



Detective June's MOST THRILLING CASE

NOEL'S STARTLING REAPPEARANCE

By PETER LANGLEY

JUNE GAYNOR, niece of Noel Raymond, the famous young detective, went to Port Craig College disguised as a new girl, Dorothy Whiteman. Her object was to solve the mystery which surrounded an old play which the Upper Fourth Form, led by Julie Vermont, intended producing in the ancient refectory, which was used as the school theatre.

She was startled to discover that her case and that of her Uncle Noel were connected, who was out to capture the Grey Falcon, a mysterious master-crook.

Thanks to the Grey Falcon's treachery, it was rumoured that Noel himself had turned crook, and that he himself was the Grey Falcon!

Some valuable jewels were stolen from the near-by manor, tenanted by Howard Wyndham, chairman of the college governors, and it was believed that Noel had stolen them. He was traced to the edge of the cliff, and there it was presumed that he had fallen into the sea and drowned.

June, still determined to discover the identity of the Grey Falcon's secret helper in the school, carried on with her investigations, which led her to examine the shoes in the boot-room. Hearing footsteps in the corridor she went to the door. Then she paled. There, limping towards her, was a familiar figure. It was Uncle Noel—whom she had believed to be dead!

"UNCLE NOEL!"

Torn between delight and amazement, June flung herself into the arms of the man she had believed to be dead.

Even now she found it hard to believe that she was not dreaming. The limping, unkempt-looking figure she had so unexpectedly encountered outside the school boot-room was so utterly unlike the smart, brisk young detective she had always known.

"Uncle Noel!" she gasped again. "It really is you, isn't it?"

A boyish grin momentarily illumined that tired face.

"Yes, it's really me," agreed the voice—she knew so well.

"But—but what's happened? Where have you been? The newspapers all said you were—"

June's voice choked, and as he realised her emotion, Noel Raymond put a gentle arm around her.

"I know—they thought I was drowned," he said. "That's what I want everyone to go on thinking, June. But, of course, I couldn't let you believe it. That's why I came here as soon as I could. I wanted to let you know that I was all right, so when I saw you through the window, I took the risk of being seen and nipped in through the door."

June gave another gasp. What the detective had told her had given her another shock.

"You want people to think you really are dead!" she exclaimed. "But why—"

And then she broke off again. From the near-by kitchens came the clatter of pots and pans. From upstairs came the sound of voices. The whole school was stirring. Soon it would be breakfast-time. Instantly June took alarm. Her fingers tightened on Noel's arm.

"You mustn't be seen here," she whispered. "We must go somewhere quiet and finish our talk. I know—my study. We'll be safe from discovery there."

Only stopping to pick up the white shoes which in her amazement she had dropped, she led the way down the corridor. Slowly the young detective followed. As she realised how bad was his limp, she came running back and put a helping hand around his waist.

"Oh, you're badly hurt!" she gulped. "It's nothing much—sprained my ankle when I fell into the sea—be better in a day or two."

But though he strove to make light of his injury June was not deceived. She knew it was an effort for him to put his left foot on the ground, and tenderly she helped him along to the Upper Fourth corridor.

Fortunately, none of her Form chums were down yet. The corridor was deserted. Pushing open the door of her room, June led Noel to a comfortable armchair, and as, with a scarcely concealed groan of relief he sank down into it, she darted back to the door and slid home the tiny brass bolt.

"There," she declared, "no chance of unwanted visitors bursting in on us. Now tell me the whole story, nunky. My mind's still in a whirl. I've still got a feeling I'll wake

up in a minute. Oh, but you can't imagine how lovely it is to know you're—safe!"

She flashed him a tremulous smile, and it was fondly that he returned it. Then quietly he began to speak, and as he explained June got busy. She put on the electric kettle. She got out her first-aid outfit, then peeped anxiously into the cupboard to see what food she had. For she knew her uncle needed food, as well as treatment for his injured ankle.

But as she worked she listened eagerly, now filled with horror, now with indignation, now with compassion, for it was a startling story which the detective had to tell.

It appeared that on the night of the burglary he had gained entrance to the library at the Manor and had concealed himself behind one of the bookcases, revolver in hand, to await the arrival of the Grey Falcon.

Time had passed, and still the master-crook had not appeared. It had looked as if Noel's long vigil was to be in vain. Puzzled and uneasy, he had examined the safe in which the rajah's jewels had been locked. To his consternation the door was unlocked, and, looking inside, he found the ebony box containing the diamond and emerald necklace had gone.

Though staggered by this discovery, it had not taken Noel long to guess what had happened. In the mysterious way the Grey Falcon had learnt of his danger, so he had carried out his coup earlier than he had originally intended.

"I realised there was only one thing to do," went on the detective. "That was to get quickly to the old smugglers' cave at the foot of the cliff. I knew that that was a meeting-place for the Grey Falcon's men, and I thought I might catch the whole gang there, together with their booty."

"And did you?" June asked.

Noel made a wry grimace.

"I didn't get a chance, for at that moment Howard Wyndham walked in. Seeing me standing by the open safe, he naturally jumped to the conclusion that I was the Grey Falcon. It was no time for argument, so I dashed through the french windows, and I gave the alarm and soon I found myself hunted by the whole household. It was very dark, and I lost my bearings. The next thing I knew"—abruptly Noel's voice—took on a grimmer note—"I was hurtling through space. In the darkness I'd blundered over the edge of the cliff."

It had been high water, and the young detective had plunged head-first into the sea. For over an hour he had battled with the strong current, and at last had managed to gain the safety of one of the many caves at the foot of the cliff. Utterly exhausted, he had lost consciousness, and it was midday before he had recovered his senses. As he had lain there he had heard the voices of the search-party who were patrolling the beach, and it was then he realised that he had been branded a crook.

"I didn't dare budge," Noel explained, with another wry grimace. "Besides, I decided it might be a good idea to let everyone think I had been drowned. That would mean that the Grey Falcon would be put off his guard."

"And so you would be able to unmask him," put in June excitedly.

"Yes, that's the idea. Besides, if I show up I'll be arrested, so my only hope is to lie low for a bit. But I knew how you'd be feeling, my dear, so I decided I'd come along to the college and try to get in touch with you."

All the time her uncle had been talking June had been busy making cocoa and buttering the buns left over from yesterday's tea. While he ate and drank, she dropped to her knees and carefully removed his left shoe and sock. He was red with dismay as she saw how red and swollen his ankle was, and when she had put a cold water compress around it she looked up, her face firm and determined.

"You won't be able to go far until your ankle's better," she declared.

Seeing how worried she looked, Noel Raymond forced a grin.

"Oh, I'll manage to limp along somehow."

he said. "If I can once get down to the beach I'll soon find a cave where I can hide until I'm fit again."

June looked horrified.

"Live in a cold, draughty cave—with no one to look after you!" she exclaimed. "Not likely. You're going to stay here, nunky."

"Stay here—you mean, in the college?"

He gave a startled gasp, and June gave a decisive nod.

"Yes, here, where I can look after you," she declared.

"But—"

June, however, was in no mood to listen to his protests. Her mind was made up.

"Yes, uncle. Don't you see, it's the only way," she urged. "You will be perfectly safe in one of the attics. No one ever goes up there, so there's no danger of being discovered. Besides, I've got a clue to the identity of the Grey Falcon's helper, and once I've discovered who she is, between us we ought to track down the Grey Falcon easily."

To her delight Noel seem to be impressed by her arguments, and, eager to press home her advantage, she showed him the white shoes which she was certain belonged to the unknown traitor in the college.

"I've thought of a way of tricking their owner into claiming them," she declared, her grey eyes agleam, "so once I've seen you smuggled away upstairs I can get busy. You will agree to my plan, won't you?"

Anxiously she regarded him, and gradually a smile replaced the doubtful frown on his face.

"It looks as if you're the boss, June, so I'd better do as I'm told," he said. "All right, I'll stay!"

"Whoopee!"

June gave a little cheer, then quickly conquered her high spirits and started to plan.

"After brekker, when everyone's in chapel, that'll be the best time to smuggle you out of here," she decided. "And that'll give me a chance to nip across to the old watch tower and get your things. You need a shave and a fresh suit. I'll also buy all I can from the tuckshop. Meanwhile, I'm afraid I'll have to lock you in, nunky. It wouldn't do—"

The clanging of a bell interrupted her. It was breakfast-time and, knowing that her absence from the dining-hall might provoke awkward questions, she snatched up the white shoes, kissed her uncle, flashed him a last cheery smile, and departed.

Fortunately, the corridor was deserted, so after locking the study door and pocketing the key, she hurried along to the Common-room and put the white shoes in the cupboard there.

Then, feeling happier than she had done for days, she made tracks for the dining-hall. But the moment breakfast was over, she slipped away, racing through the college grounds and along the cliff path to the old watch tower. To her delight Noel Raymond's suitcase was still there, so, picking it up, she carried it away.

Her heart was in her mouth as she retraced her steps through the grounds. If anyone should see her it would be difficult to explain the case, but fortunately she met no one. All the girls, she realised, would be getting ready for Sunday morning chapel.

She entered the hall, darted across it, and then abruptly stopped.

From down the Upper Fourth corridor had come a medley of voices, amongst which she recognised the shrill, nervous voice of Miss Tuft, the Form-mistress.

"What does this mean?" Miss Tuft was demanding. "Where is Dorothy Whiteman?"

"Golly, what's happening? What does she want me for?" June asked herself, for, of course, at Port Craig she was known as Dorothy Whiteman. No one had any suspicion as to her real name.

Hurriedly she dumped the heavy suitcase out of sight in a curtained alcove and, striving desperately to assume a nonchalance she was

far from feeling, she stepped into the corridor.

Her uneasiness deepened to real alarm when she saw Julie Vermont, Lady Sue, Mary Twig, and a group of other Upper Fourth Formers congregated outside her study. With them was Cora Jarrold, the spiteful Fifth Former whom June vaguely suspected might be the Grey Falcon's secret helper, and Miss Tuft. Even as June approached the Form-mistress gave the handle of the study door an irate rattle.

"Locked!" she exclaimed. "Really, this is most extraordinary! I have never heard of anyone locking their study before! Surely—"

She broke off, for Cora Jarrold, a malicious glint in her eyes, had seen the approaching figure.

"Here she comes, Miss Tuft," she said. "Now perhaps she'll explain. It's a bit thick, I must say," she added, with a show of indignation. "Makes it look as if we're not to be trusted!"

The fussy, usually gushing Form-mistress frowned angrily as she saw June, and sternly she pointed to the study door.

"What does this mean?" she demanded. "Why have you taken the unusual precaution of locking your door? Can it be, Dorothy, that you have something to conceal?"

JUNE IN COMMAND



The unexpected question staggered June, and for a moment a sense of panic overwhelmed her.

As she stood there, struggling desperately for words, Miss Tuft tapped with an irate foot.

"Well, why don't you answer, Dorothy?" she asked. "Can it be that my suspicions are well founded? Have you something you wish to hide in your study?"

Again that feeling of utter panic threatened to overwhelm June, but somehow she managed only to look surprised and bewildered.

"I—I'm afraid I don't understand, Miss Tuft," she stammered. "What could I possibly want to hide? I didn't think there was any harm in locking up my room. After all, we can't be too careful these days. Since that horrid Grey Falcon's been threatening us—"

"The Grey Falcon's dead," cut in Cora Jarrold curtly.

"Yes, but his gang's still at large, and I felt a bit nervous," put in June quickly, hoping that Miss Tuft, a highly strung, nervous person herself, would sympathise.

To her relief the Form-mistress's stern expression faded.

"That seems a very reasonable explanation," she agreed. "Indeed, I must confess to feeling a little uneasiness myself. I shall know no peace until all those rascals are safely under lock and key. Nevertheless, now I am here I must satisfy myself that you really aren't the stupid practical joker I'm looking for."

"Stupid practical joker?" echoed June, utterly nonplussed.

It was Julie Vermont who explained.

"Yes, someone's taken a pair of white shoes from the boot-room. The boot boy says they were there last night, but this morning they'd vanished. Of course, it's all nonsense to think one of us has taken them. That's just another of Cora's ideas."

As she spoke, Julie glowered indignantly across at the Fifth Former, but June was not conscious of the fact. A great wave of thankfulness had swept over her. So that was the explanation! Convinced that a practical joker had taken the missing shoes, Miss Tuft's suspicions had been aroused by the locked door. She thought that the shoes might be hidden in June's study!

"Please hurry up and let me examine your room," put in the Form-mistress.

"Of course, but you won't find the shoes there," declared June. "Guardedly calm, she took the key from her pocket and made to insert it in the lock. Then, her heart thump-

ing, she suddenly turned and gave what seemed like a startled gasp, "Did you say they were white shoes, Julie?" she asked, whirling excitedly on the leader of the Upper Fourth. Julie nodded, and June pretended to be more surprised than ever. "Then I believe I know where they are!" she exclaimed. "I was looking in the Common Room just now and I noticed a pair of white shoes stuffed behind some books."

From Julie & Co. came a cry of astonishment, while Cora Jarrold grinned with spiteful satisfaction.

"What did I say!" she snapped. "I knew this was some more of the Upper Fourth's idea of humour!"

Julie and her friends glared. "We don't know anything about it!" declared Julie.

"Of course we don't," added Lady Sue. "We've something better to do than to run off with other people's footwear."

"Nevertheless, this must be investigated," put in Miss Tuft, and made an agitated gesture with her hands. "Really, I don't know what the college is coming to," she added. "We have had no peace at all this term. Ever since— Breaking off, she turned to June. "Kindly show me where you saw these shoes," she ordered.

"Certainly, Miss Tuft." And June, almost hugging herself with delight, led the way down the corridor.

Not only had she succeeded in diverting everyone's attention away from her study, but soon, if all went well, she would discover who was the owner of those incriminating shoes.

Her pulses were racing as she entered the Common-room. Her grey eyes gleamed, she crossed to the cupboard, and while Miss Tuft and the other girls congregated round, she pulled open the double doors and rummaged about amongst the books on the top shelf.

"Are these what you were looking for?" she asked, pulling out the white shoes and holding them up for all to see.

The Form-mistress gave an agitated nod. "Yes, they are the ones," she declared. "But what stupid person can have hidden them there? Really, this is beyond a joke!"

"I'll say it is!" agreed Cora Jarrold, with a spiteful look around.

June held her breath. The crucial moment to put her suspicions to the test had come.

"Well, there's no need to be so upset," she told the Fifth Former. "No harm's been done. Here, you'd better take them if they're yours."

And she made to thrust the shoes into Cora's hands. But to her surprise the Fifth Former drew back.

"I don't want them," she snapped. "They're not mine!"

June stared blankly, her brain whirling as she found all her suspicions crashing in ruins about her. For if Cora wasn't the Grey Falcon's secret helper, then who could be? As she stood there, dazed and staggered, the shoes were snatched from her, and an irate voice rang out:

"Of course they are not Cora's. They're mine!" it declared, and June nearly collapsed, for the person who was now clutching the shoes possessively to her was none other than Miss Tuft.

"Yours?" echoed June in a hardly audible whisper.

Miss Tuft nodded. "Yes, and I warn you all, when I discover who had the impudence to hide them I shall take measures to deal with the culprit."

She frowned threateningly, and then, still hugging the shoes, turned and made for the door. As one in a dream June watched the young, slim Form-mistress depart. It was as if a thunderbolt had suddenly exploded at her feet, and for a moment she stood there dazed.

Those shoes were the ones which the ghost of Sir Richard de Coreville had worn. There could be no doubt about that. Then that could mean only one thing.

June drew in another long, horrified breath. "Crazy though it seems, it must be true," she told herself. "Miss Tuft is the unknown helper! She's the traitor who is in league with the Grey Falcon!"

SUSPICIONS GROW



"WHAT do you think, Uncle Noel?"

It was half an hour later, and June had just told the famous detective of her sensational discovery.

The rest of the girls were in chapel, but June had absented herself in order to visit her locked study. If her absence was discovered there would be trouble, but she was not worrying about that. She had other and more exciting things to think about.

Noel Raymond, seated in the armchair, his injured leg resting on a footstool, gave a chuckle which showed that he was fast recovering from the nerve-racking experience he had recently undergone.

"You've done excellently," he declared. "I can see you have the makings of a really first-class detective, but we mustn't jump to conclusions. What you have told me is very suspicious—this Form-mistress of yours must certainly be watched, but she may not be our quarry, you know."

"But surely those shoes prove it!" exclaimed June.

"Not necessarily." Noel shook his head. "For all we know, the Grey Falcon's helper may have borrowed them—with the object of diverting suspicion. You know, my dear, we've got very crafty people to deal with."

"I—I suppose so." Reluctantly June nodded. She realized that her uncle might be right. "All the same, I'm going to watch her like a hawk," she declared.

Then, remembering how the time was passing, she ran to the door and looked out.

"It's all right, uncle," she announced. "The coast's clear, so it's a case of now or never. Come on, I'll give you a hand."

With her arm around him, the detective limped out of the study. In the corridor June paused while she retrieved his suitcase, then together they ascended the stairs. June's heart was in her mouth as she helped him upward.

What if they should meet any of the servants? All hope of discovering the identity of the Grey Falcon and his secret helper in the college would be gone. And what of Uncle Noel? Although he was supposed to have been drowned he was still suspected of stealing the jewels from Howard Wyndham's house. If he was caught—

June clenched her teeth. Not if she knew it would Uncle Noel be caught, and forcing a cheery smile she led him on towards the attic.

Luck was with them, and in a few minutes they had reached the attic landing without meeting anyone. All the same, it was with a great sigh of relief that June opened the door at the far end of the dark passage.

"Thank goodness!" she breathed. Then, as she led the way into the attic, she smiled a little tremulously. "Well, what do you think of your new home?" she asked.

Noel gave a boyish grin as he looked around. The attic, though half-filled with lumber, was a light, cheerful room, with a big window overlooking the sea. A pile of old mattresses stood in one corner; against one wall was a discarded washstand, and there was even an ancient armchair.

"I'll be as snug as anything in here," he declared. "But you're sure there's no danger of anyone popping in?"

June shook her head. "No one ever comes up here," she assured him. "I'll get you some water; you need a shave, you know."

"You're telling me." Noel grinned, rubbing a hand across his bristly chin.

"Then later on I'll smuggle you up some food," June continued, "and anything else you need. There's a bolt on the door, so you'd better lock up behind me. I'll give two long taps and one short one when I come back. Don't open up unless you hear my signal."

She flashed him a smile, then hurried away, but in less than five minutes she was back, carrying a jug of hot water and two blankets she had taken out of the dormitory store cupboard. She made up a bed in one corner, unpacked Noel's case for him, then, after a brief word, departed again, still smiling as if she was thoroughly enjoying this unusual adventure.

But once the door had closed behind her her smile faded and she bit worriedly at her upper lip.

"It's not going to be easy to pop up and down without arousing suspicion," she told herself.

But for once her fears were unfounded. During the next two days she visited the secret tenant of the attic no less than five times, and not once did she encounter anyone. It was just a case of choosing the most sensible time—when everyone was downstairs and busily occupied.

To her delight Noel Raymond's ankle showed signs of mending, and the detective himself looked once more his bright, bristly self again.

Only one thing continued to worry June, and that was, although she had kept Miss Tuft under careful scrutiny, she had discovered nothing in any way suspicious.

Until the Tuesday afternoon. Then, having occasion to go to Miss Tuft's study to hand in some lines, she made another startling discovery.

The room was empty, and, having placed the impot on the Form-mistress' desk, June was about to depart when suddenly her attention was attracted by an envelope which lay on the carpet near the wastepaper-basket. Idly she picked it up, then stiffened as on the torn flap she saw the crest of the Manor.

Who at Howard Wyndham's house could have been writing to Miss Tuft?

"I'm certain Julie said the other day that Miss Tuft didn't get on with Mr. Wyndham," she murmured excitedly, "so it's hardly likely that—"

Breaking off, she bent over the wastepaper-basket. Perhaps the letter which had been contained in the envelope had been thrown there. Eagerly she rummaged through the contents, and suddenly her eyes gleamed as her fingers closed around two crumpled pieces of notepaper.

The missing letter! There could be no doubt about that, for the top piece bore the same crest as the envelope. Without compunction June read the few lines of writing.

"Have made an important discovery. Must see you without delay. Meet me at usual place this evening at seven o'clock."

There was no signature, but it was headed with that day's date. And at the bottom of one of the torn pieces of paper could faintly be discerned a finger-print—a print with a scar running through it.

June's heart began to pound, and her eyes surveyed that tell tale mark in triumph. "This proves it!" she whispered. "I was right! This letter was written by the Grey Falcon, so Miss Tuft must be his secret helper! But what—"

She broke off and an icy shiver ran down her spine, for from outside the room had come the sound of footsteps, and even as she stood there, that incriminating letter clutched in one hand, the door-handle turned.

Can June's astounding discovery really mean all that she suspects? And who is this at the door? Will she be caught? Don't miss a word of next Friday's thrilling instalment in the **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.