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GIRLS' CRYSTAL ³

Week
Ending
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1948.

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"



DOLORES *The MISCHIEF- MAKER*

Life In A Holiday Camp Is Featured In This Enthralling New Serial—
By HAZEL ARMITAGE

THE GIRL AT THE BOATHOUSE

"Good luck, Pat!"

"And Chris! Mind you bring back the ketch for the regatta. We'll be waiting!"

Patricia Rockwell laughed, while her chum, Christine Caslon, surveyed happily the crowd of Westonmouth Camp holiday-makers.

"Trust us. We'll bring the boat back," she promised. "Now, if you duffers will only let us go—"

At once the ranks broke. Willingly the Westonmouth guests made way, and out from the crowd stepped Pat and Chris, to go striding briskly along the cliff path.

"What a ripping crowd they are!" Pat said. "And what a ripping place this holiday camp is. I don't know when I enjoyed myself so much. It's been just lovely so far."

"And," Chris confidently prophesied, "it's going to be lovelier still. Especially now, Pat, that you've thought of such a stunning stunt for the Westonmouth Regatta. I only hope," she said fervently, "that there's no snag about hiring the ketch. Steve Conelly did say we could have it until after the regatta, didn't he?"

"Of course, goose! He not only said we can have it, but said we can make all the alterations and the improvements we like," Pat said. "Don't worry, I fixed it all up on the phone."

Happily Chris smiled again. Her eyes were full of affection as she glanced sideways at her chum. Many were the admirers Pat had at Westonmouth Holiday Camp, but there was not one of them so glowingly enthusiastic as her own chum from Greenfields School.

And Pat's idea certainly merited all the praise it had so far received. The camp, as usual, had entered for the super-holiday attraction of the year—the Westonmouth Regatta—but until Pat had thought of her great scheme yesterday they had drawn up no particular programme.

No wonder now that the camp bubbled with excitement, for Pat's idea was to transform the black old ketch which belonged to Steve Conelly's boathouse into a glittering Roman galley, complete with a Roman emperor and empress and a Roman bodyguard; and an army of ancient Britons to attack the royal galley and capture the empress when it sailed.

"We'll have the whole camp in it," Chris chuckled. "And what fun it's going to be turning that old ketch inside out. But here comes the climb," she added, as the great slope of Lookout Hill loomed before them. "Save your breath, Pat."

Pat did. In the sunshine they toiled up the steep green slope, pausing breathlessly on the summit to admire the glorious view which this beauty spot afforded. To the front of them was the broad sweep of Westonmouth Bay, its glasslike surface interrupted only by the gleaming white cliffs of Dartfleet Island; to the left of them the wide estuary of the river which, at this point, entered the sea.

"And there," Pat said, pointing to a collection of buildings set around a landing-stage far below them, "is Steve Conelly's boathouse. And there—pointing to the motionless black hulk of a ketch anchored just offshore—is our objective. Come on!"

They hurried down the other side of the hill, but when they reached the boathouse they were disappointed to find it locked up.

"Oh, goodness, where's old Steve got to?" asked Chris. "I hope—"

She broke off, and they both turned as they heard footsteps on the river path, but it was not the elderly fisherman who owned the boathouse who approached, but a golden-haired, strikingly beautiful girl dressed in immaculate white slacks and a yachting jersey.

At sight of them she pulled up and smiled.

"Hallo! Looking for Mr. Conelly?" she asked.

The chums nodded.

"Yes; d'you know where he is?" asked Pat, wondering who this dazzlingly pretty girl could be.

"Gone to lunch, by all accounts," was the reply. "It's a nuisance, for I want him to take a look at the motor of my cruiser. It's broken down."

And she nodded to where a magnificent cabin-cruiser lay moored at the end of the landing-stage. Pat and Chris gasped as they surveyed it. They had never seen a finer-looking craft.

"My, what a beauty!" exclaimed Chris.

The girl gave rather an airy gesture.

"It's not bad," she admitted. "Quite useful for getting around while on holiday. I suppose you are on holiday, too?"

"Yes; we're staying at the holiday camp over the hill," said Pat. "This—indicating her chum—"is Christine Caslon, and I'm Pat Rockwell."

The unknown girl flashed them both another dazzling smile.

"Pleased to meet you. My name's Dolores Belgrave Bellamy, but—I say, it is annoying about Mr. Conelly being away. We simply must find him. Are you wanting to see him also?"

Pat nodded.

"Yes, we've come for the old ketch over there," she said.

"The old ketch?"

Dolores' delicately arched eyebrows rose as she glanced across at the old boat.

"Do you mean that—that you've bought it?" she exclaimed, a strange gleam in her eyes.

Pat shook her head.

"Goodness—no! We can't afford to buy boats," she laughed.

"We've just hired it—for the regatta, you know," added her chum, and eagerly explained all about Pat's brain-wave. "What do you think about it?" she asked.

Dolores beamed on them.

"Simply wizard," she declared.

"But, I say, what about this boatman? If he's gone to lunch he's bound to be either at the Harbour Café or the Lookout Restaurant. Tell you what, let's split forces and go in search of him. If you'll try the Lookout, I'll amble along to the café—how's that?"

The chums nodded, and the trio separated. It was a good ten minutes' walk to the Lookout Restaurant, and when Pat and Chris reached it, it was only to draw a blank.

"Hope Dolores has had better luck," Pat murmured, as they retraced their steps along the river bank. "I shan't know any peace until we've actually got possession of the ketch."

"Nor me," agreed her chum. They strode on, and when they returned to the boathouse they saw, to their delight, a blue-jeaned, grizzled man standing outside it.

"There he is!" cried Pat, and broke into a run. "Hallo, Mr. Connelly, where've you been?" she asked. "There's been quite a search-party looking for you."

He took his pipe out of his mouth and stared at them in surprise. "But surely you saw the note I left on the door?" he asked.

They shook their heads. They were certain there had been no note pinned there when they had first arrived at the boathouse.

"But I always leave one when I go to lunch," he declared, "and it said distinctly that I was to be found at the Harbour Café."

"The Harbour Café!" ejaculated Pat. "Why, that's where Dolores went. But where is she now? She doesn't seem to have—"

And then she gave a startled gasp, for suddenly she had noticed that the black painted boat they had come for was no longer at its mooring. "The ketch!" she cried. "It's gone!"

The old boatman nodded calmly. "Yes—your friends collected it," he said.

"Our friend?" "Yes, that girl with the golden hair. I gathered from her that she had your permission to take the ketch. Look, there she is! She's going to tow it round to the camp for you."

He pointed with his pipe, and Pat and Chris, as they swung round, stared in blank amazement, for the missing ketch had now come into view. It was being towed down the river by a smart-looking cabin-cruiser, and piloting the latter was a slim figure in white slacks.

"Dolores!" gasped Pat. "But what's it mean?" added Chris. "Why's she towing away our boat? And why, did she pretend to Steve that she was our friend?"



DOLORES' SURPRISING OFFER

The old boatman regarded the two girls in bewilderment.

"What's wrong?" he asked gruffly. "I reckon you ought to be grateful to that girl for saving you a heap of trouble."

Pat made no comment. Her brain was spinning, and suddenly a startling suspicion occurred to her. Suppose Dolores had actually arrived at the boathouse before them—suppose she had deliberately destroyed the note pinned on the door—and suppose that she had deliberately sent them off on a wild goose chase!

It sounded fantastic, but she could not forget that Dolores had said the engine of her cruiser had broken down, yet clearly there was nothing wrong with it now. Besides, why should she be so anxious to help a couple of strangers?

Pat caught in her breath. If her suspicions were true, then it could mean only one thing. The dazzlingly pretty owner of the cabin-cruiser was planning to steal their ketch!

But why? What possible interest could Dolores have in the old boat? Pat did not know, but some instinct told her that her sensational theory was right, and excitedly she turned to her chum.

"Chris, we've been properly fooled!" she cried. "She knew all along where

Steve was to be found. She only sent us off to the Lookout in order to make away with the ketch."

"What!" Chris looked horrified, while Steve Connelly stared as if he could hardly believe his own ears.

"Here, steady on, Miss Pat!" he urged. "That's a bit steep. Why should your friend—"

"She's no friend of ours," cut in Pat. "We never met her until a little while ago. But never mind that now. We must go after her." Agitatedly she gripped the old boatman by the arm. "Have you a spare launch handy?" she gasped.

He nodded, and pointed to a motor-boat bobbing up and down at the water's edge.

"Then come on," urged Pat. "We've got to get the ketch back."

Steve followed her down to the water's edge, though it was clear that he still thought she was worrying unnecessarily.

"It's all a mistake," he declared, as he helped the two girls into the launch, then started up the engine.

Pat said nothing. As for Chris, she was too flabbergasted to speak. But both of them kept their gaze concentrated on the two boats ahead. The cruiser was heading straight for the mouth of the estuary, but, hampered as it was by the weight of the ketch, it was no match for the launch, and quickly the chums drew near.

"Aho, there!" shouted Pat, cupping her hands to her mouth. "Heave to! We want to come aboard!"

Dolores must have heard, for she turned her head, but she made no attempt to obey.

"Heave to, there!" ordered Pat, again, standing up and waving angrily.

Dolores turned her head, and for one brief moment Pat and Chris saw a furious scowl cross her pretty face, then she smiled and waved a friendly hand.

"Hallo, what's the matter?" she asked, as if nothing could possibly be amiss.

"We'll talk to you when you've anchored," declared Pat.

Impatiently she and her chum waited while the other girl shut off the engine and then released the anchors. As the cruiser came to a standstill, old Steve manoeuvred the launch alongside, and Dolores smiled down at him—a demure, winning smile in which there was a hint of puzzled surprise.

"How nice of you to come after me, Mr. Connelly," she said. "Did you think I wouldn't be able to manage on my own?"

"Mr. Connelly followed you at our request!" snapped Pat.

"But why?" "Because," said Pat bluntly, "you were stealing our ketch."

"Stealing?" Dolores' violet eyes held only innocent wonder. "Goodness, Pat, what do you mean? Why should I want to steal your boat? I was only trying to do you a good turn."

"Just what I told 'em myself, miss," growled Steve.

But Pat remained unconvinced. Accusingly she surveyed the slim figure in the cabin-cruiser.

"If you were on the level, why did you tell those fibs?" she demanded.

"Fibs?" Dolores looked more bewildered than ever. "Yes; you told Steve you were friend of ours."

"Of course I did. I really thought we were going to be friends. You seemed so nice and friendly that—oh, I say, I am sorry. I suppose it was taking a bit too much for granted. Please forgive me."

And Dolores flashed the chums another of her dazzling smiles. Chris began to wonder if they had not misjudged the girl, but Pat was still frowning.

"And what about your cabin-cruiser?" she asked. "I thought it was supposed to have broken down!"

Dolores remained quite unperturbed.

"I thought so, too," she said, "but when I tried it again it started up

immediately. It's the most aggravating engine ever."

Pat gave the girl another sharp look.

"So you intended to tow the ketch straight to the holiday camp, did you?" she asked.

Dolores beamed. "Of course."

"Then why were you heading the wrong way?"

"The wrong way?"

"Yes," Pat pointed with an accusing finger. "You were steering for the far side of the estuary, but the holiday camp lies round the other bank."

"Does it?" Dolores looked a little confused for a moment, then she gave an apologetic laugh. "What a silly I am!" she cried. "That comes of being a stranger around here. Goodness, but I am glad now that you did decide to follow me. You've saved me from going miles out of my way."

She smiled winningly at the chums, and the old boatman, completely won over, re-started his engine.

"I knew it was all a mistake," he declared. "I take it you'll carry on with the towing, miss?"

"But of course. I'll be only too glad to help Pat and Chris."

"Right, then I'll be getting back home."

Only waiting until Pat and Chris had clambered aboard the ketch, Steve swung round his launch and went speeding back up-river. Dolores' charming smile remained until the launch had disappeared round a bend, then abruptly it faded, and she looked calculatingly across at the ketch.

"If you two are staying at a cheap holiday camp, I expect you're short of money," she said, "so what about us doing a deal?"

"A—a deal?" stammered Pat, startled by the amazing change which had come over the girl.

Dolores nodded. "Yes, I'll buy your rights in the ketch from you," she said calmly.

"How about accepting ten pounds for the hire of her?"

"So you are after the ketch!" exclaimed Pat.

"Well, I've a certain interest in her—yes, admitted Dolores, with an airy wave of the hand.

"And you were trying to steal her!" Pat gasped.

"Never mind about that!" snapped the other girl impatiently. "Do you accept my offer?"

"No, we jolly well don't!"

"Not if I raise it to fifteen pounds?"

"Not if you raise it to fifty!" Her pretty face was red with fury. It was amazing the transformation which had come over her.

"All right," she said through her teeth. "All right, you cheap little holiday camp meddlers—take your ketch! But be warned! You haven't finished with me."

Tempestuously she bent and clutched at the tow-rope. Chris eyed her in alarm.

"What are you doing?" she gasped. "I thought you were going to tow us to the camp?"

Dolores gave a savage laugh as she freed the tow-rope and tossed it scornfully away from the cabin-cruiser.

"What a hope you've got!" she cried. "I wouldn't be seen dead at a holiday camp. I hate them all. As for towing your mouldy old boat there—not likely! You can stay here and sink for all I care!"

And stepping back into the cockpit of her cabin-cruiser, she switched on the motor. Another moment and she had gone speeding away.



THE NEWCOMER TO THE CAMP

"Well, can you beat that?" Chris gasped, as the cruiser chugged away.

Pat shrugged. "Good riddance!" she said. "The bigger the distance between us and Dolores the better. But to think we delore her bluff when we first saw her!"

(Please turn to the back page.)



Her Holiday WITH LING MIN YO

By DORIS BROOKES

FLIGHT FROM THE LAUNDRY

WHILE staying at Puchow, in China, with her friend, Ling Min Yo, Maureen Carstairs learnt that an organisation known as the Scarlet Dragon, whose leader was Ku Yi Tso, was scheming against the House of Ling.

She befriended Wong, a young boatman whom the Lings believed was chief of the river pirates.

As a result of this friendship, and the cunning of Ku, Maureen was forced to disguise herself as a Chinese girl and together with Min Yo, became a fugitive.

They worked in a laundry while Wong was away on a mission connected with a mysterious jade tablet.

A search was made at the laundry by the police for the fugitives, but Maureen and Min Yo managed to evade it. When they reappeared, however, Soo, the owner of the laundry, insisted that he himself should take them to the police to be checked.

"THERE is nothing to fear," Soo was saying blandly. "All that the police wish to do is check up on your identities."

Maureen and Min Yo were regarding each other in horrified consternation.

Nothing to fear! Soo didn't know that for the police to ask questions about their identities was the one thing they had to avoid at all costs. He didn't realise that they were the two girls for whom all Luchin was being scoured.

Terribly anxious, Maureen knew another crisis had overtaken them in their desperate efforts to elude capture by Ku Yi Tso.

"Come," said Soo. Maureen was trying frantically to think of some way out of the dilemma; yet realising that to refuse to go would at once arouse Soo's suspicions.

"Of course. But first we go to our room to prepare for the journey, O Soo," she said, speaking in her most careful Chinese, and playing for time.

"Then hurry," grumbled the laundry-owner. "Soo is a poor man, and to a poor man time is money."

Maureen and Min Yo went to their room, at the side of the laundry, where Soo had given them lodging.

"What are we to do, Maureen?" asked the Chinese girl in a trembling voice.

Maureen came to a sudden decision. "We've got to leave here, Yo-Yo," she replied. "We'll have to find another hiding-place!"

It meant they would be on the run again—two fugitives hunted on all sides. But there was no alternative. "Maureen know best," Min Yo said simply and trustingly.

Hurried preparations were made for flight. Maureen quickly touched up her disguise, made sure that the two sections of the precious jade tablet were still safe in her handbag. At the same time her mind was busy, planning ahead with the foresight of a leader.

"We'd better take some food with us, Yo-Yo," she said.

"I know where there is some. Maureen—and a bag to carry it in."

"Good. And we'll need some drinking water."

"I will fill a bottle, and leave money for Soo in payment for what we take."

Five minutes later the two girls slipped away—away from Soo's laundry in the Street of Washing. There they had hoped to remain until Wong returned from his journey to Shanghai, whither he had gone to find Li San, the learned professor who would be able to translate the message on the tablet. But it was not to be; to stay on there now was impossible.

"Where can we go?" whispered Min Yo, her face pale as she realised all the dangers. "The search still goes on. The streets will be guarded."

Maureen realised that only too well. But she had already made up her mind as to their course of action.

"We will avoid the streets and follow the stream," she replied. "And we must hurry before Soo discovers we have gone and becomes suspicious."

They reached the stream, threading their way through the trailing lacery of overhanging willows. Soo's laundry was left behind, and with thudding hearts the two girls pressed on unchallenged. For the time being at least, the search for them was still concentrated in the town itself.

Dusk was beginning to fall, and never had Maureen longed so much for darkness to come. The more she thought about their plight, the more she realised the tremendous odds they were fighting against. Not only had they the police to fear, but also the Scarlet Dragon, that secret organisation of which Ku Yi Tso was the leader. Could they possibly hope to escape capture? But they must—somehow they must!

The two girls continued on their way along the path beside the stream, broadening now as it meandered towards the main river.

Maureen was gazing around, looking for any likely place in which they could conceal themselves. Min Yo, ahead of her, paused.

"Caution, Maureen," she counselled. "We pass within sight of the main gateway."

"Then we'd better dodge among the trees, Yo-Yo—" began Maureen. But too late. Suddenly a challenging voice rang out.

"Who goes there?"

They had been seen by the gate-man. And with him were two uniformed figures, guarding that exit and entry into Luchin.

Maureen knew a moment of panic. But Min Yo had an answer.

"We go to fetch water, O gateman!" she called back. "We shall return ere sundown!"

"But we're not telling him which way we go!" whispered Maureen. "Goodness, will he follow us?"

Both girls felt a wild desire to break into a run, but that would have been fatal. They passed on, moving among some trees. No sound of pursuit came.

They quickened their steps. They were out of sight of the gateway now, but in the countryside. And then, as if impelled by the same impulse, they did break into a run.

"We still haven't found a hiding-place," panted Maureen. "I didn't want to go too far away from Luchin because of Wong—"

Suddenly she tripped over an unseen root. Over and over she rolled. She crashed against some undergrowth, and with a horrifying sensation the ground seemed to open beneath her and she felt herself falling.

Then came a bone-jarring thud and there in blackness she lay, breathless and dazed.

"Maureen! Where are you? Where are you?" Maureen was still half-stunned. She felt bruised and shaken.

"I—I'm down here, Yo-Yo— wherever that is!" she called back shakily. "Be careful—there's a big drop. Hang on a moment. I think I've got some matches in my handbag."

She groped around for her bag which, because it was so English-looking and therefore conspicuous, she had had concealed beneath her Chinese blouse. It was still there, and she fumbled in it for the box of matches.

Next moment she struck one, and the flame flared up, casting a dull yellow glow over the scene.

In amazement Maureen stared about her. She was in a large, rock-walled cavern. And there, standing on a ledge about five feet above her, peering through the bushes against which Maureen had first crashed, was Min Yo.

"Goodness, I made sure I fell at least twenty feet!" Maureen gasped in rueful surprise. And then a sudden thrill of excitement surged through her. "I say, Yo-Yo, how's this for a hiding-place?"

Min Yo jumped down beside her and, looking around that cavern as Maureen struck more matches, the two friends realised that indeed they had accidentally stumbled upon an ideal place in which to conceal themselves.

"We're staying here for to-night, anyway," Maureen decided. "Maybe this can be our new home until Wong returns!"



THE SCARLET DRAGON AGAIN

"Ouch! Grooo!" groaned Maureen.

"What is the matter, Maureen?" asked Min Yo, her quaint little face screwed up in comical surprise.

"The matter?" moaned Maureen. "I ache all over and I'm full of dents. You're used to Chinese brick beds, Yo-Yo, so sleeping on rock didn't make any difference. But it's not my idea of comfort!"

Min Yo had slept peacefully. But Maureen had only dozed fitfully, and now she was glad to be up.

A greyish gloom lighted the cavern, and the girls judged it must be soon after dawn. But scrambling up on to the ledge, and peering through the curtain of bushes there, they received a surprise. For outside it was broad

daylight, and already the heat of day was making itself felt—an oppressive heat, though in the cavern the temperature was nicely cool.

"Soon the weather will break," murmured Min Yo. "In a few days' time the rains will come."

"Like the monsoon in India, eh?" asked Maureen. "Then that's all the more reason why we should find a new home—and the more I think about it, Yo-Yo, this is the place. What do you say?"

Min Yo nodded. The cavern was completely screened by the undergrowth. Near by was the stream. And they were near Luchin, ready at hand for when Wong returned.

"Mauleen speaks wisdom," the Chinese girl said. "We stay here."

And so it was decided. That cavern beside the stream became their new home.

For the first day they found much to occupy their time. If this was to be done, then they were determined to make it as homely as possible.

Min Yo appointed herself cook and housekeeper. She gathered sticks to make a fire on which to cook. Some of the food she had brought from Soo's laundry was in tins. The tins served as saucers, and one as a kettle in which to boil stream water for tea.

Maureen, still painfully aware of her discomfort the previous night, gathered a heap of rushes and grass with which to make herself a crude sort of bed.

Then she started constructing a stool, consisting of four lengths of stout wood with woven reeds for the seat. And both girls roared with laughter when, sitting on it for the first time, it promptly collapsed.

"Goodness, I forgot the support pieces," chuckled Maureen. "Oh, well, we learn from experience. I'll have to start again. And what are you making, Yo-Yo?"

Min Yo was carefully fashioning some small pieces of stick with Maureen's penknife.

"I have collected shells for platters to eat from. Now I make chopsticks to eat with," she announced proudly.

"Chopsticks!" grimaced Maureen, who had never really mastered the art of using such things. "You needn't bother about any for me. I'd rather be all prehistoric and use my fingers."

And so that first day passed, and the day after it. Not all the time did the girls stay inside the gloom of the cavern. Much of the time they spent outside, but always dodging back into their hiding-place whenever anybody came near.

Workers from the near-by rice fields often passed by, and from the talk that went on between them the friends knew that the search for them and for Wong continued unabated.

They tried to remain cheery under the strain of being hunted. Maureen now called their home the Nest, because every day she added more reeds and grass to her bed, and said she felt like a bird building a nest.

But eventually, with the days and nights dragging on and the necessity of such restricted activity, the strain began to tell.

And now two things had come to worry Maureen. Their food supplies, even after being severely rationed out, were practically gone. And there was the problem of Wong.

Had he returned from Shanghai? How were they going to contact each other when he did? Owing to their hasty departure from Soo's laundry there had been no opportunity to seek out the old Chinese pastry-cook who was Wong's friend in Luchin. He had said that Wong would not return for some days; but the time of his return must now be drawing near.

"We ought to try to get in touch with the pastry-cook somehow," Maureen said on the third day. "I wonder if I could sneak along to the gateway, where he had his pitch on the first day we arrived in Luchin? If I could tell him where we are hiding, so that Wong will know—"

Min Yo, who had been silent and thoughtful, suddenly sat up.

A WORD FROM YOUR EDITOR

Many readers have written to say that from now on they are going to collect all the waste paper they can. That is grand news, and I am sure all you other girls will rally round when you realise how urgently old paper—and cardboard—is needed. Not a scrap should be thrown away. All of it can be put to good use.

Best wishes,
The Editor

"I will go, Mauleen," she volunteered.

Maureen looked startled. That hadn't been her intention at all. She didn't want little Yo-Yo running into any danger.

"No, it's too risky. You stay here—"

"If it is dangerous for me, then also it is dangerous for you—more so," Min Yo pointed out. "Mauleen, I wish to go. I will try to find this pastry-cook and ask him about Wong—and ask him, too, to send another message to my illustrious family. All this time I have been absent, Mauleen, and they will be distraught. They must know the truth, so that my honoured father can act."

Now Maureen understood why her friend was so eager to make the perilous trip into Luchin. And what Min Yo had said was true; the Chinese girl would indeed stand a far better chance of safely accomplishing the mission. Maureen's inability to speak fluent Chinese might very well prove her undoing if any emergency arose.

"Very well, Yo-Yo," she agreed reluctantly. "But you will take great care, won't you?"

"Of course, Mauleen. And while I am in Luchin I will buy food, too."

Ten minutes later she set off, accompanied part of the way by Maureen. Then, with a squeeze of the hand and a whispered "Good luck," Min Yo went on, disappearing from sight amid some trees.

Maureen turned to retrace her steps to the cavern. Lying on the bank of the adjacent rice field she saw a large cartwheel hat, evidently left there by a coolie.

She frowned anxiously and looked around her. The presence of that hat there meant that at least one coolie might be working in the vicinity. She mustn't be seen; above all she mustn't be spotted going into the cavern.

Next moment a startled gasp broke from Maureen's lips. Coming along the dusty path was not one coolie, but eight. They were the bearers of a magnificent palanquin in which rode the figure of Ku Yi Tso, the Great One of the Scarlet Dragon.



NEWS FROM MIN YO

Maureen stood there as if petrified, a horrible sinking sensation inside her as she saw this man who was her enemy, who had

proved such a false friend to Min Yo and her father, Ling Cho Yen.

And then, driving away panic, came the all-impelling urge to get out of sight before it was too late. Her description would have been broadcast throughout the province. Even if Ku did not recognise her, he might stop and question her.

She must hide. But where?

Alongside her were the rice fields, ripened and ready to be harvested before the rains came. But there were no bushes or trees.

In that tense moment Maureen's gaze again alighted on the large coolie's hat lying on the ridge of the rice field.

Quick as a flash she had stooped, picked up the hat and thrust it on her head.

Then she stepped into the field, her feet squelching in the mud, for rice is grown in fields that have been flooded.

But Maureen paid no heed to the slime oozing over her feet. Quickly she began plucking at the rice—to all intents and purposes a Chinese girl working in the fields, testing the rice to make sure that it was ready for harvesting.

The patter of eight pairs of feet sounded on the dusty path about twenty yards away. With the cartwheel hat pulled well down over her head, with her face averted, Maureen went on gathering rice.

But her heart was pounding with suffocating rapidity, and she dreaded to hear Ku's harsh voice ring out.

Seeing her working there, the leading bearer broke into a chant.

"Your exalted governor passes. Pay homage—pay homage!" she

Maureen bowed low, the wide-brimmed hat hiding her face. Ku Yi Tso lolled in his magnificent palanquin, casting but the briefest glance at the girl in the field.

His fleshy face was dark with anger; his eyes glittered coldly. Back at his imposing residence, which he had left half an hour ago, he had learned that the fugitives were still uncaptured. News had also come that the authorities of Puchow were conducting an all-out drive to trace Min Yo and that suspicion existed that he Ku Yi Tso, governor of the neighbouring province of Kanlo, was not co-operating in the way he should.

The fear of exposure was upon Ku. Well he knew that if Min Yo ever got back to Puchow his villainy would become known. Now he was on his way to Luchin, personally to organise the hunt for the two girls and Wong the pirate, who had so daringly defied him.

Not until he had disappeared completely from sight did Maureen dare to step back on to the path.

"Phew! That was too close a shave for my liking!" she muttered.

And then a new anxiety gripped her.

Her own danger had passed. But now she realised that Ku was going towards Luchin—was going in the same direction as little Min Yo. If his bearers kept up that same pace they might overtake the Chinese girl.

Helplessly Maureen stood there, knowing there was nothing she could do. She left the coolie's hat where she had found it. Then slowly, worriedly, she made her way back to the hiding-place beside the stream.

The mud of the rice field had come up over her ankles, had seeped through her Chinese boots. She took them off and bathed her feet in the stream. Then, thrusting her way through the concealing undergrowth, she jumped down into the cave.

It was just as she had left it. Except that now she was alone.

Two hours, three hours passed. But not yet was there any sign of her Chinese friend.

Maureen grew more and more restless and concerned. She stood on the ledge of the cavern, peering through the undergrowth, her gaze always turned fixedly in the direction of Luchin.

Then suddenly she quivered. A figure had appeared in the distance, coming towards the cavern.

It was Min Yo.

Min Yo running as Maureen had never seen her run before, the straw carrier which she had taken for her purchases swinging at her side.

Maureen's heart knew an awful fear, submerging the gladness at seeing her friend again. Had Min Yo been seen? Was she being pursued?

Protectively Maureen went dashing towards her.

"Yo-Yo, what is the matter?" she gasped.

"Mauleen, I have news—wonderful news!" Min Yo cried excitedly. "Wong has returned to Luchin, and we must go to him!"

Here is a surprise indeed. How and where will they contact Wong? The excitement mounts in next Friday's instalment.



THEIR SCHOOL ON CASTAWAY ISLE

By RENEE FRAZER

AT THE SECRET GROTTTO

TANIA, a jungle girl who had lived alone on Castaway Isle for many years, possessed an old book containing a map of the island. She knew that an unknown enemy among a party of castaways was interested in the map, and suspected cheery Gerry Royston, who had always been eager for her friendship. She trusted quiet Dave Cardew, whose attitude towards Gerry was always hostile.

Tania became a pupil at the school the castaways established on the island.

One morning she overheard a conversation between Stanhope, mate of the wrecked ship, and Dave, which startled her. For it suggested that not Gerry, but Dave, was her enemy!

DAVE—plotting with the rascally mate!

Heartbroken, Tania stared after the two figures, who were now climbing into a boat at the water's edge.

Even as she started forward, with an involuntary cry, she saw them row away from the shore.

"Steady, Tania!" It was Gerry's voice, gentle and understanding. "Take it easy! I'm no end sorry you had to see this, but it was the only way to convince you. I found it hard to believe myself that Dave could be such a rotter."

With a little sob, the jungle girl turned away, her eyes smarting, her hands tightly clenched. She had trusted Dave—trusted him implicitly from that day when he had tended her wounded panther.

She had confided her fears to him and taken his advice, believing that he was trying to help her. And now—now—

Her heart felt numbed, and she was scarcely conscious of Gerry's hand on her arm, gently leading her away from the beach.

The discovery of the boy's treachery had come as a stunning shock. Even now she could scarcely believe that Dave had deceived her. Yet how could she doubt what her own eyes had seen—and what her ears had heard?

"This is pretty rough on you, Tania," said Gerry. "I know you thought a lot of Dave, but I've suspected for some time that he was up to no good. I hated to say anything; after all, I might have been mistaken, and I couldn't see why he should want to plot against you—why anyone should for that matter."

Impulsively Tania turned, meeting his concerned, friendly smile. A sudden lump rose in her throat as she remembered how she had doubted him.

"Tania speak hard words to Gerry," she muttered, "for she believed he was her enemy. But—but now—"

"Now?" prompted Gerry. "What now, Tania?"

The jungle girl drew a quick breath.

"Tania is sorry!" she whispered.

"Gerry has shown her the truth, and she believes that Gerry is her friend."

The boy's hand tightened on hers. "You know I am, Tania. And I'll stand by you, whatever happens. Between us we'll find that secret of yours—"

He broke off as Tania looked at him searchingly.

"Secret? Gerry means the map?" "Of course," said Gerry, nodding quickly. "The map that Dave stole from you. He's got it hidden somewhere. But whatever happens, Tania, we must keep this to ourselves."

The jungle girl looked puzzled. "I mean," explained Gerry, "it would never do to let Dave know that you suspect him, and it would be best not to tell the others just yet. They'd never believe us without more proof, and Dave would deny everything. The secret is between you and me, Tania, and I want you to trust me to help you."

The palm-trees rustled as a faint, moaning gust of wind swept up from the sea, and the sky grew darker. Tania shivered involuntarily as she looked into Gerry's frank blue eyes.

She remembered that Dave had once spoken almost the same words—Dave, whom she now believed had lied to her!

But there was no one to turn to now—no one except Gerry—and the jungle girl longed for a friend.

"Tania will trust Gerry," she said.

"Good!" The boy's face lit up. "And now we'd better get along to school, or they'll suspect that something's wrong. We're late as it is."

But Tania drew back quickly. She could not face the jolly crowd at school after what had happened. She could not meet Mr. Barnard's shrewd, kindly glance without betraying what was on her mind.

"Not now, Gerry," she said. "Tania go back to her home—to think. To-morrow, perhaps, she come to school."

"Of course." The boy nodded understandingly. "Just as you wish. They knew you were upset after what happened on the ship, and they won't be surprised if you don't turn up. But—be careful, Tania!" he added gently. "Don't run any more risks. If you need help, you know where to find me."

He gripped her hand, smiling charmingly, and Tania saw him waving to her as she darted into the shadow of the trees.

Her mind torn by conflicting emotions, the jungle girl paddled her canoe back towards her forest home.

The sky that had been so blue when they set out that morning was now strangely pale; the sun gleamed like a coppery disc.

Tania knew that a storm threatened, but her troubled thoughts were bent on other matters closer to her heart.

Reaching her home she found Michi and Bimbo awaiting her. The panther was strangely restless, his

sleek fur ruffled, his tail lashing as he sniffed the sultry air.

Bimbo, chattering excitedly, ran up and down the ladder of woven creepers, to spring finally on to his young mistress' shoulders, holding tightly to her hair as though for protection.

Tania soothed her pets as she prepared her midday meal of fruit and nuts. After the meal—of which Bimbo ate the major share—the jungle girl called Michi and examined the panther's wound.

It was nearly healed, thanks to the ointment and bandages that Dave had given her and his skillful instructions that she had so carefully followed.

Tania's eyes were smarting as she applied the final dressing; as she tucked away the ointment and bandages, and the scissors that she had so proudly worn as a keepsake.

The sight of Dave's gifts—the memory of his kindness—were more than she could bear.

For the rest of that day she kept near her home, unhappy, restless. In the morning, after a disturbed night, Dave was still on her mind.

But soon the approaching storm forced her mind to more practical matters. She was not thinking of herself, but her pets, especially Michi, who hated storms.

With sudden determination, she rose to her feet. She would take her pets to a safe spot before the storm broke.

Tania knew the very place, sheltered and secure from the wildest gale.

That secret cave in the cliffs that she called the Grotto of Shells.

"Come, Michi! Come, Bimbo!"

She climbed down the swaying ladder, Bimbo swinging after her, while Michi sprang from the platform in a graceful, noiseless bound.

Following the banks of the winding stream, she came at length in sight of the great cliff, with its screen of trailing creeper—beyond which, hidden from all eyes, was the mysterious cavern she had discovered by accident many moons ago.

Only just in time. The clouds broke as she hurried forward, and the torrential rain beat on the swaying palms. Suddenly a vivid flash of lightning split the gloom.

A choking cry escaped Tania's lips. She halted at the small entrance to the Grotto of Shells, her dark eyes wide with horrified accusation.

A boy stood in the entrance. He turned towards her, a tattered, yellowed map clutched in his hand.

"Dave!" cried Tania brokenly. "It is you—with my map!"



TANIA MAKES A PRISONER

"Tania!" Dave took a step back, a startled expression in his grey eyes.

Tania slowly entered the cave, her gaze fastened on the precious map.

There had been no mistake. Gerry had been right. Dave was the treacherous thief! Dave was her enemy!

"Tania," said Dave, reaching out

his hand, "what—what on earth are you doing here—in this storm?"

Sudden anger blazed into the jungle girl's eyes.

"Go back!" she cried. "Do not come near me, boy of the false heart who pretended to be my friend!"

"Tania, are you crazy?" gasped Dave. "Do you know what you are saying?"

Her hand trembling, the jungle girl pointed at the tattered map.

"Tania knows what her eyes have shown her and what her ears have heard!" she exclaimed. "She has seen Dave laughing with her enemy, and now she finds him with the paper he has stolen! Dave, who came to her with words of friendship—"

"Tania, I am your friend!" exclaimed Dave, his face white and stern. "For goodness' sake listen to me! I—I found your map—never mind where. When you saw me with Stanhope yesterday I was bluffing him, trying to discover where it was hidden. This morning I found it. Then the storm came, and I sheltered—"

A clap of thunder drowned his words, and Michi growled uneasily.

Tania stood at the entrance of the cave, her finger pointing, her dark eyes stony with contempt.

"What are words?" she demanded. "So many words has Tania heard from Dave—words of kindness that made her heart weak. Was it not Dave who told her to hide the precious book in the jungle, and who sent word to the mate that he might steal it from her—"

"Tania—you can't believe that I—"

"Was it not Dave," persisted the jungle girl accusingly, "who spoke the false words against Gerry, so that Tania distrusted him?"

"Gerry!" burst out Dave. "I might have guessed he was behind this! Why, the rotten trickster—"

"Stop! You shall not say that about Gerry—my friend!"

"Your friend!" Dave made a furious gesture. "That's not true! Do you hear me, Tania? That fellow doesn't know the meaning of the word friendship. He's just bluffing you for his own purpose!"

Tania's chin came up. "More false words!" she said scornfully. "But Tania is not deceived. Give me the map—my map—at once!"

Dave hesitated. "You mean to give it to Gerry?" he challenged.

The jungle girl stiffened. "Tania will do as she wishes with what is her own!"

"Right!" snapped Dave, crushing the map in his hand. "Then I'll keep it, Tania, till I can make you see sense! You'd better wait here and shelter from the storm. I'm going to—"

He made to brush past her, but Tania barred his way, her hands outstretched, her eyes blazing.

Anger had transformed the timid, appealing jungle girl whom Dave knew into someone he had never seen before.

"Dave shall not leave with Tania's map!" she exclaimed. "Michi, guard the false one till Tania returns!"

A deep, ominous snarl rumbled in the panther's throat as he crouched beside its young mistress.

Dave looked startled. "Look here, Tania, you don't seriously imagine that you can keep me here against my will?"

Tania laughed—a soft, scornful laugh.

"Michi will guard you, as I have ordered. But even without him Dave could not escape. None but Tania has ever set foot in this grotto before you came, and Tania alone knows its secrets."

"What are you going to do?" demanded Dave, starting forward as the jungle girl sprang back through the mouth of the cave.

But a warning snarl from the panther momentarily checked him.

"Will you give Tania back her map?" cried the jungle girl.

"No!" retorted Dave. "And you can't—"

He broke off as Tania threw her slight weight against a boulder at the entrance—a massive stone, so precariously balanced that it rocked at the slightest touch.

"The secret of the rock is known only to Tania!" called the jungle girl. "Dave need not fear, for there is air to breathe, but his voice will not be heard by his friends, and Tania will not let him go until he gives back the map he stole!"

Dave's shout of protest was drowned by a sound-like thunder as the great stone rolled across the entrance of the grotto, plunging the cave into darkness.



RESCUE IN THE STORM

Sam Perkins, his sou'-wester and oilskins dripping with water, pushed open the door of the jungle school-room, slamming it against the gale.

Mr. Barnard started to his feet, and there came a questioning clamour from the youthful castaways.

"Any news, Sam?" demanded Mr. Barnard.

The handyman sailor mopped his face, panting for breath.

"I've just signalled to the ship, sir, Cap'n Rawlins' compliments, and everything's O.K. there. But he's not seen anything of Master Dave."

The master frowned, and an anxious whisper went round the room.

"I can't understand it!" he exclaimed. "Dave went out early this morning, saying that he'd be back in time for class. Nothing's been seen of him since then, though I sent Gerry to search the beach for him and—"

"Here comes Gerry!" put in plump Tim Burchell.

Gerry appeared in the doorway, a soaked raincoat over his khaki slacks and open-necked shirt. Grinning ruefully, he wrung the moisture from his clothes.

"Not a sign of Mim anywhere on the beach, sir," he declared. "But I found traces of footprints on the jungle path. It looks as though he's gone exploring for some reason."

Mr. Barnard bit his lip as the rain lashed against the windows.

"The boy must have taken leave of his senses!" he exclaimed. "In a gale like this, anything might happen."

He strode anxiously from his desk and stared out across the rain-swept clearing.

"I want volunteers for a search-party!" he said abruptly. "Three of you boys—Gerry, Tim, Jeff—Right, that'll be enough. We'll search the forest in the vicinity of the camp. Dave may have met with an accident."

There was a hasty scramble for raincoats.

"You others will see to the tents," continued the master. "If this storm gets worse we may lose a lot of valuable stores. Thank goodness no harm has come to the ship so far, though the waves look pretty dangerous out on the reef."

"What about the meals, sir?" asked Sam Perkins. "The kitchen's pretty high flooded, and the fire's gone out—"

"The girls will help there," said Mr. Barnard briskly. "Moyna, get a party together and give Sam a hand. Ready, you boys? Right! Then let's go!"

Followed by the eager search-party, he headed out into the driving rain.

The others crowded towards the store tents and the open-air kitchen, anxious to assist.

The food stores, in particular, needed moving, and, under Sam's direction, they piled sacks of flour, cases of tea, and tinned provisions under the shelter of a huge tarpaulin, pegging it to the ground.

The youthful castaways worked like Trojans, their willingness unimpaired by the general wet and discomfort, though more than one face was anxiously clouded as they discussed Dave's mysterious absence.

"Dave's not been himself since last night," declared Pat Saunders, a worried expression on her freckled face. "Ever since they brought Tania back from the ship, and there was all that talk about her stolen map, he seems to have had something on his mind—"

"That jungle girl's brought nothing but trouble to the camp!" cut in Moyna Curtis rather sharply. "I can't think what everyone sees in her. Just because she's quaint and appealing, the boys seem to think that butter won't melt in her mouth. If you ask me, she's as cunning as a young monkey, and—"

Suddenly came a warning cry from one of the boys:

"Look out, there, you girls! Mind that tree!"

Moyna started back, but Pat Saunders, who was knocking in a tent-peg, was taken off her guard. A huge, splintered bough, snapped by the gale, came crashing down from one of the tall trees that shaded the clearing.

The next instant Pat would have been crushed beneath it. But in that split second a slight, agile figure sprang from the bushes, dragging Pat clear in the nick of time.

A shout of relief and surprise went up as everyone rushed on to the scene.

"Tania!"

"Gosh, that was a near shave!"

"Where on earth did you spring from, Tania?"

Her dark eyes wary, her breath coming quickly, the jungle girl looked from one to the other. Pat caught her gratefully by the hand.

"Tania, you probably saved my life!" she declared.

"Tania glad," said the jungle girl. "But now—now she must go back to her home, where her animals wait for her—"

"Here, not so fast!" exclaimed one of the boys warmly. "We can't let her go like this, can we, chaps? She must wait and see Mr. Barnard—"

"No—please!" The jungle girl was looking round her rather desperately. "Tania must go—"

"But why, Tania?" asked Pat. "Look, the rain's stopped, the storm's practically over, and—"

"Here is Mr. Barnard!" came a sudden shout.

The little search-party appeared at that moment from the tress, and it was plain from their worried expressions that they had had no luck.

A rush was made towards the master, to inform him of what had happened. He listened, then strode up, followed by Gerry and the other boys.

"Tania!" he exclaimed, taking her by the hand. "This is a surprise! I've just been hearing about your very plucky act. But what brought you to the camp in this weather?"

Tania shook her head, a stubborn gleam in her eyes.

Mr. Barnard's puzzled expression deepened, while the others exchanged curious glances.

At that moment there came a gasp from Moyna Curtis, who had crossed over to the bushes from behind which Tania had appeared.

"Look!" she cried, and held something up.

It was the jungle girl's woven basket, in which she usually collected fruit. Now it was filled to the brim with food from the stores—biscuits, tins of beans, packets of butter, and jars of jam—all bundled in at random and without any idea of choice.

"Goodness!" exclaimed Moyna. "So that's what she's been up to—stealing food from the kitchen—"

There came a gasp of protest from Pat and the others.

"Not stealing, Moyna!" cut in Mr. Barnard rather sharply, though his

(Please turn to page 107.)



The Merry-makers Afloat

By DAPHNE GRAYSON

THE COLONEL IS ANNOYED

"NOW let me see!" Sally Warner, seated in a steamer chair on the promenade deck of the Ocean Star, paused, wrinkled up her pretty blue eyes in the brilliant sunshine and stared down at the writing-pad on her knee. "Johnny's giving a turn on the guitar, with Don at the drums. Then— Oh, bother, I've run out of ink."

She shook her pen vigorously. "Hang on a jiffy, Sally, I'll get mine," volunteered Don Weston.

"No need for that, brother," said a rather nasal voice behind him. "Here's my latest invention, Sally. The everflow pen. If your ink is getting low, use an everflow." Snappy, eh?"

"Oh!" In some apprehension Sally looked at the proffered pen, with its queer barrel-shaped attachment on one end, then at the tall, thin, serious-faced boy, whose solemn eyes were alight with pride behind his large horn-rimmed spectacles. "You—you're sure it works, Slick?"

"Works? Say, you kidding?" Slick, otherwise Samuel Leander Kaplin of Detroit, U.S.A., looked pained. "Go ahead, Sal, try it. 'Once you try it you'll want to buy it,'" he added, quoting proudly one of his interminable slogans.

"Once you use it you'll want to lose it," countered Fay Manners with a chuckle.

Slick ignored that. He was a new student, having joined the floating college at the last port of call.

He allowed no levity where his precious inventions were concerned, and as he produced on an average two new inventions per day, there was, consequently, little time for fun and games in his busy life.

But Slick made plenty of amusement for the chums, and quite a lot of worry. For his inventions had a nasty habit of going wrong, sometimes with amusing and sometimes with disastrous consequences for the user.

"All right," Sally said now. "Somewhat gingerly she applied the pen to the paper, and in some surprise saw the nib working neatly, and then:

"Oh, golly!" she cried in dismay. "The everflow's overflowed," chortled Johnny Briggs.

"Might as well try writing with a distemper brush," declared Don.

"Shucks! Had a notion the flow was too fast through that barrel. I'll fix that all right." And quite unconcernedly Slick fished in his pocket and produced another object. "This is my 'raseabout,'" he said proudly. "Your whatter?" asked Don faintly. "Automatic eraser—just press the lever and it works with a circular motion, completely eliminating any exertion on the user's part," explained

Slick. "'If you want to rub it out, use the raseabout,'" he added.

Sally gingerly took the queer contraption, applied the four little metal prongs each holding an ink eraser to the pad, and rather finchingly pressed the lever.

Frantically the erasers scabbled over the paper, removing the blob of ink by the simple method of clawing through to the page beneath, and then, before Sally realised what was happening, to several pages beneath that.

"You ought to patent that as an excavator," grinned Don.

In stony silence, though with her lips twitching, Sally handed back the "raseabout." Very unconcernedly Slick took it, peered at it.

"Guess the friction's a little too hard—I'll fix that, too," he said amiably, and with a rather absent-minded nod at the chums he ambled off.

While Sally, glancing from the bobby, screwed-up pad to her helpless chums, suddenly lay back in her chair and shook with laughter.

"Golly, if his demonstration of inventions at the concert-to-night is going to be anything like that, he'll have the audience in stitches," she chuckled, dabbing at her eyes. "He'll be—I say," she added, her laughter suddenly vanishing and a look of concern taking its place, "the colonel looks a little put-out."

That was a gross understatement. Colonel Brough, late of the Indian Army, was a first-class passenger on board the Ocean Star. Always of a somewhat peppery disposition, he was now positively purple with anger. It bristled in every line of his severely waxed moustache, in every hair of his bushy eyebrows.

"G-good morning, colonel," said Fay faintly as he approached.

"Good morning," Nonsense, awful morning," barked the colonel.

"H-have you found your pieces of p-paper yet?" ventured Sally.

The colonel drew himself up. Even his ears turned crimson.

"My pieces of paper, young lady," he said with biting sarcasm, "are a collection of the most minute mathematical calculations of the ship's daily progress, and our position in relation to—but bah! You wouldn't understand. Somebody," he barked, "has touched those papers. They couldn't disappear by themselves—it's sabotage, that's what it is. Sabotage!"

"You could have mislaid them," suggested Don.

"I couldn't!" roared the colonel. "But that's not all." He looked grimly at the four faces regarding him. "There's either a practical joker or a maniac aboard this ship—I'm inclined to the latter view. Look at my hair!"

With a furious gesture he swept off

his Panama hat and pointed to his sand-coloured hair.

"It—it looks very tidy," said Sally hopefully.

"Tidy?" The colonel gritted his teeth. "It's glued down—immovable. Yesterday I found a free sample of hair-cream outside my cabin. It bore some foolish slogan—ah, 'Slickfix for a slick fix.' This is the result."

In trepidation the chums looked at one another. Slickfix, of course, was another Slick invention.

"Whoever did it should be thrashed—they should be put in irons and thrown off at the nearest port. Bah!"

The colonel slapped his hand down on the table beside Sally—then gave an anguished howl, glaring at a metal object which had suddenly become clipped to one of his fingers.

"Take it off! Take it off!" he roared.

With an inward groan Don grabbed the object and released the colonel's finger. He glanced at his three chums.

"Slick's patent cigar-cutter," he muttered. But despite his low voice the colonel heard.

"Slick!" he muttered. "That name again. Do you realise that—that thing has practically removed the top joint of my finger?" This was a gross exaggeration, of course. "I cancel my remark about him being thrown off at the next port—he should be thrown off now," belowered the colonel. "I'll find out who this person is! I'll tell the captain! I'll—bah!"

And with a withering glare at the chums the colonel stalked off.

"As you say, Sally, a little put-out," remarked Don. "But I say, if he finds old Slick—"

"He'll complain to the captain—he'll stop him from entering the concert-to-night," said Sally in alarm. "Oh, come on, let's find the chump, tell him to apologise to the colonel. It might smooth things over."

They knew exactly where to look for Slick. He was down in the carpenters' shop where he put together his inventions. He listened rather absently to the chums' story.

"I like that old battleaxe," he said casually. "Wish I could invent something to help him find his precious papers. But that chair over there will be a humdinger when it's finished. I heard him say he couldn't find a comfortable chair—"

But never mind that now—what about this?" And proudly Slick indicated the object in front of him. "This is the Whizz! Let the Jerk shirk, the Whizz will do the work," he added.

"The—the Jerk?" asked Sally puzzledly.

"Sure, the soda jerk—the guy who fixes the ice-cream sodas. This does the work for him. See—soda and ice in here, press the lever. Now get an eyeful of this."

There was a whirr, a splutter. Out flew a splatter of white drops.

"Slick, my blouse!" protested Fay. "Look!"

"H'm, bit spotty. Sorry, Fay, but I'll fix it." Slick raked around, produced a bottle. "Special stain remover—removes anything," he added, dabbing vigorously at Fay's flower-patterned blouse.

The chums watched with interest, which turned to surprise as the stains disappeared. Then Sally gave a cry: "Fay—the flowers! They're disappearing, too. Oh, my hat!"

"He said it removed everything," remarked Johnny. "You'd better go and change it, Fay, otherwise it will remove you, too. As a matter of fact, we'll all go."

"So-long," said Slick equably. "I'll hurry on with the chair for the colonel. But in the meantime I've made a swell present for the old boy," he added. "I've given it to the steward to put on his table at lunch." And with a nod he turned away.

In petrified dismay the four chums stared at one another. Another invention to smooth the colonel over! Wasn't that just like Slick? If that invention was anything like the previous ones it was liable to send the colonel hopping mad. Instead of appearing at the concert to-night Slick would more probably be confined to his cabin, with all sorts of dire punishments hanging over his head!

THE COLLAPSIBLE STICK

"We've got to get that parcel before the colonel gets it," declared Sally.

"And pitch it overboard before the old boy sees it," added Don.

With Sally leading, the Merry-makers charged into the dining-saloon, oblivious of the pained glances of the other passengers. Quickly Sally looked over to the colonel's table, her heart missing a beat as she saw the steward placing a parcel on his chair. But fortunately there was no sign of the colonel.

Like a flash Sally darted across the room and as the steward turned his back she made a grab for the parcel. And at the same time the colonel's voice boomed over her shoulder:

"Well, steward, where's this parcel you had for me?"

"Here, sir." The steward motioned to the chair, then his eyes bulged. Quickly he lifted the cloth, looked underneath the table. "Why, it was here, sir," he said in stupefied tones. "I put it here a moment ago."

In alarm Sally looked huntedly around, her hands clasping the parcel behind her back. But she was hemmed in. In front of her was the steward, behind her the colonel, and tables on either side.

"Another practical joke, eh?" the colonel asked menacingly. And then he caught sight of Sally who, looking the very essence of guilt, was still trying to wriggle her way out. "Do you know anything about this?" he barked.

"I—I—" blurted Sally. "Oh, golly, colonel, I—"

"Ah!" The colonel gave a grunt of satisfaction as, suddenly whipping out a hand, he swung Sally round. "I thought so. We'll go into your reasons for this queer behaviour after I've opened my present."

"Colonel, please!" cried Sally in an agony of apprehension. "I—I shouldn't open it if I were you. I'm sure you wouldn't like it."

"Not your type of thing at all," put in Don desperately.

"Allow me to decide that for myself, young man," replied the colonel crushingly. "Now, what the Dickens—" He lifted out a card, read it frowningly. "Guess this little gift will make us buddies again! H'm! An adjustable walking-stick, eh? Suitable for anyone from a dwarf to a giant."

He glanced at it pleasedly, while Don and Sally stared at each other with the fervent hope in their eyes that at least this invention would work without a hitch.

"Press the lever—ah!" With the delight of a small boy the colonel watched as the stick gradually lengthened, then, as it reached the required height, he pressed another

lever. "A very handsome present indeed. I wonder who—"

The colonel never finished wondering. For as he spoke he leaned his weight heavily on the stick. Unable to watch, Sally and Don tightly shut their eyes, flinching as a heavy thud announced that the colonel had reached the floor. When they opened their eyes again they saw that the colonel, breathing heavily, was staring through narrowed eyes at the stick, which had gone back to its original six-inch length.

"Another one of those inventions, eh?" he gritted. "The Slick-stick! That Slick person again. I'll slice him, the jackanapes. I'll keep this stick and break every bone in his body with it. I'll—"

"Hi, there, Sal—everything jake?" asked Slick's voice.

"Oooh!" Sally gave a wailing cry. She turned, grabbing Slick's arm. "Oh, S-Samuel," she said in a strangled voice. "There's something I must show you—over here by—"

With Slick eyeing her in some alarm, she dragged him out of the room, leaned faintly against the wall outside.

"You've done it again," she wailed. "You chump! You ass! You fat-head—" She paused for breath. "That stick collapsed."

"Is that so?" asked Slick interestedly. "Say, it won't take me a minute to fix that."

"You'll fix nothing." With determination Sally grabbed his arm and drew him back as he started towards the dining-room. "You've done enough fixing. You're going to keep out of sight—"

"But what about lunch?" asked Slick reasonably. "Gee, a guy's got to eat—"

"Then a guy can eat somewhere far removed from the colonel," replied Sally firmly. "Maybe—just maybe, mark you—if we keep you out of sight until to-night the colonel may have calmed down a little. Otherwise, there'll be no concert for you, my lad."

"Shucks, that would be too bad," protested Slick. "I've got quite a lot of gadgets I want to demonstrate. Okay, Sal, if that's what you want—just have something sent down to my workshop. I'll finish off my chair," he added as he trotted off. "I still think that's a cinch to put old battleaxe in a good mood."

"Oh, jumping catfish!" muttered Sally hopelessly. "He'll never learn."

Worriedly, trying to make herself as inconspicuous as possible, she made her way to her table where Don, looking somewhat crestfallen, had just taken his place.

"How's the colonel?" Sally whispered.

"Awful!" hissed Don. "And I believe he's got a pretty good idea of Slick's identity. Sally, we've got to keep those two apart until the concert—and especially we've got to keep Slick's inventions away from the colonel from now on."

"But the chair," Sally wailed. "He's working on it now. He's dead keen on giving it to the colonel."

Don and Johnny looked at each other. Simultaneously they replaced their knives and forks on their plates and rose to their feet.

"Where are you going?" asked Fay in surprise.

"To get that chair," replied Don grimly.

"And pitch it overboard if necessary," added Johnny. "We're going to make sure it doesn't come anywhere within range of the colonel."

"Good! I'm with you," said Sally. "Come on, Fay."

It was, they realised, an ideal time to carry out their purpose, with the majority of the passengers at lunch.

Somewhat grimly they made their way down to the carpenters' shop, Slick, busy at his chair, straightened up as they entered.

"You've come at a swell time," he said in satisfied tones. "I've just finished. Get a load of it," he added, looking proudly at the chair.

"Isn't it a beaut? Say, have you guys come to give me a hand upstairs with it?"

"We've come to take it," said Don grimly, "but we haven't decided where."

"Meaning that this chair's going to disappear for a time—if not for ever," explained Sally. "Sorry, Slick, but it's for your own good."

"Quit kidding," said Slick unconcernedly. "Can't think of a slogan for it," he added worriedly. "I'm calling it the Rapture—that's the feeling it gives you when you sit in it—"

"Hey, what's the idea?" For Sally & Co. had replaced argument by action. While Johnny held the alarmed inventor at bay, Don, Sally and Fay carried the chair out of the door. Johnny followed, locking the door behind him.

"The carpenters will be back in twenty minutes," he called. "They'll let you out—if you haven't invented a way out before."

Headless of Slick's yells they plodded on with the chair.

"Where to?" asked Johnny.

"In one of the lifeboats," replied Sally with sudden inspiration. "They won't be inspected again for a while, and at least the chair will be out of the way until after the concert."

Fortunately, the service lift was not being used. It took only a matter of moments for the chums to whiz up to the promenade deck which, luckily, at this hour was deserted.

They eased the chair out of the lift, left it for a moment while they scurried along the deck to unhack the canvas cover of one of the lifeboats. And as they did so a startled yell from along the deck suddenly rang in their ears.

Tense with alarm, the chums straightened up, then as one they turned and bolted back to where they had left the chair.

Then Sally gave a cry of dismay. For the chair, empty before, now had an occupant—a man who thrashed around wildly in an effort to free himself from the chair which, collapsing as he had seated himself in it, was now wrapped lovingly around him.

"All that trouble to keep the thing away from Colonel Brough," groaned Don.

"And it's caught the captain himself," finished Sally miserably.

MAKING PEACE



It took some time to release the captain from those enveloping folds, during which time the chums, scar-time let-faced, had to listen to a non-stop flow of not very flattering comment.

It was Johnny who, accidentally touching a knob, sent the chair quivering back to its original shape. A very ruffled, very dignified captain straightened himself up and glared at the chums.

"I suppose this could be looked upon as a joke, if one had that queer sort of mind," he snapped.

"But really, sir, it wasn't us," protested Johnny. "And, anyway, it wasn't made for you—it was for Colonel Brough—"

A warning kick from Sally stopped him, but it was too late.

"Colonel Brough?" The captain's tone was curt. "Surely you realise I cannot have my passengers annoyed—"

"But that's the point, sir," broke in Sally desperately. "It was because we didn't want him annoyed that we were hiding it."

"I haven't time to go into all this now," the captain said gruffly. "Just leave the chair here. I'll get one of the stewards to remove it. Meantime, as a mark of my displeasure at such a foolish joke, I must ask you to refrain from appearing at my concert to-night."

And heedless of their cry of protest, (Please turn to the back page.)



The MYSTERY MUSICAL BOX



THE PUZZLING CLOAK-ROOM TICKET

"NOW for a couple of hours' shopping!" June Gaynor smiled. "Some of these American styles are so attractive it's hard to know what to choose!"

The girl detective and her famous uncle, Noel Raymond, were staying in Hollywood, where Noel was giving expert advice on a film dealing with Scotland Yard.

This particular day, however, June had journeyed over to the city of Los Angeles to see the sights and do a little shopping by the way. She was thoroughly enjoying her walk down one of the gay, busy, tree-lined boulevards.

"My word, what an attractive girl!" she murmured suddenly. "But she looks worried."

Coming towards her on the thronged pavement was a slim, dark girl in a trim, emerald-green jacket and swaying, ballerina skirt. Yet June's keen eyes had noted at once the almost desperate expression on that girl's face.

She didn't seem to notice the traffic and the crowds and the gay shop windows. Until suddenly—

Her eyes met June's, as she drew almost level with the girl detective, and something like a flash of recognition seemed to dawn on her face.

She threw a lightning glance over her shoulder and then quickly stepped sideways, bumping into June as if by accident. There was fear in her dark eyes as, for a brief second, she gripped June's arm.

"Say—I guess I'm sorry!" she murmured.

At the same instant June felt something pressed into the palm of her hand.

"Please—use this!" the girl said in a swift whisper. "Carlos is following, and I dare not say more—"

That was all June heard, for next moment the girl had swung away, after throwing her one more desperate glance of appeal. Into the crowd she vanished, but not before June had noticed something else.

A tall, dark boy had loomed up out of the shifting throng. Head erect, he carried himself proudly, walking with long, easy strides. And his eyes were fixed on the girl in the swaying ballerina skirt. Swiftly he followed her.

"He must be Carlos!" June thought amazedly. "The boy she said was shadowing her!"

The whole incident was over in a few seconds, almost before June had realised it had happened. Her pulses quickening, she stepped back against a shop window, looking down the pavement.

But both the girl and the boy who were trailing her were out of sight now, lost in the throng.

Drawing a deep breath, June gazed at the object the girl had pressed into her palm. It was a folded slip of paper. As she opened it out, her puzzlement grew.

"Well! Of all the strange things!" she murmured.

For it was a cloak-room ticket, issued from the railway terminus, for one suitcase deposited at the left-luggage office.

Whatever June had expected, it certainly wasn't that! Why on earth should a complete stranger have pressed it into her hand, begging her to use it? Why had she seemed so tense and frightened, and why was that boy Carlos following her?

One thing was quite clear, however. For some reason she couldn't fathom,

that frightened girl in the ballerina skirt wanted her to claim a suitcase that had been left at the railway terminus.

"And that," June decided promptly, "is what I'd better do—right now!"

Her shopping forgotten, she hailed a stream-lined taxi, and a few minutes later was standing by the cloak-room counter, handing the ticket to the official on the other side.

It was a very ordinary-looking bag that he brought her in exchange. Just a small suitcase, light in weight.

Yet June's heart beat more quickly as she lifted it. What was its importance? Why had that girl seemed vitally concerned that she should claim it? And, now she had got it, what was she to do with it?

That last question, at any rate, was soon answered.

"I'll take it to nunky," June said to herself. "He may be able to throw some light on the affair!"

It was some time later when she reached Hollywood, but, fortunately, her famous uncle was in the rooms they had taken in a skyscraper hotel. He looked up from a pile of papers in surprise.

"I didn't expect you back till after lunch, June," he smiled. "Don't tell me you couldn't find anything to buy!"

June shook her head as carefully she placed the case on his desk.

"I haven't bought a single thing, nunky!" she declared. "All I've got is this case, and I don't know what it is, whom it belongs to, or why I should have it!"

And, as Noel gazed at her in quizzical surprise, June told him briefly what had occurred. She could see that he was intrigued by her story as he gazed with interest at the suitcase.

"Nunky! That girl was desperately scared!" exclaimed June. "But why should she hand that cloak-room ticket to a complete stranger?"

"That's not easy to answer, June," he replied. "But if she was being shadowed, possibly she was afraid to claim the case herself. Could you describe the boy who was trailing her?"

June nodded.

"I'd know him again anywhere," she said. "He was tall, dark, romantic-looking. I suppose if his name's Carlos he might be a South American. But, nunky, I can't see that the girl's any better off now, for she won't know where to look for her bag."

"It's a strange affair, certainly," Noel agreed. "But don't forget, my dear, that you had your picture in the papers yesterday in connection with the Frisco gang we ran to earth. It's possible the girl may have seen it, and recognised you. In which case I think it likely she may know

where we're staying and call here to claim the bag, or else ring us up—"

Even as the young detective spoke the phone bell shrilled suddenly.

Noel picked up the receiver.

"Noel Raymond speaking!"

A girl's voice spoke at the other end in a tone of immense relief.

"Oh, thank goodness it's you, Mr. Raymond!" Her voice was low, musical—yet agitated. "I am Lola Novarro. I recognised your partner and handed her a left-luggage ticket. Say—did she secure that case safely?"

The question sounded desperately anxious.

"The case is here in my office, Miss Novarro," Noel answered quietly.

"Then—please—open it!" the girl's voice rushed on. "Follow the instructions, and—oh!"

Noel anxiously grew tense, for Lola Novarro's words had ended in a frightened scream.

"It's Carlos!" he heard her burst out in muffled tones. "He's followed me in here! He's attacking—"

And that was all. To Noel's urgent questions there was no further answer. The phone was dead.

"Sounds as if the girl was seized from behind while she was speaking," he said grimly. "I'll get through to the Exchange and ask them to trace where that call came from. That may help us."

Swiftly Noel did so, the Exchange promising to ring back as soon as they had the necessary information.

"She mentioned the name Carlos, June," Noel went on, turning from the phone. "Everything points to the fact that he attacked her while she was phoning. And she wants us to open the case and follow certain instructions it may contain."

June exclaimed in excitement.

Carlos! The dark, romantic-looking Novarro who had been shadowing Lola Novarro. And it seemed he had crept up behind her treacherously as she phoned.

But why? What did it mean?

The case was locked, but Noel fetched a tool-kit, and very soon forced back the catches.

June watched eagerly as he swung open the lid of this mysterious suitcase, around which a baffling mystery seemed to centre. He lifted out the single object it contained, and a cry of amazement broke from June.

It was an old-fashioned musical-box!

And attached to it was a roughly printed message:

"TUNE 3. DURSLEY FAIR AND CIRCUS. TWIST THE DRAGON'S TOOTH."

By PETER LANGLEY



THE DRAGON'S TOOTH

"Well, my dear! You certainly encountered a strange mystery in Los Angeles," Noel said quietly. "But since we were asked to follow the instructions, we'll do so."

There was a tiny indicator on the musical-box, with an arrow that could be pointed to any of the numbers from one to four, according to which tune was required. Noel moved it towards number three, wound up the musical-box, and set it working.

A haunting little tune tinkled out. June listened in growing wonderment. What could that tune signify? And what was the meaning of the reference to the dragon's tooth and Dursley Fair?

And, above all, what had happened to Lola Navarro? Was she in peril? How could they help her?

The gay little tune tinkled to its finish, but before either of them could speak the phone bell rang again.

It was the Exchange, to say that the previous call had been traced. It had come from a public call-box at a spot known as Baring Corner, on the road to Beverly Hills.

"And that's on the way to Dursley, too," Noel said, jumping to his feet. "So that settles it, June! I've a feeling we may find the key to the mystery at the fair and circus, and on the way I'll examine that phone-box."

They were very soon in Noel's car, speeding away.

At Baring Corner Noel stopped the car and ran to the phone kiosk which stood a little way back from the main road, in a lonely spot not overlooked by other buildings.

Noel spent some time there. He examined the interior of the kiosk carefully, and swung the door to and fro several times.

"Nunky, you've discovered something!" June challenged him, as he returned to the driving seat.

The young detective nodded. "I've certainly noted a rather significant fact," he admitted. "I've a feeling that something very strange is going on, June, and the sooner we reach Dursley, the better!"

On they sped, at length swinging away from the main road to the little town of Dursley, where the circus Big Top could be seen rising above the trees near the fairground.

And the first thing they noticed as they parked the car was a huge poster:

"Lola Navarro, sensational girl acrobat, and her partner, Max. See them in the Thrilling New Circus Act to-night!"

So the girl in the ballerina skirt was a circus acrobat!

"But if she's been attacked, or kidnapped, she won't be able to appear," exclaimed June. "Nunky! Hadn't we better—"

She stopped short, gripping Noel's arm.

"The tune!" she breathed. "The musical-box tune. Listen!"

They could hear it plainly above the blare and shouting of the fairground. That haunting tune they had first heard from the musical-box in the suitcase! With one accord they left the car park and plunged in amongst the side-shows and stalls and merry throng of the fair.

The lilting sound of that tune led them on, until—

"Look!" June cried. "It comes from the merry-go-round, nunky! The tune was meant to lead us here!"

Sure enough, the tune was being blared out by the organ of the big merry-go-round that was whirling gaily in the midst of the fair.

"And there," Noel commented keenly, "is the dragon!"

Amidst the brightly painted horses on the merry-go-round there was a golden dragon, and from its lower jaw sprouted a single wooden tooth.

"Twist the dragon's tooth!" June repeated. "There's the clue that may help us to find Lola Navarro!"

The merry-go-round had slowed down to a halt, and the tune had died away. Those who had enjoyed a ride were jumping off, and others taking their places. But a boy astride the golden dragon stayed where he was, apparently intent on another ride.

He was a tall boy wearing dark glasses, a cap pulled well down over his forehead, a red scarf muffling his chin. Yet as she studied him June gave a start of surprise.

"It's Carlos!" she gasped. "It's the boy who was shadowing Lola, nunky. He has tried to disguise himself, but I'd know him anywhere. He's sitting on that dragon as if—as if he's guarding it!"

"Perhaps he is," Noel replied. "He may know there is some secret connected with it, but as he was unable to obtain the suitcase and musical-box, he may not know exactly what it is. June, would he recognise you, do you think?"

June shook her head. "He hardly saw me," she replied. "His eyes were fixed on Lola all the time!"

"Then use your feminine wiles, June! Mount that horse next to the dragon, and find some way to lure Carlos off the merry-go-round when it stops next time, so as to give me a chance to get on the dragon!"

The whistle was already shrilling out as a signal that the roundabout was going to start again. Eagerly June stepped forward, clambering on the vacant horse just in time.

The music blared out once more—a different tune this time—as the merry-go-round began to move.

Clinging to her horse, June glanced sideways at Carlos. How tense and watchful he looked! Yet never once did his hand stray towards that wooden tooth.

"He doesn't know the secret!" June told herself, as she whirled round.

But when the merry-go-round stopped he showed no sign of moving. Now was June's chance to put into action the plan her quick wits had already formed.

She jumped from the horse, standing close to the golden dragon. No sooner had she done so than she began to sway, putting one slim hand to her forehead.

"Oh, dear! This giddiness!" she gasped. "It must be the motion of the roundabout. I feel—oh!"

She staggered, almost falling, and quickly Carlos put a hand on her shoulder.

"You are feeling ill?" he inquired.

"It's silly of me!" she murmured. "But if you could just help me down to firm ground, I'm sure I'd be all right!"

She saw him hesitate, as if he hated to give up his seat on the dragon. But as she staggered again he jumped off, his arm round her shoulder, helping her to the ground.

Here, following out her plan, June still clung to him.

"If you could help me across to that patch of shade!" she suggested in a weak voice.

He supported her so gently that she almost felt a twinge of conscience at the trick she was playing; she had to remind herself that this was the plotter who had shadowed Lola Navarro, who had attacked and probably kidnapped her.

"Thank you!" she murmured, as they reached the shade.

But Carlos wasn't listening. He had swung round, frowning grimly as he saw that someone else had taken his place.

Noel was already astride the golden dragon!

He had tested the wooden tooth, but had found it immovable.

"Maybe I've got to wait for the right tune," the detective murmured.

"The musical-box tune!"

Faster and faster swung the merry-go-round. And June, watching from the shadows, knew a throb of fear.

There, seemed something strangely threatening in the attitude of Carlos,

as he stood close to the whirling roundabout, his eyes fixed on Noel and the golden dragon whenever they swung into view.

None of the carefree throng busy enjoying themselves guessed the drama that was being played in their midst. And suddenly, with a wheeze, the merry-go-round changed its tune. It switched back to the haunting melody of the musical-box.

At once Noel bent forward, grasping the dragon's tooth between finger and thumb. This time he found he could twist it out of its socket. And then—

"Scoundrel! Robber!" The hoarse cry broke from Carlos, who had seen Noel's swift movement. "You are in league with Lola!"

There were cries of alarm from spectators as, like a tiger, the dark boy sprang on to the moving roundabout.

"Nunky! Look out!" June screamed.

But already Carlos had grappled with the young detective with such fury that June's cheeks paled. To and fro they swayed on the rocking platform. Then they rolled sideways, still grappling as they struck the ground. Carlos' cap and glasses fell off.

Two figures rushed forward. One was a burly, red-faced man, the other a fair-haired boy.

"It's Carlos, Mr. Roster!" panted the boy. "It's Lola's old partner, who always vowed he'd come back and do some mischief. Quick—grab him!"

What happened next in that wild scuffle June scarcely knew, but somehow Carlos dragged himself free and dashed off amidst the crowd, while Noel rose to his feet, dusty and breathless.

"Nunky! Are you hurt?" cried June. He shook his head.

"Don't worry, my dear! I'm quite unharmed, though I admit it was hot while it lasted!" he said. "Carlos actually wrested the tooth away from me, but I got it back, and—"

Before anything more could be said there came a further startling surprise.

Muffled cries and thuds sounded from a near-by caravan, and on opening the door they were amazed to see—Lola Navarro! The girl acrobat was bound with stout cords, and a cloth gag hung loosely from her chin.

"I've just managed to shift the gag!" she panted. "Carlos drugged me when I was phoning to Mr. Raymond, and when I came to myself I was in here, bound and gagged. Say—Mr. Raymond!" She looked imploringly at Noel. "Did you open the suitcase? What did you find?"

The burly, red-faced man—who was Mr. Vick Roster, manager of the circus and fair—interposed here.

"Guess we'd all better step into my caravan," he said. "Max, here"—he indicated the fair-haired boy—"reported that Lola was missing some time ago, but I never dreamed that scoundrel Carlos was at the bottom of it!"

Quickly they released Lola, and with trembling fingers she grasped the wooden tooth Noel handed to her.

The top could be screwed off, disclosing a cavity, and as she examined it a groan broke from the girl acrobat.

"It's empty!" she cried. "Sam Trenton's diamond has gone. I guess Carlos must have taken it when he wrested the tooth from you, Mr. Raymond. We've failed, after all!"

Her lips were trembling, and she seemed on the verge of hysterical tears.

"Sam Trenton was the previous owner of the circus, Mr. Raymond," she went on. "He invested all his savings in a most valuable diamond which he bought abroad. But he hadn't got the papers which proved his ownership of the gem, and Carlos tried to cheat him—tried to prove he had no right to it.

"That's why Sam must have hidden the diamond in the cavity of the dragon's tooth," she went on. "Just before he died in Los Angeles he sent me that cloak-room ticket, telling me

I'd trace the diamond if I claimed his suitcase and followed the instructions. But Carlos knew I had the ticket, and he trailed me. And then I saw Miss Gaynor, and slipped the ticket to her, and—"

She broke off wildly, grasping the circus manager.

"Mr. Roster! Carlos has got the diamond!" she burst out. "But he sure won't be content with that. When we broke up our partnership he vowed he'd smash my new act with Max. And he'll do it. He'll come back to-night!"

"Vick Roster patted her shoulder. "Calm yourself, my dear!" he said. "I'll have a search made for that scoundrel right away, and I'll place guards on the circus tent to-night."

June was watching Noel, for there was an expression on the young detective's face which she couldn't quite fathom.

As they moved away from the caravan she turned to him eagerly.

"Nunky! Carlos has got away with the diamond!" she exclaimed. "And Lola is still in danger. What's going to happen during her act to-night in the circus ring?"

Noel's face was grave. "I think there may be a startling surprise in store for us," he said quietly. "And I also feel, my dear, that there is a good chance of recovering Sam Trenton's diamond!"



DRAMA IN THE BIG TOP

Night had fallen. A gusty wind moaned over the lighted fair-ground, and whipped the guy ropes of the towering Big Top.

where the circus show was in progress.

No one saw a dark figure clambering up the sloping roof of the mighty tent. Higher and higher he climbed, clinging to trailing ropes, forcing himself upwards in the teeth of the wind.

Not till he reached the great king-pole at the very summit of the tent did the unseen climber pause. He was now immediately above the lofty platform from which, just beneath the tent canvas, Lola Novarro and her partner Max would shortly begin their sensational acrobatic act.

And there the climber crouched, waiting and watching.

In the crowded tent, June occupied a ringside seat. Where Noel was she didn't know, but he had suggested that she should visit the show that night and keep her eyes open for what might occur.

The circus parade had taken place, and the elephants and liberty horses had performed.

Now a long roll of drums heralded the entrance of Lola Novarro, in glittering spangles, and her partner Max.

June's heart beat fast as she watched them swinging up the rope-ladders towards that lofty platform under the tent roof.

Lola had said that her one-time partner, not content with stealing Sam Trenton's valuable diamond, had threatened to wreck her act. Would he strike to-night? Had he slipped through the guards that the circus manager had placed all around?

The drums ceased suddenly. Lola and Max had reached the platform, poised there to begin their sensational leaps and dives amongst the trapezes, with only a small safety-net stretched far below.

And then June choked back a scream, for suddenly every electric light in the great tent went out, leaving complete blackness.

There was a stir of alarm through the audience. On all sides people sprang to their feet in the darkness.

A cry echoed from far above. What was happening up there? Was it—Carlos?

As suddenly as they had been switched off, the lights blazed on again, and this time June couldn't keep back the gasp of horror that burst from her lips.

For there were now three figures on that lofty platform high above their heads. One of them was Lola, in her flashing spangles, but there was a second figure up there, struggling perilously on the very edge of the platform with her partner Max.

"It must be Carlos!" June gasped. "He's carrying out his threat to smash the act, and—oh!"

A cry of dismay rose from hundreds of throats. Swaying to and fro, those two struggling figures had suddenly fallen, hurtling down past the ropes and the trapezes.

A gasp of relief left June's lips as they hit the safety net. One of them lay still, as if winded, but the other quickly recovered and slid to the sawdust floor of the circus ring.

And then June's eyes widened.

"Nunky!" she cried.

It was Noel Raymond! While the audience watched, dumb-founded, he strode to where Vick Roster stood by the entrance to the ring. Wildly excited, June hurried to join them, just as Noel held up a glittering object between finger and thumb.

"I have Sam Trenton's diamond here!" he exclaimed to the astonished circus manager. "I caught Lola and Max in the act of stealing it from a cavity at the top of the king-pole, when I dropped through a slit in the canvas just now! They'd arranged with an electrician to switch off the lights while they did so."

That unseen climber on the tent roof had been Noel!

A moment later there was a further surprise, for two attendants came in with the news that Carlos had been caught while trying to slip into the circus grounds.

"You can release him," Noel said calmly. "Carlos is completely innocent. All he has been doing is to try to safeguard his own property!"

It was a very amazed little group that gathered a little later behind the scenes to hear what Noel had to tell them.

Sam Trenton never sent that cloak-room ticket to Lola," the young detective said. "He sent it to Carlos, but Lola stole it from him, afterwards trumping up all kinds of charges against him and getting him turned away from the circus."

When she found Carlos had followed her to Los Angeles, Lola, alarmed, had hit on the cunning idea of entrusting the ticket to June and getting her and Noel to obtain the secret for her.

She'd pretended Carlos had attacked and bound her, to avert suspicion from herself, and further to incriminate the boy.

And still Carlos had been on the watch, for he knew the secret was somehow connected with the golden dragon on the merry-go-round.

"The diamond was never hidden in the wooden tooth—and Lola knew it," Noel explained. "One half of the tooth was really a kind of key which would open a cavity in the king-pole. I discovered this when I searched Lola's caravan just before the show. I also found stolen papers which proved Sam Trenton intended to bequeath the diamond to Carlos, to be used for the good of the circus. But, knowing there were plots to steal it, the eccentric old fellow hid it in that strange way."

"But, nunky, what first made you suspect Lola?" June asked quickly.

"A very simple fact, June!" Noel smiled. "When I examined the phone-box I found the door made an extremely loud grating noise when opened. If Carlos had really opened the door to attack Lola when she was phoning, I should have heard the grating sound at the other end of the wire! Therefore I suspected she was playing a part!"

And a few moments later they were receiving the heartfelt thanks of Carlos for having exposed a very cunning plot.

(End of this week's story.)

Next week Noel and June tackle an amazing mystery on a horse ranch. Look out for **THE VALLEY OF VANISHING HORSES**.

THEIR SCHOOL ON CASTAWAY ISLE

(Continued from page 102.)

face was clouded with puzzlement. "Tania, of course, has a perfect right to any food she wishes. But"—there was a frown on his face as he met the jungle girl's rather defiant glance—"Tania, why didn't you ask for the food if you were hungry?"

His voice was gentle, but Tania's lips trembled.

"Tania not hungry," she said. "It is not for her." "Not for you?" echoed Mr. Barnard. "But who else can you have intended it for?"

Tania did not reply. It would not be wise for the castaways to learn how she had imprisoned Dave. They would not understand.

At the jungle girl's silence Mr. Barnard's frown deepened.

"Please answer me, Tania!" he ordered. "If you did not intend this food for yourself, why did you take it?"

Before Tania could even attempt to reply, Moyra cut in.

"She took it just because she can't help thieving!" she declared.

Tania's eyes filled with tears, but it was angrily that she regarded the other girl.

"That is not true!" she cried. "Then what was the reason?" asked Mr. Barnard. "Why—"

He broke off, for Tania, thinking it best to avoid these awkward questions, had snatched back the basket and broken into a desperate run.

"Stop her! Don't let the little thief get away!" shouted Moyra, and instantly all the castaways set off in hot pursuit.

Wildly Tania raced for the jungle. If only she could once reach its unexplored depths she could easily rid herself of her pursuers.

But Sam Perkins, rushing across from an angle, headed her off, and Tania was forced to swerve.

She dodged a clutching hand, darted between Moyra and Tim Burchell, and then, just as she thought she might get away, there came disaster.

In her blind haste she tripped over a billet of wood left on the ground. Headlong she fell, and before she could regain her feet she found herself seized.

"Got you!" cried Moyra triumphantly.

Mr. Barnard picked up the fallen basket, then sternly regarded the jungle girl.

"Now, Tania, please explain what this extraordinary behaviour means," he said. "Why—"

He paused. He had caught sight of something protruding from among the food in the basket—a bone-handled knife and fork, a set of which was kept by each of the castaways in their respective tents.

More baffled than ever, he examined the bone knife-handle, and a startled ejaculation escaped his lips.

"Why, this is Dave's knife!" He caught in his breath, looking accusingly at the jungle girl. "Where is Dave, Tania? I believe you know!"

Tania drew herself up amid a tense, breathless hush. She realised that complete silence was impossible now.

"Tania knows where Dave is," she replied defiantly, "but she will not tell. Dave is Tania's prisoner!"

What will be Mr. Barnard's reaction to this? Look out for exciting developments next week.

THE MERRYMAKERS AFLOAT

(Continued from page 104.)

he gave a curt nod and strode off. "Well, of all the unfair things to happen," cried Johnny indignantly.

"Barring us from the concert all through that chump Slick," said Fay disappointedly.

"What do we do now?" asked Don. "Seems to me the only thing to do is to get Slick up here," Sally said slowly. "If he could demonstrate the chair to the captain—and just for once get an invention to work perfectly—then the captain would understand it wasn't meant as a joke at all. How about it, shipmates?"

"It's a chance," said Johnny slowly. Upset, rather disgruntled, they made their way down to the carpenter's shop again. Slick looked at them inquiringly.

"We've come about your beastly chair!" Sally began grimly.

"Say is that still around?" Slick beamed, his relief. "Gee, I guess I knew you didn't mean what you said when you threatened to pitch it overboard. Say, has the colonel tried it yet?" he asked eagerly.

"No, but the captain has—and it collapsed on him," Sally eyed the boy inventor grimly. "And because of that we're barred from the concert to-night." And very tersely she explained what had happened. "As for you now, Slick. Somehow or other you've got to make that chair work properly and get us out of this jam—and yourself, too," she added. "Because when the captain finds out you made it he'll be more furious with you than us."

"Guess that's so," agreed Slick seriously. "Though I still can't see what you're worrying about. Sure I'll make the chair work."

"Then come on," invited Don. "And remember it's your last chance. Because if this invention flops it's pretty certain that you won't be allowed to fool around with any more on this ship."

That thought shook Slick as nothing else could have done. Grabbing a spanner and a few more odds and ends, he followed the

chums as they began to make their way back to the promenade deck.

But as they mounted the last flight of stairs, the sound of rumbling voices came from ahead. It was the captain and Colonel Brough. "So you caught them red-handed, eh, captain?" he asked in a gleaming voice. "But this Slick person is the real miscreant. And I've found out at last who he is." He stroked the collapsible stick which he still carried in a meaning way. "It's that American boy, Samuel Kaplin, and when I lay my hands on him—"

Sally gave a gasp of dismay. Her idea about making the chair work had, it seemed, come too late.

"I suppose we'd better get it over," she remarked miserably, stepping on to the deck. And then she suddenly stiffened, with an excited gasp.

For standing at the rail was a steward—obviously the one whom the captain had sent to remove the chair. He was standing with his back to that object, was in the act of screwing up some sheets of paper in his hand before throwing them overboard.

With a little cry Sally sprang forward. Without waiting to think she snatched the stick from the colonel's grasp. Heedless of his bull-like roar, she pressed the lever which extended it to its fullest extent. Then, thrusting it forward, she hooked the steward's collar just as he had moved forward his arm to drop the papers.

He staggered back, gave a wild yell, and flopped back into the chair, which collapsed about him, pinning him fast in its folds.

"Sally!" Fay was aghast. "Sally, what have you done?"

"Just made the colonel happy again," laughed Sally. "I knew nobody else but the colonel used grey paper and bright green ink. Look!"

She pointed to the amazed steward's imprisoned hands. And the colonel, who had been about to tear his hair with rage—had been able to loosen it from his scalp—gave instead a dance of delight.

"My missing papers!" he roared.

"My slogan!" shouted Slick. "I've just got it. If you want to make a capture—make sure you've got a Rapture."

"Oh, my hat!" Sally rolled her

eyes in pretended faintness. "Save your breath, Slick, and release the poor steward. He must be wondering what's got him."

And while Slick released him and the colonel pored eagerly over his precious papers, the steward explained how he had found them wedged behind one of the ventilators on deck, had decided they were worthless and had been about to throw them away.

"So you see, colonel, you did mislay them after all," twinkled Sally.

The colonel had the grace to blush. He pressed a coin into the steward's hand, and gave him an apologetic pat on the back.

"I must apologise," he said remorsefully. "Guess losing them made me a bad-tempered old man to have around. But that was quick thinking on your part, Sally. You did me a good service—what can I do for you?"

"Well—," Sally glanced demurely at the captain. "You could ask the captain to change his mind about us going to the concert."

The captain smiled. "On one condition—that you show us how that chair really works."

Slick stepped forward confidently. "Sure, sir," he said. "It's like all my inventions—they only need to be fixed right. Please sit in it, one of you."

Sally flinched and closed her eyes as the colonel lowered himself into the chair and Slick fiddled with the various knobs. Then, at an amazed cry from her chums, she opened them again.

There was the colonel, his face one expansive beam, seated comfortably in the chair.

"Splendid!" he announced. "It really works. Wonderfully comfortable."

"My hat!" said Sally dazedly. "I can't believe it."

"Here, try it yourself!" said the colonel gallantly.

With a grateful sigh Sally sank down. And with a gentle squeak the chair collapsed around her, pinioning her firmly in the wreckage!

(End of this week's story.)

Sally & Co. will entertain you again in another fine complete story next Friday.

DOLORES THE MISCHIEF-MAKER

(Continued from page 98.)

"What a two-faced twister!" Chris said scornfully. "And what an awful snob, too! Wouldn't be found dead in a holiday camp, wouldn't she? Well, we certainly don't want her kind at the camp. But why on earth should she want the ketch?"

Pat frowned a little. "Beats me," she said. "But she must have had some pretty good reason. She must have come to the boathouse with the deliberate intention of getting hold of the ketch."

"And then, when she heard we'd already hired it, she decided to run off with it," Chris said. "Myes, she must have been pretty desperate. And worth bags of money, too." She paused, uttering an unconscious little sigh, for Chris herself was anything but wealthy these days. "Wonder where she comes from?"

"Don't know, and don't care!" Pat said. "Just glad to see the back of her, and hope to goodness she never comes our way again, in spite of her warning. But what about this ketch?"

"You tell me," Chris grimaced. "We can't very well tow it back without a boat—"

Pat laughed. "Hardly," she agreed, "but we can easily get out of this fix. Look! The ketch itself carries a small boat. No reason why one of us shouldn't row

back in that and reborrow Steve's launch—"

"And that," Chris joyfully whooped, "is the big wheeze. Bags I go in the boat to fetch the launch," she added quickly. "O.K. with you, Pat?"

O.K. it was. Pat, now that she was on board, was rather eager to inspect the ketch. Enthusiastically the two set to work to unshackle the small row-boat.

In five minutes it was afloat with Chris at the oars. Pat waved her off, then started to explore the ketch.

So absorbed was she that she never noticed the passage of time. She was quite startled when suddenly she heard a shout. Looking round, she saw Chris climbing over the deck rail. The ketch's small boat was moored astern, and there also bobbed Steve Connelly's motor-launch.

"Here we are!" Chris announced. "And I've brought sandwiches, too, Pat. But—golly, you should have seen Steve's face when I told him how Dolores had walked out on us! Like a spot of lunch?"

Pat would. Then and there they sat down to an impromptu picnic, enthusiastically discussing the plans they had made. Another hour passed pleasantly by, then, after hitching the ketch to the launch, they set off cautiously across the estuary, Pat at the wheel. It was half an hour later before they came in sight of the holiday camp, spread out like a small town on the slopes of the hill which slipped down into the sea. Expertly they anchored outside the camp's boathouse.

"I say, where is everybody?" Pat

asked. "Thought they were all coming along to welcome us home."

"Expect they got tired of waiting for us," laughed Chris.

Launching the small boat again, they rowed ashore. All agog to spread the good news, they hurried into the camp, nodding brightly to passing holiday campers they knew. And then suddenly they paused.

"Hallo! What's cooking?" Pat asked.

For outside chalet No. 7—the largest and the most expensive in the camp—stood one of the camp's motor-driven refreshment vans, piled high with cakes and fruit and minerals and ices. Round it were a group of a dozen laughing boys and girls; also Bruce Feltham, the camp's young and popular sportsmaster. And at the side of Bruce—

"Dolores!" Pat gasped, and went running forward to gaze at the girl in startled amazement. "Dolores—you! What on earth are you doing here?"

Dolores Bellamy turned. She saw the chums, and laughed gaily, as if oblivious to the angry scene which had taken place between them.

"Well, if it isn't you two again!" she cried. "Come among us! What am I doing here? Well, now, hold on to your hat for a delicious surprise—I've joined the holiday camp. I've come to help you out with your regatta! Isn't that wizard?"

What is Dolores' real reason in coming to the holiday-camp? And why is she so interested in the old ketch? You will find next Friday's grand chapters even more enthralling.