again—not after this! One law for us and one for her. That's what it has been all along—now we know!"

All the way upstairs with her chums, Betty was followed by the rest of her schoolmates. A fear lest one of the mistresses should get to know, caused a lull in the hostile demonstration. The Form, for its own sake, did not want the affair to become known to Authority.

But in the study-corridor upstairs the storm raged again. Fay and Edna had grandly refrained from going down just now. They were in their study doorway as Betty went by, with chums doing their best to keep her from being literally mobbed.

"Were we right?" Edna called out. "Ha, ha, ha!"

And then she and Fay drew back and banged their door upon the throng. In the study they could be heard screaming their laughter.

At last Betty was alone with her chums in Study 12, and that door could be banged in the faces of the demonstrators. For a little while, however, it was impossible to carry on any talk in the study. Etta had done her best to persuade the crowd to disperse; it was still outside Study 12.

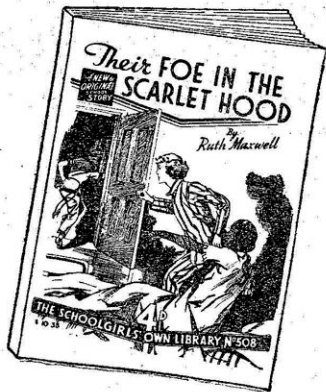
At last Polly sprang to the door, whipped it

(Continued on the next page.)

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open and dashed among the demonstrators, pushing several of them against others. Bunny Trevor then rushed out of the study, and so did Tess and Helen, to join in the *mélée*.

More level-headed girls, like Pam and Judy and Madge, ran out to make the impulsive ones come in. Betty herself did the same, and her re-appearance in the corridor was the signal for a fiercer onslaught than ever.

But it endured for a moment only, and it was to be the last. The hostile girls went away, audibly promising Betty that she had not heard the last of it all—as if she needed to be told that!

Slam! went Study 12's door once more.

"Lost another game to Fay and Edna—that's all it means," Betty said, looking more composed than any of her listeners. "But the set isn't finished yet." And after she had given her accurate surmise of how the whole thing had been worked:

"Don't say anything about that to other girls. Even if it could be of any use, I would rather you didn't."

"Why did you act alone this evening?" Polly demanded. "If only you'd had some of us girls—"

"Any rate, Betty," broke in Bunny, "after this—you will, won't you?"

"I make no promise," the ex-captain smiled. "You know how I feel about it. I hate the idea of leading you into doing things that might get you as badly in the cart as I am myself! There have been things I simply had to do—and there will be other things, at any moment, for all I know."

"Let 'em happen!" shrugged Polly, and there were murmurs from others in emphatic agreement. "Who cares a hoot about that! We want to see you righted, Betty—"

"In the eyes of the whole school, yes," Pam nodded. "From Miss Somerfield downwards."

There was silence for a moment. Then Betty said slowly and impressively:

"I shall only be righted when it has been proved, not simply that Fay and Edna went out of bounds on that night of the cliff fall, but WHY they went! And to prove that, I have to find out why the fall of cliff that night had such an attraction for them."

"Just curiosity?" Judy Cardew submitted. "Plus their love for slipping out of bounds?"

"I don't think so," Betty dissented. "A day or two ago I came to the conclusion that there is more in it than that—much more. The Denver girls were strangely interested in that fall of cliff. They are also strangely interested in the people at the bungalow."

"The Vanderloos?"

"Yes. And at the bungalow—well, they've a laboratory, and they use chemicals. Mysterious things are being done there. I know you'll stare, girls, but—I'm inclined to wonder if that really was simply a fall of cliff the other evening."

"Why, what else could it have been?" gaped Polly.

"An explosion?" Betty suggested very softly.

Moving round to that side of the table where she worked, she pulled open the drawer and took out a small coil of insulated wire, such as is used for electrical work. It would have run to several yards when uncoiled.

"That's what I found," Betty said, offering the soiled-looking wire for inspection. "Trailing amongst the fallen rocks. There was more of it, but this was the only bit buried."

"Telephone wire?" Helen took it to be. "But

there were no telephone wires where the cliff fell!"

"They use wire like that," Tess exclaimed excitedly, "for firing explosives, don't they?"

"Well, do they?" Betty asked, smiling. "I fancy they do! And don't forget what I said about the Vanderloos—they have a lab., and they are meddling with chemicals!"

"Phew!" Polly exclaimed.

"I don't know if the Denver girls have begun to connect the Vanderloos with that fall of cliff—the result of an experiment with some explosive, say. But this I do know," Betty quietly added: "Mr. Denver is having a lot to do, at present, with a chemical business. Fay and Edna, the day they got back for the new term, were rather on the brag about their father's latest 'stunt,' saying it was going to make him a millionaire."

"Then I begin to see!"

That was Polly again as she swept fingers through her hair.

"Here, let's all sit down," she next moment suggested. "For this wants talking about!"

THEY were still talking when a bell sent its summoning clangour through the great schoolhouse. All scholars must now make for Big Hall, for the last assembly of the day.

Betty found the long corridor almost lined with girls on either side.

She was instantly aware that they had provided themselves with oddments in the way of outdoor wear.

"Going out again?" someone started the jeering as Betty walked up the corridor. "It's raining; but never mind—have this coat!"

"And this hat!"

"And a mac!"

"And this broly, Betty—oh, do!"

"Scarf, Betty—these damp evenings!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fay and Edna, at their study doorway again, added their own laughter to all that which came from girls who were pelting Betty.

For as long as the merciless teasing and twitting continued, with Betty only slowly walking along between the hustlers, the sisters remained as delighted onlookers. Then they withdrew into their study and slammed the door.

Edna darted to the window.

"Must see if it is raining," she remarked, with a swift change from ribaldry to anxiety. "No, it's nothing to speak of, Fay, and the wind's up, so there may not be much in the night, after all."

"Still," muttered the elder girl, "we must get those papers away from the moor."

"Before brekker, to-morrow—"

"Oh, not then," Fay nervously objected. "It might be wondered in the school why we had gone out as early as that. But after morning class—"

"All right, then—at midday," Edna agreed.

"Both of us!"

She said it lightly.

Like Fay, she felt nothing warning her; had no foreboding of all that was to result from the decision.

If only there could have been some such foreboding to deter them from a step which was to put them in such danger as they could never, even in their wildest dreams, have imagined.

[END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.]

BE sure to read next Tuesday's grand long Morcove story entitled: "The Denvers' Bad Blunder," by Marjorie Stanton.

Despite all Difficulties Dave Cardew has Manfully 'Stuck to his Gums,' Is Success to Crown his Efforts at Last?



Grangemoor to Guard Her

Well Met!

"**H**ETTY! Oh, this is splendid!" So Dave Cardew voiced his delight at finding that she, the storm-centre of the last few weeks, had come towards him on the road, just outside the Grangemoor gateway.

Her tall and graceful figure, darkly clad, was very faintly illumined by the tail-light of Mr. Gordon's car, where it stood drawn-up beside the road.

Even without that light, dim though it was, Dave would have known instantly that it was she. But to Mr. Gordon, now down from his seat at the steering-wheel, she seemed a complete stranger.

Still in amazement at having found Dave getting a "lift" in the back part of the car, Mr. Gordon's bewilderment was intensified by the appearance of this sorrowful-looking girl upon the night-bound scene.

"Well?" he addressed Dave, after raising his hat to Hetty, who bowed nervously in return. "You were to tell me something, my boy?"

"And before I begin, sir—this is Miss Hetty Morland. You won't remember her, but when you were here before you gave her a lift in the car—she had a lot of parcels—"

"But, of course, I do remember you!" Mr. Gordon exclaimed in sudden delight. "At the time—I couldn't make out why, except that your face, young lady, was an appealing one; but—you interested me!"

Dave gave one of his rare laughs. "I hope to interest you still more in Hetty, sir. It's awfully lucky that she has turned up like this. Nothing could be better!"

"Yet I feel—sort of ashamed," Hetty faltered. "The way I have been hanging about, close to the school—it is the kind of thing I greatly dis-

By MARJORIE STANTON

like. Only I wanted to see the headmaster, and again and again he has refused—"

"Refused to see you, my girl? Why?" "The fact is, sir," Dave interposed, "there is a lot the headmaster has been making a mistake about, over both of us; but that doesn't mean he is to blame. I'm not respecting him any the less because he did, yesterday—expel me."

"Expelled you! Good heavens!" "Yes!" Hetty exclaimed distressfully. "And it was because I knew I was to blame that I wanted to get word with—"

"Mr. Gordon, Hetty isn't a bit to blame—don't believe it," Dave serenely broke in. "It's true I came back to Grangemoor, after being put on the train for home, on account of this young lady. But that doesn't make her to blame. You see, sir, I wanted to get a meeting with you. I found out that you were away from your home, motoring, and were likely to call at the school to see your ward, Ralph Gayner. So I simply came back to be around in case you should turn up."

"And that accounts, does it, for your being so strangely dressed for a Grangemoor scholar?" "I did the best to disguise myself—yes."

"My boy," Mr. Gordon said gravely, "you seem to have done it pretty well?"

"I had to!" Dave smiled. "I knew—at least, I felt almost certain—it would mean a great misfortune to Hetty here, if I got caught before I had met you."

Mr. Gordon could only say, temperately: "Well—and now that you have met me?" "May I show you—these?" Dave promptly continued, lugging out the fateful packet of papers.

"I hope you can take a look at them straight away, sir—by the car-lights—and see if they interest you."

"They are papers," Hetty agitatedly rejoined, whilst she and Dave followed Mr. Gordon as he stepped across to the headlamps, "papers that I gave Dave Cardew to examine and to take care of for me. I have had them by me ever since I was a child. As I grew up, I began to believe that they might mean a lot to me some day. The way they first came into my possession, and the warning I had about taking great care of them, and not letting my Uncle Ezra know about them—"

She broke off, for Mr. Gordon, standing close to one of the car's headlamps, was already examining the papers in the strong light.

Very rapidly he looked at one document after another, seeming to find nothing in any of them to linger over.

Making full allowance for his being an experienced business man, he was showing a very significant grasp of a case so suddenly presented.

At last he shuffled the papers so as to revert to one or two that he had first looked at. He reread these, and Dave and Hetty saw him nodding comprehendingly.

Then he turned to Hetty.

"You were saying—how you were warned to take care of these documents? By whom would that be, my girl?"

"Aunt Liz, as I always called her; she and Uncle Ezra had the bringing up of me. But Aunt Liz died when I was still very young. She gave me the papers—unbeknown to Uncle Ezra—just before she died. I don't know, sir, but I—I've always fancied that she had something on her mind at the time. She was like a person who has taken part in a bad deed and who is afraid to confess because of others who were guilty, too."

Dave saw Mr. Gordon give that comprehending nod again.

"And after that aunt of yours died?"

"I just lived on with Uncle Ezra. We live at Joab's now, down by the river; but I must tell you, sir, uncle is not—not a nice man to deal with. If you should go to him to-night—"

"Not to-night, I think, although it looks as if I shall have to deal with 'Uncle Ezra,'" came Mr. Gordon's grave murmur. "It is a most extraordinary business; so amazing, and so disturbing to me—really, I am at a loss for words."

He turned to Dave.

"A thing I must ask you to explain at once, my lad. Why—why did you pitch upon me as being the person to whom these papers must be shown? For it does happen that, of all the people in the world, I am myself vitally interested in these papers. So I can't help wondering: how did you know that it would be like that? You must have found out, somehow!"

"I—I kind of deduced it, sir," Dave reluctantly explained, "from your being Ralph Gayner's guardian."

"Ah! You—you got at the connection that way, did you? And yet I don't quite see why! It is, as a matter of fact, due to my having become Ralph's guardian, when he was a little lad, that I must now be interested in these papers—and in you, Hetty Morland! But—"

And he paused, eyeing Dave closely whilst waiting for an ampler explanation.

"Come, my boy, no reticence! You, who appear to have done so much to help this young lady to get at the truth of things—you must know that it must be the truth, and the whole truth, now!"

"Yes, sir. But—"

"Well?"

"I hate the idea of telling you. It seems, though, that I must. Your ward, Ralph Gayner, ever since he found out that Hetty had given me the papers to take care of, has been trying to get them from me."

"He has!"

Neither the shocked cry nor the horrified look surprised Dave. As much as he had dreaded anything, in connection with all that he had been doing for Hetty, he had dreaded the moment when Mr. Gordon might have to find out what a rotter, what a selfish cad, Ralph Gayner was.

"You mean, my boy, Ralph did not show a friendly interest? It was the other way about? Oh, don't think of my feelings, Cardew! Remember, if I don't find out now, I shall later on. Yes or no; did Ralph appear to oppose you? Did he appear to want those papers not to be produced to me or anyone?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but that was just it, and that's how I got my idea that you, his guardian, were the very gentleman who should be shown the papers. I—I— But—"

"Go on, my lad."

"Well, then, sir; my theory was that any benefit Hetty might gain would be at the expense of Ralph himself—and he knew it. So he wanted to destroy the papers."

Dave's reluctant words ended, and there was a lengthy silence here on the dark roadway where these three had met so fatefully.

"It need not have been at Ralph's expense—anything that you, Hetty Morland, gained," Mr. Gordon sighed at last. "But now—I think it will, it must—yes! For him to have acted like that; to have striven, for selfish reasons, to cheat you, Hetty, out of the life that has been owing to you all these years! But let that wait. About your Uncle Ezra—would he have taken the papers from you, if he had known about them?"

"Oh, yes, I am sure of that," Hetty answered sadly. "I think at one time he had the papers, and then Aunt Liz got hold of them and hid them from him, and so she was able to give them to me in secret when her end was near. I was never to let him know that I had them. On the other hand, he was often searching and poking about as if trying to find the papers."

"I can understand. I can imagine, too, what a life it has been for you. Well, you need not call him 'Uncle' any more after to-night, Hetty Morland."

"Oh! You mean—I shall be able to be done with him? I shall have someone else, perhaps, to go to? Ralph Gayner told me that my father was a—a criminal—that he even went to prison—"

"What! Oh, abominable!" cried Mr. Gordon. "Even if it had been the truth, the cruelty in telling you! But your father was a perfectly upright man—we were boys together at school—"

"You were, sir!"

"And inseparable friends until his marriage caused us to go different ways. Don't mistake me, my dear girl, we had no quarrel. Marriage often does, of course, cause friends to see less of each other. Your father married abroad—in France. She was an English lady, but they met in France and were married out there. What with living in France and my being, at that time, a young man with many interests, we lost touch altogether. Then suddenly, years after the marriage, I found that they had both died, and that

there was a child whom it was clearly my duty to adopt. That child was produced to me by a servant who had brought him from France. I say 'him,' for it was a little boy. But—"

Dave, as Mr. Gordon paused, could tell what was coming next, if Hetty could not. Could she? Her delicately beautiful face, in the lamplight, was charged with a look of excited interest, but it did not suggest any jumping to a joyful conclusion.

"It should have been a girl, not a boy," Mr. Gordon said with slow impressiveness at last. "It should have been you, Hetty—not Ralph. The papers have told me. That servant, knowing that in me there was a wealthy person to deal with, committed a fraud. Or, rather, the woman and her husband—but he remained in the background—they palmed off their own child upon me, and kept—you!"

"Then Ralph Gayner," Dave exclaimed tensely, "is Ezra Joab's son!"

"Yes. I won't be so hard as to say that now Ralph has a father to go to, I will finish with him. I must still do something for him. But he can never be to me what he has been up till now. The papers have proved it all, and he has proved himself to be—what he is—"

"Oh," Hetty quavered emotionally, "but now it begins to seem so—so terrible for him, whilst it means such happiness for me. You are sure, are you—quite sure that it is as you say? I mean—a thing I can't quite understand—what did the Joabs gain by doing it?"

"At the time, very little—no more than the sum of money I gave them for having, as I was led to believe, looked after an orphan whose parents had died poor. But in the long run there was much to be gained. I have not the slightest doubt," Mr. Gordon went on, "that Ezra Joab meant, in the near future, to start exacting money from Ralph. As soon as Ralph was old enough to have a liberal allowance of money—that was to be Ezra Joab's game!"

"You mean a father planned to blackmail his own son?" asked Hetty.

Mr. Gordon nodded.

"And so Ezra had as big a reason as Ralph had for wanting to get hold of the papers," Dave quietly rejoined.

"That's it! And now—"

Mr. Gordon was suddenly at his courtliest as he opened a door of the car serving the rear seats.

"Hetty, my dear, you must get in with Dave, and let me drive you both—back to the school. I would love to have you sitting next to me, Hetty; but you'll have me always after this—sharing and brightening my home, Hetty, or I should say, OUR home!"

At last the joy broke through in her. Vestiges of anxiety and perplexity vanished from her looks. Her eyes were sparkling, her expression was a radiant one as she moved close to her intending benefactor and impulsively kissed him.

"You dear!" she said.

"Thank you," he smiled. "And—one for Dave, I hope?"

"Well—yes!" Hetty gaily decided, and turned to the schoolboy who had been such a valiant champion of her rights. "That is, if Dave doesn't mind?"

"I don't mind," said Dave, "if you don't. But I haven't had a wash since midday!"

"Such a poor reward," Hetty whispered as she gave him the kiss quickly, "for all you have done for me."

"Such a treat to have been able to do it," was his calm retort, "for a girl like you!"

Their Darkest Hour!

"HAVE a choc, you fellows?"

"Oh, shut up, Tubby!"

"Or an apple—"

"Tubby, if you don't hold your row—"

"I only want to suggest—"

Whiz—plop! a hurled book smote the wall behind Tubby.

"Hand me that book!" Jack impatiently requested, having been the very one to shy it at the beefy member of the chummers. "I can't do a line without it! Gosh"—and he rumbled his hair—"if Old Tony didn't just about pile it on to us in the way of a punishment task!"

"Latin, too—how I hate it!" Tom Trevor growled.

"I just won't do another stroke for a bit," Jimmy Cherril announced, casting down his pen. "I don't know a bit what I am writing, anyhow! Thinking of Dave all the time. But just fancy his getting away like that from the detention-room. Marvel how he did it, when they say there were ever so many chaps chasing him—if only for a lark!"

"They haven't caught him and brought him back, any-old-how," Jack rejoiced, and got up to go round the table to Tubby and help himself to the chocolates carried loose in that chum's pocket. "Or we'd have known."

"Even though we are threatened with expulsion if we go outside the den until the bell rings for assembly," Tom grimly rejoined. "Where's an apple, Tubby?"

"Jimmy?" inquired Tubby, offering to toss an apple to him also.

"No, thanks." And Jimmy got up, looking disconsolate. "Dave didn't deserve such bad luck!"

"No," Tubby said, munching, "good chap, Dave?"

"If only he'd known that Mr. Gordon was here at the very time he was doing the getaway," Jimmy sighed on. "So everything has gone wrong—every blessed thing! Can any of you imagine more rotten luck? By the time we discovered that Mr. Gordon was here, it was too late. Dave had gone again; otherwise—"

"Look here, Jimmy," said Jack fiercely. "It's bad enough, without starting any might-have-been talk. Personally, I don't want to say anything, except that I'm fed up, and if it weren't that I had a sister at Morcove, I'd bolt to Bristol and become a stowaway. That," Jack said, starting upon an apple now, "is where I am stalled. Polly so often disgraces the family, at Morcove, I simply must stick it out here at Grangemore, and rise again from the depths! And what the blazes, Tubby," he shouted, "do you mean by giving me an apple that has earwigs?"

It was just then, when Tubby was dodging the hurled apple, that the door opened and Mr. Challoner came in. He looked cheerful; but he had a way of being very cheerful with scholars undergoing punishment. He could imply that the friendship between master and scholar was not at an end—oh, no! But the punishment must be suffered just the same!

"How much of your punishment task have you done?"

"Oh, quite a lot, sir," Jack said, a little cheekily drawing attention to a first page of Latin.

"Um! Well, you needn't do any more. Put all your books away, and then you may go across to Head's House to bring Dave Cardew back with you."

The Four failed to look at all pleased. Jack even scowled.

"You mean they have caught him again, sir?"

"No, I mean that things have come right for him at last—"

"What! Gosh!"

"The expulsion has been cancelled—yes, and I am so delighted!" beamed Old Tony. "Go across now and you will hear—you will learn about everything! By the way, Dave has been saying that he never could have done what he has, if it hadn't been for you fellows. So, presently, you four had better come along with Dave to have some supper with me and Mrs. Challenor. She is putting Hetty up for the night, and

"Oh, boy!" Jack insanely shouted. "D'you hear this, you chaps? Come on, boys—come on!"

In a little while the boys of one House and another had come out of doors to cheer Dave Cardew upon his way from Head's to Challenor's.

Like wildfire the news had spread all through the great school. Lamplit yards and quadrangles were alive with a boyish multitude hurrahing for all they were worth.

Challenor's House was to the fore, of course, in this tremendous demonstration.

Fellows of Dave's own house had swarmed to meet him as he came out of the headmaster's own stately domain, borne shoulder high by Jack and Tom.

"Hurrah!" the autumn night rang again and again with the applauding shout. "Dave Cardew—good old Dave!"

"Our Dave!" Challenor's was proudly able to claim. "Our Dave—hurrah!"

Their Dave, until a few minutes ago the supposed "disgrace" of the school; their Dave, the expelled scholar of a day or two since, and now—he was the hero of the hour!

"Give him a cheer, then, boys!" Jack had roared; and how they were cheering now!

Laughter, too—roars of laughter, Dave's triumphant progress being, for him, an ordeal as uncomfortable as it was unwelcome! Every request of his to be set down, seemed only to aggravate the scrimmaging, and it was his being so often changed from one lot of shoulders to another that caused all the guffawing.

Jack and Tom would have liked to carry Dave all the way, but Challenor's was not going to have that. Jimmy and Tubby—their turn lasted only a few moments. Then ensued another playful mêlée, from which Tubby finally emerged with many a button gone.

Breathless, battered, but still smiling, Tubby was a mere unit in the roystering mob when Jack and Tom and Jimmy found him again, whilst Dave was being still carried high, to the accompaniment of more wild hurrahing.



"May I show you these?" Dave said, proffering the fateful packet of papers. Tensely Hetty Morland and he watched Mr. Gordon. The moment for which they had striven so long had arrived—at last.

At Challenor's, they would not at once dump him in the lamplit porch, but bore him twice round the yard. Finally, the Four rallied, charged in together, and got Dave again.

Their collars burst and their ties flying free, Dave's own ever-faithful pals had him once more, and, as this seemed only right and fitting, the cheering became louder than ever.

Then, when there was no longer a Dave Cardew to acclaim so frenziedly, because he had been got to private quarters in Challenor's House, the crowd began to think of Ralph Gayner, as to whose caudish activities something was known to all at last.

An ugly rush took place to demonstrate against Gayner, in his study; but he was not there. Mr. Challenor, fearing there might be something of the sort, had taken steps to get Gayner safely out of the way.

Nor was he to be seen again, ever, at Grange-moor School. That very night he was smuggled away by his guardian, from whom he doubtless received in due course far more merciful treatment than he deserved.

It was to be known, later, that Ralph, on this very evening which had enabled Dave to place those treasured papers of Hetty's in Mr. Gordon's hands, had made a clean breast of everything to that gentleman.

No difference could it have made to Hetty, even if Ralph Gayner had never confessed. Mr. Gordon, thanks to Dave's astute work, had every-

thing clearly established. But Gayner's abject admissions did serve to throw light on one point about which there might have continued to be wonderment.

How had Ralph Gayner become aware, in the first instance, that Hetty was entitled to all that he was enjoying at the hands of his wealthy guardian?

The explanation was simple enough. Soon after Ezra Joab came to live at the riverside cottage with Hetty, the scoundrel had dropped hints to Gayner as to how he might find himself placed some day, unless—

Ezra Joab, in fact, had even then started to feel his way to exacting hush-money from the prefect, considering him to be old enough already to appreciate the menace—and weak enough to be an easy victim.

Smartened up for the occasion, Dave and his pals presented themselves in Mrs. Challenor's drawing-room, to find that charming lady talking with a very radiant Hetty.

"I have just been saying," exclaimed the Housemaster's wife, "how nice it would have been if certain girls from Morcove School could have been here! Judy and Polly and Bunny—they would have been so delighted."

"And wouldn't Naomer have enjoyed sitting next to Tubby at supper!" Tom rejoined.

"What about Jimmy?" Hetty inquired, smiling at him. "Surely there is some girl at Morcove who is more or less his chum?"

"Rather more than less," chuckled Jack. "A girl named Pam Willoughby."

"We'll have all the chums of Study 12 over to tea, to-morrow," Mrs. Challenor gaily decreed. "For you to meet them, Hetty! Meantime—"

The Housemaster came in, bringing Mr. Gordon with him, and so now they could all go to another room, there to sit down to what Naomer, of Morcove, would certainly have considered a "gorjus celerbration."

Dave's modesty over his lion's share in the great triumph kept him as quiet as ever. It was for his more heady pals to keep the supper-table lively, whilst he chatted to Hetty, sitting next to jubilant Mr. Gordon.

She was so greatly changed, to-night, it was as if a magician's wand had been waved over that pretty head of hers.

Once, and only once, did Dave glimpse the ghost of her former self in Hetty—the Hetty of the old drab days of "Joab's." That was when he saw her lapse into a sudden, pensive state.

But it was a reflective mood which kept her silent and sad-looking for only a few moments.

Then she raised her eyes and they met Dave's across the table.

There was her returning smile to tell him that she was really happy beyond measure, knowing the future to be full of golden promise. But there was also an eloquence in her glance which gave him to understand; in the midst of this newfound happiness she still could not forget the roughness and rascality which had surrounded her up till now.

A hard life hers had been until Dave and his chums came into it to make such a difference.

So she had been thinking just then. So, in many a quiet moment in the time to come, when there would be everything to fill her days with joy, that same emotional thought must recur to her.

This coming into her own at long last—she owed it all to aid so strangely rendered.

For it had been then, when life was at its darkest and most perplexing, that a pitying Fate had sent—GRANGE Moor TO GUARD HER!

THE END.

(In next Tuesday's **SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN**, opening chapters of a great new serial by Joan Inglesant: "An Outcast on Mystery's Trail.")



CROSS STITCH IS SO SIMPLE

A Dainty Notion
by "NANETTE"

Cross Stitch is so easy. Even those who do not like sewing much can do this simple embroidery—and how it can brighten up your gloves, cap and handbag if they are looking a little weary after summer's use.

I came across the idea the other day and I felt sure it would appeal to readers of **SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN**. You will see from my little sketch that the most simple beret can be greatly improved in this way:

Just take a chalk and mark on the beret the dots where each cross is to go. Remember that the dot is only the centre of the cross stitch and that you must leave room for the actual cross. You might mark the four points of the cross to

ensure getting the stitches of equal length, if you have not a true eye.

A hat with a brim would like this treatment just as well as a beret, if you work the crown only with cross stitches and leave the brim quite plain.

Gloves and handbag must match; and you can see from the sketch how simple they are to do. Use silks or wools to tone in colour with the article you are decorating, of course.

I shall keep a look-out for new and smart ideas to pass on to you from time to time, readers of **SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN**.

How the Stitch
in Made

