

GIRLS' CRYSTAL³

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"

Week
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1945.



The HOUSE OF THE GOLDEN MOON

Standing Beside The Blue Waters Of The Nile, The House Of The Golden Moon Was A Romantic Place . . . Also A Place Of Strange Surprises—By HAZEL ARMITAGE

A STRANGE RECEPTION

"GOODNESS, I'm not dreaming, am I?" Nancy Price asked, clutching at her companion's arm. "There was an Arab guard there half a second ago. And now—"

"He's gone!" Terry Farrow said, with a frown. "Vanished like the genie of some magic lamp. I thought for a moment I'd imagined him, but if you saw him as well—"

The two—boy and girl—turned to regard each other. Terry's good-looking face puzzled, Nancy's attractive features still a little startled.

It was odd—unreal, somehow. Nancy turned to gaze back at the white walls of Beit el-Dahab Gamar, through whose gate they had just entered, at the broad strip of desert blazing under the Egyptian sun, and the blue waters of the Nile shimmering in the distance.

She shook her head. One second the Arab in his white burnous had been standing there at the entrance to the courtyard. The next he had gone.

"Perhaps we did imagine it," Nancy said doubtfully. "Anyway, there doesn't seem anyone to meet us, though that's strange, because I sent a message to say we were on our way. Shall we go in—or what?"

Terry appeared to consider. His blue eyes were thoughtful, with a far-away expression which Nancy had noticed many times during their long, five-hundred mile voyage up the Nile from Cairo. It was on the Nile boat they had struck up their friendship when they had both discovered they were bound for the village of Damaiya, which was to be the centre of the great Nile Festival this year.

Nancy liked Terry. She gathered from him that he was the son of a Professor Farrow—the professor himself being ill in England at the

moment—and Terry had been to Egypt as a result of winning a travel scholarship at his school.

Nancy herself was travelling on behalf of her firm in Cairo to take photographs of the great Nile Festival, and had been offered the hospitality of the great Said Ibn, at his famous home, which was known in English as the House of the Golden Moon.

"Let's go in," Terry decided. "After all, we are supposed to be guests at the place."

He hitched Nancy's camera which he was carrying into a more easy position on his shoulders. Firmly he stepped forward on to the mosaic path that led to the arched entrance of the great square house. The heavy doors, screened on either side by sentinel palms, were open, and a whiff of lotus perfume came to their nostrils as they stepped into the cool interior of the place. And there they stopped.

For a moment Nancy caught her breath in the wonderment, the magnificence of it all. They found themselves in a vast hall. Rich, exquisite tapestries covered the walls, a glittering carpet of crimson and gold covered the marble floor. Here and there were statues—bronze and granite statues of celebrities long since dead, which had come from the great tombs near by.

In vaulted niches in the wall stood crimson doors elaborately ornamented with golden studs. And in the middle of the floor, surmounted by a profuse mass of lilies, was a gleaming aquarium in which the flash of gold and silver fish caught the light, and from the centre of which, its burner cunningly hidden, went up a twisting spiral of incense smoke.

"Gosh, it's like Aladdin's cave!" breathed Terry. "But where is everybody?"

Nancy looked around in bewilderment, for she had spent many years in the East—had, in fact,

been in Egypt as a child before the war—but never yet had she known native hospitality to be so lacking. There was certainly nobody in that great hall, and yet—was she just allowing imagination to get the upper hand?—she felt a sense of hidden presences, felt somehow that people were close at hand, that eyes were watching her. And suddenly it seemed to her the glitter and glimmer of those ornate surroundings faded. Suddenly she had a sense of heavy, brooding mystery.

"Terry," she whispered.

But Terry was not heeding. His eager eyes, alight with his delight, were going round and round. Terry, in fact, seemed rather glad than otherwise to find himself alone. There was a sudden eager keenness in his face which made Nancy wonder. He turned to her.

"I say, what about having a look round on our own?" he suggested eagerly.

"But hadn't we better ring or call or something?"

"Ring?" he grinned. "What with? Call? Why? They must know we're here, so it's up to us to keep ourselves amused until they arrive. I—what's the matter?" he asked, as he saw a sudden startled change in her face.

"Terry, that—that tapestry. I—I saw it—move—"

He looked at her quickly. And then, as she pointed, he walked over to the tapestry, and without hesitation pulled it aside. A smooth painted wall met Nancy's gaze.

"Nothing else."

"Dreaming, Nancy!" Terry said pleasantly. "Wait a minute, let's have a squint through here."

He opened one of the doors. Cautiously he peered in. But Nancy repressed a shiver, and again sensed the heavy mystery of the place. She had seen that tapestry move, she felt certain.

"Nobody there," Terry announced, coming back to her. "Sort of study—with divans and cushions all over the floor. What's the matter, Nancy? You're looking quite pale."

"Don't be silly," she chided him. "Terry, don't—don't explore any more."

"Why not?" he asked carelessly. "I'm enjoying this." He studied the second door. "Let's take a peep in here."

He opened the door and peered in. Nervously, almost apprehensively, Nancy watched him, and then, gazing round again, suppressed a shudder. The next moment she almost screamed out.

For there, in the far corner where the statuesque figure of one of Egypt's ancient queens stood, she saw a movement. And even as her widening eyes watched she seemed to see the arm of the figure move upward and then drop.

"Terry! Terry!" she found herself shouting. He switched round. At once his expression became all concern as he saw her white face, her eyes fixed upon the moving figure. With a trembling hand she pointed.

"The statue!" she whispered. "It—moved, Terry. It—its arm moved!"

Then as he abruptly stepped across towards the statue she pulled herself together and darted to his side.

"I'll come," she said. "Terry, give me the camera. I'd like to get a picture of this place."

He nodded as he unslung the camera and handed it to her.

Together they made their way across the long, gleaming floor. Presently they stood before the statue, and again Nancy felt uncertain of herself as she gazed.

The statue was a good two feet away from the smooth wall. It was not made of bronze or marble, it was of wood—wood which had been richly carved and gloriously painted, the face so realistically tinted that it might have belonged to a modern doll.

Sweet, smiling and serene were the features of the woman it was supposed to represent, and there was a queer magnetic intensity about the green eyes which held Nancy spell-

bound. And then Terry, who had been questioning round the statue, came back to her side.

"I say, you must be jumpy," he said. "There's not a thing here. There—" And then he started as he gazed at the statue, his eyes riveted on a little panel of coloured hieroglyphic signs which was fixed to the plinth on which it stood.

"Uerta," he breathed.

"What?"

"A queen—an Egyptian queen," Terry explained, still staring. "Lived about three thousand years ago." His face was suddenly alive with excitement. "Then—then that must be the door. The door!" he breathed.

"Door?" she stuttered. "What door?"

But Terry was not even looking at her. He stepped forward once more, this time towards the niche that stood on the left of Queen Uerta's statue. Nancy saw him pause, saw him try the door. Then something attracted her own attention.

Unwillingly, as if magnetised, she found herself lifting her gaze to meet the green eyes of the queen, and something she saw there made her catch her breath. Steadily and mockingly those eyes were staring at her, fascinating her, seeming to chain her feet to the floor against her will.

And then those green eyes moved. She saw them flicker unmistakably, and felt a chill run down her spine. At the same moment she became aware that the door Terry had gone to explore was softly closing, and that Terry himself had disappeared.

There came a click, a slight scuffle, and Nancy came to herself with a start. Something was happening behind that door; the mystery of this house was at last coming to life. She rushed forward.

"Terry!" she cried, and caught the door and wrenched at it. It remained immovable.

"Terry!" she cried again.

There was no answer. Nancy was frightened now—frightened by the atmosphere of this house. Terry had gone—where? What lay behind that locked door which had so fascinated him? What had happened to him?

NANCY'S SEARCH



SHE hardly knew what she feared. Quite suddenly she hated the House of the Golden Moon, with its invisible occupants, its weird statues. She was sorry now that she had accepted the task to take photographs there, and wished herself a thousand miles away. But Terry!

Again she wrenched at the door. She banged upon it. But no sound came from beyond the stout crimson and gold studded woodwork. And then she stopped.

"English girl is in distress," a smooth, purring voice spoke behind her.

With a gasp Nancy wheeled. With a stare she eyed the figure before her, wondering where he had come from—a Bedouin youth of Terry's own age.

A strikingly handsome youth he was, with smooth, olive skin and teeth that shone ivory-white. But it was his eyes which caught and held Nancy's attention. Deep, liquid black eyes. Eyes that seemed to have fathomless depth, which seemed to be as unflickering, as unchanging, as full of mystery as the Sphinx itself.

He was richly dressed, a white silk robe falling gracefully from his strong, athletic shoulders over white European suit, and bands of gold around his headdress.

"Allow me to introduce myself," he said, his eyes still upon her. "I am Said Idris, son of the Omda in whose house you have come to reside. In the name of my father I give you welcome."

"Thank you," she said, and uncertainly

stared at him, fascinated yet uncertain of him. "My—my friend Terry has—has got locked in that room."

"Your friend, the young Master Farrow, he has gone," he said quietly.

"Gone?"

"Even so. At this moment my slaves are taking him back to the boat on which you and he arrived." He looked full at her, but there was no expression in those dark, compelling eyes. "You see, young English lady," he added softly, "Master Farrow had no business to go beyond that door. It is forbidden, you understand? Unfortunately we caught your friend in the act of stealing a small gold figure—"

"Terry? Stealing?" she breathed incredulously.

"Perhaps not intentionally." He shrugged. "Perhaps he was merely overcome by the curiosity of the foreigner, and wished to take the figure away as a souvenir. But the matter was too serious to be ignored, and so I had him taken away."

She stared at him. Her mind was in a whirl suddenly. She could understand that Terry might have caught up the figure in his curiosity, but not for a moment did she believe he had the faintest intention of stealing it. And now he had gone, while she—

She was alone and friendless in the House of the Golden Moon.

It was as if Said Idris read that last thought in Nancy's mind. He bowed a little.

"Master Farrow is gone, yes," he said. "Therefore, it shall now be my pleasure to act as your escort, fair English rose. This is my father's house, and here will be the centre of the Festival. You come to take photographs, I will see you get the best ones. You come to make merry, it shall be my pleasure to see that your every wish is granted."

Again he bowed. In a sort of dazed fascination Nancy stared at him, impressed by his words, yet chilled by his voice which never rose above the level on which it started, which had held no expression or warmth.

"Perhaps you would like me to guide you to your quarters?" he suggested.

Nancy gave a little shiver. If it had been possible she would have left there and then, relieved and glad to have put the mysterious house behind her. But it was not possible. The boat by this time would be gone, and there was no other village for fifty miles.

"Thank you," she said at last, and as he turned she followed him. Across the room he walked, and as presently he paused outside one of the crimson doors, it flew open, and a white-clad servant bowed his head as they both passed.

The house which five minutes before had been so deserted, now sprang to life. Voices chattered, the sound of laughter filtered through a vaulted window to her right. On the first landing of the staircase which she climbed with her escort another white-robed servant stood, his arms folded across his chest, and his head bowed as they passed.

Finally Said Idris reached another door, took a key from his pocket, and went in.

"This is yours," he said. "And see—" He led her to the window which looked down into a great white courtyard—a courtyard teeming with excited people, all gaily dressed and in high spirits. Among them stood a dozen beautifully groomed Nile oxen, whom they were tenderly draping with garlands and cloths.

"They make ready for the Feast of the Nile for to-night," Said Idris observed. "An excellent subject for a photograph, English rose."

Nancy thought so, too. For a moment she forgot her uneasiness, and leaning through the window, she poised her camera and carefully took three pictures. Then she turned again to find that Idris had been joined by another man—a tall, gaunt-looking man with a bristling black beard.

At once she knew him, if only from the photographs she had seen of him in Cairo.

"Said Ibn, the Omda," she breathed, and gave a little curtsy. "Your Excellency."

He laughed. Then in the English way he shook hands with her.

"I hope you will get good pictures," he said. "We are honoured, Miss Price, to have you in our home. You are free to come and go as you choose. Ask what you will, and it shall be yours. My son Idris here is to take care of your personal safety and your happiness. If you should require anything, English rose, pull the bell cord in yonder corner," added Said Idris, with a smile.

The two men bowed themselves out. Left alone, Nancy mechanically put aside her camera and looked about her. Luxurious yet comfortable was the room which had been allotted to her, with none of the sinister statues and moving tapestries which had made the hallway of the House of the Golden Moon so frightening. But she was not at ease. She was still anxious only to be out of the place.

"If only I knew for sure what had happened to Terry!" she murmured. For despite what Said Idris had told her, she had an uneasy feeling that Terry was not on his way back to Cairo. But how could she make sure?

"Anyhow, there's no harm in having a look round," Nancy told herself.

Deliberately she slung her camera over her shoulder, and again stole to the door.

For a moment she hesitated. Then she pulled it open. The marble landing on to which she looked was deserted now. With growing confidence she descended the cool steps, the haunting incense from downstairs seeming to draw her on. She reached the lower landing—also deserted. Presently she found herself in the great hall again.

Under the arch of the great doorway which screened the stairs she paused, gazing around her. Though the great hall was deserted, once again she had the chilly feeling that eyes were watching her.

Giving herself a little shake, she made for the door through which Terry had disappeared, but still she could not lose the feeling that she was not alone. As she approached the door she gazed steadily into the glassy green eyes of Queen Uerta, but this time there was no fancied movement, no flicker. She felt reassured.

Fearlessly she stepped to the door which had so fascinated Terry. She tried it, but it was locked, and as she stood gazing at it she thought she heard a sound. But when she spun round, her heart beating fast, nothing had moved.

"Oh, goodness, am I imagining things?" she thought.

Then suddenly she noticed something—a little round, white something lying on the floor just to her right.

With eyes widening in recognition she moved swiftly towards it and picked it up. It was a white bone button from Terry's drill coat.

How had it got here?

Deeper became her anxiety then. Terry might have dropped it before going through that door, of course. But she did not think so. In the silence that had been all around she would have heard it fall, she felt sure. Yet according to Said Idris, he had been taken straight away to the boat, and had not returned into the hall. But had Said Idris been telling the truth?

"He—he may have been kidnapped," Nancy whispered to herself.

It was a frightening, almost fantastic thought, but it was one that persisted. And it strengthened the resolution Nancy had already formed—not to leave this house until she had found out for sure what had become of her chum.

Yet why should they kidnap Terry, who, as far as she knew, they had never seen before, who had, in fact, been invited to the house as part of his travel scholarship award.

Nancy shook her head. All that she did

know was that Terry was definitely missing—in danger, perhaps.

She'd got to find him—must find him to be certain he was safe. That was her main task now.

And then, staring round with suddenly sharpened senses, she noticed one particular tapestry hanging on the wall. Though similar to the others which decorated other parts of the hall, this tapestry, unlike those others, hung in folds, suspended from a rod. Her heart jumped as she recognised it for a curtain screening some exit. The proximity of the button she had found to that curtain immediately suggested that Terry had gone that way. Without hesitating Nancy pushed the tapestry aside.

A long, dark passage, its walls glimmering whitely in the reflected light from the hall, met her gaze.

She tiptoed into the passage. It smelt cool and clean and faintly perfumed with the odour of lilies and incense. White limestone slabs vibrated gently under her feet, filling the passage with tiny echoes.

But for all its peace, her heart was racing. She felt again that she was being spied on, that her every movement was being followed. And—what was that? Surely she heard foot-steps behind her?

Abruptly she stopped and swung round. There was nothing to be seen.

But as she went on it seemed to her that soft footfalls in the rear echoed her own. Again she stopped sharply; in a flash wheeled round. Still nothing was to be seen.

She shuddered. Unconsciously she hurried her steps until she was almost running.

And then at last the passage showed daylight ahead, white-hot and sun-kissed. She hurried forward to find herself in what was obviously a private garden, set here and there with colourful flowerbeds, and in its centre a small grove of figs and tangerines which gleamed a polished brilliance in the sun's hot rays.

And she saw something else in the same moment. Something which caused her to pull up suddenly, which brought a cry of stifled excitement to her lips.

Footprints, three sets of them—two sets made by flat native sandals, the others with a definite pattern. And that pattern was the pattern on the soles of Terry's tropical shoes.

"I'm getting warm," she breathed. Her eyes followed the trail across the garden. The prints led to a small, square stone building with a crimson door which stood under the great wall in one corner. What sort of place was that? she wondered. Could it be that Terry had been taken there? Her pulses raced high with hope. And then again she paused.

She was being followed. She knew it now. But when she turned swiftly there was still no movement behind her.

She hurried on, and reached the grove of figs and tangerines. Still she was aware of pursuit, and suddenly, as a thought struck her, she paused. Whoever followed her must not guess her goal. If Terry were indeed a prisoner, it would not do for her to reveal that she was aware of the fact. Acting on impulse, she swerved suddenly into the grove, and there crouched down.

Now she would see who was following her. She waited, ears strained. No sound—no movement. Had her fear got the better of her after all? Was the strange House of the Golden Moon and its mysteries causing her to imagine non-existent things? And then, with a start and a sudden crimsoning of the cheeks she jumped up.

For behind her a quiet voice was speaking. "This is a strange place in which to take photographs of the Festival, English rose."

Nancy jumped to her feet, confused and dismayed. Before her, inscrutable as ever, and with no light of either mockery or amusement in his faithless eyes, stood the silk-robed form of Said Idris.

AT THE FESTIVAL



"I—I was admiring the garden," she found herself stammering.

He nodded.

"As you say, English rose. But there are better views than from here. Come with me, and I will find pictures for your camera that will gladden your heart."

Was he laughing at her? She could not say. But she fell in immediately with his suggestion.

She had no means of judging whether he had guessed her intention to visit the building in the corner of the garden. No further action or gesture of hers must give him any grounds for encouraging that idea. She gave her pleasantest smile.

"It will be an honour, Excellency," she murmured.

"It is I to whom the honour is granted," he answered gravely. "If you will follow me—"

She followed him through a door in the wall which led them into the courtyard. Here the colourful preparations for the Festival of the Nile were going ahead. Here indeed were the gayest of festivities. Here the subjects for a hundred pictures.

Nancy's camera clicked busily, first at a group of dancing girls, then at a jovial Nubian singer strumming on his guitar.

Then at several of the decorated oxen, looking rather bewildered in the white garments and garlands with which they had been bedecked.

It was all very, very colourful and thrilling, with no feeling of that sinister shadow which seemed to lurk in the interior of the house.

But all Nancy's secret thoughts were on the low building against the garden wall. She was still anxious about Terry.

She must get back to that building. Must!

Low in the west the sun was turning red. Night—the night of the great feast—would soon be here. Three great bonfires had been prepared in the courtyard, and, looking towards them, she saw that the guests were pouring oil upon the timber, ready for the spectacular conflagration which would signify the opening of the feast.

Servants were carrying huge trays of food and fruits from the house, and there was a fragrant scent of coffee in the air. And suddenly she saw the Omda himself step into the courtyard. He made a quick gesture to his son, who instantly responded.

She watched Idris as he went up to his father, saw the two engage in conversation a moment, and then both abruptly disappear into the house.

"Now!" she breathed. "Now's my chance!"

The shadows were falling swiftly. Palely a golden moon was rising in the sky. Near by was the garden gate through which Said Idris had conducted her. With a quick glance round Nancy had slipped through the opening, and found herself in the lonely garden.

Like a scarlet dome in an ocean of sand the sun was sinking rapidly. It seemed very quiet after the happy tumult of the courtyard. Eerie, too.

With heart thudding Nancy crept cautiously along by the wall, taking advantage of the deepening shadows until at last she had reached a group of date palms. There she paused.

Nobody was about. Not a thing stirred. For once she had a feeling that she was not being watched. Suddenly the sun was gone and the pale moon, now richly gold, was left riding triumphantly in the velvet-darkness of the sky.

Shimmering and spectral, the white building drew nearer—nearer. In the moonlight's glow she could make out every detail of it.

It was windowless, and guarded only by the heavy crimson door.

She approached the door, heart in her mouth. But that heart gave a sudden joyful

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Detective June's Most Thrilling Case

By PETER LANGLEY

A BID FOR ESCAPE

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 help her uncle track down a mysterious master-crook known as the Grey Falcon.

As a result of the Grey Falcon's scheming Noel was accused of himself being the Grey Falcon, and of stealing jewels from the near-by Manor, tenanted by Howard Wyndham, chairman of the college governors.

Miss Tuft, the Upper Fourth Form-mistress, was secretly in league with the Grey Falcon, and she suspected that one of her girls was really Noel Raymond's niece in disguise.

June discovered that the Grey Falcon and Howard Wyndham were one and the same. She also suspected that he was holding her Uncle Noel a prisoner.

Thanks to a trick of the Grey Falcon's, June's real identity was revealed. The headmistress would not listen to her and bade Miss Tuft escort June to the detention-room.

"HERE we are!"

With a grim smile Miss Tuft inserted the key in the lock of the detention-room, while Howard Wyndham, alias the Grey Falcon, kept a tight grip on the white-faced June.

"In you go," ordered the rascally Form-mistress, as she flung open the door.

June received a violent push, and as she went sprawling into the detention-room there came a sardonic laugh from the master-crook.

"Perhaps now you realise the folly of attempting to get the better of the Grey Falcon," he sneered.

Then—bang! went the door, and there came a click as the key was again turned in the lock.

Locked in! June collapsed on the bed and gave herself up to her tears. The shocks and humiliations of the past quarter of an hour had been too much for her, and sobs shook her as she realised her hopeless plight.

This was the end of all her plans and hopes. Now there could be no outwitting of the Grey Falcon. Despite everything, he had triumphed.

To-night he and his gang would discover the

mysterious secret left behind by the long-since dead Sir Richard de Coreville, and with their booty would board the yacht which awaited them off Smuggler's Isle. By this time tomorrow they would be on the high seas—never to return.

And Noel Raymond and his schoolgirl niece would be left behind to bear the brunt of all their crimes.

The thought was maddening, unbearable, and another convulsive sob shook June.

"Oh, what a fool I've been!" she gulped. "To be taken in by a forged message! To allow myself to be tricked like that! Oh, if only Uncle Noel were here! If only he were free—"

She broke off, another stab of fear piercing her heart.

What really had become of Noel Raymond? That he was a captive was clear—but where exactly had he been imprisoned?

"There are too many guests at the Manor—they'd never dare keep him there," June told herself, sitting up and dabbing at her eyes. "He must be hidden somewhere in those underground passages. Oh, if only I could get out of here! If only I could find him! Perhaps, then, even at this late hour, there'd be some way of turning the tables."

She blew her nose, and, jumping to her feet, paced up and down. Her emotions were under control now, for it wasn't like June to give way to despair for long.

"I've got to do something," she told herself. "I can't just sit here and let those crooks triumph, and let Uncle Noel be blamed!"

Her voice broke, and the tears again spurted to her eyes as she realised that unless she was able to do something Noel Raymond—the uncle she adored, and of whom she was so proud—would be condemned as a thief and a villain.

With an effort she smothered the new wave of emotion which threatened to overwhelm her, and, her white face suddenly set and grim, she resettled herself on the edge of the bed.

"It's no good just hoping for something to happen," she told herself. "If uncle's going

to be saved, I'm the only one who can do it. The first thing is to get out of here. Then, somehow, I've got to find where he's imprisoned."

Every minute was precious. If she was to act she must act quickly.

Taking off her left shoe she turned it upside down, and with fingers that trembled, twisted at the heel. Suddenly it swung round, like a hinged block, revealing an unsuspected cavity—and hidden there was a tiny file, and one or two miniature detective aids.

Noel Raymond always had his shoes fitted with such secret cavities. Thanks to them, in the past he had managed more than once to extricate himself from what had appeared to be a hopeless position. And it had been the proudest moment of June's life when her uncle had allowed her to have one of her shoes "doctored" in this way, and had presented her with a miniature set of escape tools. That act seemed to stamp her as a real detective; had, in her eyes, made her a fully fledged professional.

As yet she had never had any occasion to make use of the contents of the secret cavity, but now—

Eagerly she grasped the tiny, but business-like file, and crossed to the window.

For a moment she stood there, peering down at the quadrangle two stories below. Gathered there in excited groups was practically the whole school. June smiled wryly as she guessed what they were all talking about.

Herself!

What an unpleasant shock it must have been for Julie and all her other friends in the Upper Fourth when they had learnt of the supposed Dorothy Whiteman's downfall! And how maliciously delighted Cora Jarrod and her Fifth Form cronies must feel!

A sigh escaped the schoolgirl detective's lips, then resolutely she set to work, filing industriously at the thick iron bar. It seemed a hopeless task, and even if she succeeded in escaping, the prospect of turning the tables on the Grey Falcon was frighteningly slender.

First she would have to track down her uncle; then she would have to help him to escape. And even then her task would only be commencing. And time was against her. Every minute that passed made her task more difficult. For within a few short hours the Grey Falcon would be embarking on his last coup; before the morning he would be safely at sea with his booty.

June's lips quivered as she realised the almost overwhelming odds against her. But fiercely she persevered, rubbing the tiny file to and fro across the iron bar.

The afternoon seemed to speed by. Suddenly June heard the chink of crockery, and the sound of footsteps out in the corridor. Hurriedly she darted away from the window and seated herself on the bed. A few moments later the door opened, and a maid, carrying a tray, entered the detention-room.

"Your tea, miss," she announced.

She put the tray down on the table by the wall and withdrew, locking the door behind her.

The moment she was alone again, June leapt up, and, without so much as a glance at the teatray, started work once more on the bar. More than three-quarters of it had been filed through, and June felt her spirits rise as the file bit deeper and deeper into the iron.

"Another few minutes and I'll be able to wrench it away," she panted.

More furiously than ever she worked, and then, dropping the file, she grasped the bar with both hands, and tugged with all her strength. After an effort she managed to lever the bar aside, and anxiously she peered down into the quadrangle. It was deserted, and she smiled with relief.

"Now's my chance," she whispered. "The whole school will be at tea."

Flinging open the window she clambered up on to the sill, and there paused, glancing uneasily from the ivy-covered wall down to the ground far below.

It would be a nerve-racking climb, and if the ivy should tear away under her weight—

Resolutely she banished the frightening thought, and clutching at the tendrillike branches, she began the descent. Slowly, a foot at a time, she worked her way downwards, and at last, with a jolt that jarred her from head to foot, jumped down on to the gravel path.

"Done it!" she panted. "Now to search for Uncle Noel!"

One anxious look she gave around, then, seeing that the coast was clear, she went streaking across the quadrangle, heading for the old refectory.

THE SECRET WORKSHOP



"NOW where shall I start? These secondary passages seem to offer the best hope."

Standing in the circular chamber below the refectory, June let her torchlight rove around for a second or two, then groped her way along the tunnel which gave access to the

library at the Manor.

When she had explored this passage the previous night, she had noticed the entrances to two minor tunnels, and she decided to investigate these first.

There was a worried, desperate look in her eyes, for she knew how very short time was for her to accomplish all that she had in mind.

Any moment now the Grey Falcon and his gang might appear on the scene, come to search for Sir Richard de Coreville's secret, and if they should discover her here—

She gave an involuntary shiver, then gave a disappointed gasp, for the passage into which she had turned only ran in for a few yards, and then came to an end in a pile of tumbled rock. The roof had evidently fallen in at some time, completely barring all further progress.

"The other one's my only chance now," June told herself anxiously, and, her heart in her mouth, crossed to the narrow entrance on the opposite side of the main tunnel.

The beam of her torch was reflected from green, slimy walls. The air was thick and stuffy, and the uneven ground made her stumble.

She shivered, but forced herself to press on.

"It's just that I'm hungry, I expect," she gulped, remembering the tea she had not tasted. "Oh!"

She finished with an excited gasp, for abruptly she saw an ancient oak door before her.

Her spirits rose at once, and eagerly she clutched at the rusty latch, then pressed against the oaken panels.

Creakingly the door swung open, and breathlessly June called out:

"Uncle Noel! Uncle Noel! Are you there?"

But there came no response. As silent as the tomb was that underground room. Disappointed, yet feeling an involuntary quickening of the pulses, June strode forward and flashed around her torchlight.

She found herself standing in a low-ceilinged room hewn out of the solid rock—a queer, surprising room, furnished with benches, tiny lathes, and other unfamiliar pieces of apparatus.

Wonderingly June looked around.

"An underground workshop!" she exclaimed. "It must have been the Grey Falcon who fitted it up, but why—"

Breaking off, she crossed to one of the benches. A twisted piece of silvery metal

attracted her attention. It looked like the remains of a bracelet. Then she noticed a small steel furnace. She peered inside. At the bottom was a tiny scrap of golden metal, and on the bench near by two diamonds which winked up at her.

She drew in a startled breath. At last everything was clear to her. This was the secret workshop where the Grey Falcon "broke up" the proceeds of his many audacious robberies. Here diamond necklaces, silver cups, and other stolen valuables were melted down, altered and re-fashioned so as to enable the gang to sell them without their original appearance being recognised.

"No wonder the Grey Falcon didn't want any schoolgirls prowling about the refectory!" June told herself. "He was scared they might discover his secret. Why, he and his gang must have been operating this secret workshop for months! I suppose it was while they were exploring down here that they stumbled on Sir Richard's secret."

She frowned. What secret could that medieval knight have left behind him? Something very valuable, obviously, otherwise the Grey Falcon would not be contemplating giving up his profitable career of crime in this country.

And then June bit her lip. Startling though this discovery was, it hadn't helped her to find Uncle Noel? Where could he be imprisoned? She looked around more keenly, and then her heart leapt. Behind one of the benches was what looked like a faded old tapestry, and it was swaying slightly, as if behind it there was a strong draught.

Eagerly June darted forward, to pull aside the tapestry. Instantly a triumphant cry left her lips, for she found herself looking into a small inner room—a room without windows and ventilated only by gaping cracks in the rocky walls; and at the far end was a heap of straw, with something on it which moved convulsively.

"Uncle Noel!" called June. There came no reply, but the shadowy object moved again, and a gasp escaped her lips as the beam of her torch fell on a man's bound and gagged figure.

"Uncle Noel!" she gulped again. "Oh, thank goodness I've found you!"

And she dropped to her knees beside the helpless prisoner, hugging him in wild delight. In a moment she had torn off the gag which was tied with cruel tightness over the young detective's mouth, and a hoarse cry came from her uncle:

"June! By all that's wonderful—June! But what brought you here, my dear?"

Tremulously June smiled.

"I'll tell you in a moment," she panted. "But, first, let's get rid of these ropes."

And furiously she grappled with the knots.

A minute later Noel was free, and, as he rubbed his numbed limbs and stretched himself, June related all that had happened. Her uncle listened, first in surprise, then with admiration, and when she had finished he put a fond arm around her.

"You've done simply splendidly, my dear!" he declared. "You shouldn't have taken all those risks, but—well, in the circumstances, I mustn't reprove you." He smiled and gave her another hug. "You're a real detective now," he declared. "After all you've done, no one will be able to call you an amateur again—not even Aunt Janet."

June blushed, delighted at his praise and feeling very proud, then eagerly she regarded him.

"But how did you come to be captured, nunky?" she asked.

He gave a wry grimace.

"That's easily explained, my dear. As you know, I succeeded in decoding that message in the book from the school library. It gave details how to find Sir Richard de Coreville's lost treasure."

"Lost treasure?" whispered June, her eyes gleaming.

Noel nodded.

"Yes, it seems that that duel he fought with his brother wasn't only about his lady love. It also concerned the family collection of jewels which his brother had stolen and hidden down here. And that old book contained directions how to find it. By all accounts, there are enough diamonds and gold plate buried to make a dozen families rich for life."

June gave an excited whistle.

"Golly, no wonder the Grey Falcon's decided to give up his career in this country!" she exclaimed. "Once he'd laid hands on the treasure, he wouldn't have to bother about committing any more robberies."

"Exactly. But to get on with my story. After I'd written to you I decided to have a shot at finding the treasure myself. Unfortunately, I ran into the whole gang, and after a struggle was overpowered. And that's not all. The Grey Falcon found on me that old illustration, with the key to the secret on it. Fortunately, I'd destroyed the decoded message, so he didn't get that."

"But he's managed to decode it himself," June reminded him, "and to-night he's going to find the treasure. Then—"

She broke off, and they both stiffened, for faintly from the far distance came the echo of footsteps.

June drew in a startled breath.

"That'll be them," she said in a whisper. "They've come to start their search. Oh, nunky, what are we going to do? What can we do?"

There was a note of anguish in her voice, and Noel Raymond smiled and gave her a reassuring pat on the arm.

"Don't worry, dear. We'll find a way of outwitting them somehow," he said softly. "The first thing is to spy out the ground and see what exactly is happening. You stay here while I investigate."

"Nunky!" There was a world of reproach in June's voice. "You can't leave me behind!" she protested.

"But I can't risk you getting into more danger, my dear."

"Oh, don't be mean! You said yourself I was a real detective, nunky, so you can't ask me to stay here. I simply must go with you. Please!"

It was impossible to resist her appeal, and so her uncle nodded, although it was a trifle reluctantly that he led the way out into the secret workshop.

"All right. But keep behind me," he whispered. "And run for it if I give the word. They'll be armed, you know, and they're double our number."

Her heart thumping, her face flushed with excitement, June tiptoed after her uncle. Out of the workshop he led the way, then down the long, winding tunnel. The sounds ahead grew more distinct, and when they regained the main tunnel they saw an orange splash of light ahead.

"Don't move," whispered Noel.

Hardly daring to breathe, June peered over his shoulder. It was an amazing sight which met their eyes. Farther up the tunnel, very near the stone steps which gave access to the library of the Manor, were gathered the Grey Falcon, the plump butler, and James Needham, the other male member of the gang. The only one missing was Miss Tuft.

All three crooks were in shirtsleeves, and by the light of flickering oil-lamps they were digging—digging with desperate eagerness in the floor of the passage.

Noel frowned as he watched, and in anguish June regarded him.

"They are after the treasure," she breathed.

"Oh, we must stop them getting away with it somehow, nunky!"

For a few moments her uncle said nothing, and anxiously June stood there, listening to

the clang of the spades. Suddenly Noel Raymond gave a nod of decision.

"There's only one thing for it," he said. "You must go for help, June."

"Help! But no one will believe me if I try to tell them what's happening!" June protested.

Her uncle frowned.

"We've got to try to convince them of the truth. It's our only hope," he declared. "Wait a minute while I write a note for the police-inspector at Port Craig. If I word it carefully he will at least be curious enough to investigate." Taking out his pocket-book, he scribbled quickly; then, folding the note, he handed it to the schoolgirl detective. "Take this to the police station," he ordered.

June took the note, but there was an anxious look in her eyes as she surveyed the young detective.

"But what are you going to do?" she whispered.

"Try to get across to Smuggler's Isle. That yacht may be deserted. If so, I may find a way of putting it out of action. At least, I'll try to delay their getaway. Hurry now, there's a good girl."

June hated to leave her uncle. But there was not a moment to be lost; so, after giving him a quick kiss, she tiptoed out into the main tunnel.

The Grey Falcon and his men were too intent on their digging to notice the slim figure that flitted from out of the side tunnel and went stealing down towards the circular chamber farther on.

There June paused, flinging a last anxious look backwards. She was thinking of Noel Raymond, and suddenly that strange premonition which had warned her of impending danger in the past seized her, and involuntarily she found herself shivering.

"Suppose the police just laugh at uncle's note!" she muttered. "Suppose they decide to take no action! Suppose—"

She shivered again as she thought of the dangerous task which Noel Raymond had set himself; then, forcing down her fears, she made her way to the steep flight of stairs which gave access to the refectory.

Clambering through the trapdoor, she gained the stage, then groped her way through the long, dusty theatre. The great double doors creaked as she pushed them open, and as she gained the open she saw that it was beginning to get dark.

Still clutching her uncle's note, she went hurrying up the path, and then abruptly pulled up. On the main drive a taxi stood, its engine ticking over. The muffled-up driver was engaged in strapping in place three bulging suitcases, and instantly June's thoughts turned to the treacherous Upper Fourth Form-mistress.

"That'll be Miss Tuft's luggage," she told herself. "She's leaving the school this evening, and—"

She finished with an alarmed gasp, for suddenly a foot crunched on the gravel behind her, and at the same moment there came an angry shout in a shrill, all-too-familiar voice.

Round swung June, to find her worst fears confirmed.

There, confronting her, was Miss Tuft, a furious look of surprise on her face.

A CAPTIVE OF THE GREY FALCON



"So you've escaped, have you? Well, what have you been up to? Answer me, you little spy?"

Glaring, the Form-mistress came striding across the path. Boldly June faced her.

"Don't you dare touch me!" she snapped. "I'm not afraid of

you, so don't you think it! Besides, there's the taximan to help me, if necessary."

"Taximan!" Miss Tuft gave a scornful laugh. "You little fool! He's in the Grey Falcon's pay!"

June's defiant manner disappeared instantly, and, as she remembered the note in her hand, she turned. Her duty was clear. She must run for it—must carry out Uncle Noel's orders. But she had not taken two steps before there came a grim shout from behind:

"Come back! Come back, or I'll shoot!"

June's eyes dilated, and an icy shiver ran down her spine as she saw what was in the treacherous Form-mistress' levelled hand. A revolver! Seeing the alarmed look in her eyes, Miss Tuft laughed.

"You see, I've got the whip-hand," she said. "It would be too bad if I had to injure you, wouldn't it? Come along! Quick march!"

June licked lips which had suddenly gone dry.

Helpless, not daring to disobey, June obeyed, and her uncle's note dropped unseen from fingers that had suddenly gone nerveless and cold.

Watched sardonically by the waiting taximan, June crossed to the vehicle and, at another word from her captor, clambered into the back. Miss Tuft sat down beside her, there came a high-pitched hum, and the taxi rolled forward.

Down the carriage drive, past the porter's lodge, and out through the school gateway; then, gathering speed, it went chugging down the country lane.

June, that revolver still pressed against her side, with an effort stifled a sob. Once again she had allowed herself to be outwitted. Now she was a prisoner once more. But it was not her own predicament, unenviable though that was, which worried her. It was the knowledge that she had failed Noel Raymond. How did things fare with him? And what would he do when the desperately needed help failed to materialise?

The grim, tense figure at her side gave a chuckle.

"I hope you like the sea," she said.

"What d'you mean?" demanded June.

"Well, you'll be seeing a lot of it during the next few weeks, you know."

"You mean—"

"But, of course, you will come with us. You know too much to be allowed to go free. A long, quiet voyage to South America—that will be nice, won't it?"

And Miss Tuft gave another triumphant laugh.

The taxi sped on, and now June saw, through eyes misted with despair, that they were heading for a gap in the cliff, bowling down a steep slope which gave access to a deserted cove. Suddenly the beach came into sight, and with squealing brakes the car jolted to a standstill.

"All right. We're here. Get out!" ordered Miss Tuft. "And no tricks, remember!"

Dispiritedly June obeyed, and, as she clambered down to the pebbly beach, she saw three figures gathered at the water's edge. They were the Grey Falcon and the two other members of the gang. They were looking across the mirror-like sea to where, a mile or more away, in the shelter of the small, rocky island known as Smuggler's Isle, a large yacht lay at anchor. On hearing the taxi drive up, however, the Grey Falcon looked round, and he gave a startled shout as he saw Miss Tuft's companion.

"Where did that girl come from?" he demanded, glowering at June.

The rascally Form-mistress explained, and the Grey Falcon gave a savage snort.

"Then she'll be the one who helped Noel Raymond to escape!" he exclaimed.

Miss Tuft's face went white.

(Continued on page 176.)

Sally & Co. Were Delighted When The Stranger Offered To Lend Them His Magnificent Car. Little Did They Realise The Reason For His Apparently Generous Offer



The Merrymakers at College

By DAPHNE GRAYSON

A FRIEND IN NEED

"LOOKS as if we've been let down!" Sally Warner said in exasperation. "If the car's not here pretty soon, Don, we'll have to see about hiring another!"

"Or else give up a jolly fine invitation, with our apologies!" groaned Don Weston. "Where are we going to hire another car to take us all the way to the Mexican Border?"

"They said the car would be here at this cafe sharp at eight a.m., and now it's after nine!" fumed Johnny Briggs.

"Shouldn't be surprised if they loaned it out to someone else and have left us high and dry," put in Fay Manners.

The four chums were sitting on the terrace of the Atlas Cafe, on the outskirts of Roxburgh City. Their luggage stood beside their table, packed for the trip, and they had been looking forward to an exciting week-end party on the border, at the house of a distinguished college professor, who made a point of inviting co-eds from all over the States.

An unbroken run of success, at games as well as study, had won Sally and her chums the coveted invitation. But now it seemed that disappointment faced them. The car they had hired for the journey had failed to turn up!

"We're too late for the train," Sally said wrathfully. "It's got to be a car or nothing."

"Then if you ask me"—and Don's gaze swept along the empty road—"it's nothing!"

During their conversation a young man, seated alone at a near-by table, had been listening to the chums' dilemma, a frown on his face. Then, as if suddenly making up his mind, he rose and sauntered across to them.

"Say, youngsters, I couldn't help hearing your difficulty," he said genially. "I reckon I could help you, and at the same time you could help me. You want to get to the border, do you?"

"Yes!" The chums gazed up at him eagerly. "Driving yourselves?"

"That was the idea," Don said with a wry smile, "but we've nothing to drive!"

The stranger stroked his chin, and turned ruminatively towards a sumptuous car drawn

up by the sidewalk—a huge yellow roadster, its great bonnet covered by a handsome rug.

"Queer thing is," he murmured, "my difficulty is just the opposite to yours. I've got business to do at the border; my car's needed up there—but I've got no time to drive there!" And he paused. "You're not afraid of strange cars or you wouldn't have hired one. Ever driven a Bronx?" he asked.

"I did once, sir—it was perfect!" And Don's eyes rested upon the yellow Bronx, while his chums held their breath.

"Right!" And the stranger turned back to the chums. "Tell you what I'll do. I'll loan you my car to run you up to the border—and you'll deliver it to the address I'll give you, and this package with it!" He took from his pocket a small sealed parcel. "They're waiting for this at the other end. The address is Creek Ranch-house, a couple of miles outside Chawiki. Got that?"

While Don made a note of the address, Johnny excitedly took charge of the package. The chums' grateful thanks for the loan of the car were waved aside by its genial owner.

"You're more than welcome," he said. "You've saved me a journey and valuable time into the bargain. That's everybody satisfied! Now, I'll give you a hand with your traps—you can't start too soon for my liking!"

Sally & Co. could hardly believe their luck. In a few moments they were gliding away from the Atlas Cafe in the magnificent Bronx, Don at the wheel, heading for the great open highway and the Mexican border.

"Oh boy, oh boy! Three cheers for the hired car not turning up!" sang Johnny in ecstasy, sinking back in a cushioned seat beside Don, while the girls reclined at the back.

Johnny took turns at the wheel with Don, and gradually the miles rolled away behind them.

It was noon when the sight of a snug little farmhouse, nestling away in a copse, reminded Sally that she felt hungry.

"Don, let's stop there for lunch!" she cried. "Could we do with farm eggs and cream and luscious apple-pie?"

"Could we!" grinned Johnny.

Don swung the car round to the farmhouse, and merrily the chums got out. Johnny

cheerfully rattled on the door, and a few moments later the farmer's wife opened it.

"Good-morning—we just couldn't pass this sweet house of yours! We're hoping you can give us lunch? There are four of us!"

Sally brought the words out with a rush. It was the regular custom in the States to call for meals at wayside farms, and Sally & Co. had only met with the warmest hospitality so far. But this woman seemed an exception. She frowned impatiently.

"I wasn't expecting any strangers," she grumbled. "Why didn't you phone earlier? We're on the telephone—Beadle's Farm!"

"But we've come all the way from Roxburgh, you see," Sally explained, feeling rather rebuffed.

"Well, I don't know; you'd better wait. I'll ask my husband."

And she flounced into the house, leaving the chums standing outside, feeling uneasy as they saw the curtain move in the kitchen window as the farmer looked at them. Sally looked at Don & Co. with a grimace, and all of them were about to go, to seek a better welcome elsewhere.

But at that moment Mrs. Beadle returned—quite changed.

"Certainly! Will you come in?" she said, smiling nervously as if to make up for her former surliness. "There's hot broth, a beautiful roast duck, and plenty of my own homemade lemon pie. It won't be long, if you'll just make yourselves comfortable."

Only too eagerly now, she ushered Sally & Co. into her best room, and settled them all in easy chairs.

"I'll be as quick as I can," she said, bustling to the door. "You must be hungry after your long drive, I'm sure!"

The chums blinked as she went out, quite overcome by her new attitude.

"They're like that, these country people," Johnny said with a knowing air. "Very changeable!"

Sally chuckled. "I think Farmer Beadle saw the car, and it impressed him!" she said. "Good old Bronx!"

"We'll know all about it when we get the bill," grinned Don.

It seemed an endless wait before any food appeared. Sally amused herself by studying the Beadles' relations, whose photos cluttered every spare corner of the spotless parlour. Their stolid faces and forbidding black dresses did not, however, assuage her hunger. At last, however, Mrs. Beadle appeared with a tureen of excellent broth.

"Finish it all up if you can, please!" she urged them, placing it on the table. "My oven's a bit slow, and I'm afraid the roast isn't quite ready."

"That's all right, thanks—no hurry, Mrs. Beadle!" said Sally, already serving out the steaming soup.

"Our time's our own!" breathed Johnny, drawing his chair eagerly to the table.

"Not quite, Johnny!" Don reminded him. "We've got some business to do, you know. Remember what you've got in your pocket!"

Mrs. Beadle looked interested, but turned and hurried out to the kitchen. Another interminable wait followed after the broth had been finished. An appetising odour of roast duck wafted from the kitchen. But it remained in the kitchen.

"Gee, I wish she'd bring something in—I'm still hungry!" sighed Sally.

"And just look at the time! We've been here an hour and—" exclaimed Fay, then broke off as the farmer's wife came in at last with the duck.

It was well worth waiting for, but it hadn't come straight from the oven, and Sally wasn't taking any chance of more delay.

"Is the lemon-pie cold, Mrs. Beadle?" she asked brightly.

"I was going to warm it up for you—"

began Mrs. Beadle.

"Don't bother, thanks! We'd like it cold," beamed Sally. "Then it will save you trouble and we can be getting along!"

That speeded things up a little. Mrs. Beadle was rather slow in clearing the duck-plates away, and there was much muttering in the kitchen before she appeared with the cold lemon-pie. But then it came—and vanished almost as quickly as it came—and Sally got out the road-map and studied it while Don went to the door and called for the bill.

"Tell 'em it's not ready yet!" they all heard the farmer say quickly to his wife.

Wondering at his tone, Don looked oddly at the others, then called again.

"Let's have the bill now, Mrs. Beadle—please! We've got to be off!"

There was a heavy step in the passage. Next second he started back with a jump. So did the chums. Farmer Beadle approached the doorway, holding a shotgun in his hands, its gleaming barrel pointed menacingly at them.

"You're not going out of here, young folks!" he said harshly, and jerked his gun towards the back of the passage. "That's your way! March!"

Sally and Fay stood stupefied. Don gave an angry shout:

"Look here, what's all this about?"

The farmer kept them squarely covered with the gun, barring their escape to the front door.

"I'm not arguing with you—and I'm not bluffing!" he barked out sharply. "Step the way I told you—and step lively!"

Don and Johnny made a fierce move forward to seize the gun from him. Sally saw the relentless look on the farmer's face and gave a warning cry. But the boys had seen that look, too, and their hands went up helplessly.

"Now march—all of you!" Farmer Beadle rasped. "Don't try any tricks, or it'll be the worse for you!"

With the gun levelled at their backs, Sally & Co. were marched through the kitchen, past Mrs. Beadle, who stood watching them with hard eyes and grim, tight lips. Then out into the yard, Farmer Beadle driving them before him to the open door of a barn.

"Get in!" He gave a threatening jerk with his gun. "In there, the lot of you!"

Sally and her chums turned rebelliously, but his finger was on the trigger, his stern eyes full of purpose, and they could only back helplessly into the barn. Instantly the heavy door was slammed upon them, imprisoning them in the darkness, and the key was turned in the lock.

A STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE



"HE'S a crook! This is—this is kidnapping!" Sally cried as she beat wildly at the locked door.

"He saw the car, and—"

panted Don.

"Thought we'd got money," put in Johnny. "Thinks he can hold us here till our people pay up!"

Fay suddenly remembered the parcel they were to deliver.

"Johnny! That parcel—that package the owner of the car gave you! Have you got it all right?"

A gasp of understanding burst from the others. Johnny thrust his hand in his pocket.

"O.K.—of course I've got it!" But his voice held a note of relief. "Gosh, you don't think that crook farmer's after that, do you? You don't think it—it's valuable?"

"It must be valuable, or the owner wouldn't have loaned us such an expensive car to deliver it!" Sally observed. "We've run into a trap! The farmer knew something about it—so did the woman! They're both in this!"

"Yes, it's this package they're after. But they're not going to get it," said Johnny determinedly.

Sally was feeling her way around, trying to find a means of escape.

"Ouch!" she gasped, colliding with Don. "What are you doing, Don?"

"I'm trying to find something to force the door." And he went on peering behind sacks and boxes that lined the walls.

Sally's eyes began to grow accustomed to the dark, and now she made out a square frame in the back wall of the barn, hinged at the top. It had once been a window-flap, but now it was heavily nailed and boarded up.

"There's something here!" burst out Don, rummaging behind the sacks of swedes. "A bit of iron that might be useful!"

It was a broken scythe he pulled out. Its blade was just a rusty stump, too flimsy to tackle the door. But Sally's gaze flashed again to the nailed-up window-frame.

"If you boys could prise open that flap," she said breathlessly, "Fay and I could keep up a racket at the door, so that they won't hear you. It's about our only chance!"

While the boys got busy in the rear of the barn the girls kicked and thumped at the door, drowning every sound they made. Farmer Beadle's rasping voice only answered once. It sounded muffled and a long way off through the stout door, and they could not hear his words.

The girls' fists ached with thumping on the door, but at last a gleam of daylight trickled into the barn. The boys had prised open one board in the window-frame. Ten minutes later a second board was torn away by Don. The way of escape was open!

Sally held her breath and wriggled out through the gap. She dropped down into the stackyard. Seen or unseen, she didn't wait to look. She made a wild dash for the car and started up the engine, to be followed only a moment later by the rest of the chums. Tense and breathless, they tumbled in.

"Hi! Stop! Stop!"

Sally heard Farmer Beadle's furious voice, and with a trembling foot stepped on the accelerator. The car shot off with a jerk through the gates, swerved on to the road, and skimmed away from the irate farmer.

Breath failed them till they were out on the open highway again, speeding along the vast white road to the border. Even then they hadn't recovered from their stupefaction.

"They looked so prim and proper, that farmer and his wife!" Fay said dazedly. "Who'd have thought they were crooks?"

"Amazing how they can get away with it!" marvelled Sally. "Living there on a farm just like any respectable people. And on the telephone, their number in the directory, if you please—so Mrs. Beadle said!"

"You know, we'll have to report this," Johnny said excitedly, "at the first police-box!"

"Not now, Johnny—we've lost time enough!" protested Don. "We'll have to go out of our way and deliver that package you're minding, anyhow, before we can get along to Professor Richmond's. And we've never stayed at the professor's before. It's going to look bad being as late as we are!"

"Right-ho!" agreed Johnny. "Only I'm responsible for the package, and I'm going to see that the affair's reported!"

Sally drove for a while, then handed the wheel over to Don and engrossed herself in his road-map. Occasionally she gazed about her at the passing landscape, then suddenly spoke jubilantly:

"Don! We're coming to Professor Richmond's place now! It's down this next lane on the left—through the woods!"

Don nodded and swung the car round to the left, then drew up at the edge of the lane under the trees, and turned to the others.

"I say, don't you think one of us should let the professor know we're here before we go on to the other place and deliver that package?"

"I'll go!" nodded Johnny, jumping out of the car. "You wait here for me!"

Sally chuckled as he ran off towards the

house. Johnny had figured in a drama, and she could trust him to give a highly dramatic account of it to their host.

Glad of a chance to stretch their legs, the rest of the chums got out of the car and sauntered back to the high road.

Excited voices struck upon their ears. A lorry driver was leaning down from his seat talking to a group of local men.

"The police are out everywhere watching the road for them! You'll know the car if you see it," he was saying impressively. "A swell yellow Bronx with four of them in it!"

"Four?" whistled his listeners, while Sally and her chums looked at each other in sudden uneasiness.

"Four proper young desperadoes—and two of 'em girls!" the driver went on dramatically. "A farmer caught 'em at the point of his gun and locked them up while he phoned the police. And even then they broke out and got away!"

Sally & Co. gazed at each other, horrified. At the driver's next words they drew swiftly back, under cover of the trees.

"They're masquerading as college students, and they know how to put on the bluff, too. Clever ain't the word for it. It's not only the car they've stolen! They've got away with a packet of jewellery—the famous Countess Roma jewels!"

The truth dawned upon the chums. The genial stranger who had loaned them the car was a crook and a thief!

The car was stolen property! That package contained stolen jewellery! He had given both into their charge, in the cunning hope that they might succeed better than he could in getting to the border and delivering his spoils to a confederate!

"Sally! We've been—we've been tricked!" Fay gasped.

Sally tugged feverishly at their arms. All three rushed back to the car, jumped in, and drove it deep into the bushes, where its tell-tale yellow body was hidden from the view of any casual passer-by.

"That hides the car, and there it stays—for the present!" Sally said in relief. "If those people had seen it, we'd have spent our weekend in gaol! They don't know us!"

"Neither does the professor—nor any of his party!" gasped Don. "Gosh, we're in a ticklish spot till we've cleared this up with the police!"

"The police will fall on our necks when we roll up," Sally said breathlessly. "We've saved the car and the jewels, too. What luck—what priceless luck that we found out in time!"

"But meanwhile all the lot of us are under suspicion—as runaway crooks!" Don said in a worried voice.

"I know that! We've got to grab Johnny out of the house first!" Sally panted. "Can't do anything without Johnny—he's got the package!"

All three broke into a run.

"How are we going to get in?" wondered Fay. "If they've heard the news and they see us—"

"They're not going to see us!" Sally burst in. "We want Johnny, we want him to dash straight along with us to the police! We'll do our explaining afterwards! I'll pop in and get him without anyone seeing me!"

Skirting round the woods, they made for the back of the house. There was no door left conveniently open. But there was an open window on the ground floor.

"You two wait outside—here in this shrubbery!" whispered Sally, and quickly climbed in through the open window.

Lightly she dropped down into a deserted passage. Voices echoed from a room at the end, and the clink of china—obviously the reception-room. Sally tiptoed forward and peered through the slit of the curtains.

She could see everyone in the room quite plainly. Students of different colleges were

everywhere. Joking with them was a burly man in white flannels—clearly their host, the professor. But Sally stared bewilderedly. There was no sign of Johnny!

A servant moved inquiringly into the opposite doorway, and the professor spoke to him:

"No more arrivals yet, Henry?"

"No, sir. No one for the last hour!"

"Right-ho, then we won't wait, Henry! You may serve tea!"

Sally drew back from the curtains, her head awhirl. Johnny wasn't here! No one had arrived within the last hour! Then—where was he? What had happened to Johnny?

TO THE RESCUE



A LOW whistle sounded urgently from outside.

Sally darted back to the window.

"What's the matter?" she hissed.

"Cave, Sally! Gardener coming!" Don whispered rapidly.

Don pointed agitatedly across the garden.

"The gardener's over there," he explained, "and he's looking this way. Down, Sally! Quick!"

But he was too late! Sally had already shown herself at the window. She could only scramble out hastily, while the oncoming gardener paused, staring at her blankly.

Sally recognised him uneasily. He was one of the men who had been listening to the lorry-driver!

"Where's Johnny?" Fay asked her feverishly.

Sally shook her head.

"He's not in the house—he hasn't been inside the house!"

"Wh-what?" stuttered Don. "B-but we saw him go! And he's got that package—"

"He's not there! Come on, we can't talk here! That man's staring at us!" And agitatedly Sally hustled them along towards the gate. Once through the gate they took to their heels and fled up the wooded lane. Behind came a sudden, excited shout.

"Hey! Look, pards! The yellow car's hidden here! The stolen car!"

"Oh golly! They've found it! Scoot for the woods!" And breathlessly Sally plunged into the woods, Don and Fay following.

How long Sally & Co. ran they didn't know. It was a road cutting through the woods that finally pulled them up. A private road, lined with empty trucks from a haulage depot.

The chums dived behind the trees, panting for breath.

"Wh-what could have happened to Johnny?" Don voiced the question that was in the minds of all three.

"There's only one thing that could have happened!" groaned Sally suddenly. "He was caught by one of those crooks before he got into the house. They'd know Johnny was carrying the package. The chap who lent us the car got in touch with them as soon as we left Roxburgh—and, of course, he'd tell them to watch the professor's house! He heard us saying about fifty times that we were going there!"

"Then—then they've got the package, after all!—The Countess Roma's jewels!" Fay said faintly.

"They've got Johnny as well. They'd take him with them so that he couldn't talk," Sally said slowly. "We know where they've taken him, because we've got the Chawiki address that crook gave us. But how are we going to get there?"

"How?" gasped Don. "Gosh, if we venture anywhere now with this hue-and-cry after us—"

"I know. But we've got to do it!" panted Sally. "I don't care about the jewels—it's Johnny I'm worried about. We've got to rescue him somehow!"

It was a maddening sight to see one of those empty trucks on the road chalked with its destination: "Chawiki." The very place where they so desperately needed to go! But the driver was standing by the bonnet, awaiting his orders, and they dared not even move lest he saw them and perhaps recognised them as the wanted fugitives!

The chums watched the man as he pitched empty crates on to that truck. What mockery! And then—

The driver was called away—just for one brief moment!

Sally glanced at the chums. No need to tell them what to do. In a flash they had leapt aboard and were hidden inside the empty crates.

Only just in time. The driver returned, and, unsuspectingly, he clambered up to his seat. The engine throbbed. There was a jolt as the truck jerked forward. Then it steadied, picked up speed, and went thundering away on the road to Chawiki.

It was a long and tiring journey. Sally & Co. peeped warily out from their crates from time to time to see where they were. Signposts told them at last that they were drawing near to Chawiki—near to the Mexican border.

Then all at once the truck began slowing down. Sally took another quick peep out, then bobbed back into the crate again in utter dismay.

They had reached a weighbridge. A frontier officer stood outside his little hut, waiting to weigh the truck and ensure that it was indeed empty and carrying no contraband over the border!

"Three tons exact, counting me!" said the driver as he handed his waybill to the officer.

Sally's heart sank to her shoes as she felt the weighbridge wobble under the wheels of the truck.

"Hi, something wrong here!" came sharply from the officer. "You're three hundred pounds over weight!"

"What? Nonsense!" shouted the driver. "I weighed-in at the depot and—"

"There's the figure and you can see it for yourself!" interrupted the officer coldly.

Sally & Co. felt the truck shake as the driver stormed down from his seat. All three gave themselves up for lost.

"If there's any mistake, then the depot made it—not me!" he cried. "Where's your phone? Let me ring them up and—"

The chums heard him march into the hut. In one dive the three of them shot out from their crates! Another moment and they were tearing away across-country without daring even to glance behind them!

The chums heard the officer shout, but they rushed on wildly through the pampas.

"We're near enough the place. It's here somewhere!" Sally panted.

"The crooks' place?" gasped Don.

"Yes! Creek Ranch-house—a couple of miles outside Chawiki! It can't be far!"

They came upon the place suddenly—so suddenly that they would have missed it had their eyes not been straining for every out-of-the-way and unlikely spot. The ranch-house was buried in a deep, sunken road that was more like a gully than a creek.

Cautiously they drew away from the creek, lest they should be seen from the house.

Choosing a less conspicuous spot, the chums crept down into the creek and stole along to the yard behind the house. Noiselessly they edged the gate open and tiptoed inside, peering swiftly, warily, into each of the windows.

Suddenly Fay, a little ahead, gave a cry.

"Johnny!"

Sally and Don were at her side in an instant, peering through the window. Johnny was sitting bound to a heavy wooden chair, his arms and legs tightly trussed, a knotted scarf tied round his mouth.

(Please turn to the back page.)

Prove It?

The SKATING GIRL'S MYSTERY MASCOT



By MARIE MATHESON

THE STOLEN PORTRAIT

SHEILA MAYNE lived with her family at the little Canadian town of Juniper Bend.

The "Bluebirds," the skating club to which Sheila belonged, were anxious to do well in the forthcoming ice carnival and impress Lee Farrell, a film producer, who would be present.

Sheila's rival, Corinne Lefevre, was being tutored by Karl Olsen, who boarded with the Maynes. He and Corinne seemed curiously interested in an owl totem necklet which Sheila had found, and which Red Eagle, a young Redskin, told her to guard closely. He also offered to help her improve her skating.

While spending a week-end at Larry Green's home with the rest of the Bluebirds, Sheila discovered a portrait of an ancestor of Red Eagle's. She believed this to be a clue to the mystery, and, ski-ing across to the wigwam where Red Eagle was camping, told him about the portrait.

Sheila arranged that Red Eagle should visit the house to see the portrait. He came, and Sheila left him to carry out his mission. Later that evening it was discovered that the portrait had been ripped out of its frame, and Corinne immediately blamed Red Eagle.

"THE picture! It's been stolen!"

Sheila stared, quivering in amazement and dismay at the empty picture-frame from which the portrait of Red Eagle's ancestor had vanished.

On all sides of her shouts of anger and excitement arose.

"We'll get the villain!" shouted Larry Green's father. "Baines, call the police! Say it's urgent. Lock all the doors. No one must leave the house."

Amid the clamour on all sides Corinne Lefevre's shrill voice rang out.

"I knew it!" she cried. "This is Red Eagle's work! He was here, thanks to Sheila Mayne. Look, here's the proof he has been in the house and talking to her."

She held up the eagle's feather, her face flushed with malicious triumph as she gave Sheila a challenging glance. The faces of Mr.

Green and his guests turned towards her, and Sheila felt herself go crimson with dismay.

"What's that you're saying about Sheila?" demanded Mr. Green sharply. "What has she to do with the thief?"

Corinne swiftly told him.

"She knew Red Eagle was a bad hat—a wanted person. Yet she invited him here. And now you see what's happened. She ought to be arrested as an accomplice."

"Is this true, Sheila?" asked Mr. Green, in amazement. "Did you actually send an invitation card to—this young scoundrel?"

"Yes," Sheila admitted. "He is my friend. I've never known him or seen him do anything wrong. I don't believe what Corinne says."

Larry intervened, with a sympathetic look at Sheila. He was still her friend, Sheila saw, though he doubted her wisdom in associating with the mysterious young Redskin.

"I think Sheila was foolish asking him here, sir," he said quickly. "She's been more sinned against than sinning. It'll be quite a while before the police get here, and the robbery must have happened only a quarter of an hour ago or so. We've got to try to catch the thief."

He waved a hand at his boy pals of the Bluebirds.

"Get your skis and sticks!" he ordered. "We'll go out on the hunt while the others search the house again."

His father nodded approval, and Larry led the way through the broken french window. Instantly he gave an excited shout:

"There're plenty of ski-tracks here. They lead right up to the window, and there's blood on the snow. It looks as if the thief hurt himself breaking the window or in making his getaway. Hurry, boys!"

Off the boys set to follow the ski-marks, while Mr. Green and many of the other guests began to search the house. Sheila, left alone, gave a heavy sigh. She was positive that Red Eagle was innocent. But if this was so, then whom could the thief be?

Suddenly she heard a knock on the front door, and her heart contracted. Had the police arrived already? Then, as she looked out of the doorway of the ball-room, she saw whom the visitor was.

"Karl Olsen!" she exclaimed.

Corinne's skating coach was dressed in full ski-ing kit, and he was stacking his skis and a pair of somewhat hefty bamboo ski-poles in the stand reserved for them. He was flushed as if with a hard run, and, as he removed one of his gauntlets, Sheila saw that his left hand was roughly bandaged as if he had, recently received an injury.

A sudden suspicion gripped her. Suppose Olsen had been the thief! She knew that he was in league with Corinne, and that that girl for some reason had not wanted her—Sheila—to discover the secret of the missing portrait.

"Yes, I had a bad fall coming here," Olsen was saying to the girls who had crowded round him. "But never mind my injury; it's nothing to worry about. What's all this I hear about a robbery?"

They started to tell him, but Sheila did not listen. There was a thoughtful frown between her eyes. She felt convinced that Olsen, and not Red Eagle, had been the thief; but if this was so, where had he hidden the stolen picture? He was only carrying a small rucksack, and he would have ruined the picture by folding it up and stuffing it in there. On the other hand, there had not been time for him to have smuggled the picture out of the grounds.

As Sheila strove unsuccessfully to grapple with the problem, Corinne stepped forward and took the coach by the arm.

"Come with me, Karl. I'll see to your hand," she said. "It wants cleaning and bandaging properly."

She led him upstairs, but after a few minutes returned to the hall—just as Larry & Co. entered, accompanied by two policemen from Juniper Bend.

Sheila was spared any specific interrogation from them, probably through Larry and his father's disinclination to create scandal; but though a search was made of the house, no further clues or a trace of the thief was found.

Larry & Co. had been unsuccessful in their hunt, and it was apparent that neither the thief nor the stolen portrait was in the house. It all remained a complete mystery. But Mr. Green intimated that he would offer a reward for the return of the picture.

Then an attempt was made to renew the festivities. But most of the Bluebirds were disgruntled and uneasy. Such fun as there was was only half-hearted and forced.

"You see," said Corinne bitterly, when she found herself close to Sheila, "you've ruined the whole party with your goings-on. Everyone feels it is your fault."

Sheila flushed, and did not make any reply. At the first opportunity she said "Good-night!" and went upstairs to her room. As she turned the corner of the landing she looked back and saw Olsen and Corinne laughing and talking to one another, as if very pleased over something.

Once again Sheila felt certain they knew more than they had divulged concerning the burglary. She entered her bed-room, and then, as she turned down the sheets, she received a shock. Pinned to the pillow was a note—a note from Red Eagle!

Eagerly she read it:

"Olsen has what we want. Keep an eye on him and try to find out where and what he has done with it. I will meet you soon."

That was all, but it made Sheila's pulses race. What Red Eagle had written had confirmed her suspicions, but again the baffling question hammered in her brain: What had the rascally skating coach done with his booty?

Sheila crumpled up the note, set fire to it with a match, and let the ashes drop into the fireplace. Karl Olsen stayed at her home,

Chinook Lodge. Somehow she would learn the truth, and then, along with Red Eagle, she could contrive to expose Corinne and her unscrupulous ally.

CORINNE IS ANGRY



WHEN the Bluebirds returned home next day some of the tension over the previous day's happenings had lessened. Sheila's closest friends said "Cheerio!" quite normally, and added that they were looking forward to seeing her at the next meeting at the clubhouse to discuss future plans.

Others, however, were aloof and awkward, but most of them belonged to Corinne's coterie. Larry Green himself was kind and generous.

"Don't let what's happened upset you, Sheila," he urged, with a smile. "You've got to do your best for us in the ballet, you know. But try to avoid—you know whom. We all think it's dangerous for you, and we don't like it."

The first moment she had alone with her father on regaining home Sheila mentioned the portrait and asked questions about her Great-uncle Rupert.

"Oh, yes, painting was his hobby!" said John Mayne. "But he was a queer chap; got mixed up in lots of things. But though he must have made a lot of money, he only left this property and a few hundred dollars or so behind him. He had a lot of queer friends, too. This Red Eagle, the chief in the picture, was one of them, if I remember rightly."

Sheila did not get much more out of him. In any case, she did not get the time, for when Jerry and Gracie got home from school they were so delighted to see their sister again that her leisure was fully occupied.

Karl Olsen returned that evening. Sheila saw that he had only his rucksack with him, and, excusing herself while he ate a meal downstairs and chatted with her father, she slipped upstairs and made a quick examination of it.

There was nothing but a change of clothing inside. In a corner stood his skis and ski-poles, and as she looked around Sheila sighed with disappointment.

"He must have hidden it somewhere out in the open," she murmured. "I'll watch him closely, then. Maybe, when he goes to collect it, I'll discover the truth."

A Bluebirds' meeting had been arranged for the next evening, to make final preparations for the torchlight procession and also for the ballet.

Sheila was late in getting down, as she had had arrears of housework and some mending of the children's clothes to see to. Her arrival was the signal for a loud-voiced sneer from Corinne, who was holding the floor in front of the blazing log fire.

"Here's Sheila!" she cried. "Late as usual, probably because she's been keeping a date with that disreputable friend of hers!"

Sheila flushed, but ignored the gibe. Instead, she looked towards Larry Green, who was scribbling in a notebook.

"Is everything ready for the procession?" she asked.

"Yes," said Larry. "I'm posting the list now. You'll be riding with Tubby Laing. We're just going to have a short meeting tonight and some skating. Once we've got the torchlight over we can really get down to the final practice for the ballet."

Sheila nodded, sat while various details were discussed, and then got her skates ready. She was the first out on the ice, and, as it was a lovely moonlit night, the lake was like silver.

As she twirled and swung through the figures that Red Eagle had taught her, once

again Sheila felt exhilarated and supremely confident. The scrunch of the skates on the crisp ice was like music in her ears.

She was conscious of being filled with a wonderful power, and her figure naturally threw itself into the most graceful lines and poses. So absorbed was she in the practice that she did not observe that the rest of the Bluebirds were watching her.

It was the noise of handclaps, and then some cheers, that made her turn, flushing, to see she had spectators.

"Bravo, Sheila!" cried Larry. "You haven't lost your style. That's what I call really classy stuff! Come on! Let's see how I'm doing now. My leg's quite better again!"

He skated out to meet her, and off they spun, Sheila guiding Larry in the figure to which he was not accustomed. Corinne, watching from the bank, sniffed when the others applauded.

"Showing off, that's what she's doing," she declared to Mavis Poynter. "Well, I can beat that any day."

Corinne struck off over the ice, expensively arrayed in a spangled skating skirt, and multi-coloured rabbit's wool tunic, with a toque of the same texture.

Her skating was brilliant, but her moves did not have quite the same sensitive grace as Sheila's. But she finished up triumphant, for she received quite an ovation.

"You'll make a hit all right, Corinne," said Jack Nelson. "I say, Larry, we'll have to have some kind of test to decide who's to be the leading lady in the ballet, won't we?"

Corinne started, and a spot of crimson appeared on either cheek.

"I should have thought you'd decided that already," she stated, with heat. "I've more skating experience, especially on the Continent and before big audiences, than anyone here. Besides, expense for clothes will mean nothing to me. I'll not let the show down—will I, girls?"

Corinne faced her own particular group of friends, and they all gave a quick "No" in answer.

But this did not impress Larry Green. As president of the club, he had decided everyone was to have an equal chance.

"You're one of our stars, Corinne," he agreed. "But I'm sure the majority will agree that we have someone just as good in Sheila Mayne. I think it lies between the two of you, and we'll decide in committee after you have both done a test performance."

Corinne turned crimson. She had apparently thought that Sheila was so unpopular now that she would not have a chance. She had expected, therefore, to walk right into the leading part.

"Well, I like that," she exclaimed bitterly. "As if we haven't had enough trouble through Sheila already. I don't think she has any right to star in the ballet after all that's happened. While she remains friendly with Red Eagle, there'll never be any peace in the club."

Some of Corinne's friends nodded, and clapped their hands approvingly, eyeing Sheila in disdain. But Mavis Poynter stepped forward and took the floor.

"Pipe down, Corinne," she urged. "You're just jealous of Sheila, that's all. I believe in her, anyhow, and I don't see what her private occupations have to do with the ice ballet. As far as we're concerned, all that matters is that we select the best skater for the part."

"Hear, hear!" To Sheila's delight there came a chorus of approval from most of those present.

"Right, then. As it seems generally agreed, we will hold a test," said Larry, "and the star of the ballet will be settled by ordinary democratic vote."

Corinne, looking round, saw that this decision met with the approval of practically

everyone, so she decided it would be unwise to make any further protest.

Soon afterwards the meeting broke up. When Sheila returned home she learnt that Karl Olsen had been out, but had already gone upstairs to his room. Her father told her that he had come and gone on skis.

Again her thoughts returned to the stolen portrait. Had Olsen's outing had anything to do with the picture? Uneasy and wondering, she went to bed. Next morning she was up early, and, as she laid the breakfast table, Olsen came into the room, carrying a long parcel, open at both ends, and protected with two strips of plywood.

"Jerry," he said to Sheila's young brother, "I want you to take this in to Juniper Bend for me, and leave it at the parcel office—to be called for. It's a broken ski and ski-pole I want to have specially repaired. I know only one person who can do it in Continental style. Here's a dollar to pay the fee. You can keep the change."

"Thanks, Mr. Olsen," said Jerry. "I'll see to it."

Olsen sat down, apparently relieved, while Sheila could scarcely pour out his coffee, her hand was trembling so. She could see the end of the ski-pole, one of the stout ones she had observed him using when he had arrived at the Green's mansion on the night of the burglary.

"I believe I've got it," she thought excitedly. "Perhaps one of these ski-poles was hollow. In that case, it would be long enough for him to hide the portrait in it! Yes, that's the secret of the mystery! He brought it back here with him, unsuspected, and now he's sending it somewhere else for safety."

Excusing herself after she had served everyone, Sheila rose and pretended to busy herself in the kitchen. But when Jerry and Gracie prepared to leave for town and school, she called Jerry, and by a simple excuse managed to read the label on the parcel he had been given.

The name was "Leopold, c/o Parcel Office, Rail Depot, Juniper Bend."

She was very tempted to open the parcel and to put her suspicions to the test, but before she could do so Karl Olsen entered the kitchen. He frowned as he saw the long package in Sheila's hand, and she felt herself colouring. Quickly she handed it back to Jerry, as that boy finished putting on his thick coat and hat.

"Here you are, Jerry," she said. "Don't forget to take great care of it. No larking about, remember."

Her young brother grinned and nodded, then set off with the parcel, and Sheila, conscious that Olsen's eyes were still on her, got on with the washing-up.

His manner convinced her that her suspicions were true. Hidden inside the broken ski-pole was the missing portrait. Oh, how could she get it back? If only, she thought, she could get in touch with Red Eagle.

Once her housework was finished she visited all the spots where her mystery Redskin friend usually left his messages to her, but she failed to find a note. Despairing of getting in touch with Red Eagle, she was tempted to go into town and visit the parcel office herself. But she was well known, and the clerk in charge would refuse to hand over Olsen's parcel to her.

Yet somehow it must be examined before the mysterious Mr. Leopold collected it, she told herself, and it was worriedly that she dressed herself in her fancy-dress costume and prepared for the Bluebirds' parade—the parade which was designed to advertise the forthcoming ice ballet.

But when Sheila joined the rest of the Bluebirds, all wearing their gay fancy costumes, that night, she forgot all her worries and threw herself into the enjoyment of the parade.

THE FANCY-DRESS PARADE



BOOM! Boom! Boom-de-ray!

Laughing, expectant crowds were gathered outside the ice rink at Juniper Bend, listening to the Bluebirds' brass band.

Already all the sleighs were packed with picturesquely attired girls and boys, Sheila amongst them. Larry Green

gave a quiet look round, then nodded.

"O.K.! Let's start," he said.

The procession was accorded loud cheers as it set off, escorted by ski-runners carrying gleaming torches. Other skiers went on ahead, rattling collecting-boxes, to receive donations for the club funds, and the sleighs were all adorned with banners advertising the ballet:

"SUPPORT HOME PRODUCTS! EMERALD LAKE ICE BALLET! HELP MAKE THE ICE CARNIVAL A SUCCESS! THE BLUEBIRDS FOR SKATING THRILLS!"

The money rattled into the boxes, and the cheers grew louder as the procession reached the centre of the town. Sheila, seated beside Tubby Laing, smiled with delight.

"The whole town seems to have turned out to see us," she murmured. "This means we'll have a big crowd at the ballet."

As the procession made its way through the streets, she scanned every face in the crowd, in the hope of seeing Red Eagle.

Crackers and other fireworks began to bang and sparkle, and Tubby, not a very skilful driver, frowned.

"All this noise is bad for the ponies," he declared. "I hope it don't upset them. The horse we've got is pretty nervous."

Sheila did not answer him. She was still watching the spectators. The crowds became denser than ever, and the procession started to thin out, leaving a greater space between each sleigh. Suddenly Sheila saw someone she knew.

But it was not Red Eagle.

It was Karl Olsen. Dodging among the crowd, he was keeping pace with her particular sleigh, but at the same time apparently trying not to draw attention to himself.

"I wonder what he's up to?" thought Sheila uneasily.

Olsen was swallowed up in the crowd at the next corner, and it was not till a few minutes later she saw him again. By this time the sleighs were well separated, and Tubby lifted his whip to try to persuade his horse to close up.

Tubby's horse started round the bend in the road, and as it did so Sheila gave a low cry. A shadowy figure on the pavement had lifted an arm, and something that sizzled and sparked dropped right under the horse's hoofs. A second missile quickly followed the first.

They were fireworks, and as they exploded the horse gave a terrified snort and reared up. Then, with a tug that jerked the reins clean out of Tubby's grasp, it went leaping madly forward.

"Oh, help!" gasped Tubby, in dismay. "Stop, you jackass! Stop!"

But the horse was crazy with fright now. It had the bit between its teeth and was off at a gallop, causing the sleigh to sway dizzily from side to side.

"Hang tight, Sheila!" panted Tubby. "I've got to get these reins, or we may turn over!"

He rose pluckily from his seat, and made to reach forward. But as did so the sleigh bucked, and with a shout he lost his balance, and went tumbling off the sleigh, rolling into the snow piled at the side of the road.

Feeling less weight behind it, the runaway increased its speed, causing Sheila to give an apprehensive gasp. She felt certain that this was no accident. Someone had purposely

thrown the fireworks to startle the animal and cause an accident.

Sheila rose, determined to avert trouble if she could. But galloping hoofs sounded behind her, and a voice bade her sit down. Looking up, she saw a figure riding after the runaway.

It was Red Eagle.

"I'll stop him!" shouted her mystery friend. "Keep still! Sit back!"

Galloping on, the young Redskin drew level with the sleigh, and then, mounting on his steed's back, made a desperate leap for the back of the runaway.

He landed, gripped the trailing reins, then slipped. Sheila gave a horrified cry, for it looked as if he was going to fall and land under the horse's pounding hoofs.

More thrilling chapters of this enthralling serial next Friday.

DETECTIVE JUNE'S MOST THRILLING CASE

(Continued from page 168.)

"You mean, he's still at liberty?" she asked, a catch in her voice.

The Grey Falcon nodded.

"Yes." A tall, awe-inspiring figure, he strode forward and glowered down at the schoolgirl detective. "Now, then," he cried, "where is that uncle of yours now?"

There was a blaze of menace in his dark eyes, but, though inwardly scared, June forced herself to face him defiantly.

"I don't know—and I wouldn't tell you even I did!" she retorted.

For a moment the Grey Falcon glared, and he raised a hand as if to strike her; then his mood changed, and he laughed.

"Well, what does it matter whether he's captive or free?" he asked. "He can't do anything to spoil things now. We've got the treasure"—with an exultant laugh, he pointed to a big, iron-bound chest which stood on the pebbles at the water's edge—"and in less than half an hour we'll be out in the open sea."

"And you are coming with us, my dear," put in Miss Tuft, smiling mockingly across at the white-faced June.

"Of course she is—all the way to South America!" nodded the Grey Falcon. "And a pleasant voyage it will be for her—I'll see to that!"

The sarcastic note in his voice held an undercurrent of menace; then he turned as from the sea there came a hail.

Chugging towards the beach was a motorboat, a black-bearded sailor at the wheel, and, as it reached the shallows, two of the members of the gang waded out to meet it, while the Grey Falcon ripped out a series of quick commands:

"Jim! Sam! You get the treasure-chest aboard! Miss Tuft, you see to that dispatch-case! I'll attend to the girl."

Striding forward, he grabbed June by the arm.

Helpless despair in her heart, June allowed herself to be hustled across to the waiting boat. One desperate look around she gave, wondering what had become of Noel Raymond, wondering whether he had been able to put any plan into operation.

It did not seem likely, June realised hopelessly. And now it was too late. Already the treasure-chest had been loaded into the motorboat. Already June and the whole gang had clambered aboard, and, at a nod from the Grey Falcon, the black-bearded sailor at the helm switched on the engine.

You'll be reading the final thrill-packed chapters of this exciting serial in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**. Don't miss them, whatever you do.



The House of the Golden Moon



(Continued from page 164.)

leap as she saw, sticking out of the lock, a massive key. Whether left there by accident or by custom she could not say. She crept forward, intently listening.

"Terry!" she breathed.

She thought she heard a faint sound.

With sudden determination her hand closed on the key. The next second it would have turned.

"I should not enter there, English rose," a soft voice said, and a strong, brown hand closed over hers.

She turned with a frightened start. There, his eyes gleaming in the moonlight, stood Said Idris.

Nancy repressed a shiver of fear. She had heard no sound of his approach.

Gently he took hold of the key, extracted it, and slipped it into the folds of his burnous.

"You were curious—yes?" he asked softly.

"I—I—" she gasped for breath. "I—I was just looking round."

"For photograph subjects, yes?" If his eyes had not been so expressionless she could have vowed that he was mocking her. "Even your camera, English rose, would not take photographs in a light such as this. No doubt you were hoping to obtain the pictures to-morrow."

"I—I was very interested," she murmured.

"As you should be," he replied gravely. "Western guests are always interested in the habits and the buildings of their Eastern hosts. But here, English rose; your interest must cease. Not even guests may enter this building. My father has given you the freedom of his house, but that freedom does not include the use of his father's tomb."

"Tomb?" she breathed, and gazed in awe at the door. "Is—is that what it is?"

"A tomb—yes," Idris murmured. "As you will understand, therefore, it is entered only by my father and my family. But come," he went on, as suddenly a great red flash went up from the courtyard, and a roar of cheering and music filled the air. "Come with me and attend the feast. That is the purpose of your visit, is it not?"

"It is," she told him.

"Then we must not miss it," he said.

He bowed for her to precede him, and Nancy, sick with worry, stepped on to the path that led back to the entrance in the wall. She was afraid now—afraid of this young man. Was he a friend? she asked herself. Was he keeping this careful eye upon her merely that she should come to no harm?

She felt certain he wasn't. As for that tomb—in spite of what he had said, she still had an idea that Terry was locked inside—a prisoner. Though why, she had no idea, and could not attempt to guess. But she would know no peace until she had looked inside. Yet how could she do that? For now Said Idris had the key.

She must get hold of it! But how—how?

It was not long before an idea came to her. Said Idris was being courteous itself. First he took her to the eating tables, then pointed out the various shows which were taking place in every corner of the courtyard. Again Nancy took photographs—wonderful photographs of

scenes lit by the brilliance of blazing bonfires. Then suddenly she turned to her host.

"Excellency, may I take a photograph of you?" she asked.

"If it pleases you, English rose," he answered at once, and he posed for her.

"And now," she laughed when the photograph was taken, "would you do something for me? Would you please take a photograph of me with the decorated oxen behind me? But, no, wait," she added, as if caught by a new inspiration. "I have a better idea than that. Let me pose as an Arab leading one of these animals away."

"I will get you a costume," he said politely.

"But why waste time?" she asked. "It's only for a picture. It won't take me a minute. Lend me your cloak."

Her voice was eager and excited as she made the suggestion. It sounded just a girlish whim.

"You said you would do anything for me," she reminded him as he hesitated.

"That is true," he smiled. "You shall find I keep my promises. There!" With a wriggle he had slipped out of the burnous he wore over white coat and breeches, and as she handed over the camera he handed the garment to her. "But please—hurry," he said. "I have no wish for my servants to see me only in Western dress."

She slipped it over her head and draped it round her shoulders. She posed and the photograph was taken. But when she handed the burnous back there was a great triumph in her heart, for in her hand was tightly clutched the key of the square building in the garden.

Now, at an opportune moment, she would steal away from the merry throng and explore that strange building.

It was another hour, however, before she dared risk stealing into the garden. That was when Idris had been called into the great procession which was being marshalled, and, for the first time, Nancy found herself alone.

She edged her way to the garden entrance. Through it she slipped. Her heart pounding, she clung to the friendly shadows of the wall until she found herself outside the tomb again. With a trembling hand, she inserted the key. With no hesitation at all she swung the heavy door open.

"Terry," she breathed and stepped inside.

She stopped, startled and transfixed, as a light flamed in the ceiling above her. She had just time to see that she was in a square, white-walled building grimly in front of her.

One was Said Idris, the same inscrutable look on his face. But the other, standing beside him, dressed in the magnificent robes he had worn during the ceremonies of the feast, and his eyes glittering fiercely with anger, was Said Ibn, the Omda himself!

"So it is true, Miss Price," he said harshly. "Like your friend, you seek to pry into secrets which do not concern you. What mean you by disregarding my son's warning and daring to enter this place which is forbidden? Speak! And speak truly—or leave my house for ever!"

THE PURSUIT



FOR a moment Nancy could only stare in open-mouthed dismay at the angry father and the inscrutable son. But even in that moment she knew that her fears for Terry had been justified.

Said Idris had only followed her around with apparent devotion so that he could watch her every movement—make sure she would not find Terry.

The Omda's son had known she had taken the key of the tomb from him. He had said nothing—but had laid this trap for her instead, so that he could be sure of her intentions. They knew now that she was in league with Terry.

But—but where was he? His whereabouts were still a mystery. And there could be no further chance of finding him now—suspected and watched as she was. Yet the quest must not be abandoned.

The only way to help Terry now, Nancy told herself, was to give the impression that she was going away, that she would trouble them no more. Her help for Terry must come from outside the House of the Golden Moon; not inside.

She flung up her head and regarded the two of them.

"As you require an answer, you shall have it," she said distinctly. "Terry Farrow was my friend. I am not satisfied that he left this house as he was supposed to have done—"

"So!" Ibn Said's brow furrowed; his voice thickened with anger. "I think, Miss Price, that it is better—yes, better for all concerned—that you go. There is, unfortunately, no boat at the jetty, but a boat may be caught at dawn by riding across the desert to the landing-stage at Lampari. I must request you to leave—at once."

"And I will accompany you on your journey to see that no harm befalls you on the way," said Idris. "I have your consent to this, father?"

For a moment the man hesitated. Then he nodded.

"You have my consent," he said curtly. "See the girl away from here. Miss Price, you will please to be ready in the courtyard in half an hour."

Nancy was ready in the courtyard as instructed in half an hour. She had many misgivings now. Lampari was twenty miles away. How could she get back undetected to the House of the Golden Moon? There would be no throwing Idris off the track—she saw that clearly. He would probably accompany her on to the boat and remain with her until it sailed.

But it was too late to do anything about that now, for here came Idris, riding towards her on a white Arab steed, and towing another at his side. Overhead the moon poured out a golden glory, etching his stern face in patches of white and black. He nodded curtly.

"You will mount. And hurry, please—"

She stared in surprise. It was the first time she had heard any urgency in his voice. The first time—or was it a trick of the moonlight—that she had seen any expression on his face.

He must be anxious to be rid of her, she told herself. She would certainly watch out for treachery on the way, and as soon as she reached the boat—well, then she would find some means of escaping and of getting back.

Idris held the horse steady as she put her foot in the stirrup. Leaning over, he lent her a hand as she flopped across the saddle.

"You have your camera?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Good. Then we go—"

He trotted the horses forward, shooting a quick glance over his shoulder. And then, with a rush, they were galloping for the gates. The sentry there saluted them as they swept into

the desert, and without pause he galloped on, still with his hand upon her rein.

"Why do you hurry so?" she asked.

"Because I must," he replied. For a moment he turned his moonlit face towards her, and Nancy was surprised to see that it had lost its inscrutability, was now full of some sort of desperate purpose.

Now they were alone in the vast wide sweep of the gleaming desert, the great full moon above them, and on the horizon a black jagged line of hills.

Suddenly, behind them, she heard a faint cry, the distant sound of hoofs.

"Something is happening—" she faltered.

"Should we—"

He did not answer. But his head bent just a little lower. She heard a hissing breath come from between his lips as he urged the horses on.

And now, staring ahead, Nancy became really alarmed. For the jagged line of hills was growing blacker, more ominous. Presently she saw a great gap in the middle of those rocks, and knew that they were heading for Pharaoh's Pass. And Pharaoh's Pass was not on the road to Lampari! It was, in fact, in quite the opposite direction. What was Said Idris' idea—

"Stop!" she cried. "Stop! Where are you going? This is not the way—"

"It is my way," he cried, and dragged her horse on. "Please, Nancy—let me know best."

She was so startled at the unexpected use of her Christian name that she was silent, but her conviction that something was wrong was growing. A panic of fear suddenly possessed her.

And still, from behind them, came that faint thunder of hoofs, of distant voices.

What did it mean? What trap was this? Nancy did not know; she only felt herself to be in some deadly peril. But great as that was, there was still that thought of her duty to Terry strong in her mind. She had still got to find out what had happened to him. She must still find some way of outwitting his enemies.

On they thundered, the horses snorting and panting. Nearer, nearer came the Pharaoh's Pass. Still, from behind them, sounded the shouts, the drumming of hoofs in soft sand.

And then, all at once, the blackness of the gap had closed upon them. The night became chill and tomb-like. Even as Nancy shuddered, her companion, leaning over, put an arm round her waist.

She screamed—just once. Then she felt herself lifted from the saddle, heard him shout to her riderless horse, and heard the animal thundering away in obedience.

She had a brief consciousness of falling through space. A bump, a jerk, and then she rolled over. Swiftly she was jerked to her feet.

"How dare you—" she began.

"Look!" breathed her companion.

She stared at him, catching her breath, her eyes widening. From the thin cleft in the rocks above her one slanting beam of moonlight cut into the black canyon like a shining sword, and in that beam she saw his face. The hood of the burnous had been jerked back and eyes, blue and desperate, were looking into her own from beneath a close-cropped curly head. Surely she was dreaming. For this was—not Said Idris—but—

"Terry!" she gasped faintly.

"And you never guessed," Terry Farrow grinned. "But—quickly, Nancy." He caught her hand, and now she heard the hoof-beats behind her growing louder, heard their own released animals thundering on. "This is a trick," Terry said hurriedly. "Said Idris is behind us—with his men. They'll follow the horses—I hope. If they don't—"

The grimness of his face, the crispness of his words, told her what he meant. There was no need to say more.

"Here," he said. "Crouch behind this boulder. And not a sound."

She crouched there, with Terry at her side. She still couldn't believe it. Still felt that she was dreaming. But now she knew that she had not sensed peril for nothing. Though that peril had not come from the companion at her side, but from the revengeful band led by Said Idris. Nearer, nearer they came—

"Hush!" Terry said again. His hand closed on hers. Her heart-beats seemed to stifle her as she listened. Now she heard shouts, then Said Idris' own voice.

"Through the pass. On—on, you dogs! Capture them! Take them! Dead or alive!"

Nancy's heart stopped. Her mouth was suddenly dry. She could see the pursuers at the mouth of the pass, the moon glinting on long-barrelled rifles. If they should find them!

Nearer! Terry's hand clutched on hers till its grip hurt.

And now they were in the pass. She saw Said Idris, tall and statuesque, riding at the head of the band. She saw him halt suddenly, gazing around.

"Has he seen us?" Nancy whispered. Terry did not answer.

"Careful!" Said Idris grunted. "Tis dark hereabouts! But the track of their horses is plain."

Nancy held her breath. Cautiously he came riding forward, looking to left and right. Was he going to stop? She bent her head; she felt Terry, at her side, become very still. She dared not look up, dared not breathe. Now—

They were here—they were passing! Dust rose, filling her mouth and nostrils, but still her heart remained frozen and solid. Clatter, clatter, clatter—swish, swish, swish! The horses jogged on through the soft, glinting sand, and not till the last of them had passed dared she even lift her head. Then she felt Terry relax.

"Good!" he breathed, vast relief in his voice. "We've dodged them—"

"But Terry, what are we to do? When they find out—"

"They won't—till they catch up with those horses," Terry chuckled. "And Arab horses run till they drop. Still, we've no time to lose," he added briskly. "Listen, Nancy! A mile from here there is a British camp. Colonel Carstairs, my father's friend, is there, and he has instructions to wait for me. Once with him we'll be safe. Come!" he said tersely, and caught her hand. "Keep to the hills—and hurry—I'll explain as we go."

And as they went he did explain. Before the war his father, excavating in a valley near Daimaya, had found a wonderful scarab. The scarab was inscribed with hieroglyphics which related to the rich, as yet unopened, tomb of Queen Uerta.

"My father was a guest at the House of the Golden Moon," he said. "Said Ibn wanted that scarab. My father refused to give it to him and he hid it in a certain room in the House of the Golden Moon, in the mummy wrappings of a cat. He knew the scarab would be safe there, for the cat is a sacred, uncatchable animal to Arabs."

"And which room was that?" she breathed. "The room I entered—the one nearest to the statue of Uerta. Father had described the door to me—it contained thirteen studs where all the others had twelve. And so—well, now you know why I went in."

"And you got captured?" "That's it! I was rushed to that tomb place you saw in the garden. I was there all the time this afternoon. Then, I suppose they thought you were going to be a nuisance, so they shifted me—to the house. There I was left with Said Idris. I tricked him and dressed up in his clothes after I'd learned their plans to get rid of you."

"It was a wonderful disguise, Terry," she smiled. "But do you suppose the trap was all prepared for you when we arrived?"

"Of course," he nodded. "I know that now," he said. "They were actually watching

us from concealed hiding-places. The idea was that if no one appeared to be around, I'd go straight to where the scarab was hidden. I didn't, though I scouted around a bit at first—and then they caught me. They tried to make me reveal the hiding-place—but, of course, I wouldn't." He looked at her. "I've an idea they would have been a good deal more violent if you hadn't been around."

Nancy shook her head. "I only had vague suspicions to go on," she said. "I'm afraid I didn't do anything really. What a pity about the scarab," she finished regretfully.

He laughed. "Not at all. I've got it—got it just a couple of seconds before I met you in the courtyard. Look!" And from his robes he produced a small green, beetle-shaped object. "And now," he went on gaily, "I see a fire and lights ahead. That'll be Colonel Carstairs' camp. They'll be thrilled to see you."

"I hope they'll offer me a good old British cup of tea," Nancy laughed. "Hot and sweet and strong. I've had enough Eastern splendour for a day or two."

At a brisk walk they made off towards the distant lights, and some quarter of an hour later reached the British camp.

Unquestioningly the sentry allowed them to pass through the gate, where they were immediately greeted by bluff, grey-haired Colonel Carstairs, looking decidedly relieved at seeing his friend's son and his companion.

He welcomed them both warmly, then looked eagerly at Terry.

"Well, my boy, have you got the scarab?" Terry grinned.

"You bet I have, sir." And again he thrust his hand into the folds of his robe and drew out the little green object and handed it to the colonel.

"Well done, Terry—well done—"

But Terry interrupted him. "Don't thank me, sir," he said softly, and placed a hand on Nancy's arm. "Here's the little lady you have to thank. If it hadn't been for Nancy those rascally Arabs would have got away with the scarab—and the treasure."

Nancy flushed with pleasure under the admiration in his eyes.

"And now, sir"—Terry turned again to the colonel—"when can we start out on the last stage of our quest for Queen Uerta's treasure?"

"To-morrow—at dawn," the colonel answered him rapidly, his voice betraying his excitement.

"And—and what about Nancy?"

"Why, she can come, too—if she wants to!" Terry's hand tightened on her arm.

"What do you say, Nancy?" Nancy's eyes sparkled.

"I'd love to. Perhaps," she added, "I will be able to get some good photographs of the queen's treasure."

And she did. She won the congratulations of her firm in Cairo, and in Daimaya she cemented a lasting friendship—with Terry.

THE END.

CASTAWAYS ON MONKEY ISLE

By ELISE PROBYN

Do not miss this thrilling double-length complete story in next Friday's

GIRLS' CRYSTAL

THE MERRYMAKERS AT COLLEGE

(Continued from page 172.)

He saw the chums. His muscles strained wildly, trying desperately to signal them.

Don whipped out his knife, and without a sound he succeeded in undoing the clasp of the window. Inch by inch the girls helped him lever the low window silently open.

All three climbed stealthily over the sill. They were in the room, darting noiselessly towards Johnny, when the door behind him opened.

"Thanks! I've been waiting for you!" said a mocking voice.

Sally & Co. gazed, aghast, at the man who entered—the stranger who had loaned them the car. His genial pose was dropped; his thin lips sneered at them.

"You bungled the job I gave you!" he said grimly.

"We don't do jobs for a crook—a jewel thief!" Sally blazed at him, while Don leapt at him, trying to bring him to the floor.

Other hands grabbed Don and pinned him down. The master-crook had a confederate with him. Quickly Don, Sally and Fay were trussed up, and as they lay on the floor beside Johnny, the chief crook grinned down at them.

"You young fools! I'm glad you came—I was banking on it!" he ground out. "You know too much!"

"Yes—and you wait till the police get here! They'll—"

"You can't kid me," laughed the crook. "In any case, by the time they arrived we'd be gone."

"Gone? What d'you mean?" Don gasped, trying to struggle up desperately from the floor.

"You're coming over the border with us. Into Mexico!" the other said suavely. "We've got ways of disposing of the jewels there—at a very handsome price and no questions asked. After we've disposed of them"—and he smiled from one to the other of the chums—"we're going to turn you adrift—let you at large in Mexico with all the police of the country hunting you down!"

"The Mexican police—hunting us?" And Sally's voice trailed away as she saw his meaning now.

"The police this side," he explained smoothly, "will know soon enough that they're hunting four innocent people. But they won't accept that tale in Mexico! Oh, no! They'll hunt till they've got you. And once they've got you they'll keep you a long time before they'll send you back here! You see, there are other little jobs I've done—"

"And you'll try to pin them on us?" panted Don.

"You haven't got us over the border yet!" blazed Sally.

"But we're starting off now—by the same way that I got here!" their captor said meaningfully. "I specialise in cars. I've got one now that's even faster than the Bronx! And safer! A genuine mail coach—with a driver I can trust! Listen! D'you hear it? It's coming for us now."

The chums listened, their faces pale and drawn. Sure enough it was a Government car they could hear on the road. It was approaching at daredevil speed, siren shrieking.

The crook looked at their white faces and laughed mockingly.

"Marvellous what bluff can do, isn't it?" he said. "I always pull a big bluff—same as I pulled on you. You can get away with anything—the Countess Roma jewels and even a Government mail coach—as long as the bluff's

big enough! That's why they call me Slippy Sam Carter, the man they can't catch, the man they've been wanting for— Hey!"

A wild cry broke from his lips; his eyes were suddenly glued upon the window.

For it was not a mail coach, but a police car that came screeching into the yard! And following it was another, and yet another.

Sally stared dizzily as the frontier officer from the weighbridge leapt out of the leading car.

"This is where they went—all three of them!" he was shouting to the police. "You say it's four young desperadoes you're after—but I saw only three through my field-glasses. They may be hiding here."

The chums looked at each other in triumphant relief; but the master-crook was not beaten yet. He looked quickly across at his confederate.

"You go along and see the police. Spin them any yarn you like, but convince them they've made a mistake. Hurry! They won't know you, and I'll keep out of sight—minding these four."

"O.K., chief!" the other man nodded. "Don't worry. I'll easily bluff them."

He hurried out of the room, and the master-crook swiftly gagged the helpless chums. He had just finished when there came a knock at the front door.

Sally & Co. regarded each other anxiously. Would the rascal down below be able to stop the police from searching the house?

"Oh, if only we weren't gagged—if only we could shout!" thought Sally.

Helplessly the chums sat there, listening to the voices from the hall. To their dismay the master-crook's confederate seemed to be satisfying the police that they had been mistaken in thinking that the wanted quartet had entered the house. Sally gave another groan.

"It's all up," she told herself glumly. "Once they've gone away—"

She broke off and her heart gave a wild leap, for Don, desperate, had seized his opportunity as for a brief second their captor's gaze was turned away. Drawing up his tied feet, he shot them out with all his strength—up towards the window.

With a crash the window glass went flying in all directions, and involuntarily the master-crook gave a furious shout.

"You trickster—" he howled, then stopped, for the police had heard the noise and had become suspicious. For a moment or two Sally & Co. could hear the other crook arguing frantically with him, then there came a rush of feet across the hall and blue-uniformed figures burst into the room to investigate. They gasped with surprise as they saw the four bound and gagged Merry-makers, then the officer in charge produced a gun, for he had recognised the outwitted crook who now cowered sullenly back against the wall.

"Slippy Sam Carter!" he exclaimed.

SALLY & CO. had a magnificent time at Professor Richmond's house party. Not only did the other guests insist on treating them as heroes, but Countess Roma wired them a special invitation to her own chateau, at any time they liked to come, so that she might discuss the reward she felt due to them for the recovery of her jewels.

But the high spot came on their last morning, when the police rang up Sally & Co. and asked them, as a special favour, to drive the yellow Bronx back to Roxburgh.

(End of this week's story.)

Don't miss the entertaining complete story featuring the cheery Merry-makers in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.