

**THE MYSTERY  
OF  
ARNOLD HALL**

**HELEN M. PERSONS**

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Rhoda helped them to scramble up the rough stones, slippery with moss.

[Rhoda helped them to scramble up the rough stones, slippery with moss.](#)

# THE MYSTERY OF ARNOLD HALL

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By HELEN M. PERSONS

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AUTHOR of  
"Finding the Lost Treasure," etc.

Girls on Horses

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# **THE MYSTERY OF ARNOLD HALL**

## CHAPTER I

### PAT'S CHANCE

“Will you go, Patricia?” called Mrs. Randall from the living room, one cool evening late in August, as the doorbell rang imperatively. “I’m starting a fire in the grate.”

From the dining room across the hall, where she had been putting away the last of the supper dishes, hurried a tall slender girl, whose short wavy yellow hair and big brown eyes were set off to perfection by a green jersey dress. Expecting to see one of the neighbors when the door was opened, she was startled into an involuntary gasp as a messenger thrust forward a special delivery letter, inquiring curtly—“Miss Patricia Randall?”

“Y—es.”

“Sign here.”

Patricia signed his book, closed the door, and walked slowly into the living room staring down at the unexpected missive in her hand.

“What is it, Pat?” inquired her mother, glancing up from the hearth rug where she knelt trying to coax a blaze from a bed of charcoal and paper.

“A special delivery letter—for me.”

“For you?” repeated Mrs. Randall in surprise. “From whom?”

“I don’t know,” replied her daughter, frowning in a puzzled fashion.

“Well, open it and find out. Don’t stand staring at it like that,” urged her mother

briskly.

Patricia sank into a low tapestry chair beside the fireplace and tore open the envelope. As she drew out the single sheet it contained, a slip dropped from it onto her lap. Still holding the folded letter she picked up the slip and exclaimed:

“A cashier’s check for a *thousand dollars!*”

“Pat!” cried Mrs. Randall, reaching for the yellow paper to read it for herself. “Look at the letter, quick, and see who sent it!”

“It’s only a line. ‘For Patricia Randall to spend on a year at Granard College.’ Oh—why—Mums!”

Patricia flung herself on her mother so suddenly that Mrs. Randall lost her balance, and the two fell in a heap on the rug.

“Mary! Patricia!” ejaculated a horrified masculine voice from the doorway. “What in the world—”

“Oh, Dad!” cried the girl, springing up and giving a helping hand to her mother. With scarcely more effort than that of her daughter Mrs. Randall regained her feet, and they stood facing Mr. Randall’s astonished gaze.

“Just look at this!” Patricia thrust the magic papers into his hand. “Isn’t it marvelous?”

Mr. Randall read the brief message, turned the check over and over as if to discover its sender by inspecting it from all sides, and then looked inquiringly at his wife and daughter.

“Is this a joke of some kind?”

“Joke!” retorted Patricia in disgust. “I should say not! A messenger just brought it, special delivery.”

“Strange, very strange,” commented her father, shaking his head. “Do you know anything about it, Mary?” addressing his wife, with a suspicious look.

“I most certainly do not. Do you?”

“You ought to know that I don’t. Where would I get that much money? Didn’t we send Pat here to Brentwood College last year because we couldn’t afford to send her away?”

“Keep your shirt on, Dad!” laughed Patricia. “Keep your shirt on, and say I may go.”

“I—I don’t know what to say,” replied the puzzled man, sinking heavily into his favorite chair, and pulling his pipe out of his pocket.

“Do you suppose,” began Patricia, perching on the arm of her father’s chair, “that Aunt Betsy could have gotten big-hearted and sent it?”

“Pat!” cried her mother derisively. “Of course not. She has all she can do to keep Ted in college.”

“Be rather nice for me, having Ted at Granard,” mused Patricia, recalling her cousin’s beguiling ways and good looks.

“And having Aunt Betsy there to keep an eye on both of you,” added her mother.

“Some eye! She’ll probably never know I’m there,” laughed Patricia. “Darling Ted takes up all of her time and attention.”

“You two women,” remarked Mr. Randall peevishly, “seem to have this affair all settled.”

“Well, you see, darling, we felt quite sure you would let me go,” laughed Patricia, ruffling up his hair. “You’re going to, aren’t you?” bending down to look pleadingly into his eyes. “You know I’ve longed to go out of town to college where I could live in a dorm. Not that I don’t like living at home, but—”

“We understand,” interrupted her mother; “you need not be apologetic.”

“I wish we knew who sent the money, though,” said Patricia, frowning earnestly. “It must be somebody who knows all about us, but I can’t think of a soul who could or would do it.”

“I shall investigate, of course,” began her father, after some thought; “but if nothing can be found out about the donor of this wonderful gift, it seems to me



that since the money has been sent to you for a special purpose, and sent in such a manner, the only course open to us is to use it as stipulated, and not make any further effort to discover its sender.”

“Oh, but, Dad! It’s so tantalizing,” wailed his daughter.

“I know; but, Patricia, when you have a secret, you don’t like to have anyone try to guess it, do you?”

“N—o.”

“This is the same thing. Just do your best to be worthy of such a generous gift and wait for its sender to reveal himself when he chooses.”

“Your father is quite right, Pat,” agreed Mrs. Randall; “and I’d like to add one more suggestion: that you do not discuss the matter with anyone else but us. It’s romantic, and your inclination will be to let your new companions in on the secret, but I think you will be wise if you keep it to yourself; unless, of course, some unusual circumstance arises.”

Patricia thought soberly for a few minutes, then said with a sigh, “I suppose you’re right, Mother.”

“Do you think you’ll have any trouble transferring your credits and getting into the Sophomore class?” asked her father presently, after another long pause, while each was busy with his own thoughts.

“I don’t think so. I’ll go to see the Dean the first thing tomorrow morning, and I’ll have to write for a room—”

“And we’ll have to shop and sew,” added Mrs. Randall, almost as eagerly as her daughter.

After Pat had gone to bed to lie awake anticipating all kinds of unknown adventures, Mr. and Mrs. Randall had a long serious talk over the dying fire.

“Then you feel satisfied to let her go?” inquired Mrs. Randall anxiously as they finally rose to go upstairs.

“I don’t see how we can do any different. And who knows what this opportunity may mean to Pat?”

“If I could only be sure that everything was all right, and that no harm would come to the child,” sighed Mrs. Randall, running her fingers through her hair, a habit when troubled over anything.

“Now, Mary, what harm could come to her? She’ll be living with lots of other students under the direct supervision of the house chaperon and the Dean; and Betsy is right near the college. But of course if you don’t want her to go—”

“Oh, I *do*—at least I haven’t the heart to deprive her of the fulfillment of one of her dreams.”

Mr. Randall locked the front door, put out the lights, and followed his wife up the long stairway. At the door of their room Mrs. Randall paused, grasped his arm and whispered cautiously, with an eye on Pat’s door, “I’m willing to give Pats her chance, but, just the same, John Randall, I wish she were going back to Brentwood. I have a presentiment that—”

“Oh, you and your presentiments!” ejaculated Mr. Randall, pushing her gently but firmly ahead of him into their room. “Nonsense!”

The weeks that followed were very exciting ones for Patricia. Her days were filled to the brim with shopping, sewing, making last calls on old friends, and finally, packing. So many evenings were taken up with farewell parties that Mr. Randall complained that he never saw his daughter any more; that, as far as her parents were concerned, she might as well have gone to college the night she received the money.

“But, dear,” remonstrated his wife soothingly, “all her friends want to entertain for her, and she can’t very well refuse any of their invitations.”

“Where is she tonight?” grumbled Mr. Randall.

“Carolyn is giving a dinner dance at the Club. Poor Carolyn! She’s quite disturbed over having Pat go away. They have been such pals ever since they were little.”

“Pat might ask Carolyn down for a week end some time this year. She and her mother have been more than good to our girl. Besides, I don’t want Pat to be so taken up with the new life and new friends that she will cast aside all her old ties.”

“I don’t think she will, John. Of course just at first her whole mind will be on Granard, but after the novelty wears off—”

“I’ve been thinking,” interrupted her husband, who evidently had his mind on something else, “that it would be nice for Pats to have a little car—”

“John! How ‘galumptious’ as Pat says. Could we manage it?”

“I think so. We’ll have the money we expected to spend on her year at Brentwood, and Everet Schuyler has a coach he’s very anxious to sell. If I can drive any kind of a bargain with him, I think I’ll do it. Of course don’t say anything to Pat. I thought we might drive down some week end, and surprise her with it; and then come back on the train.”

“How did you ever happen to think of such a thing?” inquired Mrs. Randall, knitting very fast on the green sweater she was making for her daughter.

“Oh, I haven’t been blind to the fact that more than half of the college girls here have some kind of a car, and I often wished I could get Pat one. Never been able to, before, but now I guess we can swing it. It will be a saving, too; for she can drive back and forth whenever she has a vacation, and save carfare. And maybe, once in a while, she could come home for a week end?” he added, hopefully.

“Perhaps,” Mrs. Randall smiled and leaned forward to pat his arm.

“Let’s go down to Schuyler’s now and look at the bus,” proposed Mr. Randall ten minutes later.

“All right,” agreed his wife, laying aside her work and getting briskly out of her easy chair.

If Patricia had not been so absorbed in her own affairs she would certainly have wondered the next day what ailed her parents; for there was such an air of suppressed excitement about them that vented itself in significant glances and

knowing smiles. The thrill of buying her ticket, however, made Patricia oblivious to all else.

“Why don’t you take a sleeper,” asked her mother, “and get a good rest on the way down? You’ve been up so late every night.”

“Nothing doing!” retorted Patricia decidedly. “When I travel I want my eyes wide open so I won’t miss a single thing.”

Her positive decision recurred to her three days later as she snuggled deep into her comfortable chair, with a sigh of satisfaction, a sigh which was unceremoniously cut short by a very big yawn. The farewells at the station had been exciting and gratifying, but yet something of a strain. Almost all of her crowd had assembled to see her off, bearing gifts of candy, fruit, books, and magazines; her mother had clung to her till the very last minute, and her father had fussed about time tables, porters, tips, and a dozen other things. It had seemed as if she were being torn into a dozen pieces trying to pay attention to everybody. Now the train was bearing her rapidly away from Dad and Mother and all the dear old friends toward a new life at Granard.

“Perhaps I’d have been wiser to have followed Mother’s suggestion about the sleeper,” she thought, as she tried to stifle another great yawn. “Maybe if I take a little nap now, I’ll feel fresh for the rest of the day.”

Turning her chair toward the window, and leaning back, her hands on the broad arms, she was almost immediately floating in a delicious sea of semi-unconsciousness which became deeper and deeper until she was completely lost to the world about her. After a while, however, a most persistent dream began to disturb her peaceful sleep, a dream about a soft grey kitten whose silky fur she kept stroking, stroking until her hand was tired; but yet she could not stop. After a time she began to realize that she was dreaming, and made a desperate effort to free herself from the world of sleep by closing her fingers sharply on the little animal’s neck and giving it a shove.

Then with a sudden start at some movement close to her she sat bolt upright and opened her eyes just in time to see a pair of long legs, the ankles clad in grey silk socks, hastily removing themselves from the ledge beside her chair.

“Good Heavens!” she thought, horror-stricken. “I do hope *those* weren’t the kitten!”

## CHAPTER II

### ANNE

Swinging her chair sharply about to face the aisle, she met the amused gaze of a red-haired girl of about her own age.

“Tell me,” begged Patricia impulsively, leaning forward, “was I—doing anything—unusual while I was asleep?”

“I’ll say you were,” responded the girl, smiling broadly.

“What?”

“You—you were—stroking the ankles of that young man back of you as if your life depended on it,” choked the stranger.

“No!” cried Patricia, in great distress.

“Yes! Then suddenly you pinched the poor fellow, and I thought I’d just *die!*”

At that moment the man in question rose and hurried down the aisle toward the smoker. With crimson face, Patricia watched the slight boyish figure, with its crown of smooth yellow hair, disappear before she again addressed her neighbor.

“I’m embarrassed to death! What *must* he think of me? I can’t apologize for something I didn’t know I was doing; and if I try to explain, it will look as if we were trying to scrape up an acquaintance. What would you do?”

“I’d just let it go, and try to forget it,” advised the other girl, raising up in her chair to lower the shade a little; for the sun was shining full upon her.

“Do you suppose the rest of these people saw me?” persisted Patricia, glancing anxiously around the car.

There were not many other passengers; an old lady, apparently absorbed in a weighty-looking volume; a couple of middle-aged men, with their heads close together, evidently discussing some important question; a young mother, absorbed in the baby in her arms; and a scared-looking, awkward girl, who gazed moodily out of the window, occasionally munching a chocolate from a box in her lap.

“I don’t think so,” replied the red-haired girl, settling herself anew in her chair, and smoothing out the skirt of her dark green suit. “I probably shouldn’t have, if I hadn’t been watching you.”

“Watching me?” repeated Patricia, opening her brown eyes very wide in surprise.

“Yes; and wondering if by any chance you were going to Granard College.”

“I am, but what in the world made you think so?”

“Oh, you looked like a college girl, some way, and then being on this train, which, this time of year, is a favorite one for the Granard students. Don’t know where they all are today, though. Are you just entering?”

“Yes, and no,” laughed Patricia. “I did my Freshman work at Brentwood; so I’m entering the Soph class here.”

“Congratulations! Welcome to the class of 19—. I’m one of your classmates-to-be. Anne Ford, at your service.”

“My name is Patricia Randall, and I’m very glad to get acquainted with some one before I get to Granard. I confess I have stage fright at the prospect of meeting so many strangers.”

“Don’t let that bother you. The girls are easy to get on with, and you’ll soon feel as if you’d always been at Granard,” said Anne carelessly.

Patricia realized, however, that it would not be quite so simple to break into a class whose cliques and customs had had a whole year’s start before she came on

the scene.

“How did you happen to choose Granard?” inquired Anne curiously. “Do you know anyone there?”

“My cousin,” replied Patricia, breathing a prayer of thanks for the second question which enabled her to disregard the first. “Ted Carter; do you know him?”

“Ted Carter! I should say I do!” exclaimed Anne, adding, quickly and somewhat possessively, “Ted’s my best boy friend.”

“How nice!” commented Patricia so heartily that all the suspicions which had arisen in Anne’s mind as to possible claims on the fascinating Teddy were promptly allayed.

“Come on over here,” suggested Anne, turning a vacant chair to face her; “and we’ll have a cozy chat.”

Patricia gladly accepted the invitation, and as she settled herself with one foot tucked under her, a habit whenever she wished to be especially comfortable, Anne asked:

“Do you know yet where you’re to room?”

“Yes; Arnold Hall.”

“You *are*?” exclaimed Anne, gazing at Patricia in astonishment. “You certainly must have some pull.”

“Why?” inquired Patricia, in a puzzled tone.

“Because Arnold Hall’s the best dorm at Granard, and there’s always a waiting list for it. You’re a lucky girl to be able to break right into it. My reservation was made while I was still in high school.”

“Oh, then you live there? I’m so glad!” There was no mistaking the note of gratification in Patricia’s tone, nor the admiring gaze of her brown eyes which rested somewhat shyly upon her new acquaintance.

Anne smiled in the manner of one who is so accustomed to being popular that it has long ceased to be exciting. There was something unusual about this new girl, evidently, or old Hattersley would never have let her get into Arnold Hall. It evidently wasn't money; for though Patricia's clothes were in good taste, they were not expensive. She had no friends there, except her cousin. Perhaps it was scholarship, or some powerful influence from Brentwood or high school.

Patricia, meanwhile, was wondering what Anne would say if she were to tell her that when Dad had written for a room for Patricia, the registrar, somebody by the name of Hattersley, had promptly replied that one had already been reserved for her in Arnold Hall. They had speculated on the strange fact for days, and had been forced to leave the mystery unsolved, just as they had the arrival of the check.

"Do you know Aunt Betsy?" inquired Patricia, presently.

"Not personally," replied Anne, smiling broadly; "but I've heard of her."

"I'll warrant you have," giggled Patricia. "She's as good as gold, but most awfully funny. You never know what she's going to say or do next. We say she has only three interests: Ted, and Ted, and Ted. They used to live near us in Brentwood, but when my cousin won a scholarship at Granard, she rented her house and took an apartment down here so she could give Ted all the comforts of home during his course. She meant well, of course; but I feel sort of sorry for Ted. I fancy he'd rather be a bit freer. One night during his Freshman year he stayed out to dinner and for the evening without telling her; so she ran all over the campus looking for him, quite sure that the terrible Sophs had imprisoned him somewhere."

"I have heard that story," laughed Anne. "He was at the Zeta Omega House—that's right next to Arnold Hall."

"When Aunt Betsy heard that I was coming down, she wrote Dad that she could take me in just as well as not, and that I'd be far more comfortable with her than in any dorm—"

"But you preferred to be less comfortable," interrupted Anne.

"I certainly did. I've wanted to live in a dorm ever since I knew what college was. Tell me something about Granard so I won't be quite so ignorant."



Anne began to talk animatedly of college affairs, and Patricia's eyes got bigger and bigger and her cheeks redder and redder as she became more and more interested. Neither of the girls noticed that the blond youth had returned to his chair and was watching them intently.

"My goodness!" exclaimed Anne, glancing out of the window a couple of hours later, as the train began to slow down. "I didn't realize that we were nearly in. We change to the bus here at Plainville. Come on! They make only a two-minute stop here."

Grabbing their bags, the two girls hurried out of the train onto a long platform splashed with big drops of rain. At the end farthest from the train a bus was waiting for passengers; and just as they reached it, the rain, now driven by a brisk wind, began to fall in torrents. Laughing and breathless, they scrambled up the steps of the bus and sank into seats near the door.

"Here comes a friend of yours," remarked Anne, peering out of the doorway at other travelers, scurrying across the glistening platform.

Thinking that perhaps Ted had come that far to meet her, Patricia leaned forward just as the young man with the light hair bounded up the steps and collided sharply with her outstretched head.

"Oh, say—I'm awfully sorry," he cried, flushing brilliantly. "I hope I didn't hurt you."

"Not in the least!" lied Patricia curtly, trying desperately to fight back tears. Ever since she could remember, any sudden blow or fall had made her cry, whether she was really badly hurt or not. It was a most embarrassing habit, now that she was grown up. As she elaborately straightened her little brown hat which was over one ear, and tried to recover her poise, the youth passed on to the other end of the bus.

"Wonder when and where your next encounter will be," observed Anne, as the driver closed the doors and started the big bus. "Three times—you know."

"Never, I hope," replied Patricia emphatically, little dreaming what the future held in store for her. "Does this bus take us right to college?"

"No, only to the foot of the hill about one-half mile from the campus. We'll be

there in an hour.”

“Have you a room mate?” inquired Patricia, a few minutes later.

“No, I have one of the three singles on the first floor. Where are you to be?”

“I don’t know, but I hope that it will be near you, and that I’ll have a room mate.”

“Why?” asked Anne, idly tracing designs on the steamed window beside her.

“Because I’ve always wanted one. It’s a bit lonesome, being an only child.”

“Sometimes you’d wish you were,” laughed Anne, “if your sister tried to boss you as mine frequently does. Joan and I are usually pretty good friends, but once in so often we have a flare-up.”

“Oh, I hope I’ll be able to get along peaceably with a room mate, if I have one,” said Patricia earnestly. “Maybe I wouldn’t though. I guess I must be pretty well spoiled.”

“Don’t look so worried!” ordered Anne. “And, by the way, don’t take to heart everything the girls may say. Living all together, as we do, we are pretty frank at times, but everybody takes it in good part.”

When the bus stopped, it was still raining, and the two girls ran hastily across the muddy road to a small rustic shelter.

“Well!” said Anne, shaking her wet umbrella. “Evidently none of the girls have come down to meet the bus. Don’t blame ’em much on such a ‘nausty’ day. So we’ll have to climb the hill by ourselves and take our own bags.”

“Bags!” exclaimed Patricia, clutching Anne’s arm, as she opened her green umbrella preparatory to starting up the hill.

“Yes, bags; what about them?”

“I—I haven’t mine! I must have left it on the bus.”

“Good night!” ejaculated Anne forcefully.

“What shall I do?”

“You can’t do a thing but wait and see if the driver finds it, and brings it back on his next trip. Is your name on it?”

“Yes.”

Anne closed her umbrella again, set her own bag in a corner, and loosened her jacket. “Might as well sit down, I suppose,” she commented, leading the way to a bench across the back of the shelter. “There won’t be another bus for an hour.”

“Oh, but you needn’t stay,” offered Patricia heroically. “I can wait alone.”

“Yes, if I’ll let you; but I won’t,” replied Anne, pushing back some little red curls which had escaped from under the brim of her smart green hat.

“It’s mighty good of you,” said Patricia gratefully; for she had hated to think of staying here all alone for a full hour.

“I never desert a friend in distress.”

“A friend in need,” quoted Patricia.

“Speaking of friends,” interrupted Anne, “what became of the blond youth? I didn’t see him get off the bus; did you?”

“No, but he might have just the same. I was too excited over my bag to think of anything else.”

“He may have gone on to Mendon, but I doubt it. I’ve never seen him before, but he looked to me like a college fellow.”

“Just as I did,” began Patricia.

“You never looked like a college fellow in your life!” retorted Anne, laughing.

“Well, I mean,” said Patricia, flushing.

“I understand what you mean; but, just the same, I am curious to know what became of the boy.”

The time passed more quickly than they thought it would, and both were surprised when a grey bus loomed up in the distance. As soon as it came to a stop, Patricia ran out in the rain to question the driver.

“Did you find a bag?” she demanded eagerly.

The fat, good-natured driver wrinkled up his forehead thoughtfully and then nodded.

“It’s mine,” she declared, with relief. “Please give it to me.”

“Sorry, Miss; but I can’t.”

“Why not?” inquired Patricia, a bit impatiently.

“Because it’s back at the station. I didn’t know whose it was, and we have to turn everything in. Then it has to be identified by its owner.”

At this point Anne, who had been the center of a group of girls who had gotten off of the bus, left her friends and came to Patricia’s rescue.

“Mike,” she said, smiling sweetly up at the big driver, “couldn’t you bring Miss Randall’s bag down on your next trip? We don’t want to go all the way back to town now.”

## CHAPTER III

### “HILL TOP”

“I guess perhaps I can manage it, Miss Ford; since it’s you who asks it,” replied the man, smiling admiringly down at the pretty face upturned to his.

“Thanks, a heap! We’ll be waiting right here for it. Now,” turning to Patricia and leading her over to the three girls she had just left, “I want you to meet some of my friends. They’re all Arnold Hall girls. This is Lucile Evans,” stopping in front of a slight, pale-faced girl whose red lips protruded in a pout, which, Patricia later learned, was perpetual. Without a change of expression, she bowed rather indifferently at Patricia.

“I’m Jane Temple,” announced the second girl, advancing cordially as if to make up for Lucile’s rudeness.

As Patricia took Jane’s hand and looked into a pair of honest grey eyes, and at the good-humored smiling lips, she felt that here was a girl to whom one could always tie in any emergency.

“The last of this trio is Hazel Leland,” continued Anne; “our beauty.”

“Now, Anne, don’t embarrass me,” protested the girl, smiling gayly at Patricia.

She *was* a beauty; big, starry grey eyes; lovely, light brown hair which curled all over her head in little rings, like a baby’s; and a figure as slight and lithe as a boy’s.

“The newcomer in our midst,” concluded Anne, putting her arm around Patricia, “is Patricia Randall, formerly of Brentwood, now a member of the illustrious Sophomore class of Granard; and, what’s more, an inmate of Arnold Hall.”

“Good for you!” ejaculated Hazel, patting Patricia on the back, while the other two girls shot surprised, inquiring glances at Anne, who pretended not to see them.

“Why don’t we go on up?” drawled Lucile, opening her mouth for the first time.

“Going to wait for Patricia’s bag,” replied Anne quickly.

“Oh,” was Lucile’s brief response; but some way there was an unpleasant note in it, which made Patricia flush uncomfortably.

“There’s no need of my detaining you all,” she said. “I can wait by myself.”

“Now, darling,” protested Anne, “we’d never be so inhospitable to a new member of our household as that. You needn’t wait if you prefer not to, Lu.”

Without another word, Lucile picked up her bag and started haughtily up the steep hill.

“What’s the matter with her?” asked Anne, watching the blue-coated figure ascending the slope as rapidly as possible.

“Don’t know,” replied Jane. “She’s been out of sorts all day.”

“Oh, she met some youth last night who was coming down here on the two o’clock bus today,” said Hazel quickly; “and when he didn’t, show up, Lu got peeved.”

“She usually isn’t sufficiently interested in men to care whether or not one breaks a date,” said Jane.

“My dear,” replied Hazel, “she probably wants something of him. Lu’s the limit,” she continued, turning to Patricia, “for getting just what she wants without lifting a finger. Everybody waits on her, and she sits back and accepts service like a queen.”

“You mustn’t give Lu a bad reputation,” said Jane reprovingly. “She’s not a bad kid when you get to know her.”

“No, not bad,” agreed Hazel, “but—as selfish as they’re made.”

“Look!” cried Anne, pointing excitedly to the top of the hill.

There against the green background stood the blue-coated object of their discussion, and a grey-clad masculine figure with yellow hair.

“The boy friend at last!” exclaimed Hazel. “He must have been waiting for her at ‘Hill Top.’”

“Well, I only hope that he treats her to something real sweet,” laughed Jane. “‘Hill Top,’” she added, addressing herself to Patricia who was gazing apprehensively at the couple, “is a little tea room up there.”

The youth was the young man who was the object of her caresses on the train, and Patricia flushed hotly to think what a story he’d have to tell Lucile if he chose, and what fun they’d all make of her. She glanced at Anne, but that young lady displayed no signs of ever having seen the man before.

“Let’s go up and have a soda, or something,” proposed Hazel, looking at her watch. “Plenty of time before Mike gets back. Our stuff will be all right in the corner over there.”

Patricia opened her mouth to refuse, although she was hungry; but when the other girls hailed the suggestion with glee, she closed it again without voicing her objections, and followed them silently up the hill. Almost on the edge perched a small grey house with lavender shutters, and on its long, screened porch stood a grey, weather-beaten spinning wheel and a lavender table.

“Let’s eat out here,” proposed Anne, leading the way to the end of the porch.

Patricia could have hugged her; for she didn’t want to go in and meet her fellow traveler. He might even think she was following him up.

“O. K.,” agreed Hazel, slipping into a chair. “You go in and get a waitress, Nanny. I’m starved.”

“So am I,” replied Anne. “There was no diner on the train, and all Patricia and I had was some sweet chocolate.”

“I’m not so hungry—” began Jane.

“*You* are not hungry! Did I hear aright?” asked Hazel. “That girl can always eat,” she added, to Patricia.

“Well, you see I got pretty well fed up at home during the summer, but just wait until I’ve been here a couple of weeks, and I’ll get back to my old habits.”

“The meals at Horton Hall are the limit,” said Hazel, “as you’ll find to your sorrow, Patricia. We spend all our spare change, and some we can’t well spare, at the various tea rooms around College Hill.”

“What shall we have?” asked Anne, returning at that moment, followed by a waitress, and sitting down opposite Hazel. “This is on me, to celebrate Patricia’s coming.”

“Chicken patty, French pastry, and iced tea,” replied Hazel promptly.

“Waffles, maple syrup, and ice cream,” said Jane.

“How terrible! Think of your ‘figger,’ darling. You’ve put on about ten pounds this summer,” teased Hazel.

“I’ll take shrimp salad, Danish pastry, and pineapple sherbet,” said Patricia, when Anne looked at her.

“Chicken sandwiches, brownies, and ginger ale for me,” said Anne, completing the order. As the waitress disappeared, she leaned both elbows on the table and announced in low tones, “They’re not in the dining room, but Lu’s bag is in the hall.”

“Perhaps they’re out in the coffee room,” suggested Hazel. “I’ll go and see.”

“Don’t,” objected Jane quickly. “We don’t want them to think we’re spying on them.”

“Even if we are,” laughed Anne. “Maybe they’ll come out while we’re still here; and, in the meantime, let’s eat.”

Lunch took much longer than they had anticipated, and when Patricia, suddenly remembering her bag, glanced at her watch, she was surprised to find that the hands pointed at 3:30.



“Girls!” she cried, pushing back her chair and getting up so quickly that Hazel jumped. “It’s half past three.”

“Go on,” said Anne. “I’ll settle the bill and catch up to you.”

The other three hurried down the hill, and when Anne caught up to them at the foot, Patricia was pointing in speechless dismay at a grey bus rounding the curve toward Mendon. “It’s gone!” she wailed.

“Maybe Mike left your bag in the shelter,” suggested Jane comfortingly. “Let’s go and see.”

A thorough search revealed no trace of the missing bag, either inside of the shelter or out; and Patricia bemoaned the carelessness which had, a second time that day, betrayed her.

“Just wait until I see Mike!” stormed Anne. “He should have had sense enough to leave it, even if we were not right on the spot.”

“Especially when ours are here,” agreed Hazel.

“What we do with our own is entirely up to us,” said Jane slowly. “If Mike had orders to put the bag in its owner’s hands, he couldn’t very well do otherwise. Suppose we go on up and telephone the terminal to see what can be done about it.”

“Good idea! All right with you, Pat?” asked Hazel. Then, as Patricia nodded, “Let’s get going!”

“Don’t worry,” advised Anne. “You’ll get it some way; and if not tonight, we can manage between us all to fit you out. We’re used to that; aren’t we?”

“I’ll say so,” replied Jane. “Why, Hazel, here, went to a dance last winter in a dress Mrs. Vincent lent her. That’s our chaperon; and as far as borrowing and lending go, she’s surely one of us.”

Just as they reached the top of the hill again, Lucile sauntered down the tea-room steps alone.

“Where’s the boy friend, Lu?” called Hazel.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” replied Lucile haughtily, as she joined them.

“Don’t try to bluff,” ordered Hazel; “we all saw him meet you.”

“That’s one on you,” scoffed Lucile. “He stopped to ask me the way to Arnold Hall.”

“Arnold Hall!” chorused the others. “What in the name of fortune does he want there?”

“Don’t you wish you knew?” jeered Lucile.

“Is she putting something over on us? Where do you suppose he went?” whispered Hazel to Jane, but the latter only shrugged her shoulders.

“Shall I telephone the terminal?” inquired Anne, when they came to the little building which served as post office for the college.

“I wish you would,” replied Patricia gratefully; “you’ll know better what to say.”

“I’m going on,” announced Lucile, as they paused to wait for Anne.

“Go to it!” retorted Hazel. “Look, Pat, that red brick building on the corner is Horton Hall, the dorm for the music students. In the basement is the college dining room, where each dorm has a certain section. Over there, across the street, that grey building with all the steps is the auditorium, where the entertainments and meetings are held.”

“What did they say, Anne?” interrupted Jane, as Anne rejoined them.

“I talked to Mike himself. His sub was on the earlier bus, and he was afraid to leave the bag, since there was no one to take it. Mike will bring it out on his next run. I told him to give it to anybody who was coming up to the college; then we won’t have to go down for it. There’ll be heaps of students on the last bus, and Mike knows most of them. All right, Pat?” as the girl looked a bit doubtful.

“Surely,” she replied; but way down deep in her heart she felt that she would be much happier when her property was once more safe in her own hands. “But it serves me right for being so careless,” she thought, with characteristic honesty.

“Come on,” urged Hazel. “I’m crazy to get to the Hall.”

Much to Patricia’s surprise they turned away from the college buildings and down a side street. “Where are we going?” she finally asked.

“To Arnold Hall, of course,” replied Jane. “Oh, I forgot that you didn’t know where it was. You see, all the dorms, frat and sorority houses are on streets fairly near the college, but not right on the campus.”

“I should think you’d all be dead, climbing these hills,” commented Patricia, as they started up Wentworth Street.

“The whole town is built on hills, and the college is on the highest one; but you’ll get used to them.”

When they went up a brick walk leading to a big three-story house near the end of the street, Patricia felt a queer thrill of excitement and apprehension as she gazed up at the house which was to be her home for a whole year. What joys and sorrows would come to her there? Could she make good? Would her unknown benefactor reveal his or her identity before the year was out? Would she be coming back here this time next fall? Even now, the very idea of Anne and Jane returning next September without her brought a queer lump into her throat.

“I’m just nervous,” she reflected. “I must not think of the future at all.”

Determinedly she shook off her apprehensions, and followed the other girls into the house.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ALLEY GANG

As Anne opened the door and started down a long hall, from which rooms opened on either side, a short, dark little girl, whose round brown face instantly reminded one of a pleasant hazel nut, appeared from a room at the very end of the corridor.

“Anne, darling!” she shrieked, dashing along the passage and throwing herself upon Anne so violently that Anne staggered and fell back against Jane, who had to grasp one of the pillars quickly to save herself from falling.

“Don’t be so rough, Fran!” gasped Anne, but as she spoke, Frances transferred her embraces to the other two girls in turn, while Patricia stood beside the door watching, until Anne led her forward and began introductions.

“This roughneck is Frances Quinne, who lives at the end of the alley. You see, this corridor is so long and narrow we call it ‘The Alley’ and the eleven girls who live here are known as The Alley Gang. Kath come yet?” she inquired, as Frances shook hands with Patricia.

“Yes, she’s upstairs. You might tell me your friend’s name; that’s only common politeness.”

“Your welcome literally knocked me out,” laughed Anne. “She’s Patricia Randall, and is going to be in our class, and live here.”

“Here?” demanded Frances in surprise.

“Yes; and, what’s more, right in the *alley!*” cried Jane, triumphantly holding up a card which she had picked out of a pile on the hall table. While the others were

talking, Jane had been busily rummaging among the cards of room assignments.

“Let’s see,” said Anne, taking the bit of pasteboard from Jane. “No. 5. Right, next to me!”

“And across from us,” added Jane. “Has Ruth come yet?”

A slight little girl with big shy black eyes and a boyish bob ran down the stairs and approached the group.

“What do you mean by being up there when I come?” demanded Jane, shaking her room mate affectionately.

The girl’s pale face flushed slightly as she replied in a soft little voice: “I went up to see if Clarice had all of her things out of No. 14.”

“No excuse at all,” declared Jane. “This is my room mate, Ruth Maynard; Patricia Randall, a new member of our Gang.”

“What about Clarice, Ruthie?” asked Anne curiously, after Ruth had silently shaken hands with Patricia.

“She’s moving down here to No. 4,” replied Ruth quietly.

“Good night!” ejaculated Hazel, sitting down violently upon one of the trunks which lined the hall.

“Oh, boy! Oh, boy!” exclaimed Jane dramatically.

“Down *here!*” repeated Anne. “How come? Don’t know whether or not I fancy her for an opposite neighbor.”

“Nobody knows why she’s been moved,” contributed Frances excitedly. “She went to her old room as a matter of course when she came this morning, and then we found her card had No. 4 on it.”

“I think that’s just fierce!” cried Hazel. “She’s so noisy and notorious—”

“Now, Hazel,” protested Jane, “there’s nothing really bad about Clarice. She got herself talked about last year, it is true, but—”

“Maybe the Powers-that-Be think we’ll reform her,” suggested a gentle voice behind the group.

Everybody turned to face a fair, plump girl with braids of honey-colored hair wound around her shapely head, despite the prevailing fashion of short locks.

“Mary Taylor!” cried Hazel, joyfully kissing her room mate.

“Hail, Hail, The Gang’s All Here!” chanted a brisk voice, as its owner, a tall, finely developed girl with red cheeks and brown skin, which bespoke a love for out-of-doors life, jumped from the third last step to the hall below and encircled with her long arms as many of the girls as she could.

“Katharine, you hoyden!” exclaimed Anne. “Let me present Patricia Randall.”

“This noisy creature is my room mate,” added Hazel, as Katharine gave Patricia a regular man’s grasp of the hand.

“One of the Gang is missing,” commented Anne. “Where’s Betty?”

“‘Boy Friend’ is bringing her down by auto after dinner,” said Katharine.

“She must be going to be Patricia’s room mate,” offered Anne.

“She is,” announced Jane. “I saw her card.”

“What room did she have last year?” whispered Patricia to Anne.

“No. 4; but she felt quite abused at not having a room mate, so I imagine she’ll be delighted to move in with you. Here comes Dolly,” she added in an undertone, as the front door opened and a medium sized woman of about twenty-eight entered, followed by a short rather heavy girl whose restless black eyes missed no detail of the group before her.

“Well, girls,” said Mrs. Vincent, smiling patronizingly upon them, “how are you all? Glad to get back?” Without waiting for a reply, she went on: “You’ll find some changes here this fall. Clarice,” laying her hand on the girl’s arm, “is to be down here with us in No. 4. We also have a new member of our household, Miss Patricia Randall,” crossing the hall to shake hands with Patricia. “I do hope you’ll like us all, and be happy here.” Then she continued, without stopping for

Patricia's reply, "We're to have a new maid—"

"Oh, where is Lizzie?" asked Jane.

"She got married this summer," replied Mrs. Vincent; "and, my dears, you should have seen the beautiful presents she received! Our new maid's name is Rhoda Hurd, and the Dean says she comes highly recommended. She'll be here some time tonight. You had better all unpack now, and get ready for dinner. Arnold Hall girls will take the southwest end of the dining room, as usual. Come, Miss Randall, I'll show you your room. Of course it looks rather bare now," she added, when they stood on the threshold, "but you'll soon change all that. My room is No. 1, right back of the reception room. If you want anything, don't hesitate to come to me."

When Patricia found herself alone, her glance traveled from the day beds on either side of the room to the two dressers flanking the doorway and to the writing tables in the big bay window. In spite of its bare floor and curtainless windows, the room had distinct possibilities; for the furniture was Early American, and the woodwork was good.

"Why," she demanded of Anne, who came in at that moment, "do they have that heavy barred wire outside of the windows? It reminds me of a prison, or makes me feel as if I were in a cage."

"It is, a sort of a prison," laughed Anne. "You see, some of the girls like to stay out later than 10:30, and if it were possible to climb in the windows, nobody knows what time they would come in. The Black Book wouldn't be of any use then."

Patricia looked puzzled. "The 'Black Book?'" she repeated.

"Yes; beside the telephone booth in the front hall, near Dolly's room, is a table upon which rests a big, black blank book. Whenever you go out or come in after dinner, you must register in it your name and the hour. The girls take turns looking after it, and at bed time, Dolly inspects it before she makes the round of the rooms. And, by the way, whenever the outside door at the back of the hall is opened, it rings a bell in Dolly's room, right under the bed. So you see how good your chances are of staying out nights."

"Tell me something about Clarice," begged Patricia, sitting down on one of the

beds. "Why do all the girls dislike her so very much?"

"They don't really dislike her," replied Anne, plumping down beside Patricia. "She's lots of fun, and generous to a fault; but she has such a loud laugh, and doesn't care what she does or says. A good time appeals to her a whole lot more than does study, and last year she played around too much with a boy upon whom the authorities frowned. The girls on this floor have always been so congenial, and have had no demerits for conduct; so naturally they rather resent the introduction of Clarice. I think, though, that there is really a lot of good in the girl, if one could only develop it. Let's go down the hall and see if Kath has a dress you could wear to dinner. Mine would be too large for you."

Just as they stepped out into the hall, the doorbell rang.

"I'll bet that's Dolly's boy friend," whispered Anne, pausing to peer around one of the pillars, and catching sight of the top of a man's hat showing in the door pane. "Wait a minute, I want you to get a look at him. He's a special student here, and years younger than Doll."

The door leading to the cellar opened suddenly, and a black-gowned maid appeared and hurried down the hall to answer the bell.

"Apparently Rhoda has arrived. Isn't she pretty?" breathed Anne softly.

When the door was opened, a low-toned conversation ensued, of which the eavesdroppers could hear nothing. Then Rhoda admitted the blond youth, who stood waiting while the maid came down the hall toward the two girls.

"Some one to see Miss Randall," she announced.

Patricia clutched Anne's arm in a frenzy. "You've got to come with me," she whispered.

"Are you expecting a bag?" inquired the boy gravely, fixing his great grey eyes upon Patricia when she reached the door.

"Yes," she faltered; "I left it on the bus."

"The driver was going to bring it down on the six," volunteered Anne irrelevantly.



“He did,” said the youth, “and asked me to deliver it. I have it in the vestibule.” Opening the door, he secured the bag and handed it to Patricia.

“I am very grateful to you,” said Patricia a bit stiffly. “It was good of you to bring it.”

“No trouble at all. I was down at the shelter waiting for some one—” he broke off suddenly, as if fearing he had said too much, and bowed himself solemnly out.

“Well!” exclaimed Anne. “Of all things! You seem fated to get mixed up with that young man.”

“Don’t I? I suppose Mike remembered that he was on the bus with us, and just naturally gave the bag to him on that account.”

“Probably. Anyhow, now you won’t have to borrow a dress. You’d better hurry, though; it’s after six, and we dine—mark, I said *dine*—at six-thirty.”

Dinner was quite an experience for Patricia, who had never before seen a college dining room. The big low room was bare and unattractive in itself, but the long tables, each surrounded by twenty girls in pretty dinner gowns, the bright lights, and the orange-clad waitresses made up for lack of decorations elsewhere.

“My ears will grow at least a yard long here,” she observed to Anne, who sat next to her.

“What on earth do you mean?” inquired that young lady, reaching for the olives.

“Why, there are so many interesting conversations going on all around me, that I want to hear them all.”

Anne laughed. “This is nothing; just wait until classes are in full swing. Then child psychology, music theory, library cataloguing, art appreciation, domestic science, and half a dozen other subjects are all being discussed simultaneously.”

That evening most of the girls had unpacking and settling to finish, but a few members of the Alley Gang gathered in Anne’s attractive room to visit. Betty Grant had just arrived, and she and Patricia had approved of each other at the first glance.

“Tell me, Betty,” Anne was saying, “is the Boy Friend coming down week ends, as he did last year?”

“No; this year, I’m going to work—*hard*.”

Everybody laughed.

“Well, I am. I told Ed he could come only twice during this term—”

“And a few times in between,” finished Hazel.

“By the way,” began Betty, in a different tone. “I saw the queerest thing, just as Ed and I drove up. There was a fellow standing in front of the laundry window, right under your room, Hazel, evidently talking to some one inside.”

“Come now, Betty,” protested Katharine, “you’re making that up to change the subject.”

“Honest to goodness, I’m not! I saw him plain as daylight. I didn’t say anything to Ed, because he would have wanted to investigate, and I’ve no fancy for having him get into an argument with strange men. He might have had a gun, for all I know.”

“Heavens, Betty! We’ll all be afraid to go to sleep tonight,” shuddered Mary. “Hazel, you’ll have to push your bed up close to mine so you can protect me.”

“What did the man look like?” asked Jane.

“I couldn’t see his face, but he was slight, of medium height and wore a grey suit and hat.”

“The blond youth!” whispered Anne to Patricia.

“But what would he be doing prowling around here?” asked Patricia, frowning.

“Search me! Oh, hello, Lu, where have you been all the evening?”

“In the laundry part of the time. I came on here right from a house party, and my clothes are in a fine state.”

Jane, Anne, Hazel, and Patricia glanced significantly at one another.

“Sure you were pressing, Lu?” asked Hazel mischievously.

Before Lucile had a chance to reply, Betty leaned forward and inquired, “Did *you* see the man, Lu?”

“What man?”

“The man who was looking in the laundry window.”

Lucile laughed, a bit loudly for her. “Nobody around the place while I was there,” she replied, with marked carelessness, “only Rhoda.”

“What was *she* doing?” asked Anne.

“Pressing her uniforms.”

A discussion of the new maid and her predecessor followed, and the subject of the mysterious man was dropped.

## CHAPTER V

### MOSS

One morning a couple of weeks later, Patricia was wakened suddenly by a marshmallow landing on her nose and scattering its fine, powdered sugar all over her face. Sitting up quickly, she saw through her open door Ruth and Jane in their room across the hall, sitting on their beds, doubled up with laughter.

“You fiends!” she cried softly. “Just you wait!”

“What’s the matter?” inquired Betty sleepily, from the other bed, without even opening her eyes.

“Those Goths across the hall threw a marshmallow in my face!” replied Patricia, seizing the unfortunate bit of confectionery and returning it with such good aim that it struck Jane’s hand and bounded off onto the rug, where it deposited the rest of its sugar.

“Get up, Lazy Bones!” ordered Jane. “We’ve got to go out for moss before breakfast.”

“I forgot all about it,” groaned Patricia. “I wish that botany class was in Hades.”

“I wish you’d all shut up,” complained Betty. “I want to sleep; and, thank Heaven, I don’t take botany.”

Patricia was soon ready, and the three girls stole softly down the hall and tried the front door.

“Who’s that?” called Mrs. Vincent, who slept, not only with her door open, but also, so the girls said, with her eyes and ears wide as well.

“Patricia, Ruth, and Jane going out for moss for botany class,” answered Jane. “We’ll be back before breakfast time.”

“Don’t go far away.”

“Does she think we can find moss on the fire escape?” demanded Jane scornfully.

“Just where *are* we going?” asked Patricia.

“I think we’ll cut through the back yard here into Foth Road and head out toward the country.”

They went around the side of the dormitory, and, to their surprise, saw Rhoda coming toward them across the back yard.

“Aren’t you up pretty early, Rhoda?” asked Jane casually, as the girl flushed and looked embarrassed.

“Not so very,” was the low reply. “I often run out here for a breath of fresh air before starting my work.”

“How fussed she acted,” commented Ruth, “just as if she’d been caught doing something she didn’t want anybody to know about.”

“Yes, I noticed that too,” said Patricia, carefully following her companions down the treacherous, broken stone ledges into the yard behind Arnold Hall.

“Why, Ruth,” cried Jane, “‘Big House’ is occupied! I didn’t know that; did you?” The girl regarded in surprise the three-story brick house across a narrow stretch of green lawn.

“No, I didn’t”—adding softly, “Come on; somebody is watching us from that bay window on the second floor.”

“How do you know?” demanded Jane, hurrying after her room mate.

“I saw a woman’s hand pull the curtain aside a little while we were waiting for Pat to come down the steps.”

“It’s a shame to spoil our short cut to Foth Road; for I suppose we can’t go through there any more. That house was empty all last year,” explained Jane, turning to Patricia, “which made it rather nice for us because, besides using the yard as a thoroughfare, we sometimes had little parties there or met our boy friends when we didn’t want to go out the front way with them. Oh, I assure you it was useful in lots of ways.”

They were out on the road by then, and walking briskly toward the country.

“We’ll never find any moss if we keep to the road,” objected Ruth, after they had walked a mile in vain. “I should think we’d have to go into the woods, see, over there.”

“Not I!” replied Jane. “I’m too afraid of snakes.”

Patricia laughed. “There aren’t any snakes in a pine woods. They’re mostly where there are lots of rocks.”

“Well, anyway we’ll go a little farther and then I, for one, take to the woods,” decided Ruth. “We’ve got to find some moss soon, and go home; and I won’t face Yates again with no specimens.”

“Isn’t he the old pill, though?” said Jane to Patricia. “Did you ever see anybody so cold and stone-like? Even when he says unpleasant things—and, oh, boy! can’t he be disagreeable when he likes!—his face never changes from that set, gloomy expression.”

“He certainly is most peculiar,” agreed Patricia, “and I don’t like him even *any*! For that matter, no love at all is lost between us; something in the way he looks at me tells me that.”

“Ah, here we are!” exclaimed Jane, pointing to an old shed a few feet from the road. On its roof, near the ridge pole, was a luxuriant growth of bright green moss.

“How can we get at it?” asked Ruth, as they scrambled across a wire fence and crossed a stretch of rough, coarse grass. “I’m no good at climbing.”

“Nor I,” said Ruth. “How about you, Pat?”

“I think I could get up far enough to reach it, if you girls will boost a bit,” replied Patricia.

“It’s O. K. with us, but for Heaven’s sake be as quiet as possible. We don’t want the dog set on us.”

“Oh, nobody’s around so early as this; there’s no window on this side of the shed, and the door is on the other. The farm house is back of that clump of trees.”

“Easy telling you don’t know anything about the country,” said Jane scornfully; “these farmers get up early.”

Stepping up on a log, which happened to lie conveniently close to the building, Patricia, with the aid of the girls, got a firm grip on the edge of the roof and drew herself up to a point where she could lie flat on its weather-worn boards and stretch her long arms up toward the coveted plants. With much effort, she succeeded in reaching the moss and in tearing up two big handfuls. Resting on her elbows for a moment to ease the strain on her arms, she was horrified to feel the boards underneath them begin to sag; and, with a dull splintering of ancient wood, her hands and lower arms disappeared into a yawning cavity. Simultaneously, the moss dropped from her fingers into the depths below.

A snort, a gasp, and a forceful exclamation from within the shed mingled with Patricia’s startled cry of “Girls, I’m falling in.”

“What shall we do? What shall we do?” demanded Ruth excitedly as Patricia, speechless with horror, gazed down through the hole over which she hung, and met the cold, grey eyes of Professor Yates! His immaculate shoulders and smooth black hair were covered with bits of moss.

“Pull me down, quick!” cried the horrified Patricia, finally recovering the power of speech.

“It will spoil your dress,” warned Jane.

“I don’t care! Get me down, for Pete’s sake!” retorted Patricia wildly.

With their united efforts, the two girls succeeded in dragging Patricia safely to the ground, minus the moss, and with several long scratches on her arms.

“Where’s the moss?” demanded Ruth in surprise.

“All over Professor Yates!” gasped Patricia, hysterically.

“What?” cried Ruth, while Jane looked as if she feared Patricia had lost her mind.

“He’s in that shed!”

“You’re crazy!” retorted Jane, feeling her pulse.

“Honest to goodness! Cross my heart!”

At that moment, the object of their discussion strolled around the corner of the shed. He had brushed himself off, and now looked as calm and neat as if he were in his classroom. His gaze traveled coldly from one to another, then, looking directly at Patricia, he drawled: “To what am I indebted for this most unconventional call?”

“To your demand for specimens of moss today ‘without fail,’” quoted Jane glibly.

“A most novel situation, stealing it from my own roof, and ruining the roof in the bargain.”

“We had no idea it was your roof,” retorted Patricia hotly, “and I had no intention of breaking through it. It was anything but a pleasant experience, I assure you.”

“Of course we expect to assume any expense involved,” put in Jane soothingly, as they turned to go.

Professor Yates made no reply, but stood watching them scramble over the fence and start down the road toward college.

“Wasn’t that just terrible?” gasped Patricia “I’m certainly done for with him now. Next time I do any climbing for specimens, you’ll know it.”

“Whatever do you suppose he was doing out there?” demanded Ruth.



“You heard him say it was his roof, didn’t you?” retorted Jane. “Clarice said once that he had an old place where he raises all kinds of truck for the lab, but I didn’t pay much attention to her. She talks so much that half the time I don’t listen very attentively; and I haven’t given it a thought since.”

“Just wait until the girls hear about it!”

“We’re going to have a spread tonight; did you know it?” asked Jane. “Doll’s going out with one of her boy friends.”

“The dark youth who’s a ‘special’ in some year or other?” asked Patricia.

“Yes.”

“She’ll have to keep better tabs on him,” commented Ruth; “he’s a born flirt. I was at the Black Book the other night when he came in, and he tried to make a date with me.”

“Did he succeed?” asked Jane mischievously.

“He did *not*! I can’t bear him.”

“Do you realize, girls,” inquired Ruth, “that we are still moss-less?”

“Yes, and we’ll continue to be, so far as I am concerned,” retorted Patricia.

“Oh, somebody in the lab will be sure to have some,” said Jane easily, “and we’ll just borrow a little of it. I don’t feel equal to hunting any longer.”

The spread was about to get under way at eight-thirty that evening. Mrs. Vincent and her youthful escort, Ivan Zahn, had departed for a concert which the college was giving to entertain the Freshman Class. Rhoda was looking after the Black Book and the telephone; so the girls were quite free to enjoy themselves, without responsibility. The new maid had quickly become as much of a favorite as her predecessor; for she was accommodating and good-tempered, and the inhabitants of Arnold Hall, especially those on the first floor, treated her almost as one of themselves.

“Did anybody telephone the Varsity Coffee Shoppe for the eats?” demanded

Hazel, coming out into the hall in a suit of bright red lounging pajamas.

“Yes,” answered Jane from her room, where she was putting frantic last minute lines on a poster which was due the next morning.

“Who took the order?” asked Frances, rushing in to borrow some thread to run up a rip in her coolie coat.

“Al, and he said he’d send them right down,” contributed Ruth from her bed, where she lay on her back trying to fix an important bit of psychology in her mind.

“Oh, cut the study!” ordered Anne, entering with Lucile, Betty, and Patricia.

“Got to get this tonight,” cried Ruth, hanging onto the book which Anne tried to take out of her hands.

“No, you haven’t; get up early in the morning and do it. Then it will be all the fresher in your mind.”

“Yes, you like early rising,” laughed Betty.

Anne continued to pull, and finally got Ruth off the bed. Katharine, who came in at that moment, attracted by the noise, slipped past Ruth and Anne, flopped into the recently vacated bed, and pulled up the covers.

“Of all things!” exclaimed Ruth indignantly, jerking away from Anne. “Get out of my bed!”

Katharine extended a long, strong arm and pulled Betty in beside her, while Frances piled in on the other side.

“Safety in numbers,” laughed Katharine impishly. “Get us out if you can!”

“I’ll help you, Ruth!” shouted Clarice, dashing in with a glass of water which she sprinkled freely on the three girls in the bed. With a cry of protest they sprang up and chased Clarice the length of the hall where she barricaded herself with a heavy chair in the corner beside the telephone booth. At the other end of the hall, on a couple of well-stuffed white laundry bags which were ready for the collector in the morning, perched Hazel, swinging her red-clad legs and singing:

“I want a drink! Kathy wants a drink! Francy wants a drink!”

“Here’s Al, girls!” called Clarice from her vantage point, where she could see out onto the street.

The feud was forgotten, as they all trooped forward to relieve Rhoda of the basket which the boy had brought. Sitting down on the runner which extended the length of the hall, the girls quickly disposed of orangeade, sandwiches, cakes, and ice cream, not forgetting to give Rhoda a share. A songfest followed, and a general romp the length of the alley was in full swing when the front door opened suddenly and Mrs. Vincent walked in, alone.

“Girls!” she cried sharply. “Stop that noise at once! You sound like a lot of hyenas! I could hear you up to the corner!”

“What brought her home so early?” muttered Betty to Patricia.

“Must have had a scrap with Ivan,” whispered Anne. “She’s so cross.”

Just then the telephone rang, and Mrs. Vincent paused to gaze hopefully at Rhoda who answered it.

“Yes,” said Rhoda, in a low tone. “Yes, I’ll call her.”

With an oddly excited expression on her usually calm face, Rhoda turned to Mrs. Vincent, saying, “Someone wants to speak with you.”

## CHAPTER VI

### A MEDDLER

“Yes, this is Mrs. Vincent talking. What? I’m very sorry. The girls were having a little party, and didn’t realize, I’m afraid, how much noise they were making. What did you say, please? Oh, we—ll, I’ll see what they think about it. Of course, you realize that they are not children to be ordered about.”

“She didn’t think so a minute ago,” giggled Anne under her breath to Patricia.

“All right. Goodbye.”

Mrs. Vincent hung up the receiver and turned to face the girls.

“We’re in a nice fix now!” she snapped. “Mrs. Brock, who lives back of us, has been greatly disturbed by the noise you have been making all the evening, and feels that an apology is due her—”

“What utter nonsense!” cried Anne.

“She must be cuckoo!” exclaimed Clarice hotly.

The rest of the girls stood looking at one another in astonishment, while Rhoda turned her back quickly and bent her head low over the open Black Book.

“Well, what are you going to do about it?” continued Mrs. Vincent.

“Just nothing at all,” replied Jane; “her demand is absurd.”

“Of course it is unreasonable; but the trouble is,” pursued Mrs. Vincent, flushing, “she says unless a couple of you go over and present an apology for the crowd,

she will lodge a complaint at the office.”

“Now I *know* she is crazy,” snapped Lucile.

“Naturally,” went on Mrs. Vincent, “a question of my incompetence, or of my inability to manage you properly, will arise if such a complaint is lodged. Of course, you must do as you wish. I’m simply laying the whole matter frankly before you.”

Mrs. Vincent turned abruptly and disappeared into her own room.

“This is a pretty mess!” scolded Katharine.

“It’s mostly your fault!” cried Hazel, looking angrily at Clarice.

“How is it, I’d like to know!” demanded the girl, flushing a dull red, but gazing defiantly at her accuser.

“You did most of the yelling and rough-housing,” retorted Frances promptly.

“I didn’t pile into Ruth’s bed; I didn’t sit beside the back door, singing; I—”

“No,” interrupted Jane soothingly, “I think we all did our share; but—”

“What’s the use of trying to place the blame now?” asked Patricia suddenly. “The question is how to fix things up.”

“We can’t let Dolly down, I suppose,” said Mary slowly. “She *is* incompetent, and awfully silly at times; but, after all, she is our chaperon and we owe loyalty to her. She might lose her position as the result of the complaint, and we’d hate to be party to taking a job from anyone.”

“Since you all feel that I’m mostly to blame,” broke in Clarice, “I’ll go over to Big House and apologize.”

Almost before she had time to think, Patricia heard herself saying: “And I’ll go with you.”

“You’re a couple of good sports!” cried Jane heartily.

“Is it too late to go now?” asked Patricia, looking at the clock.

“Nearly ten. Better ask Dolly,” advised Anne.

Patricia went to the chaperon’s door, knocked, and when Mrs. Vincent opened it, stated quietly: “Clarice and I are going over to apologize to Mrs. Brock. Shall we go now, or wait until morning?”

“It really doesn’t matter, I suppose; whichever time you prefer,” replied Mrs. Vincent slowly, looking past Patricia to Clarice, who stood leaning against the Black Book table. The girl’s black eyes met hers, and a long, meaning look passed between them.

“We’ll go now, then, and get it over with,” decided Patricia. “Come on, Clarice.”

The two went out of the front door and the rest of the girls gathered in Jane’s room to await results.

“What a day!” sighed Ruth. “I’ll never get up so early again. It brings bad luck. What with the moss adventure this morning, and now this.”

“How did Professor Yates act in class?” asked Hazel, as the rest smiled over the story of the moss, which they had heard earlier in the day.

“Just as usual, except perhaps a little more sarcastic,” began Jane.

“And more generous with puzzling questions, especially to Pats,” broke in Anne.

“Funny they can’t get along together,” mused Mary. “Pat is such a peach of a girl.”

“There’s no rhyme or reason in anything Yates does,” declared Hazel bluntly.

“Pat is a peach,” agreed Anne fervently, “and I think we’re mighty lucky to get her in our Gang.”

“So say we all of us!” chanted Frances softly.

“It seems awfully queer to me, though,” put in Lucile, “for a girl to leave a college voluntarily after a year there, and come away up here where she knows no one, to finish her course.”

“Her aunt and cousin are here,” spoke up Anne, loyally.

“Don’t see them making much fuss over her!” retorted Lucile. “Ted’s been here only two or three times to see her.”

“Ted is a very busy boy.” Anne spoke up promptly. “He’s in Forestry, and that takes him out a lot this year.”

“Come to think of it,” commented Ruth, “I haven’t seen him much at the Frat House.”

“You should know what goes on there,” laughed Katharine, teasingly. “Such luck as you and Jane have—a room right next to—”

“Clarice’s room is even better—or worse,” said Jane; “for hers is opposite the men’s living room.”

“Why worse?” demanded Frances.

“I’ll change rooms with you some night, and let you listen to their blamed radio until the wee small hours, and then again early in the morning, before anybody is up.”

“Speaking of Clarice,” broke in Lucile, “I think there’s something between her and Dolly.”

“What do you mean?” asked Betty quickly.

“Some secret, or understanding, or favoritism, or something,” replied Lucile. “Did none of you see the look they exchanged when Pats told Dolly they’d go?”

“I did,” answered Anne thoughtfully; “it all but talked.”

“There’s some reason why Clarice was moved down here this year, and I’ll bet Dolly was at the root of it,” declared Lucile, emphasizing her words by pounding on the foot of the bed beside which she sat.

“By the way, Lu,” broke in Hazel shyly, “how’s your blond friend? Seen him lately?”

“My blond friend is good!” jeered Lucile.

“Who is he? Who is he?” demanded Mary and Betty in unison. “Why haven’t we ever seen him?”

“My darlings,” said Lucile mockingly, “just because on the day we came back, a good-looking, yellow-haired youth stopped me at the top of the hill to ask where Arnold Hall was, these silly girls imagined I had a date with him.”

“Why should a fellow want Arnold Hall?” demanded Katharine in surprised tones.

“Maybe he has a sweetie here,” proposed Hazel mischievously, looking at Lucile.

“That’s an idea,” replied Lucile, flatly ignoring Hazel’s insinuations; “maybe it’s —Patricia!”

“Oh, no,” contradicted Anne; “she never saw him before the day we came down.” Too late she realized what she had admitted.

“Came down! Oh, then he was on *your* train. Ah, ha! Now we’re getting at something!” exulted Lucile.

Poor Anne’s fair complexion changed to a bright pink, as she struggled to make her words sound casual.

“He sat across from us, and we happened to notice him because he was so good-looking. We haven’t seen him for a long time.”

“I have,” spoke up Jane; “and you’d never guess where.”

“Then tell us,” said Frances.

“Last night, I was coming from the library, and because it was rather late, I took a chance on cutting through the yard back of here. As I got to the step up into this yard, I heard the sound of a typewriter in Big House. It surprised me; for I understand Mrs. Brock is quite elderly. I glanced carelessly up at the lighted windows, and there in a second floor room facing this way, sat our unknown blond friend.”



“Maybe he’s her son,” proposed Katharine.

“Son, nothing! Grandson more likely,” contradicted Hazel. “Maybe the girls will meet him. Why didn’t more of us go?”

Jane laughed. “You all had a chance, but you didn’t make the most of it.”

At this moment the front door opened quietly, closed again, footsteps were heard coming along the hall, and Patricia and Clarice entered.

“Tell us just everything,” ordered Anne, making places on Jane’s bed for the newcomers.

“Well,” began Patricia slowly, “a maid led us into the living room, which is that room in front where the big bay window is; and there, before the fire, sat a tiny, white-haired old lady with the keenest brown eyes I have ever seen.”

“They bored right through one,” contributed Clarice.

“She never said a word to us, only looked up, and then tried to quiet her white Spitz which began to bark his head off at us.”

“I should think she’d be used to noise, if she has one of those,” observed Hazel; “they sho’ do bark.”

Just then Mrs. Vincent slipped into the room, and, sitting down beside Clarice, slid an arm around her, while the girls exchanged significant glances.

“When Mrs. Brock got the dog quieted down,” continued Patricia, “I said that we had come to represent the girls on our floor, and apologize for the excessive noise tonight; that we had not intended to annoy anyone, and had not even thought of it as a possibility; we were only having a little party among ourselves.”

“‘Drinking party, I suppose!’ she snapped, looking us over from head to foot, for she hadn’t asked us to sit down.”

“I’ll bet she knows how many buttons are on my blouse, and even where one buttonhole is torn,” observed Clarice.

“‘We had only orangeade,’ I replied, as good-naturedly as I could; for it certainly was annoying to be addressed in the tones she used,” went on Patricia.

“‘Are you sure of that?’ she demanded, fixing her brown eyes on me, like crabs. ‘I distinctly heard some one singing a song about wanting a drink.’”

A burst of laughter from the girls interrupted Patricia’s story, while Jane ruffled Hazel’s curls.

“Then *I* took a hand,” announced Clarice.

“‘You did,’ I told her, ‘and we had several; but they were all made of oranges, just as Patricia has told you. We may be noisy, but we’re not liars!’”

“What did she say?” asked Jane eagerly.

“Nothing; she just glared at me, and turned back to Pat,” replied Clarice.

“‘Aside from the personal annoyance,’ she went on,” continued Patricia, “‘I consider it highly detrimental to the reputation of college women to have such yelling and noise emanating from a supposedly respectable dormitory.’ Before we could answer, fortunately, perhaps, for I didn’t know what to say next,” went on Patricia, “she pressed a bell near her chair, and almost immediately we heard footsteps on the stairs, the heavy portieres between the living room and the hall were pushed aside, and there stood—”

“The good-looking young blond!” finished Hazel, excitedly clasping and unclasping her hands.

“Why, how did you know?” demanded Patricia in surprise.

“I saw him over there in the window last night, and the girls were just saying that perhaps you would meet him,” replied Jane. “But please go on.”

“‘Norman Young, my secretary,’ said the old lady, looking inquiringly at us. Clarice supplied our names, and the youth bowed gravely. ‘Norman,’ she asked, ‘did you type the letter I dictated earlier this evening?’

“‘Not yet, Mrs. Brock,’ he said.

“‘You need not write it. That’s all,’ she added curtly, as the young man lingered a moment, eyeing Clarice. As soon as he had disappeared, she turned to us again. ‘You may go too,’ she announced abruptly; ‘and don’t let me hear such a rumpus over there again.’ Then Clarice spoke up. ‘Mrs. Brock, we told you we were sorry, and we are; but we can’t promise never to make another sound, when we have parties, or at any other time. There are forty-five girls in the house, and it’s unreasonable to expect us to be as quiet as deaf-mutes.’ Before she could get her breath to annihilate Clarice, which I thought she would do, I broke in and said that perhaps she’d like us and understand college life better if she came over to Arnold Hall some time and got acquainted with the girls and see how we live.

“‘Maybe I should,’ she replied slowly, and really her face changed so that I thought she was going to smile.”

“Now you have *done* it, Pats,” groaned Anne.

“Whatever possessed you to say that?” complained Betty.

“Who in creation *is* she, that she thinks she can take such a hand in our affairs?” demanded Katharine hotly.

“Well, I felt sorry for her,” contended Patricia stoutly. “She’s old, and all alone in that big house—”

“Oh, no, Pats, not alone; think of that attractive youth,” protested Hazel.

“And I think she’s longing for human contacts,” continued Patricia.

“She seems to be,” remarked Lucile sarcastically.

“And that’s why she is annoyed by our fun, kind of an outsider envying those who are on the inside; like a kid who’s not invited to a party, and so wants to break it up,” concluded Patricia.

“Sentimental Pat!” scoffed Lucile.

“I’m sorry you are all annoyed about it,” said Patricia, flushing, “but I suddenly felt so sorry for her that I spoke before I thought. I never dreamed you’d object to her. Probably she won’t come, anyhow.”

“I think,” said Jane emphatically, “that you handled the matter in the best possible way. What would we gain by fighting with her? Putting aside of any question of kindness, it’s much wiser for us to be friendly with her, if she will let us.”

“I agree with you, Jane,” said Mrs. Vincent, speaking for the first time, and getting up to go back to her own room. “Now get to bed as quickly as possible,” she added, as the clock struck eleven.

There were three people in the college colony who were wakeful that night: Patricia tossed from side to side, as she kept going over in her mind the inexorable circumstances which continued to involve her in strange situations with Norman Young. Directly above her, on the third floor, Rhoda the maid was shedding tears as she worried over the affairs of one near and dear to her. In his room across the two back yards, Norman Young alternately pondered over Clarice’s pretty face and the solving of a problem which involved some cleverness on his part.

## CHAPTER VII

### A FALL

“Who’s going to the Greystone game?” asked Hazel, as part of the Alley Gang was walking back to the Hall after lunch one crisp sunny day in October.

“I am,” replied Anne.

“Ted?” queried Patricia, curiously.

Anne nodded, adding with a broad grin, “Katharine and Professor Boyd are going with us.”

Oliver Boyd was a young instructor, who had been engaged for the History Department that fall, a slim, attractive youth, whose big brown eyes looked shyly out from behind octagon glasses, and whose dark skin made the girls, when they wanted to tease Katharine, say he must have Indian blood in his veins. A melodious voice with a southern accent completed an ensemble that had proved most intriguing to the women of Granard. All the girls smiled upon him, and the registration in History V was unusually heavy that term. That he was girl-shy had been the consensus of opinion until one day Katharine happened to run across him in the Varsity Book Shoppe; and a discussion, begun from the talkative Katharine over the respective merits of note book covers No. 1 and No. 3, had been the beginning of the most talked-of of college romances.

“Now just wouldn’t a retiring daisy like Professor Boyd pick a roughneck like Katharine?” commented Lucile disgustedly. “I should think she’d scare him to death.”

“You’re just jealous!” retorted Hazel, quick to come to the support of her room mate.

“Indeed I’m not,” contradicted Lucile promptly; “but you can’t deny that they’re no more suited to each other than—”

“Oh, but opposites attract,” interrupted Betty; “remember your psychology, or was it physics?”

“Who else is going to the game?” inquired Jane, returning to the original topic of conversation in an attempt to check the friction.

“Francie and I are driving down,” replied Patricia, smiling down at the round-faced little girl beside her. For several weeks now, Patricia had been the proud possessor of the car which her father had bought for her.

“Where’s the Boy Friend?” asked Hazel curiously, turning to look at Frances.

“On the outs,” was the quick reply.

“How come?” inquired Lucile.

“Well, Joe said he wished Tut Miller would get a chance to play in the Greystone game—”

“Oh—oh!” protested her companions in chorus.

“Yes, that’s just the way I felt,” asserted Frances; “so we promptly had a row.”

“But why,” protested Jane, “should he want Jack Dunn to be taken out of the lineup. He’s a far better player than Tut.”

“I know, but I figured it out this way: Joe and Tut were at Huron Prep together, and Joe’s got an awful case on Tut. When football practice started, Tut went over big until Jack began to show what he was made of.”

“And naturally Joe sizzled when Jack got on the regulars and Tut was his sub,” finished Jane.

“Jack’s the better of the two, of course,” agreed Anne; “but I don’t fall for him the way the rest of you do. He seems to me to be rather too sure of himself.”

“Who has a better right?” asked Lucile sharply. “He’s been the absolute idol of

this college and town ever since he made the team.”

Before this challenge could be taken up, there was a sound of running footsteps behind them, and Clarice violently pushed in between Jane and Anne.

“What do you think?” she cried, noisily.

“We don’t think,” retorted Lucile crisply. “We leave that for you.”

“What is the excitement, Clarice?” inquired Jane quickly, trying to cover Lucile’s unkind thrust at Clarice’s poor scholarship.

“You’d never guess with whom I am going to the Greystone game.”

“Then tell us quickly,” said Frances, “before we all die of suspense.”

“Norman Young! He asked me in Physics Lab this morning, and—”

“Physics Lab,” repeated Betty in puzzled tones. “How did he happen to be there?”

“Didn’t you know that he registered late, and is a special student here!” asked Jane in surprise.

“No; I—”

“Where have you been all this term?” demanded Hazel in disgust.

“Betty is more interested in certain people from home than she is in Granard students,” explained Lucile in significant tones.

“I am not!” contradicted Betty promptly.

“Don’t bother; she’s only trying to tease you,” said Jane soothingly, flinging an arm across Betty’s shoulder. “If I had a devoted boy friend who wrote me letters every other day, and came down to spend week ends here, I shouldn’t know all the college gossip either.”

Meanwhile Anne was whispering to Patricia: “Wonder how Lucile likes Clarice’s walking off with Norman.”

“Why?” said Pat. “I didn’t know that she considered him her special property. She’s been going around with Tut.”

“I’m not sure that she does, only I feel it in my bones, someway, that the meeting at ‘Hill Top’ on the day we arrived was not all chance. I *do* know that she pricks up her ears whenever he is mentioned.”

They had reached the library, and Pat reluctantly left her companions.

“I’m due here, kids,” she called from the third step, as Jane demanded why she was deserting them. “Something I’ve got to look up. See you later.” Waving her hand gaily, she ran up the long flight of steps and entered the old grey building.

Some of the rooms were used for graduate work, or small classes of men students; and Patricia could hear Professor Donnell’s voice quite distinctly as she passed down the corridor to the reference department. Three-quarters of an hour later, having secured the necessary information, she was just approaching the outside doorway when Professor Donnell’s class came out of its room, right behind her. Patricia was rather shy with strangers, and hurried a bit to keep well ahead of the men going down the steps. In her haste, she failed to notice, on a step part way down the flight, some matted, damp leaves. Her heel slipped on one of them, and she rolled to the bottom of the flight. Eighteen men promptly sprang to her assistance, but the long legs of a thin dark boy brought him first upon the scene.

“Are you hurt?” he asked, raising Patricia to her feet.

Patricia looked up into solicitous blue eyes, bent anxiously upon her, and shakily replied that she didn’t think so.

“That was a nasty fall,” continued the boy, still carefully holding her by the arm as if he feared she might collapse any minute.

The other men had gathered about her in a semi-circle, and Patricia’s color came back with a rush, and flushed her face to a scarlet which matched the little hat which had fallen off during her descent and which one of the men now presented to her.

“Thank you,” she murmured.



“Lucile would say, if she could see me now, that I fell purposely,” thought Patricia, adjusting the gay little hat with shaking fingers. Then an awful thought occurred to her. Maybe these men thought the same thing! People resorted to all kinds of tricks to meet celebrities, and Jack Dunn’s acquaintanceship was much sought after.

“I don’t know how I happened to fall,” she said, trying to laugh. “I’m not usually so careless.”

“There were some wet leaves on one of the steps,” explained her rescuer, bending his head protectively over her.

It was a fine shaped head, topped by wavy brown hair flung back from a broad, very white forehead. The hands on her arm were shapely, and the fingers long and slender. A thoroughbred, thought Patricia.

“If you’ll tell me where you were going,” he continued, motioning his companions peremptorily away, “I’ll walk along with you.”

“Oh, I don’t want to trouble you further,” protested Patricia. “I’m quite all right now.”

“You’re shaking like a leaf,” contradicted her escort gently, falling into step beside her, as they started across the campus. “Let’s sit down over there a while,” he added, as they approached a stone bench under a tree near the Fine Arts Building; “or have you a class now?”

“No, not until three-thirty.”

“What year are you?” he began, as soon as they were seated. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen you before.”

“I’m a Sophomore, and my name, by the way, is Patricia Randall.”

“Mine is Jack Dunn,” said the boy, as simply as if his name were not known the length and breadth of the campus.

“I’m afraid you are not very observing,” remarked Patricia.

“Why?”

“Because we are in the same Shakespeare class, and have been all this term.”

“Oh, well, we’re seated alphabetically. I’m down in the front of the room, and you must be in the back. So that lets me out.”

Three-thirty arrived long before they finished exchanging personal bits of information, and Jack left Patricia at the door of her classroom with a promise to see her again very soon.

“How in the world did you get hold of him?” whispered Jane excitedly, as Patricia took her seat.

“Tell you later,” promised Patricia, as Professor Yates glanced in their direction.

After the class was over, the girls managed to get away from the rest of the crowd; so, as they walked slowly across the campus, Patricia told the story of the fall and its consequences.

“You’re a lucky girl!” sighed Jane, as she finished.

“To have broken no bones?” inquired Patricia innocently.

“Yes, just that,” replied her companion, with exaggerated emphasis. “Broken hearts not taken into account.”

“I suppose the girls will razz the life out of me,” commented Patricia, after a short pause.

“Don’t tell them anything about it, then. I shan’t mention it.”

“But suppose some of them saw us together?”

“That’s all right. If they don’t know how you met him, it will give them something to think about.”

That evening Patricia was keenly aware of curious eyes fixed upon her as she stood in front of Arnold Hall talking to Jack Dunn. He had stepped up to her just as she was following Jane and Anne to the post office after dinner. The girls obligingly hurried on and left the two together, but Patricia’s cheeks were red

with the knowledge that they were talking about her as they went back to the dorm.

“I was wondering if you’d go to see Arliss with me,” began Jack. “He’s on at the Plaza, and we’d be just in time for the early performance.”

“I should like to see it,” replied Patricia slowly; “but—yes, I’ll go. I’m pretty sure Jane will sign the Black Book for me if I don’t go in.”

“The Black Book?” repeated Jack in puzzled tones.

As they started downtown, Patricia told him all about the Arnold Hall customs and rules, and answered his questions regarding the identity of several of the Alley Gang.

“You see,” he said, “I don’t know many of the girls here; for I came only this year, transferred from Floynton University—”

“And I from Brentwood,” interrupted Patricia. “Isn’t that funny?”

“We ought to be friends, then, both strangers in a strange land. Shall we?”

“I don’t mind.”

After leaving the movie, they strolled slowly back to College Hill, chatting as if they had known each other always.

“Will you come in?” asked Patricia, as they reached Arnold Hall.

“Like to, but you see I’m in training and not supposed to be out too late; besides I have some boning to do yet.”

“I don’t see when you ever get any studying done; you’re in classes all morning as well as part of the afternoon, and on the athletic field until dark.”

“It doesn’t leave me much time, and I’ve just got to make good here.”

“You mean in order to keep on the team?”

“Of course; but there’s another reason too. You see, my dad isn’t well enough off to send me to Granard himself; and, well, when you’re indebted to somebody

else for a big chance, why, you've just *got* to make good."

"I know just how that is; for I'm in the same position myself," replied Patricia impulsively.

"You are?" questioned Jack. "Then you would understand."

"Good evening," said a smooth, low voice behind them, and they turned to face Norman Young.

"How are you?" replied Jack briefly, while Patricia murmured a response to the newcomer's greeting.

"Clarice in?" queried Norman as he turned and went up the walk toward the house.

"I don't know," replied Patricia.

"I don't like that fellow," observed Jack, as the door closed upon Young.

"You don't? Why?"

"Queer acting guy. Never caught him in anything; in fact I don't know him very well, but I don't trust him. Comes out and sits on the side lines to watch practice quite often, and he gives me the jitters. You know him well?"

"No, I don't. I was introduced to him at Mrs. Brock's house. He's her secretary."

"Who's Mrs. Brock?"

Briefly Patricia told him of their contact with the eccentric inhabitant of Big House.

"She must be crazy!" declared Jack, as she finished her story. "You'd better not have anything to do with her. Say, what does she look like?" as a sudden idea occurred to him.

Patricia described her as well as she could.

"The very same!" ejaculated the boy, when Patricia paused.

“The same—what do you mean?” inquired the girl, looking at him with a puzzled expression.

“I was walking along Craig Street, right back of the campus, you know, one day about two weeks ago, when I noticed a little woman ahead of me drop a small bag. Apparently, she didn’t notice her loss; for she kept right on. I picked up the pocketbook, hurried on, and gave it to her. She looked at me sharply with the most piercing brown eyes I have ever seen—”

“That’s she!” interrupted Patricia. “Those eyes fasten themselves on you just like tiny crabs.”

“I presented the bag and told her where I found it. She said curtly: ‘So you’re really honest. I didn’t think anybody was, any more.’ It made me mad, so I merely said: ‘That is one of the things upon which I pride myself,’ bowed and hurried on. I wouldn’t swear to it, but I thought I heard her laugh. Must be cuckoo.”

“She’s certainly queer, to say the least,” agreed Patricia. “I think I’d better go in, now. Thanks for the movie; I enjoyed it.”

“Wait a minute,” urged the boy, laying a hand on her arm. “You’re going to see the Greystone game; aren’t you?”

“Yes; Frances and I are going to drive down together.”

“I’ll get your tickets, then. I’d like you to be where you can get a good view, since you’ve never been to a real big game before.”

“Thanks a lot,” said Patricia gratefully, as she started up the steps. “Good night.”

“Bring them to you in Shakespeare class Friday,” called Jack, just as Norman and Clarice came out onto the porch.

Shortly after the street was again deserted, a masculine figure slipped out of a thick clump of shrubbery near the dormitory, and, keeping well in the heavy shadows which edged Arnold Hall on one side, slunk off into the darkness.

## CHAPTER VIII

### JACK OR TUT?

“Will somebody stop that bell!” called Patricia frantically one afternoon a week later.

She and Anne were in their room, trying to cram for a test in French.

“No!” shouted Clarice and Hazel simultaneously. “We want to wear out the battery before tonight; and the coast is clear now.”

Patricia gave her door a shove which made it close with a bang, and stuffed her fingers into her ears, while Anne did likewise. Presently the door flew open again to admit Mary.

“What’s the idea?” she exclaimed, viewing the two girls with alarm.

“That awful bell!” replied Anne briefly, withdrawing her fingers from ears. “What do you suppose Clarice and Hazel are up to?”

“I’m not sure, but I think they’re planning to step out tonight.”

“Rose Troy?” queried Anne.

“I suppose so,” said Mary anxiously.

Rose Troy was not a student at Granard, but at one of the college affairs to which outsiders were admitted, she had met Hazel and Clarice, taken a fancy to them, and subsequently invited them to her home several times. She entertained lavishly, and some of the girls were frankly envious of the favored two; others strongly disapproved of the growing intimacy.

“But what’s the bell got to do with it?” inquired Patricia.

“You poor innocent!” retorted Mary. “If the bell won’t ring when the back door is opened—and they find some way to have said back door opened for them—Doll can never tell what time the girls come home.”

“I wish Hazel hadn’t gotten so intimate with Clarice all of a sudden,” mused Anne. “I wonder how it happened.”

“Birds of a feather,” began Mary.

“Don’t say that. Hazel is just like Clarice!” protested Anne vehemently.

“Wait till I finish,” countered Mary calmly. “I was going to say that they both love a good time, and both let their studying go until the eleventh hour; furthermore, Hazel is terribly restless this year. I can’t make out just what is the matter with her, and Clarice is a kind of outlet.”

“Rose Troy’s attentions are very bad for both of them, I think; and perhaps partly explains their intimacy,” said Anne.

“How?” inquired Mary bluntly.

“Well, they have a common interest in which the rest of us have no part, and Rose’s parties are somewhat stimulating, I imagine; more sophisticated than ours. Rose has lots of boy friends, you know.”

“Ought we to do anything, about tonight, I wonder,” mused Anne.

“No!” replied Mary promptly. “What right have we to object if those two silly kids want to run the risk of getting into trouble?”

Suddenly the bell stopped ringing, and quiet settled down upon the house, just as Mrs. Vincent entered the front door, with her shadow, Ivan Zahn.

“But,” persisted Patricia, still puzzled, “how will they manage to get in without Dolly’s knowledge?”

“Oh, Clarice, on some pretext or other—she’ll know how—will ask for permission for both of them to stay out an hour later than usual. Doll will give it,

and go to bed at the regular time. Then, with the back door key, which I suppose they will secure during the early evening, they will be able to get in and go to bed without anyone being the wiser.”

“Clarice certainly has some stand-in with Dolly,” observed Anne.

“She works hard enough for it,” retorted Mary.

“What do you mean?” inquired Patricia.

“Oh, Clarice is always sending Doll flowers, or candy, and naturally it makes an ‘imprint’; as of course it’s intended to.”

About two o’clock next morning, Patricia was suddenly awakened by a flash of light. Wide awake in an instant, she waited tensely for the peal of thunder which she expected would accompany it—forgetting that the season for such storms was over. Electric storms were Patricia’s chief phobia; but no sound disturbed the stillness. Then the flash was repeated; again she waited, but again perfect quiet reigned. Just as she decided that one of the street lights must be blinking, a third time the light played on the wall, this time more slowly. With a fast-beating heart, she sat up, reached for her bathrobe, and stole softly to the window. On the path below, in the faint light from the street lamp, she could distinguish Clarice and Hazel. Evidently they could not get in, and had used a flash light to attract her attention. How to let them know that she saw them, without making any noise, was a problem which she solved by passing a handkerchief back and forth near the screen, hoping that its whiteness would be visible against the dark background of the room. Frantic gestures toward the back door answered her efforts. They must have forgotten the key. Creeping noiselessly toward her door, Patricia succeeded in opening it quietly and stealing down the hall without arousing anyone. Fortunately, the door into the narrow passage leading to the back entrance was open, and Patricia drew it carefully to behind her, in order to keep any sounds from the front of the house. With her heart in her throat, she turned the key, bit by bit, until the lock was released. With the same care, she opened the door wide enough to admit the two girls who were pressed close to its frame. As she was about to close it again, she noticed a bright light in Big House—in the room occupied by Norman Young. There was a slight jar as the door settled into place again, and the three girls stood silent, shaking with nervous chills, until they felt quite sure that no one had been awakened. Then, without a word, they all crept to their rooms.



“Come on up to the Coffee Shoppe with me for lunch, Pat,” begged Hazel the following noon, as they left the house with the rest of the crowd for Horton Hall. “I want to talk with you.”

In one of the cozy stalls at the back of the restaurant, after their order was filled, Hazel began bluntly:

“You’re a good sport, Pat. It was darned white of you to let us in last night, and never say a word about it.”

“Was the party worth the trouble?” asked Patricia, playing with the salt cellar nervously, and not knowing exactly what to say.

“To be frank, it was not. I never had such a fright in my life. Rose’s party was all right. We had fun, out, after the eats, one of the boys proposed driving out to Kleg’s—”

“The *road* house?” exclaimed Patricia.

Hazel nodded.

“Everybody seemed keen to go, so I wasn’t going to be a spoilsport. When we got there, we found a big crowd, and had trouble getting tables together. Luckily Clarice and I, and a couple of fellows you don’t know, got places in a back corner near a side door, like this.”

Hazel placed a piece of roll and a match on the table to show the exact relative location.

“We hadn’t been there half an hour when there was a raid—”

“Hazel!” gasped Patricia, with horror in her eyes and voice.

“While the first excitement was going on in the front room the two fellows who were with us hustled us quietly out of the side door, into Pete’s car, and brought us home. And were we lucky!”

“You don’t know how lucky,” said Patricia gravely. “Did you see this morning’s paper?”

“No, don’t tell me it was reported!”

“It certainly was—”

“Were our names in?” demanded Hazel breathlessly.

“Not yours or Clarice’s, but several of the men’s, as well as Rose’s and her sister’s. Only for a kind Providence, you and Clarice might have been included,” said Patricia severely, gazing sternly at the white-faced girl opposite her.

“I’m through!” declared Hazel finally. “This is the last time I’ll break the college rules; and—”

“And what about Rose?” added Patricia. “She’s not good for you, Hazel. You haven’t the time or money to go with anyone like that; and her ideals and standards are different from ours.”

Hazel looked at her plate and was silent so long, that Patricia began to feel as if she had been too frank.

“You’re right, I guess,” she said finally. “I’ll give her up, even though I suppose she’ll think I am an awful quitter.”

“Good for you!” commended Patricia heartily, beginning again on her lunch.

“Do you suppose, Pat,” asked Hazel, after a short pause, “that the college authorities will hear that Clarice and I were mixed up in the affair?”

“I don’t imagine so; the others were all outsiders, weren’t they?”

“Yes, but, Pats; at Kleg’s I saw Norman Young.”

“Did he see you?” inquired Patricia sharply, recalling Jack’s impression of the blond youth.

“I don’t think so; but you never can tell. He was at a table half way down the room; and Pat, who do you suppose was with him?”

“Couldn’t guess.”

“Rhoda!”

“Our Rhoda?” repeated Patricia, unbelievably.

Hazel nodded.

“Don’t let’s say anything about it to *anybody*,” proposed Patricia after a minute’s thought. “It’s awfully queer, but since we can’t understand it, there’s no object in creating talk and making things unpleasant for Rhoda.”

“No, of course not. I like Rhoda.”

“We all do, and I guess she needs her job. She said something one day about some one being dependent on her.”

“Do you suppose Norman goes with her?” continued Hazel, scraping up the last of her chocolate pudding.

“I haven’t any idea. He’s been out with Clarice quite often of late. I hope she doesn’t hear about Rhoda.”

“I don’t think she saw them last night, and I didn’t mention it. But Clarice wouldn’t care, as long as she had somebody to step out with. It’s a case of *some* boy with her, not any particular one,” replied Hazel, getting up and dropping her purse just outside the stall.

At the same moment a youth, leaving the next stall, picked up the purse and handed it to her.

“Thank you,” murmured Hazel, glancing up at the man.

To her amazement and distress, she looked full into the pale grey eyes of Norman Young.

“Going back to college?” he asked, looking first at Hazel and then at Patricia, who had just slipped out of her seat.

“Yes,” replied Patricia briefly, when Hazel did not respond.

“So am I. Guess I’ll walk along with you, if you don’t mind,” continued the boy, following them out of the shop.

Once on the street, he began to talk about the Greystone game.

“There’s a lot of money up on that game,” he remarked. “Not only among the students, but also among the townsfolk. Greystone has a player almost as famous as our Dunn, and the betting between the two factions is heavy. If Dunn were to be out of the game for any reason—”

“What would be likely to keep him out?” inquired Hazel sharply, while Patricia listened breathlessly.

“Oh, I don’t know,” laughed Norman; “probably nothing at all. I was only mentioning an improbable chance of such a thing. But, if he were, the Greystone supporters would be in line to win a heap of dough.”

“What kind of a place is Greystone?” asked Hazel.

“About the size of Granard. People of the town are just as loyal to their college as we are here. Maybe a little rougher crowd than ours.”

“Do you think Tut Miller has any chance of being put in for part of the game?” asked Patricia anxiously, the conversation of the morning recurring to her.

“How should I know?” questioned the boy, looking straight into Patricia’s eyes with a peculiar, twisted smile.

“You must know all the gridiron gossip,” asserted Hazel.

“Why should I? I’m neither coach nor manager.”

“No, but you watch practice a lot,” said Patricia before Hazel could reply.

“How do you know?” he inquired curtly.

Patricia laughed. “Did you ever know anything to be kept quiet in a college community?”

Norman looked searchingly at her for a moment, then replied gravely: “Yes, a few things.”

They had reached Clinton Hall by that time, and the girls left Norman at the

steps with a hasty “We’re going in here. Goodbye.”

“Pat!” gasped Hazel, clasping the other girl’s arm in a frenzied grasp as they hurried along the hall toward their classroom. “Do you suppose he heard what we were talking about at lunch? He was evidently in the stall next to us, all the time.”

“I hardly think so. We were talking very low,” replied Patricia kindly, pressing Hazel’s cold fingers.

“He acted very funny, I thought,” chattered Hazel, trying to control the nervous chills which shook her.

“Pull yourself together,” ordered Patricia sternly. “If he did, we can’t change it by getting wrought up over it; but I think we’ll just take it for granted that he didn’t. Don’t worry,” she added, as they entered Professor Donnell’s classroom.

Patricia gave good advice to others, but during the class which followed, her mind dwelt persistently and anxiously on Norman’s reference to Jack’s *possibly* being out of the game. Had Joe some secret influence which might, at the last minute, result in Tut getting his chance? Did Norman have some inside information? Or was his supposition as casual as he tried to make it sound. Ought she to tell Jack, or would that tend to make things worse?

“Mademoiselle Randall,” Professor Donnell’s smooth voice broke into her reveries, “*de quoi avons nous lu?*”

“*De foot balle,*” replied Patricia promptly; then realized, too late, what an absurd reply she had made.

Everybody laughed and turned around to look at her. Crimson with embarrassment, Patricia slid as low in her seat as she could, without landing on the floor.

“*Ce n’est pas etrange,*” Professor Donnell smiled his oily smile as he passed a long white hand over his star-like hair. “*Tout le monde parle, et pense, et entende ne que de footballe.*”

## CHAPTER IX

### A TOUGH PROPOSITION

“Now, boys,” said Coach Tyler on Friday afternoon, at the close of a meeting of the football team, “take the rest of the day off.”

Tyler did not believe in working a team up to the very last minute, and never had his men on the field the day before a big game.

“Take things easy,” he went on. “Drop football out of your minds and conversation. Stay out of doors as much as possible. Don’t do anything exciting, and get to bed early. The train leaves South Street Station at 8:30, and I want you here in the gym at eight sharp!”

“Let’s go for a little spin,” suggested Tut Miller to Jack Dunn as they strolled out onto the campus. “It’s only half past one. Tyler is certainly getting big-hearted.”

“I’ve got a paper to write for—” began Jack.

“Oh, come on!” urged Tut, dragging him toward a yellow roadster parked on the drive. “You’ll have plenty of time to do that later. Some friends of mine want to meet you.”

Reluctantly Jack got into the car, wondering a little at the unusual request. Tut settled himself in the driver’s seat, quickly swung the machine out onto Grover Road, and headed for the country. Jack had never been very chummy with this big blond Soph with the protruding jaw and narrowed eyes which looked at you speculatively, as if you were a bug under a microscope. He was always friendly, almost too friendly; one sometimes wondered if he were laughing scornfully, away down inside of him.

Neither boy spoke until they had turned onto Route 8, one very little traveled at that hour of the day; then Tut began smoothly: "These friends of mine live about ten miles out on this road; some fellows I knew in prep school. They're awfully keen on football, and like to be able to say they've met this or that celebrity. Been at me for some time to bring you out. They run a big roadside stand; have several cabins, and I guess they're making a pretty good thing of it; always have plenty of dough to spend."

Jack, for all his popularity, was a modest fellow and hated being shown off. If he had known where they were going, he would have managed to evade the trip; but Tut had trapped him, fairly and squarely. Nothing for it now but to get the meeting over with as quickly as possible.

Tut drove rapidly, and before long drew up at a tourist camp in a grove some feet back from the road. Three fellows a little older than the Granard boys came out to greet them. They were husky, finely built individuals, all with bright red hair, blue eyes, and a strong family resemblance.

"The Holm brothers," said Tut, with a wave of his hand. "I don't need to tell you boys who this is!" slapping Jack on the back. "Everybody knows him, at least by sight."

"Mighty glad to meet you," said each in turn, as he grasped Jack's hand in a vise-like grip.

The five stood for a few minutes talking of various unimportant matters; then Seldon, the oldest Holm, proposed showing Jack around the place.

"Some of our cabins are pretty nice," he said; "and farther back in the grove there is a stream beside which we have built ovens and tables."

Bernard, the second brother, promptly moved to their side as Jack murmured a polite assent to the proposal.

"I'll stay here with Vin," said Tut, "and help keep store."

After Seldon and Bernard had proudly displayed their property, of which Jack was able to approve quite honestly, they stopped for a moment at a rustic bridge which led back from the picnic grounds to a deep woods.

“We’ve a proposition to make to you, Dunn,” began Seldon abruptly, “somewhat of a surprise to you, and probably not a very agreeable one; but just keep cool and think it over a bit before you decide. Briefly, it’s this: we Huron Prep fellows always hang together, and let nothing stand in the way of promoting the welfare and reputation of our school. We want Tut to have his big chance in the Greystone game. Now, what will you take to stay out of it?”

For a fleeting second, Jack’s impulse was to knock the fellow over into the stream below; but some more cautious instinct immediately urged upon him the wisdom of proceeding carefully.

“Well,” began Jack, as slowly as his fast-beating heart would allow, “naturally, since I’ve never given a thought to such a question, I’m not prepared to answer it on the spur of the moment.”

“Take your time,” urged Bernard, pulling out a cigarette and lighting it.

Jack’s brain fairly raced. If he refused, since they strongly outnumbered him, they could readily keep him a prisoner until after the game. Yet to accept was definitely out of the question; he’d be just a plain cur to take a bribe. How could he get away from them without either definitely accepting or refusing? That seemed to be his only chance. What an easy mark he had been!

“How long am I to have to decide?” he asked, finally.

“Until Tut’s ready to go back,” replied Seldon, who, leaning against a big oak tree, was watching Jack closely.

“Let’s go back to where the others are,” suggested Jack; “I’d like to talk to Tut before I decide.”

“No objection to that, I guess,” replied Bernard, looking at his brother. Not a chance of this fellow getting away when there were four of them to prevent such a contingency. Much better for Dunn to accept the bribe (for that meant Tut would have his place for the next two years, as well as at the Greystone game) than it would be to have to keep him prisoner until after Saturday. Why had the fellows urged Tut’s being helped with his course at Granard except so that Huron could have a representative on the big team? Tut had played mighty good football at prep school, but this upstart kept him from his rightful place here. Pity they hadn’t gotten rid of him before. It took the Greystone game to wake them



all up. The Greystone supporters would be glad to see Dunn out of the game; they didn't know how good Tut was.

"Now let's get down to business," said Seldon briskly, when they joined the others who were standing at the edge of the grove. "Tut, Dunn wants to talk over the proposition with you before he decides."

Jack managed to get on the outside of the group, from which point he had a straight and unobstructed path to the yellow car which was parked at the farthest point of the Holm property and headed toward Granard. Tut must have turned it around so as to be ready for a quick get-away if necessary. The Holms probably had a car; but it was not in sight. Wherever they kept it, it would take at least a few minutes to get it started and out. True, Tut could have him arrested for going off with his car, but he'd have to run the risk.

"Well," Tut was saying, "spill it!"

"If I should decide to take the money, how would you explain my absence?"

"We thought you'd play up sick, and just stay at home," put in Seldon.

"That would be sheer foolishness," retorted Jack. "Tyler would send Doc to examine me, and he'd find me perfectly O. K. How would it do for me to go to Greystone, just as if nothing had happened, and start the game; then get hurt and have you put in in my place?"

"That would seem more natural," answered Tut, looking at Seldon for approval; but that sturdy individual frowned.

"How could you fake that any better than being sick before you went?" he growled.

"Just this way. I'd make a run, stumble, fall, and lie still on the field. When they picked me up, I'd go limp and not be able to stand at all. I could fool anybody who'd never seen me do it before. Let me show you what I mean, and then see if you don't think it would work out perfectly. When I fall, you come and try to stand me up, Tut."

Jack looked questioningly at the Holms for permission to stage his act.

“Go ahead,” replied Seldon curtly.

Instead of making directly for the yellow roadster, as he had intended, Jack cleverly ran about a bit, close enough to the others for them to have been able to seize him any moment they chose.

“This is just warming up a bit,” he said, smiling, as he passed the group for the second time. “In a minute or two I’ll put on my act.”

Jack sensed, rather than saw, that the tenseness with which they had watched his start relaxed somewhat as he continued to warm up. Then like a catapult he hurled himself forward and sprinted to the car. With a bound he was in the driver’s seat, the ignition was on, the clutch was thrown in, the car shot out onto the road. Wild shouts from those left behind.

Jack realized that it would be foolhardy to stay on Route 8; so at the first crossroad he turned off into a road which he thought would bring him out at Portersville, a suburb of Granard. The road was a winding one, but he made good time and met no other cars. He kept close watch in the mirror for his pursuers, but the road behind him basked quietly in the afternoon sunshine.

Just as he turned into the road leading into Portersville, a stretch of heavily wooded highway, he saw a big blue car coming toward him. In it were four big fellows wearing blue and green ribbons in their buttonholes—Greystone colors. All this, Jack took in at a glance as he sped onward. The blue car slowed down, turned around, stopped for a moment, then came on with a burst of speed, passed him and swung sharply across the road, directly in his path. It was so unexpected that Jack had to jam on the brakes suddenly to avoid crashing into the larger car.

“What—” he began angrily, when he noticed that the three individuals who had tumbled out of the car and were coming toward him had handkerchiefs tied over the lower part of their faces.

“A hold-up!” thought Jack. “Foolhardy to try to resist them.”

Without a word they seized him, dragged him out of the yellow roadster, then two of them hurried him over to the blue car while the third moved the smaller car over onto the shoulder. A blindfold was tied tightly over Jack’s eyes, he was tumbled into the tonneau, and the big car started off for—somewhere.

## CHAPTER X

### JACK IN DANGER

At first Jack was too stunned by the suddenness of the transfer to talk, but after a few dizzy miles, he began:

“Where are you taking me?”

“Shut up!” ordered a harsh voice, accompanied by a dig in the ribs; and he shut up.

Not a word did any of his captors exchange, and mile after mile whirled by in utter silence. Where he might be, he had no idea whatever. After endless eons, so it seemed to Jack, the car began to move more slowly and wind about, then came to a sudden stop.

He was hustled out, run across some gravel, up a few steps. A door slammed, footsteps on stone, then up stairs, and stairs, and more stairs. A key turned protestingly. A door creaked; there was a blast of cool air; he was pushed into some place. Then the door closed, and the key grated a second time. The sound of footsteps on stairs sounded more and more faintly; then silence, broken only by a peculiar grating sound from somewhere above him.

Where could he be?

Pulling the bandage from his eyes he discovered that he was in a small square room with slatted walls. It looked like a belfry. Yes, there was a great bell just above his head, almost touching it. If that mass of metal ever moved, it would put him out of business in short order all right. What tower was this anyhow? He tried to peer out between the slats. The only object within his narrow range of vision was the framework of some new building. What big structure was going

up now in town, or nearby? He tried hard to think, but he still felt a little dazed. How stupid! Who knew where he was now? They had been riding for a long time; he might be miles and miles from Granard. Still, there was something annoyingly familiar about that naked, orange-colored framework out there, with the big 0032 in black on the top girder. Again he peered at it. It must be—it was! The new forestry building at the University! Then this was the tower of the old chapel. His captors had evidently entered the campus from the alley gate at the back, where no one would be likely to see them. That accounted for the gravel they had crossed. They had driven for miles, first, to throw him off. But how strange of the gang to have brought him here! Who were they, and what was their game anyhow?

Game? Ah, that must be it! He remembered now; there was a lot of money up on the Greystone struggle, not only on the campus but even in the town; and if he were out of the contest, Granard stood to lose—so it was said. Evidently those fellows were Greystone supporters. He remembered now they had worn Greystone colors. Darned clever of them to put him where he would have no evidence, when he got out, and where no one would ever think to look for him.

But how to get out; that was the question.

“Good thing it’s not Sunday, for that big fellow to knock me out!” he thought, looking up at the bell. A horrible thought came to him. The boys were going to have a rouser that night; everybody out in front of the gym before dinner for songs and speeches. They’d ring that bell to call the students together; and the janitor pulled the rope from a little room at the foot of the stairs! What time was it now? Glancing at his wrist he was shocked to find it bare. Where was his watch? Must have come unfastened in the car.

One, two, three, sounded the bell of a clock in the distance. The clock on the college library. Breathlessly, Jack listened. Four. One hour—one little hour of sixty minutes to devise a means of escape. Frantically he shook the door. Only the flutter of wings, as some startled pigeons arose from the roof, answered his plea.

Panting for breath, he paused; then began to batter the slats of one panel with his fists. They were stout, and withstood the blows of even a husky football player.

He must keep his head and work rationally. There were only two means of exit:

the door and the four slatted windows. Again he shook the door, not wildly, but listening critically. Perhaps he could pick the lock.

Eagerly he felt in his pockets for his knife and buttonhook. Only a crumpled handkerchief, a pencil, a soft package of butterscotch, and a ball of twine rewarded his efforts. The door was now out of the question. What in heck had become of his knife? Had those fellows purposely stripped him of everything so he couldn't possibly get out? To do them justice, however, he supposed they didn't know about the ringing of the bell for the rouser, and probably intended him to be secure until after the game.

One, two; one, two, chimed the library clock. Four-fifteen! Nothing accomplished yet.

"If I could get the slats broken, and then lean out of the window and yell for help," he said, half aloud.

A squeak on the stairs outside of the door caught his ear. "Wonder if they left a guard around," he thought. "If I yelled, they would only come in and gag me; and that would make things worse than they are now. My only hope, a forlorn one at that, is to attract the attention of someone in order to let the fellows know where I am, and come to rescue me."

But how?

Covering his face with his hands, he crouched on the floor, in deep thought.

One, chimed the library clock, marking the half hour. Anxiously Jack glanced up at the heavy bell above him. Perhaps he could unfasten the clapper, and flatten himself on the floor so that the bell would only graze him as it swung to and fro. Then, when no sound came from the belfry, somebody might investigate. But no; old Jake, who attended to the bell ringing, was too lazy to climb all those stairs to repair the bell for a mere rally. He'd just let it go until some time tomorrow. By that time, the team would have left without him!

The tickets he had promised Patricia were lying home on his desk. Wonder what she thought when he failed to keep his promise to give them to her in Shakespeare class.

Tut's friends would probably pass around the word that Jack had taken the bribe

and disappeared. That would be his finish in athletics. Jack groaned aloud, and pulled his handkerchief from his pocket to wipe off the cold perspiration which dampened his face. Tut had always been jealous of him; and since he had refused, a few weeks ago, to work for Jim's election as Chairman of the Soph Hop, Tut had positively disliked him. Jack did not approve of the bargaining for honors, which went on at the college, but doggedly supported whatever man he thought best fitted for the job, politics notwithstanding—a practice which had not made him any too popular with certain ambitious ringleaders.

The sight of his handkerchief gave him a sudden inspiration. Quickly tearing it in half, he scrawled on one part of it, in large letters, "HELP! QUICK!" Knotting one end of the ball of twine to it, he painstakingly worked the bit of linen between the slats of the window which faced the observatory, and played out the cord as far as it would go. Fastening the end of it securely to one of the shutters, he took the other half of the handkerchief, slipped it through between the slats, and tied it about in the center of the window.

"Now I've done all I can," he muttered. "It's on the laps of the gods, for better or worse."

The part of the campus on which the chapel stood was deserted during the week. In a rather out-of-the-way place, beyond the other buildings, it was in the least frequented corner of the campus. Jack's captors planned all too well when they chose the belfry for his prison.

One, two, one, two, chimed the library clock. A quarter to five! Would *nobody* find his message or see his poor little flag? If he could only have stood up and tramped around a bit, it would have relieved Jack's feelings somewhat; but the belfry was large enough only for the moving of the single bell. Would he be safer flat on the floor, directly under the bell, or as far to one side as he could get, when it began to swing?

One, two, three, four, chimed the clock. A door slammed somewhere downstairs; the bell rope trembled; the bell quivered; Jack stretched out on the floor as flat as he could, and waited for the first blow of the iron mass.

Swift steps on the stairs, the turning of a key, hands dragging him quickly out of the way, just as the first clang of the big bell sounded deafeningly through the little room. Jack found himself in the hall with Pat and Ted bending over him.

“Just in the nick of time, old man!” cried Ted, grinning cheerfully.

“Don’t stop to talk!” ordered Patricia frantically. “Let’s get out of here right away!”

Down the stairs they rushed, while the bell clanged and clanged overhead. Pat’s car, with all shades drawn, was waiting close to the doorway.

“Get in back,” directed Ted; “crawl behind those cartons and don’t breathe.”

For a second time that day, Jack was driven off, he knew not where.

“Hi there, Ted,” called Joe Leonard, as they stopped for lights at the corner of College Avenue and Elizabeth Street. “Come on to the meeting!”

“See you later,” replied Ted; “got to deliver these fruit jars for my mother first.”

“Wonder if he’s onto us,” whispered Patricia, as they started forward with a jerk.

Ted only shrugged his shoulders and drove as rapidly as possible to the apartment he and his mother shared on Winton Street. At the side entrance, where Mrs. Carter was waiting to admit them, Ted hustled Jack into the house and up a back stairway to his own room; meanwhile, Patricia drove her car farther back into the yard.

“Going to keep you here tonight, old fellow,” said Ted, slapping Jack on the back. “Nobody’ll ever think of looking for you here; and we’ll see you safe on the train in the morning. No college people in this house, and we have a back apartment. We’ll keep the shades drawn as an extra precaution. Right across the hall from this room is the door to the attic. If anybody comes tonight to call, just beat it for the loft and slip in behind the big dresser which is near the chimney.”

“But—” began Jack.

“Pat will tell you all about it later; for Mother asked her to stay to dinner. Wash a bit if you want to, and then go out to the living room. I’ll have to show up at the meeting for a while, I suppose, in case Jim takes a notion to look for me. Don’t want to arouse any suspicions.”

Still in somewhat of a daze, Jack made himself tidy and then went out to the

living room. Aunt Betsy was busy in the kitchen, and Patricia sat alone by the bay window which overhung the side door by which they had entered. The girl smiled a bit shyly as Jack came in and crossed the room to her side.

“Have I you to thank for my rescue?” he asked, taking her hands in both of his.

“Well, partly,” she admitted. “But Ted helped a lot. He’s always been my stand-by in moments of difficulty.

“When you didn’t show up in Shakespeare class,” she continued, as Jack dropped down at the other end of the davenport, “I knew right away something must have happened. You see,” her head dropped a bit, “I heard something this morning about the possibility of your being out of the game; and, oh, it seemed only a joking reference, but I was too stupid, I guess, to have attached enough importance to it. I *did* wonder if I should say anything to you about it, put you on your guard; and now, oh, how I wish I had!”

“Don’t get all steamed up over it,” urged Jack; “it came out all right.”

“But it *mightn’t* have. If I hadn’t happened to go to the observatory perhaps nobody would have seen your flag; and—and then, if you’d been struck by that old bell, it would have been all my fault!”

“Nonsense!” cried Jack, laying his arm gently around her shoulders. He was distressed beyond measure by the girl’s self-accusation. “I was lying so flat that the bell probably would only have grazed me.”

Determinedly Pat pulled herself together and sat up very straight, winking hard and fast to keep back the tears which, much to her embarrassment, had welled up in her eyes.

“After Shakespeare class,” she continued, “I got away from the rest of the girls—I always want to be alone if I have anything to work out in my mind—and wandered about the most deserted parts of the campus trying to decide what to do. I don’t know all the ins and outs of college affairs yet, and I was afraid of telling my suspicions to the wrong person. As I passed the observatory, I remembered having left my fountain pen in the lecture room; so I ran up to get it. Nobody was in there, and I sat down by the window thinking that was a good place to be quiet. The sun shone full on the side of the chapel, and it was no time at all before I caught sight of the white flag waving in the breeze.



“I nearly broke all records running down the stairs and along the path toward the chapel. Not far from the building, I found your appeal for help. I felt sure it was your appeal. I tore off the cloth, so nobody else would find it, and ran for Ted. I knew he was in the library. I hadn’t thought about the meeting; but Ted did, right away, and realized what danger you were in. Ted grabbed up a couple of empty cartons that stood in the hall, ready to be thrown out, dumped them and ourselves into my car (which, fortunately, was standing in front of the library) and we just rushed to your rescue. Luckily, all the students were swarming over the front campus, waiting for the meeting; so no one, so far as we know, saw us.”

“But how did you get the key?” inquired Jack, still somewhat in the dark as to details.

“Oh, Ted has a master key. He has to get into Forestry Hall at all sorts of odd times. He was sure his key could be used on the belfry door, and he was right. If it hadn’t fitted, he would have had to let Jake in on the rescue, but it was better not; the fewer people knew about it, the safer we were.”

“I wonder how I can get hold of those tickets for you. I might telephone—”

“Oh, no! No!” protested Patricia.

“What the deuce does he want you to do, Pat?” inquired Ted, strolling in just in time to hear his cousin’s vigorous refusal.

“Why, I could go over to your room in the morning and get them,” offered Ted, when Patricia had excitedly explained the subject of their discussion; “after the train goes, that is, for I’m not letting you out of my sight before that.”

“Dinner’s ready,” announced Mrs. Carter, appearing in the dining room doorway.

“And we’re ready for it, Auntie,” replied Patricia, jumping up.

“It’s no end good of you all to take me in like this,” began Jack, as they seated themselves at the little round table.

“For dear old Granard, I’ll live and die!” carolled Ted. “Now tell us all about the great abduction.”

Jack was in the middle of the story of his capture, when the telephone rang

sharply.

## **CHAPTER XI**

### **AUNT BETSY TO THE RESCUE**

Ted sprang to answer the call.

“Yes. Ted. Yes, she is. Who is it, please? Just a minute.”

He turned, putting his hand over the transmitter: “Pat, Norman Young wants to speak to you.”

“Good Heavens!” responded his cousin, getting up so suddenly that her chair toppled over backwards and fell to the floor with a loud crash.

“He’ll think I’m throwing you to the phone,” commented Ted with a grin.

“Hush! You wanted to speak to me? What? He is? Why, how should I know?”

Pat was nervously clenching and unclenching her left hand as she talked, and frowning heavily.

“Certainly not! He’s probably out for the evening, and I don’t see that you or anybody else has a right to meddle with his things.”

“Don’t burn up, Pat,” advised her cousin.

“Well, perhaps,” she admitted grudgingly to the man at the other end of the telephone. “Certainly. No, you may not; my cousin will take me home. Goodbye.”

Patricia hung up the receiver with a bang, threw herself into the chair which Jack had meanwhile righted, leaned her elbows on the table and announced

explosively: “If there’s anybody in this college whom I cordially dislike, it’s Norman Young!”

“Why, what did he have to say?” inquired Ted, calmly helping himself to another piece of beefsteak.

“He told me that Jack was missing, and wanted to know if I knew where he was. The nerve of him! Somebody sent him to Jack’s room, looking for Jack, and our smart Norman found an envelope on the desk addressed to me.”

“The tickets,” interpolated Jack.

“And he wanted to know,” went on Patricia, “if he should bring it to me!”

“Quite a meddler,” said Ted.

“After I put him in his place, he apologized; and then wanted to know if he couldn’t call for me and take me home when I was ready to go. How did he know I was here, anyhow?”

“That fellow smells a rat!” announced Ted.

“I’m terribly afraid so,” admitted Patricia. “Still I think I had better go back to the dorm right after we finish dinner—”

“Oh,” began Jack in protest.

“I really think it’s wiser,” said Patricia, looking at him with a worried expression.

The telephone rang sharply a second time.

“Don’t tell me it’s that pest again!” cried Patricia, as Ted took off the receiver.

“Yes. Oh, hello, Anne. Well, spill it. You heard what? The deuce he did! Of all the rot I ever—To be sure it will. Thanks a lot for telling me. I’ll see what can be done right away. Goodbye.”

“Well, what’s happened now?” demanded Patricia.

“No use in my trying to break the news gently. Anne says there is a rumor around college tonight that Jack was offered a big bribe to stay out of the

Greystone game; that he took it, and has disappeared. Can you beat that?"

Patricia, speechless with distress, simply twisted her napkin into a mere rope.

"The curs! The contemptible curs!" exploded Jack. "I might have known they'd get even with me some way!"

"Don't tell me there's a foundation for that rumor!" cried Ted sharply.

"There is," replied Jack shortly. "I didn't mean to tell this; but listen." Rapidly, yet omitting no important detail, he related the story of the afternoon previous to his imprisonment in the belfry. "And the worst of it is, I haven't a single witness. They can say pretty nearly what they choose, and go unchallenged."

"Tut's responsible for the rumor, of course," decided Ted; "if we could only corner him some way."

"We will!" declared Patricia, with vehemence.

"And make him eat crow!" concluded her cousin.

"But how?" asked Jack, with a short laugh. "Tut's pretty hard-boiled, and who —"

"I shall," announced Mrs. Carter firmly, getting up from the table.

"Aunt Betsy!"

"Mother!"

"Mrs. Carter!"

"No use objecting. I'm going to find him right now, and I'll promise you to be back with his scalp before the evening's over. I won't give any of you away. He doesn't know me from Adam."

"Eve, you mean, Mother," laughed her son.

"And, now where will I be most likely to find him?" she asked, slipping on her coat and perching a hat on the back of her head.

Jack looked at the clock. "Probably in his room at No. 9 Craig Street. It's on the second floor, a single, right opposite the stairs; but at least let one of us take you as far as the house."

"I won't. You stay quietly here until I come back, all of you." With a slam of the door, she was gone.

The three young people looked at one another in speechless astonishment. Finally, Ted laughed.

"I feel kind of sorry for old Tut, much as I dislike him. Mother will have the truth out of him if she has to stand him on his head. He'll do what she says, or she'll know why."

The tension was broken, and they all laughed.

When the table was cleared, Ted announced that he was going to do the dishes.

"We'll help," said Patricia.

"No, you won't. You two sit in the living room and chatter."

Patricia shrugged her shoulders, and led the way into the next room; extinguished all but one of the lamps, turned on the gas log, and sat down before the fire. Jack threw himself on the hearth rug and propped his back against the big chair in which Patricia was sitting.

"Will—will this do you much harm, do you suppose?" she asked, after a moment's silence.

"Hard to tell. Of course if I can't be cleared, it will mean my finish as far as sports are concerned—that's all Tut thinks of, naturally. But, as I told you once before, I think, there is a special reason why I must make good here; and if my reputation comes into question, well—"

Jack broke off abruptly, and frowned at the fire. In a moment he continued:

"I haven't told anyone else about this, but I'd like you to know; and I'm sure it won't go any farther."

“Of course not.”

“On the tenth of last August, I received a special delivery letter,” began Jack slowly, gazing steadily at the fire.

Patricia leaned forward, breathless with surprise.

“In that letter,” continued the boy, “was a cashier’s check for One Thousand Dollars; and on a slip of paper, the words, ‘For John Dunn, to be spent on a year at Granard College.’ We tried in every way to find out where it came from, but when all of our efforts were fruitless we decided that the only thing to do was to use the money as requested. So you see why I feel under such heavy obligations to make good.”

“Jack,” whispered Patricia, with a little excited catch in her throat. “I’ve never told anybody, either—not even my aunt or cousin; but that’s exactly what happened to me.”

“You mean,” cried the boy, twisting around to look up into her face, “that you got money that same way—to come here?”

Patricia nodded.

“How very, very queer!”

The strangeness of the situation silenced them completely for a time. Then Jack murmured: “This should make us better friends than ever, shouldn’t it?”

Patricia smiled, but she did not withdraw the hand that Jack imprisoned in both of his.

“Doesn’t it seem sometimes as if you just *must* find out who sent the check?” asked Jack, a moment later.

“Yes; and sometimes I feel really nervous over it, as if somebody whom I couldn’t see were watching me all the time, to make sure that I behaved properly.”

The door flew open at that moment, and Aunt Betsy darted into the room just as Ted came in from the kitchen.

“Well,” she exclaimed, sinking down in a big chair and throwing off her coat, “I’ve settled *his* hash! He’s going around now contradicting the rumor he started, and he’ll never bother *you* again.”

“Hurrah for you, Mother!” cried Ted. “But tell us the whole story. How did you ever—”

“I knew that young man’s father; used to go to school with him. Got him out of an awful scrape once, and he promised he’d do anything I asked him to pay up for it. Never had any occasion to before. Told the young fellow about his dad’s promise (though of course not the reason for it) and said I was now about to ask him to redeem it. I said I knew what a contemptible thing he was up to, and that I stood ready right now to telephone the whole affair to his dad. Then I just lit into him, told him what a cad and a coward he is. Told him I’d start a public investigation and testify against him. Like all conceited blowbags, he collapsed when under fire; asked what I wanted him to do, begged me not to tell his father; for he’d take him out of college and put him to work in the store. Made him tell me just where and to whom he’d told that abominable lie, and told him I’d go with him while he corrected it. ‘You can call it a joke,’ I said, ‘if you must save your face.’”

Aunt Betsy laughed contemptuously.

“The boy fairly groveled, and swore he’d go; that it wouldn’t be necessary for me to accompany him. I waited while he put on his coat, and started out with him. Watched him go to two places, and on his way to the third before I left him.”

“Mrs. Carter,” began Jack, “I don’t know how to thank you.”

“Don’t try. I hate to be thanked.”

“Aunt Betsy, you’re just wonderful!” cried Patricia gleefully, while Ted shook his mother’s hand violently.

Conversation for the rest of the evening was general, concerned principally with the prospects of Granard in the morrow’s game. Patricia apparently forgot her resolution to leave right after dinner, for it was half past nine when she drove back to the dorm alone, having decidedly refused Ted’s offer to go with her.



“I’d feel lots better if you stayed home and kept guard,” she whispered to him as he protestingly let her out. “I’ll be all right.”

She did not know that Norman Young had inspected the interior of the car as it stood in the back yard; nor that, hidden behind a pillar on the porch next to the apartment house, he had watched her come out alone and start for Arnold Hall.

## CHAPTER XII ON DUTY

“Oh, come on, Pats!” urged Betty, impatiently.

“It’s heaps of fun to hear the tryouts,” added Anne; “more than seeing the plays themselves, sometimes.”

The football season was over. The Greystone game had resulted in a close victory for Granard, in a hard-fought battle. Jack had covered himself with glory and made the final score for his college in the last few minutes of play. Tut had come down with a heavy cold—so it was said—and had gone home for the Thanksgiving recess a few days early; so he was absent not only from the lineup, but also from the game. All rumors regarding Jack had died a natural death, and now were nearly forgotten; so rapidly does one event follow another, and a fresh excitement take the place of its predecessor, in college life. The present and the future are the only tenses the college student knows anything about.

Dramatics now held the center of the stage.

The Alley Gang was standing on the corner of Wentworth Street and College Avenue after leaving Horton Hall, and were discussing a coming production of the dramatic club.

“And we’ll all go to ‘Vans’ afterward and get something decent to eat,” proposed Frances enthusiastically. “That dinner we just had was fierce!”

“*Dinner*, did you say?” inquired Hazel scornfully.

“Why won’t you go, Pat?” asked Jane, clasping Patricia’s arm affectionately.

“Because my theme for English III is due tomorrow, and—”

“But not until afternoon,” objected Hazel. “You’ll have plenty of time to—”

“That’s just what I won’t have,” contradicted Patricia. “French test and History review both in the morning; and with Yates’ lab period early in the afternoon. I don’t know when you people do all your work, I’m sure.”

“We don’t do it,” laughed Mary, shifting rapidly from one foot to the other to keep warm; for the night was cold.

“Well, let’s go somewhere,” grumbled Lucile, sinking her head deeper into her big fur collar, “before we all freeze.”

Patricia bit her tongue to keep back an angry response to Lucile’s unpleasant tones. She and Lucile had never hit it off very well, and she had wondered more than once how the other girls managed so nonchalantly to put up with Lu’s uncertain moods. Clarice, the “black sheep,” was noisy and indiscreet, but at least she was accommodating and good-natured.

“You’ll be all alone in the alley, except for Clarice,” warned Anne. “It’s her night on the Black Book.”

“I can work in peace and quiet, then,” replied Patricia; “with all of you ‘hyenas’ out of the way.”

Dodging a threatened blow from Katharine’s sturdy arm, Patricia ran quickly down Wentworth Street, while the rest of the crowd started for the auditorium. It was hard to leave the girls and go back alone to work in the lonely dormitory; only a strong sense of obligation to her unknown benefactor saved Patricia from giving in to the pleas of her pals and let the theme slide. When she entered the hall she was surprised to find Rhoda still on duty.

“Why, where’s Clarice?” she asked.

“She hasn’t come in yet,” replied the maid, looking up from some fancy work she was doing.

“You’ll be awfully late for your dinner, Rhoda. You’d better go. I’ll stay here until Clarice comes.”

“That’s very kind of you,” responded the girl gratefully, beginning to fold up the long scarf and lay aside her silks. “The chef is always so put out when the help come in late.”

“I suppose he wants to get his work finished, and go somewhere; we all do. It is only stern necessity for work on an essay that brought me back here tonight. The others have all gone to the tryouts.”

Patricia slipped into the chair which Rhoda vacated, and watched the maid put on her hat and coat, thinking how little, after all, they really knew about her in spite of their association with her, day after day.

“Good night, and thank you,” said the girl softly, as she opened the door.

“Good night, and you’re welcome,” laughed Patricia.

A couple of minutes later, the telephone rang.

“Yes?” answered Patricia.

“Rhoda?” demanded a thin, sharp voice.

“No; she has just gone. Is there any message?”

“There is not,” was the curt response, as the woman at the other end of the line hung up noisily.

“Now where in the name of fortune have I heard that voice before?” mused Patricia aloud. “Those thin high tones sound oddly familiar. I know! It was Mrs. Brock! But why should she telephone Rhoda?”

Patricia was still puzzling over the question when the door opened to admit Clarice in a dull rose dinner gown and a black fur jacket, followed by Mrs. Vincent, closely wrapped in a long, grey coat, her face drawn with pain.

“Clarice,” the chaperon was saying, as they paused to close the door, “tell Ivan when he comes that I’m sorry to break my engagement with him, but that I’m ill and have gone to bed.”

She hurried to her room, without even a glance at Patricia.

“How gay you are tonight,” observed Patricia, eyeing the rose-colored gown admiringly as the girl came over to the table.

“Isn’t the dress darling?” inquired Clarice, opening her jacket to display more fully the charms beneath it. “My father just sent it to me. You see,” perching on the corner of the table, and swinging her feet, “he’s just crazy for me to make good here, and graduate; and so long as I manage to stick, he’ll send me pretties every once in a while. On the other hand, if I’m flunked out,” with a careless laugh, “he threatens to send me off into the country to live with some old maid cousin whom I’ve never seen.”

While Patricia was searching for a suitable reply to this unusual confidence, the doorbell rang, and Clarice flew to answer it. A short, dark youth with bold black eyes, which were everywhere at once, stepped familiarly in as soon as the door was opened.

“Oh, Mr. Zahn,” said Clarice, without preamble, “Mrs. Vincent is sorry; but she has a bad tooth, and has gone to bed. So *she* won’t be able to go out with you.”

There was the faintest accent on the word *she*, as Clarice smiled mischievously upon the young man. Without a moment’s hesitation, he caught the suggestion and replied suavely:

“Then perhaps you would take her place?”

“Oh, I’ve got to work tonight,” laughed Clarice, “unless—” turning to glance inquiringly at Patricia, “are you going to be here all the evening?”

“Yes,” was the brief reply, as Patricia turned over the pages of a magazine, trying not to listen in on the conversation going on near the door.

“Then you wouldn’t mind taking my place, would you?” begged Clarice, clattering noisily across the polished floor on her high-heeled rose slippers to lean on the table and smile coaxingly at Patricia. “I’ll do the same for you some time.”

“All right,” replied Patricia, without enthusiasm, for she did not at all approve of Clarice’s going off with Mrs. Vincent’s friend; yet did not feel at liberty to try to dissuade the girl.

“Thanks, darling!” was Clarice’s grateful response. A hasty kiss on the tip of Patricia’s nose, a dash across the hall, the opening and closing of a door, and they were gone.

“I hope to goodness Mrs. Vincent doesn’t come out and ask for Clarice! I don’t know what I’d ever tell her,” said Patricia to herself, as she settled down to work.

An hour later when she went to her room for a note book, she paused to look out of the window at the big snowflakes which were floating lazily down from a partly clouded sky. To her intense surprise, she saw a man slinking along the path beside the dormitory, glancing up at its windows as he passed. A grey hat was pulled so far down on his head that she could not get a good look at his face; but his size, clothing, and general make-up led her to believe it was Norman Young. Since she had not turned on her light, it was safe to watch the man until he crossed the back yard and disappeared among the trees on Mrs. Brock’s lawn. That practically settled his identity.

Catching up the note book from her desk, she hurried back to the hall. What was Norman doing out there? Why did he look up at all the windows? Was there any connection between his actions and the mysterious telephone call earlier in the evening? No satisfactory answers presented themselves; so Patricia tried to force the troublesome problem out of her mind by settling to work in real earnest on the essay.

Half an hour later the sound of a door knob turning made her jump so violently that she knocked a big reference book onto the floor. Mrs. Vincent had opened her door and was crossing the hall.

“Now I’m in for it,” thought Patricia, stooping to pick up the heavy volume; but the chaperon seemed oblivious to the change of girls at the Black Book.

“My tooth is so bad,” murmured Mrs. Vincent, pressing her hand to her right cheek, “that I’m going over to my cousin’s,—he’s a dentist,—to see what he can do for it. I’ll be back as soon as I can.” Without waiting for a reply, she hurried out.

“Well,” thought Patricia, “now I certainly *am* alone here. The girls on the third floor are all up at Fine Arts making scenery for the play; and those from the second are ushering at the concert—all except Tiny.”

A little black-haired girl, whose size and delicate features suggested nothing so much as a lovely doll, had promptly been nicknamed by the girls of Arnold Hall. Nobody ever thought of calling her by her right name, Evelyn Stone.

“Seems to me I heard someone say she was ill. If I get this finished in time, I’ll run up and see her. No, I can’t either. I’ll have to stay with the Book and the telephone,” thought Patricia, writing rapidly.

Presently she stopped, sat up straight, and sniffed.

“I smell smoke!” she said aloud, getting up from the table and walking down the hall.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A FIRE

Patricia thrust her head into each room on her way down the corridor, but no trace of fire did she find until she reached the very end. There, in the room occupied by Frances and Katharine, flames were flickering around the window frames, apparently coming from outside. Quickly closing the door again to prevent a draft, she dashed to the telephone and called the Fire Department. Then she ran into her own room to look out of the window and see how much space the fire covered. The side of the house below Frances' window was ablaze, and tongues of flame were creeping steadily up the frame building.

"Tiny's room is directly over Frances'!" was the thought which flashed through Patricia's brain.

Darting back into the hall and up the stairs, two steps at a time, Patricia burst into Evelyn's room crying:

"Get up quickly!" She pulled the covers off of the astonished little girl. "There's a fire."

"I can't get up; I'm too weak!" whimpered Evelyn.

"You've got to!" replied Patricia, snatching up a heavy bathrobe, pulling the girl up from her pillows, and forcing her arms into the sleeves. "Now come—*quick*."

Still Evelyn hesitated; so Patricia literally dragged her out of bed, and, grasping her firmly from behind, pushed the reluctant girl out to the stairs. There, overcome by fright and weakness, Evelyn sat down on the top step. Without wasting any more words, Patricia grabbed her by the ankles, pulled her all the way down the long, straight flight of stairs, and landed her on the rug at the foot



of them just as the fire apparatus clattered up to the house. Clutching Evelyn under the arms, Patricia dragged her into the parlor, rolled her onto some cushions before the fireplace, threw a rug over her, and ran out to consult with the Fire Chief who was already in the hall.

“Shall we have to get out?” inquired Patricia, somewhat breathlessly.

“Hardly think so. Seems to be confined to back corner. Keep all doors closed,” was the man’s curt reply, as he directed his assistants who were bringing in extinguishers and hose.

Immediately a huge crowd assembled and some policemen were trying to keep the excited people far enough away from the house; even the students who lived in the Hall were not allowed to enter it. Watching from the front windows of the parlor, Patricia could see the Alley Gang on the edge of one group; Jane, calm as usual; Frances crying and holding onto Katharine; Hazel gesticulating wildly as she talked to Anne; and the others dodging this way and that, trying to get closer to the house. Just as Mrs. Vincent worked her way through the crowd to speak to one of the firemen, she came face to face with Clarice and Ivan who had edged through from the opposite side of the street. Patricia held her breath for an instant, but after receiving the fireman’s reply Mrs. Vincent seemed to be chatting quite naturally with the couple. Probably she did not realize that they had been out together.

A grey coat and hat in the background caught Patricia’s eye, and as a sudden movement of their owner brought him fully into the light of a street lamp, she recognized Norman Young. Like lightning her mind raced from the skulking figure beside the dormitory earlier in the evening, to the subsequent outbreak of fire. Surely there could be no connection. No doubt an investigation of the fire would surely follow, to which, in all probability, she would be summoned. What should she say? “I should hate to tell a mere suspicion. I’m not really certain,” she stated to herself. “I wish I knew what to do about it.”

Evelyn, who had lain shivering and weeping just where Patricia had left her, now raised up and inquired plaintively: “Do you suppose my room will be burned? I just bought all my spring clothes; and if they’re lost—I—”

“I’m quite sure they must be getting the fire under control; otherwise, they would have ordered us out,” replied Patricia calmly. “I hardly think the flames

reached your room at all.”

“Thank goodness!” sighed Evelyn, collapsing again onto her pillows.

Not a word of gratitude to the girl who had rescued her. People are awfully queer, thought Patricia, gazing wonderingly at Tiny. Imagine, thinking of her new clothes when she, herself, might have been trapped up there, alone and sick! Turning again to the window, she was amused to see her Aunt Betsy dash determinedly through the crowd only to be stopped by a policeman. Patricia could imagine the things she was saying to the man who dared block her way. Nearby stood Ted and John, scanning the crowd anxiously. She wished she could in some way attract their attention so they might know she was safe. Presently the crowd shifted a little, bringing the two boys more directly in her range of vision. Ted’s restless eyes soon spied her; he said something to John, and they both made grotesque gestures, which she interpreted as offers of rescue. Gaily she shook her head, thereby causing Ted to shed imaginary tears into his handkerchief, while Jack patted him on the back.

Half an hour later sounded the welcome two gongs which indicated that the fire was out. Then the crowd made a dash for the front steps; but a couple of officers, with whom the Dean had been quietly conferring, took their stand on the bottom step and refused admittance to all but Arnold Hall students. Slowly the townspeople strolled away, while the excited girls hurried in to see how much damage had been done.

“Oh, Pat!” cried Anne, flinging both arms around her. “We were so worried about you!”

“Until we caught sight of you at the window, we were absolutely frantic,” added Jane.

A loud burst of laughter from Clarice, who had just entered with Betty and Hazel, made them all turn to see what had occasioned it.

“Just look at Tiny!” cried Clarice. “How did you get down here?”

“Patricia dragged me down!” retorted Evelyn in injured tones. “She burst into my room, scared the life out of me, and literally pulled me down the stairs—”

“Pat to the rescue!” interrupted Hazel admiringly.

“Our Pat’s a heroine!” cried Anne, while the rest of the Gang pressed closer.

“Who sent in the alarm?” inquired Mrs. Vincent.

“I did,” acknowledged Patricia modestly. “I smelled smoke and discovered the cause of it in Katharine’s and Frances’ room—”

“She’s a double heroine!” exulted Jane.

“Have you any idea what started it?” continued Mrs. Vincent sharply.

“I told you all I *know* about it,” replied Patricia, with a faint accent on the word *know*, which was lost on the troubled chaperon. “I was on the Black Book all the evening, except once when I went to my room for a book and when I was looking for the fire—”

“And when you were dragging me around,” added Tiny, provoking a burst of laughter.

“At the Black Book?” repeated Mrs. Vincent. “It wasn’t your turn. You had it night before last. Who *was* supposed to be on it?” looking accusingly around the room.

“I was,” admitted Clarice; “but I had a date, so Pat relieved me.”

“You’re altogether too fond of getting out of some of your obligations,” said Mrs. Vincent severely, while the girls stared in astonishment at her rebuking thus publicly the favored Clarice.

“Pat didn’t mind,” murmured Clarice.

“That doesn’t matter. Hereafter, if you wish to relieve one another, you’ll have to get my permission. I want that clearly understood.”

“Nice time we’ll have finding her sometimes, to get permission,” murmured Hazel to Betty.

“Must be dreadfully upset, or she’d never lay Clarice out like that,” was Anne’s comment to Patricia.

“There will be an investigation made,” continued Mrs. Vincent. “Dean Walters is very much disturbed. Morton College has recently had a regular epidemic of fires of late, all apparently incendiary; and she—”

“Mrs. Vincent,” interrupted Mary, “Norman Young is at the front door and wants to see you.”

The chaperon hurried out, and, quite shamelessly, the girls kept quiet enough to hear what was said in the hall.

“Mrs. Brock sent me over to inquire how much damage had been done, and especially if anyone was injured,” said Norman. “If necessary, she would accommodate three or four of the girls tonight.”

“Tell Mrs. Brock that I am very grateful for her offer,” replied Mrs. Vincent, “but no one was harmed; and since the damage was confined principally to one room, we shall be able to manage quite nicely without sending anyone out.”

“Ah—” exclaimed Hazel, disappointedly.

“What are you ah-ing for?” demanded Katharine. “We’d be the ones to go.”

“Did you lose much of your stuff?” asked Patricia, putting her arm around Frances, whose face still showed traces of tears.

“I don’t know yet.”

“Now, girls,” ordered Mrs. Vincent, coming briskly back to the parlor, “let’s get to bed. Some of you help Evelyn upstairs, and I’ll get bedding to put on the davenport. Katharine and Frances will have to sleep here until we can get cleared up a little.”

It was a long time before silence settled down in the Hall. Even after the lights were out, and she and Betty had stopped talking, Patricia lay in her bed as wide awake as if it were noon. What was she going to say at the investigation? Suppose Norman Young *was* the man she had seen, what possible object could he have had in setting fire to the Hall? It was certainly bold of him, in that case, to come and inquire so coolly about the damages. Yet it didn’t seem as if a perfectly respectable secretary, however much one might be inclined to dislike him, *could* be a fire bug.

After another hour of restless tossing, she decided to tell the whole truth if questioned closely.

## CHAPTER XIV

### AN INVESTIGATION

The official bulletin board was located near the head of the stairs which led down to the dining room in Horton Hall. Space in front of it was at a premium after meals; for everybody was anxious to keep in touch with campus news. On the day following the fire, an even larger group of students than usual crowded into the shallow ell where the board hung.

“Look, Pat!” cried Anne, pointing to the top notice. “The following students are requested to meet the Dean in her office at two o’clock:

Patricia Randall  
Frances Quinne  
Katharine Weldon”

Patricia read the notice slowly. Although she knew an investigation would surely be made, nevertheless her heart sank to her very shoes when she saw her fears realized quite so soon. Turning away abruptly, she pushed out of the crowd and started for the door.

“What’s the matter?” demanded Anne, who followed and caught up with her on the street.

“Nothing,” replied Patricia quickly; “or—that investigation.”

“But why get all ‘het up’ over that? Simply tell what you know.”

“But that’s just it; I *don’t* know.”

“Know what?” questioned Anne, linking her arm through that of her friend, and

pressing close to her side. "Tell me all about it; you'll feel better."

"I'm not sure that I should," began Patricia doubtfully.

"Oh, shucks! What's a friend for? I'll guess then. You know more about the fire than you told Dolly?" hazarded Anne, watching Patricia intently. "You don't need to admit it; I can tell just by looking at you. We'll walk over to the park so no one will interrupt us, and then you can unburden your mind. I'll bet you didn't sleep a wink last night. You look like nobody's business."

Up and down the deserted paths of the little park they paced briskly, for the wind was cold, while Patricia told her story.

"If I were you," said Anne, when Patricia had finished, "I wouldn't advance any information; just answer the Dean's questions. If she doesn't ask you whether you had any suspicions who the man was, you'll be all right. In any case, don't worry about it."

In spite of the comfort derived from confiding in Anne, the morning seemed endless to Patricia, who alternately longed for and dreaded the arrival of two o'clock. Promptly on the stroke of the hour, the three girls from Arnold Hall were admitted to Dean Walters' sunny, spacious office. Hardly were they seated in the chairs given them by Miss Jolly, the Dean's secretary, when Mrs. Vincent walked in.

"The Dean will be in in a few minutes," murmured Miss Jolly, placing another chair for the latest arrival. As she spoke, the door to an inner room opened, and a dignified, grey-haired woman crossed the room briskly to seat herself behind a large flat-topped desk, facing her callers.

"It is most distasteful to me," began the Dean without preamble, "to be obliged to question you regarding last night's catastrophe. Arson is a serious matter, and you will do much harm if you try to shield anyone, or by withholding any detail which might help discover the culprit. So I ask that you be perfectly frank with me, and regard what is said in here as strictly confidential. Mrs. Vincent, I'll hear first whatever you can tell me."

Nervously the chaperon of Arnold Hall told the events of her evening, passing rapidly over the fact that she had left Patricia practically alone in the house, and dwelling at some length on her own indisposition. The Dean's face betrayed no

indication of her thoughts, nor did she make any comment when Mrs. Vincent had finished her story.

Little chills began to run up and down Patricia's spine as she awaited her turn next; but Dean Walters turned slightly in her chair in order to face Frances more directly, and began to question her rapidly as to her whereabouts the previous evening; in what condition she had left her room; whether she or Katharine ever smoked there; if her or her room mate's clothing and belongings were insured, and so on. Patricia shivered still more as she realized that the Dean intended to question them rather than to listen to their stories. Frances was so frightened that she stumbled and stuttered through her replies, and finally burst into nervous tears.

"There is no reason for you to be so disturbed, Miss Quinne," said the Dean calmly; "I do not accuse or suspect any one of you; but I must obtain all the information I possibly can, not only in order to apprehend the culprit, if possible, but to satisfy the insurance inspectors. Miss Weldon, can you add anything to the facts your room mate has just given me?"

"No, Dean Walters," replied Katharine promptly, "except that early in the evening as we were dressing for dinner, our lights kept jumping, going out and then coming on again, you know."

"Did you try the bulbs to see if they were screwed in tight?"

"No, we didn't, because it was late and we were in a great hurry."

"Have the lights ever acted that way before?" inquired the Dean thoughtfully, resting her chin in her hand, and fixing her keen blue eyes on the girl's face.

"A couple of times within the last week."

"Why did you not report them?" The question came a bit sharply.

"Just carelessness, I suppose," admitted Katharine frankly. "We never bother about things until they are entirely out of commission. You see we're always just getting back from somewhere, or going out to something; so we really don't have much time." Katharine grinned in a friendly manner at the stern woman behind the desk; nothing could disturb or subdue Katharine. Dean Walters made a few notes on a small pad, then turned to Patricia.



“Tell me exactly where you were last night, and every detail of your evening.”

Slowly and coherently Patricia furnished the desired information, and then paused, hoping with all her heart that she would not be questioned further. False hope.

“You say you were in your room for a short time before the fire broke out. Did you notice anything out of the ordinary then?”

Patricia flushed up to the roots of her hair, opened her lips, and then closed them again.

“I see that you did,” commented the Dean quickly. “Let me have all the facts, please.”

Reluctantly Patricia told about the man she had seen, and his odd actions.

“Describe him,” ordered Dean Walters, making notes rapidly.

“I—I didn’t see his face,” began Patricia.

“Do as well as you can, then, with his general appearance, clothing, etc.”

As Patricia proceeded, hesitatingly, with the description, Frances gave a little gasp which, though immediately suppressed, did not escape the quick ear of the attentive woman.

“Had you then, or have you now, any ideas as to the identity of that man?” inquired the Dean.

“I’d—really—rather not say,” faltered the girl.

“Neither the information nor your part in it will be made public. I am waiting, Miss Randall,” as poor Patricia still hesitated.

“He looked to me like Mr. Young, Mrs. Brock’s secretary; but it doesn’t seem possible for him to be mixed up in such an affair.”

A dead silence followed; then Dean Walters picked up her telephone. “Assistant Registrar, please,” she requested curtly, tapping nervously with her pencil as she

waited for the connection. “Mr. Billings? This is Dean Walters. Please get in touch with Norman Young at once and send him to my office.”

No one spoke or moved as all tensely awaited the arrival of the new participant in the inquiry. In ten minutes Miss Jolly admitted the blond youth, clad in his customary grey clothes, and carrying a soft grey hat.

“Sit down, Mr. Young,” directed the Dean, indicating a chair. “We are trying to get some information regarding last night’s fire at Arnold Hall; and I wondered, since you live so near to it, if you could add anything to the facts I already have. I understand you sometimes cut through the yard to get to Mrs. Brock’s house. Did you happen to do so last evening?”

“Yes, I did,” replied the boy frankly, “about half past eight, or maybe nine o’clock.”

Patricia trembled. So it *had* been he. Quietly she wrapped her coat more closely about her so no one would notice that she was shaking violently.

“Where were you going?” inquired the Dean.

“Home, to work on my assignments for today,” answered Norman, letting his glance travel along the row of girls at his left. No one of them, however, met his eyes.

“Did you notice anything unusual about the dormitory?”

“Only that it was dark.”

“How did you happen to notice that?”

“The path which is always well lighted from the windows on that side was so dark that I involuntarily looked up to see what was the matter,” responded the youth glibly, gazing directly, and Patricia thought somewhat defiantly, into the Dean’s eyes.

“Were you out again that night?”

“Yes, Dean; I went over on an errand—for Mrs. Brock.”

“Through the dormitory yard?”

“Yes.”

“And when did you return?”

“I don’t really know the exact time, but it was after the Fire Department had reached the Hall; I could not get through the crowd to go home.”

“How, then, did Mrs. Brock get in touch with you to deliver her message to Mrs. Vincent?”

“After watching the firemen for a while, I went around the block and entered Mrs. Brock’s house just in time to prevent her going over to the Hall herself.”

“Why didn’t you want her to go?” demanded Dean Walters sharply.

“Well, she is an old lady, and it was a cold night for her to be out, and late for her to be out alone.”

“What was your ‘errand’ for Mrs. Brock, and where did it take you?”

“That I am not at liberty to disclose; it is my employer’s business,” was the decided response.

Dean Walters opened her lips to speak, then abruptly closed them again. A moment’s silence followed; then, turning toward Mrs. Vincent and the girls, she said curtly: “You may go. Your testimony was quite satisfactory. Mr. Young will remain.”

Single file, like Indians, the four women left the office, descended a short flight of stairs, passed through a doorway at the foot, and were out upon the street. Then everybody drew a long breath of the frosty air and began to speak.

“Wasn’t it terrible?” demanded Frances. “I acted like a fool.”

“Oh, forget it!” advised Katharine. “You were nervous; we all were.”

“Not you,” contradicted Patricia. “I envy you your poise upon all occasions.”

“What do you suppose the Dean will do about Norman Young, Mrs. Vincent?”

asked Frances.

“I imagine she may get in touch with Mrs. Brock,” replied the chaperon somewhat irritably; for she felt she had not made the best of impressions upon the Dean. It was advisable for her to have that lady’s goodwill; for the appointments as chaperon in the various dormitories were made yearly, and Mrs. Vincent had reasons of her own for wishing to remain at Arnold Hall at least two years longer.

Several days passed, and the girls still gossiped among themselves about the investigation; for the officials were strangely silent upon the subject. No statement had been made public, and the students were consumed with curiosity.

“Mrs. Vincent,” said Katharine one night when the chaperon came to her room to borrow a hat, “what did the Dean find out about the fire? We’re dying to know.”

“I believe that upon the advice of Mrs. Brock, the whole affair has been dropped,” answered Mrs. Vincent, trying on Katharine’s hat before the mirror, her mind more upon what she was doing than upon what she was saying.

“What on earth—” began Katharine.

“I don’t know any more,” interrupted the chaperon quickly. “I’m not sure I should have told you that much. Don’t quote me, please.”

“I won’t,” promised Katharine good-naturedly, “but may I tell the girls without saying where I got the information? They’re all wondering.”

“Perhaps it would be well to do so; then maybe they’ll drop the subject.”

A couple of weeks later, the Dean announced in chapel one day that defective wiring had evidently caused the fire in Arnold Hall, and asked the girls in all dormitories to be very careful in their use of electrical appliances.

## CHAPTER XV

### UNDER ARREST

Spring came early that year, and the hills around Granard were a lovely haze of pale green. The woods were filled with delicate wild flowers, and streams which would be mere threads later in the season, now swollen by rapid thaws, were tumbling riotously along their rocky beds. Birds were darting madly back and forth across the landscape, seeking mates and places for cozy nests.

“Pat,” suggested Jack, on one of the warm, bright days, “the spring has gotten into my blood. Let’s cut Shakespeare this afternoon, and go for a hike in the woods.”

“Jack, you shouldn’t tempt me like that!” she cried reprovingly, stopping beside the bench where they had had their first talk. “I wonder if he’ll say anything important in class.”

The boy laughed at her sudden change of tone and attitude. “I don’t believe so. He’ll talk on the last act. We know that pretty well, don’t we?” grinning mischievously down into the girl’s brown eyes.

“We’ll take a chance anyhow! When shall we start?”

“Right now. Shall you be warm enough in that thing?”

“That thing! I’d have you know this is a perfectly good leather jacket which my father gave me for Christmas.”

“My error! It’s good looking, anyhow.”

“You can’t fix it up now.”

Laughing and joking, as gay as the spring all around them, they swung briskly along the state road until they reached Tretton Woods; then they plunged in among the feathered trees.

“Oh!” cried Patricia. “Arbutus! The darlings!” Sinking down upon a bed of last year’s leaves, she tenderly plucked a couple of sprays. “It always seems a pity to tear up a whole lot of it,” she observed, handing one piece to Jack, and fastening the other in her own buttonhole.

A little deeper in the woods they came upon a merry little stream.

“Look, Pat,” exulted Jack, “at that brook. Let’s make a dam—”

“And a lake?” concluded Patricia, eagerly.

Like two children they worked happily until a wide pond spread out in a fern bordered hollow.

“Isn’t that lovely?” rejoiced Patricia, gazing proudly at the result of their labor.

“It sure is! Gosh, Pat, look!” holding out his watch.

“Half past five? It *can’t* be. How I wish now I’d brought the car.”

“No, you don’t, young lady!” contradicted Jack masterfully. “A hike’s made on two feet, not on four wheels.”

“We’ll be late for dinner—”

“Never mind. I’ll take you somewhere to eat.”

“Like this?” looking down at her soiled hands and muddy skirt.

“Sure.”

On the way out of the woods, Patricia’s attention was caught by a cluster of cup-like white flowers. “Aren’t those pretty, Jack? Let’s take them home as a souvenir. We’ve lost our arbutus.”

Both stooped to gather a handful as quickly as possible.

“Oh, the nasty things!” cried Patricia. “Their stems are just full of red juice.”

“Looks for all the world like blood,” commented the boy, dropping his flowers into the stream, which quickly whirled them away, and wiping his hands on his handkerchief. Patricia followed his example.

“It’s awful stuff to get off,” complained Patricia, still rubbing her hands vigorously, as they stepped out upon the state road almost under the wheels of a motorcycle.

“Good Heavens, girl! Watch your step. That was a narrow shave.”

“I’ll say it was. Why, it’s coming back,” added Patricia, as the car wheeled about and approached them again.

“They’re troopers,” breathed Jack, as the car stopped beside them.

Two young men gazed searchingly at the two disheveled figures before them.

“What have you been doing?” demanded the man in the side car.

“Gathering wild flowers in the woods,” replied the girl promptly.

“Then where are they?” asked the other trooper, fixing his eyes on the red-stained handkerchiefs.

“Some we lost, and some we threw away,” said Jack.

“Give me those handkerchiefs,” ordered the red-haired trooper, hopping nimbly out of the side car.

In speechless astonishment the hikers handed the crumpled rags to the man, who took them to the driver of the motorcycle, and both troopers examined them carefully.

“Blood, without a doubt,” stated the auburn-haired man. “Guess we’ve made our catch. They certainly answer to the description of Crack Mayne and his pal, Angel. You’re under arrest,” he continued, turning toward the couple.

“What utter nonsense!” exploded Jack angrily, but Patricia laid her hand on his

arm.

“We got those stains from flower stems,” she stated calmly.

“You’ll have to show us.”

“We can’t, now.”

“Why not?”

“Because we picked them all, and when we found that our hands were stained we threw the flowers away.”

“Oh, yeah? Where did you throw them?” asked the driver, getting off and starting towards the woods.

“They’ve gone down the stream,” giggled Patricia, her sense of humor unwisely getting the upper hand.

In later days, when Jack wanted to tease her, he always said that Patricia’s giggle sealed their fate.

“Quite clear they’ve been up to something,” muttered the red-haired trooper; “maybe a murder. You take ’em in, and I’ll poke about in there to see what I can find. Send Murphy out for me as soon as you get in.”

Patricia and Jack were hustled into the side car, and rushed off toward town. Soon Jack took from his pocket a pencil and an envelope.

“Better give middle names at the station,” he scribbled rather illegibly, due to the motion of the car. “Keep college out of it.”

Patricia nodded; then Jack tore the envelope into little pieces, which the wind eagerly snatched from his hand and bore away.

At the station, they registered as Peter Dunn and Alice Randall. The stained handkerchiefs were laid aside for expert examination, and the charges recorded.

“Now may we go?” asked Jack, with elaborate innocence.

“Why, sure,” replied the sergeant sarcastically. “Just walk right out.”



“Hullo, Mac,” drawled an exceedingly tall, solemn-looking youth, letting the street door close with a bang. “What have you for me tonight?”

“Only a couple of—” he began.

The newcomer took one look at the pair; then announced without a trace of surprise: “You’re Jack Dunn, the football player.”

“Twin cousin,” corrected Jack gravely.

“Oh, yeah!”

“Haven’t you ever seen cousins who looked just alike?” inquired Jack, raising his eyebrows in astonishment. “I have.”

“That may be, but I didn’t see you on the field and off of it last fall for nothing. What’s the racket?”

Before Jack could reply, the sergeant irritably gave the desired information, the last of which was drowned by a bark of laughter from the human bean pole.

“This is rich! This is just too rich!” he chortled. “Brave troopers arrest couple of college students for gathering bloodroot. Oh! Oh!”

“So that’s what it was!” exclaimed Patricia. “I should have known.”

“You’re a reporter,” said Jack accusingly. “For the love of Pete don’t put us in the paper. We—”

“Now listen, Bozo,” interrupted Craig Denton, “don’t kid yourself that nobody will know this story unless he reads it in the paper. One of your own fellows stopped in at the office before I came over here to say that a couple of college students had just been taken into the police station. That’s how I happened to breeze in so early, Mac.”

“What did he look like?” demanded Jack.

“Big blond; jaw sticks out like this; little bits of eyes.”

“Tut!” breathed Patricia.

“How the devil did he get hold of it?” exploded Jack.

“Saw you brought in,” replied Craig, as he held the door open for them. “I’m taking these birds home, Mac,” he called to the sergeant. “So you see,” he continued, as they were out on the street, “you’d better let us present the story truthfully. It’s the best way.”

“Of course,” replied Jack, ruefully, “you have us at your mercy.”

“What did the troopers look like?” asked Craig.

“I couldn’t describe them,” declared Jack emphatically.

“Nor I,” agreed Patricia. “We were too much upset to notice details.”

“I wonder,” mused the newspaper man, glancing from one to the other suspiciously; but both met his eyes with well simulated innocence.

“We’re going somewhere to eat,” announced Jack; “better come along.”

“Yes, we surely owe you something for your kind rescue,” laughed Patricia.

“There’s an old saying about two being company,” began Craig.

“Nonsense! Come along!” cried Jack, who had taken a liking to the grave youth with his keen sense of humor. “Where shall we go, Pat?”

“Wherever we won’t meet anybody we know. We’re both sketches.”

“No wonder we were regarded as suspicious characters,” agreed Jack. “Guess we’d better go downtown. Where’s a good place?” turning to the reporter. “We usually eat up on the hill.”

“The Exeter, on Field Street, is good. Got stalls; you wouldn’t be conspicuous.”

“Exeter for us,” decided Patricia; “and let’s hurry. I’m starved.”

After a good dinner, accompanied by much joking and laughter, Jack escorted Patricia up toward College Hill, while Craig hurried back to the office of the *Granard Herald*, after promising to spare the principals as much as possible in his story.

“Little did we think this noon what we were in for,” said Jack, as he was about to leave Patricia at the entrance of Arnold Hall. “I’m sorry to have gotten you into such a jam.”

“You!” protested the girl. “Why, it was all my fault. If I hadn’t picked those flowers—bloodroot’s certainly the right name for them.”

“But if I hadn’t urged you to cut—”

“Oh, Jack, we had a good time; and, as for the unpleasant part, well, it didn’t last long. And it was an unusual experience.”

“But it’s not over yet; all the publicity, and talk. Of course, I could stand it; but —”

“You think I couldn’t!” finished Patricia with a flash of anger in eyes and voice. “I always try to be a good sport.”

“You are; and I didn’t mean—” faltered Jack, distressed.

“Listen!” said Patricia, her anger gone in a minute as she saw that he was really disturbed. “Everybody will laugh and joke about it for a while, and then—pouf! It’s all out, just like a candle. Nothing lasts very long.”

“What about our benefactors’ opinion of the affair?”

“Under the circumstances, he or she ought to take a sane view of the matter. We have done nothing of which we should be ashamed. Don’t worry about it.”

With these words Patricia ran up the steps, and Jack strolled to the Frat House thinking what a sensible girl Patricia was, and what a good pal.

A most amusing account of their escapade came out in the morning’s paper, and the college world rocked with merriment. Patricia and Jack were bombarded with jokes, questions, congratulations, and cartoons.

The next day Jack and Patricia met on the stairs leading to their Shakespeare classroom.

“I got a queer note,” began Patricia.

“So did I.”

“What did yours say?” asked Patricia eagerly.

“Keep out of police stations in the future.”

“So did mine; but, some way, it didn’t seem cross.”

“How could you tell that?”

“I don’t know; but I just felt that whoever sent the note was smiling as he wrote it.”

“You have a wonderful imagination, Pat,” said Jack, grinning down at her. “I only hope it’s a reliable one.”

## CHAPTER XVI

### A PICNIC

“Could I hire any of you ladies to swim for me next Tuesday?” inquired Clarice, popping out of the back door and perching on the porch railing.

It was Saturday morning. Patricia, Anne, Frances, Katharine, and Betty had washed their hair, and were strung along the sunny top steps drying it, preparatory to going to town for a wave.

“None of us were keen enough about that swimming exam to be looking for chances to try it twice,” replied Katharine decidedly.

“You ought not to mind it,” drawled Anne sleepily; “you’re a regular mer—maid,” her last word cut short by a huge yawn.

“Look out, Anne,” cried Frances, grabbing her by the shoulders, “you’ll be sound asleep in a minute and roll down the steps.”

“It’s this strong sunlight,” said Anne, leaning comfortably back against Frances’ knees, and closing her eyes.

“What’s the matter with you doing your own swimming?” asked Betty, glancing up at Clarice through a tangle of brown hair.

“Can’t. Don’t know enough about it,” replied the girl nonchalantly, swinging one foot. “I hate it.”

“Do you mean to say that you’ve been in gym class all this year, and don’t know yet how to swim?” inquired Katharine bluntly.

“Guilty!”

“I should think Professor Wilson would have killed you off long ago,” remarked Frances. “He’s such an irritable creature.”

“Yes,” agreed Clarice, “and also so near-sighted that he doesn’t know half the time who’s in the pool and who’s out of it. Haven’t you noticed how dependent he is on his class books?”

“Then can’t you take a chance on his being too near-sighted to see that you can’t swim?” asked Betty.

“No such luck! All women may look alike to him, but not all strokes in swimming.”

“How did you manage all term?” inquired Patricia, shaking her yellow mop of hair vigorously.

“Oh, he was always hollering at me.”

There were two divisions of the Sophomore Gymnasium class. Clarice was in the second, while all the rest of the Alley Gang were in the first. To be able to swim was absolutely necessary for promotion to the Junior class at the end of the year, and the second week in May had been assigned for the final tests. Professor Wilson, a critical, quick-tempered little man, was an excellent teacher, but he did not like women and never bothered to get acquainted with the individual members of his classes, which did not at all add to his popularity.

“When I can swim out of doors by myself, I think I shall like it,” commented Anne, “but not while Professor Wilson dances around the rim of the pool snapping like a turtle.”

“That’s the way I feel about it,” agreed Patricia. “Why don’t we go out to Green Lake some Saturday and try our skill?”

“Let’s go next Saturday,” proposed Katharine enthusiastically. “We’ll go in the morning, and have a roast.”

“Who?” asked Betty.

“Us and the rest of the Gang. Everybody willing, hold up the left foot,” directed Katharine.

A laughing scramble ensued during which Clarice nearly fell off the railing. When they had settled back into their former positions, Patricia suggested hesitatingly, “Let’s take Rhoda. She’s so very nice to all of us.”

“Good idea,” agreed Katharine promptly.

“But who’d take her place?” questioned Betty doubtfully. “Could she get off for the whole day?”

“I think so. That day she was ill, Sue Mason subbed for her; and she probably would again. Sue doesn’t have many dates,” said Frances.

“I wish we could invite her, too, then,” said Patricia slowly. “It must be pretty lonely to be among so many girls, and not be in on their good times.”

“I know, but you can’t start asking people from upstairs,” protested Anne. “If you do, there’ll be no stopping place.”

“What’s the matter with Sue, anyhow?” asked Patricia.

“Mostly her queer ways,” replied Clarice quickly. “Last year she was always rapping on people’s doors and asking them to keep quiet so she could study. Then she complained to the Dean every so often about how long some of the girls kept her out of the bathroom. She also felt it her duty to report the maid several times for being late in distributing the clean linen. In short, Sue just disapproved of the way everything was run, and got herself in most awfully wrong. She belongs in some boarding house, not in a dorm.”

“How did she happen to come back here, since she found so much fault with the place?” inquired Patricia.

“Don’t know. Maybe she found out that she liked it after all. Hasn’t opened her mouth this year, so the girls upstairs say; but she queered herself for good and all last year,” replied Clarice carelessly. “But to return to my original question, can’t I interest any of you in helping me out?”

“I don’t know what we could do,” began Anne.

“Go into the pool for me when my name is called,” answered Clarice boldly. “There’s a ten in it for anybody who will.”

“You’re surely not in earnest,” said Patricia, pushing back her hair to look directly at the girl on the railing above her. Patricia was so easily embarrassed for others, frequently an embarrassment in which the “others” took no part.

“Why shouldn’t I be?” retorted Clarice.

“Why, Clarice!” cried Frances reprovingly.

“I can’t help it if you *are* shocked. If it were as necessary for any of you to be graduated from this institution as it is for me, you’d go the limit, too!” Clarice’s tone was defiant, but as she slid off of the railing and hurried into the house, Patricia who was still watching her saw sudden tears fill the girl’s hard, black eyes.

Anne shrugged her shoulders as the back door banged. Frances raised her eyebrows and looked troubled. Betty and Katharine nonchalantly continued the business of hair drying. Patricia sighed—“I wish we could help her out,” she said thoughtfully. “I know a little of what graduation means—”

“Then why doesn’t she work?” demanded Betty sharply.

No one was able to answer that question, so after a moment they began to discuss plans for the picnic. In the meantime a girl who had been sitting quietly at an open window above the back porch left her room and went in search of Clarice.

By four o’clock on Tuesday afternoon, the swimming tests were over and the gym was filled with chattering girls discussing the probabilities of success and failure.

“I won’t draw a full breath until I see the list posted,” declared Frances, as she left the building with Anne and Patricia.

“I imagine we all passed,” observed Anne placidly.

“Wish I knew how poor Clarice came out,” said Patricia. “Yet I hate to ask her



right out.”

“Haven’t heard her mention the subject since Saturday morning,” said Frances. “Have you?”

Both girls shook their heads.

“Maybe she took some time to practice, and managed to pull through,” suggested Anne. “Clarice can do almost anything *if* she tries.”

“I truly hope so,” said Patricia fervently.

That evening the Alley Gang was in such a furore over arrangements for the picnic that the test was not even mentioned.

“Isn’t the water going to be awfully cold so early in the season?” objected Jane, when the question of “eats” had been satisfactorily settled, and that of bathing was under discussion.

“If the day is fairly warm, and we go in where it’s sunny, I think it will be all right,” replied Katharine.

“All right for an out-door girl like you,” retorted Betty, with a shiver, “but it doesn’t sound altogether attractive to me.”

“Then stay out of it,” advised Katharine sensibly.

“Yes; anybody who doesn’t want to go in can get busy around the fireplace and have a big feed all ready for us. We’ll be starved.”

“Never saw you when you weren’t, France,” called Clarice, who just then appeared in the doorway of Jane’s room where the girls had congregated.

“Know anybody who runs up to the Varsity Shoppe any oftener than you do?” retorted Frances quickly.

“Don’t quarrel, children,” admonished Jane. “We can all do our share when it comes to eating.”

“By the way,” inquired Anne, “what did Rhoda say when you asked her? Will

she go?”

“She wasn’t quite sure,” replied Patricia, “but will let us know on Friday.”

“Say,” interrupted Frances, leaning forward to look at Patricia, “does anybody know why she goes over to Mrs. Brock’s early in the morning?”

Patricia glanced at Jane and Ruth before she replied with a laugh, “I’m sure I don’t.”

“How do you know she *does* go?” demanded Lucile quickly.

“Saw her, this very morning.”

“What were *you* doing, awake before the bell rang?” inquired Anne.

“My shade was flapping; and if there’s anything I can’t stand, it’s a flapping shade. I got up to fix it.”

“What time was it?” queried Ruth.

“Five o’clock.”

“You dreamed it,” jeered Lucile.

“I did *not*!”

“Maybe she was just coming home from a party,” suggested Mary’s mild voice.

“I saw her one morning, too,” admitted Hazel. “I got up at five to study, wrapped a blanket around me, and was curled up in a chair beside the window cramming French verbs—”

“Now I know that you were asleep, too,” interrupted Lucile.

“When I saw Rhoda,” continued Hazel, throwing a pillow at Lucile, “she was coming out of the back door of Big House. When she passed our window, I said ‘Hello!’ and she jumped a foot.”

“What did she say?” asked Jane.

“Nothing; she just glanced up, put her finger on her lips, and hurried into the Hall. She is always so smiling and good-natured, but she didn’t look at all pleased to see me.”

“How did she get in without ringing the bell?” inquired Clarice eagerly.

Everybody laughed.

“That interests you most, doesn’t it?” inquired Lucile sweetly.

“She went around to the laundry door,” explained Hazel. “I think she has a key for it.”

“That’s an idea!” cried Clarice. “Why can’t we borrow that key some night when we want to go out?”

Four stone steps led down from the path on the east side of the dormitory to a small door which opened directly into the laundry, located under Frances’ and Katharine’s room.

“And spend the rest of the night in the laundry?” exclaimed Hazel. “An ironing board for a bed doesn’t appeal to me.”

“Why not come up?” inquired Anne idly.

“Because, darling, Dolly herself locks that door at the head of the stairs on her eleven o’clock round every night,” replied Ruth.

“Then I don’t see how Rhoda gets up,” said Frances, frowning in perplexity.

“Oh, bother Rhoda!” cried Hazel impatiently. “Let’s plan how we’re all of us and our luggage going to get out to Green Lake and back, when we’ve only two cars available.”

“Pat and I can take the eats and a couple of girls to guard them, and then come back for the rest of you,” proposed Mary, who owned the only other car in the Gang.

“That’s a good idea,” approved Anne; and so the matter was settled.

Saturday proved to be one of those warm, sunny days which often usher in an early summer.

“See that haze on the hills?” said Katharine, as they were packing the cars in the driveway. “That means heat. We’ll be able to swim after all. Isn’t it fine that we all passed the test, even Clarice?”

“Didn’t look much like a picnic at this time yesterday,” observed Patricia with a shiver at the recollection. “Wasn’t it a cold, dismal day?”

“It sure was! Who’s going on this load?” inquired Anne, turning to the girls who were bossing the job of loading.

“Katharine and Frances will go with Pat,” responded Jane, “and I’ll keep Mary company. Don’t any of the rest of you wander off and have us hunting all over for you when we come back. All aboard who’s going aboard!”

By eleven o’clock the whole Gang, including Rhoda, was swarming over the picnic grounds situated on a wooded hill overlooking Green Lake, an oblong body of very deep water. At one end, the lake was bordered by flat, treeless meadows, and the low shore line provided a fairly good sandy beach. At the other end, heavily wooded land sloped down to the water on all sides, giving it a gloomy, deep green cast. A rough path followed the irregular stretch of water on the east side, and wound on up the hill into the woods where a depression between two steep slopes formed a small picnic ground. The few tables, benches, and stone ovens which occupied the space were unclaimed today; so the girls had their choice. They decided on a table from which they could look through an opening in the trees, directly down onto the still, green water.

“Swim first,” announced Katharine, after the food had been placed upon one table, and the extra wraps upon another.

“Will our things be safe here alone?” inquired Betty doubtfully, when they were ready to go down to the lower end of the lake.

“I’ll stay with it,” offered Rhoda.

“Oh, no,” protested Anne. “Come on down with us and swim.”

“I can’t swim,” replied Rhoda, “and I don’t care for bathing. I brought a book

along, and I'd just as soon as not stay here and read until you come back."

Seeing that the maid really meant what she said, Anne followed the rest of the girls who were already half way down the hill.

"Where's Rhoda?" asked Patricia, looking around, when they reached the beach and were about to dive into the water.

"I should think she'd like at least to come and watch us," said Patricia, when Anne had explained. "I'll go up after a while and bring her down."

Swimming in the open was very different from swimming in a tank, and after fifteen minutes of strenuous exercise the girls came out to lie on the sand in the warm sun for a little rest.

"Lend me your cloak, Anne," requested Patricia, "and I'll run up for Rhoda."

"Don't believe she'll come," replied Anne, handing Patricia her woolly bath cape.

"I'll make her. The things will be all right. There isn't a soul here today, except us."

Wrapping the cape closely around her, Patricia started briskly along the path toward the picnic grounds. Rhoda was sitting on a big stone, half way down one of the sloping sides of the depression, in a pool of sunlight which some broken branches let through. So deeply interested was she in her book, that she did not see Patricia until the girl stood right in front of her.

"I came back to get you," panted Patricia. "We don't like to have you up here all by yourself. That's no fun. Come on!" taking the book out of the maid's hands.

"I really don't mind," began Rhoda.

"But we do," Patricia cut her short, putting out both hands to help her up from the stone.

Laughing a little in protest, Rhoda got up and the two started down the hill.

"Why, there's Clarice," said Patricia, stopping short in surprise, as she caught

sight of the girl, swinging carelessly along beside the lake just below them. “She’s all dressed. I thought she was with the rest of the crowd. I wonder what happened.”

“She’s too near the ragged edge,” exclaimed Rhoda sharply.

Hearing voices, Clarice looked up without checking her pace. Her foot struck a hole in the bank beside the path, and with a cry she slid down into the lake. Dropping Anne’s cloak, Patricia dashed down the hill and dove into the water.

A treacherous current had immediately swept Clarice away from the bank and was bearing her out toward the center of the lake. “No use to call for help,” thought Patricia; “the rest of the girls are too far away. Lucky that Clarice learned to swim after all; for she’ll be able to help herself a little. She’s gone down!” Striking out frantically, with legs and arms, Patricia made what speed she could toward the place where she had seen Clarice disappear. Fear and necessity gave her extra strength and speed, so that she was near enough to Clarice when the girl came up to seize her by the collar of her sweater.

With the irresistible inclination of a drowning person, Clarice tried to throw her arms around Patricia, who knew that meant disaster for both of them.

“Stop that!” she snapped. “Swim!”

“I can’t,” moaned Clarice, frantic with fear.

“You’ve got to! We’ll both drown if you don’t. Put your hand on my shoulder and strike out as I do. If you try to grab me around the neck, I’ll leave you.”

Clarice pulled herself together and tried to obey. It seemed to Patricia as if they made no progress at all, so weighed down was she with Clarice’s weight. Just one more stroke, she said to herself, when it seemed as if she could go no farther. Now one more. That wasn’t so bad. Now another. Encouraging herself, straining each muscle to the utmost, she at last reached the bank where Rhoda stood with one arm wound around the tree trunk and the other extended to [help them scramble up the rough stones, slippery with moss.](#)

As soon as they were safe again, Clarice threw herself flat on the ground and burst into a violent fit of tears.

“Let her cry,” advised Rhoda, as Patricia bent over the sobbing girl. “She’ll get over the shock more quickly.”

“But she’ll take cold,” objected Patricia, throwing Anne’s cloak over the prone figure.

“And so will you,” added Rhoda, removing her own coat, preparatory to wrapping it around the shivering girl beside her.

“You keep that. I’ll get my own,” protested Patricia, running up the hill to where the wraps were piled on one of the tables. Pulling her long brown coat from under several others, she wrapped it around her and returned to Clarice and Rhoda.

The former was still weeping with her face hidden in a bed of ferns.

“Clarice, get up!” ordered Patricia sternly. “No sense in having pneumonia just because you won’t control yourself. Get up, I said.”

Taking her firmly by the arms, with Rhoda’s help she raised the girl and wrapped Anne’s cape more closely around her.

“It’s a judgment on me!” quavered poor Clarice, as they led her up the hill.

“What’s a judgment?” demanded Patricia rather sharply.

“Being drowned because I cheated.”

“But you aren’t drowned,” objected Patricia, laughing in spite of herself. Clarice was such a child!

“I would have been, if it hadn’t been for you. I’ll never cheat again; I’m sure of that.”

“How and when and where did you cheat?” inquired Patricia, puzzled.

“Swimming test. A girl from upstairs went in when my name was called, passed, and Professor Wilson never knew the difference. She’s about my size.”

Patricia was speechless. What should one say under such circumstances? She

shrank from the holier-than-thou attitude; yet to remain quiet might be taken as approval.

“What can we do about dry clothing for her, Miss Randall?” inquired Rhoda, saving the situation.

“I don’t know,” replied Patricia in a worried tone. “I guess I’d better drive her home to get some. It won’t take long.”

“I’d rather *stay* home, if you don’t mind,” said Clarice, drying her eyes.

“Why?”

“Oh, because.”

“It would be just as well if she’d take a hot bath and go right to bed,” advised Rhoda. “Shall I come, too, to help you?”

“Oh, no,” said Clarice quickly. “I’ll be all right.”

“And you’ll do as Rhoda suggests?” asked Patricia.

Clarice nodded and went toward Patricia’s car, while Patricia said to Rhoda in a low tone: “If any of the girls come back while I’m gone, tell them Clarice didn’t feel very well and I took her home. No point in letting them in on poor Clarice’s story.”

“You’re quite right,” agreed Rhoda.

“Patricia,” said Clarice, when they were on their way out of the parking section, “I don’t know how to thank you.”

“Don’t bother about it. I’m glad I happened to be there.”

“Should I tell about the test?” inquired Clarice slowly after being silent for several minutes. “I’ve made up my mind to learn to swim before college closes for the summer.”

“Good! Then under those circumstances, you’ll be getting your promotion fairly; and it seems to me that any revelation of your—your—”



“My cheating,” supplied Clarice frankly.

“Would involve too many people. You see, Professor Wilson’s near-sightedness would be revealed, and perhaps cause his dismissal; the girl who subbed for you would be drawn into it, and probably get into trouble—perhaps even be dropped; then the girls in your section who know about it—”

“There aren’t any.”

“How’s that?”

“We were called out of the dressing room one at a time, according to numbered cards; and nobody paid any attention to who was out. It’s such a large section.”

“I see. Well, anyhow, since you’re going to correct the wrong, as far as possible, I can’t see any object in broadcasting the story. That reminds me, I asked Rhoda to tell the girls that you didn’t feel very well and I had taken you home. So the three of us will keep our own counsel.”

“Pat, you’re just the best sport I ever knew!”

“What’s the matter with Clarice?” inquired Hazel, an hour later, as they all sat around the table disposing of steak, potatoes, sugared buns, fried cakes, and coffee.

“She had a chill,” replied Patricia calmly, opening a box of marshmallows; “but she attended to it in time, so I think she’ll be all right tomorrow.”

The subsequent devotion of the black sheep to swimming aroused much comment among the members of the Alley Gang. Many were the theories advanced, but the girl kept her own secret and worked doggedly until she was as proficient as most of her companions.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A ROBBERY

“Have you seen the paper this morning?” demanded Jane excitedly, waving the *Granard Herald* overhead as Pat was hurrying down the corridor to her room after breakfast.

“No, what’s in it?”

“Look!” Jane held out the front sheet and pointed to a headline in heavy print:

DARING ROBBERY. THIEVES MAKE BIG HAUL.

Victim of losses sits in library while men work in room above. No clues. Mrs. Brock, owner of property, offers reward.

“Why!” gasped Patricia. “How awful!”

A clock somewhere in the Hall struck the quarter hour.

“Oh, I’m going to be late,” cried Patricia, dashing into her room, seizing a couple of books, and running down the corridor. “Have to hear the rest later,” she called back to Jane.

“Pat!” cried Anne, catching hold of her at the door. “Have you seen the paper?”

“Yes, Jane just showed it to me.”

“Isn’t it exciting? All her jewelry, and a lot of money taken.”

“I’m late, Anne; let me go, please!” pulling away from the girl.

At the corner of Wentworth Street, Ruth caught up with her.

“Heard the news?” she panted.

“Yes, but can’t stop; most time for class.”

As Patricia sank, breathless, into a seat in French class, which had already begun, Frances leaned forward from the row behind to whisper, “Know about the robbery?”

Patricia nodded.

“The paper says nobody heard a thing,” continued Frances. “Norman was in his room right next to the one where the robbers were working. Isn’t that thrilling?”

“How do you know?” traced Patricia’s pencil on the margin of her note book.

“Clarice met him this morning, and he told her.”

“Mademoiselle Quinne, *continuez s’il vous plait*,” requested the Professor’s smooth voice.

It must be confessed that Patricia heard little of the French lesson that day. Her mind was briskly working on the piecemeal information she had received about the disaster at Big House.

“Seems awfully queer,” she commented to Jack later in the day, “that a person or persons would break into a house early in the evening like that. Why, Mrs. Brock or Norman might have walked in on them any minute.”

Jack smiled. “He probably had worked out, by direct observation, when his chances of being undisturbed were greatest.”

“Direct observation?” repeated Patricia.

“Yes; whoever it was knew the layout of the house, the habits of its inmates, and where valuables were kept.”

“Why, Jack!” cried Patricia, her eyes dilating with a dawning suspicion. “Who

—”

“Better not put anything into words, Pat,” Jack said quickly; “probably we’re all wrong. I hope so. Let’s try to forget all about it. The authorities will take care of it; it’s their business, not ours.”

In spite of Jack’s good advice, Patricia could not keep from dwelling on the subject rather constantly for the rest of the week, especially since the robbery was the Gang’s principal theme of conversation.

“Mrs. Brock,” announced Katharine on Thursday night, “is offering a large reward for the return of her grandfather’s watch alone. It’s a valuable heirloom, and she cares more for that than for the rest of the jewelry. Don’t I wish I could go out some morning, pick up the timepiece, and take it over to her!”

“I guess none of us would object to some extra money,” laughed Anne. “If you weren’t going home this week end, Pat, we might organize a searching party and beat Kath out.”

“Go ahead, anyway,” advised Patricia, pulling out her bag and beginning to pack it ready for an early start the next afternoon. “You’d better get your things together, Jane; we won’t have any time after lunch tomorrow.”

“Jane going with you?” inquired Anne somewhat wistfully.

“Yes. Want to come, too?”

“*Do!* You’re a peach.” Anne hugged Patricia, and departed for her own room, stumbling over the doorstep as she went out.

“Look out, Anne; you’ll break your neck over my coach-and-four,” called Patricia. “She never fails to fall over that,” she added to the girls. “Kath, why don’t you come with us?”

“I’d love to, but what will your mother say to so many of us?”

“She won’t care. My room has twin beds, so I can have guests in comfort whenever I want to; and then we have the regular guest room. You won’t have to sleep on the floor.”

“As if I’d care for that! I’ve done it at house parties.” Katharine departed to announce her good fortune to the rest of the Gang, and then went to pack.

“I envy you, Patricia,” said Jane, the next afternoon, as they were riding through a stretch of woods, “being able to take this lovely ride home any week end you want to.”

“Not whenever I want to,” corrected Pat, “but rather when I have money enough for the gas, and when my work can be left for a couple of days. I can’t do any studying at home, of course.”

“Don’t think I’d care for these woods in the dark,” observed Anne.

“Well, darling,” said Katharine soothingly, “you won’t be in them in the dark.”

“Not a chance,” agreed Patricia. “Dad always starts me back in good time so I won’t be on the road after nightfall. He’s deadly afraid of a hold-up.”

“Good place for wild flowers, I should think,” continued Jane, peering in between the tree trunks. “Don’t you want to stop and gather some, Pat?”

“I do not! I’ve had quite enough experience with wild flowers for a while, anyhow.”

“Ever see your reporter-rescuer?” asked Katharine.

“Once in a while. Jack likes him a lot, and Craig has asked us out a couple of times.”

“Hasn’t he a girl friend?” demanded Katharine.

“I guess not; not a regular, anyhow. But why should you be interested? Aren’t you and the Professor good pals any more?”

“Sure; but there are several nice girls in the Gang who haven’t boy friends. You see I’m being purely altruistic.”

“Maybe the man in question would prefer to manage his affairs himself,” said Jane practically.

“Maybe; in fact, he may have made a selection already,” suggested Anne, smiling at Pat in the mirror.

Patricia kept her eyes on the road ahead, and feigned ignorance of Anne’s meaning. Presently she changed the subject by asking what her guests would like to do that evening. “The week end is so short that we have to use every minute of it.”

“A movie,” proposed Katharine. “I haven’t seen a good one in a coon’s age.”

“And double sodas all around afterward,” added Jane. “My treat.”

“Sounds good to me,” agreed Anne, when Patricia looked inquiringly at her.

“All right, then. That’s what we’ll do. Guess I’ll put on a little speed, so we’ll get home early enough to go to the first performance. This new road certainly has meant a lot to me—it shortened the distance so much. You know it’s quite a trip by rail; this road through the woods cuts off miles. Oh!” her remarks concluded with a shriek.

“What’s the matter?” demanded Anne, startled.

“A bee!” exclaimed Patricia. “For pity’s sake keep your eyes on him and try to put him out. I’m always afraid of being stung when I’m at the wheel.”

“You have some opinion of our eyes if you think they are capable of putting out a full grown bee,” remarked Katharine. “Mine don’t even see him, to say nothing of pushing him out the window.”

“Stop joking,” begged Patricia, “and find him.”

“There he is!” cried Anne, drawing herself as far into the corner as she could.

“Where?” demanded Jane, turning around to look at the passengers in the back seat.

“Down on the floor,” said Katharine. “You girls make me tired; all so afraid of one poor little bee!”

“Suppose you pick him up and throw him out, if there’s nothing to be afraid of,”

suggested Patricia.

“No—o; but, there! I’ve set my bag on him. He’ll be quite dead in a minute, then I’ll pick him up,” offered Katharine.

“Most any one of us would be willing to pick up a dead bee,” offered Jane.

Presently Katharine lifted the bag; but the action was followed by a squeal from Anne, who announced that he was just as much alive as ever.

Katharine thumped her bag down again while Jane laughed breathlessly.

Ten minutes later, Katharine again peered at her victim; and again he showed very definite signs of life.

“Talk about cats having nine lives,” she commented.

“Set that bag down,” begged Anne, “and leave him alone. If he’s not dead, he’s at least out of mischief.”

“Toughest bee I ever saw,” commented Katharine, thumping the bag again on the unlucky insect. “There you stay until we get to our destination.”

Mrs. Randall was on the porch waiting for them when the car pulled up at the steps.

“I brought two extras, Mum!” cried Patricia, jumping out and hugging her mother.

“That’s fine,” replied Mrs. Randall, smiling at her guests. “It’s pretty lonesome around here now, and Pat’s friends are always welcome.”

When the introductions were over, the irrepressible Katharine said to their hostess, “One of our passengers is in there on the floor; where shall I put him?”

Mrs. Randall looked puzzled, while the girls laughed.

“See?” said Katharine, taking Mrs. Randall by the arm, and showing her the bee crawling along as if holding up heavy bags were just pastime for him.

“Oh,” said Mrs. Randall, entering into the spirit of the fun. “Suppose you leave the door open and let him select his own room.”

As she spoke, the big black and gold fellow spread his wings, blundered about a moment, then sailed out past the girls who dodged him with little shrieks and settled on a patch of lilies of the valley beside the porch.

“Now that the stowaway is disposed of, let’s go in,” proposed Patricia, following her mother up the steps.

“Better go right upstairs and get ready for dinner, Pat,” advised Mrs. Randall. “Daddy’s coming home a bit early, and I thought we would eat as soon as he gets here, so you girls will have a long evening for anything you want to do.”

“Your mother’s a peach; isn’t she?” remarked Anne, as the four girls went up the long stairs together.

“I think so,” replied Patricia, smiling with gratification. “Now this is my room, and the guest room is right opposite. We can divide up any way you please.”

“Suppose we change around,” proposed Anne. “Katharine and I will take the guest room tonight; then tomorrow night we’ll put Jane in with Katharine and I’ll go with you.”

“Ah—wa! Ah—wa!” lamented Katharine.

“What on earth’s the matter with you?” demanded Anne.

“I don’t have Pat at all, I don’t!”

“Oh, you sleep all the time; so what difference does it make?” laughed Jane.



“I’ll set the alarm,” offered Patricia in amusement; “and when the night’s half over, I’ll go in, roll Anne out, send her over to my room, and get in with you. How’s that?”

“I’ll consider it,” replied Katharine in her most dignified tones; “but I think my feelings are irreparably damaged.”

“Oh, go on!” cried Anne, shoving Katharine ahead of her into the guest room. “You’ll never be ready for dinner.”

Mr. Randall loved company, and was always most entertaining whenever Patricia had guests; so the dinner hour was prolonged to such an extent that when the four girls reached the theater, the early performance was well under way.

“I like it over on the right,” whispered Patricia, as they entered the darkened house. “Just follow me,” she added, ignoring the usher completely and hurrying down a side aisle. She was a bit careless in stepping up into a row of seats, and turned on her ankle. To save herself a fall, she grabbed madly at the seat in front of her, which was occupied by a very large and very dignified-looking man. Instead of grasping the back of his seat, as she intended, her hand came down very forcibly on the top of his bald head.

“Ouch!” he cried out in astonishment and discomfort.

Everybody within hearing turned around. Several people exclaimed in annoyance. Some nearby, who had witnessed the incident, laughed aloud. In the general disturbance, the girls managed to sink into their seats quite overcome with embarrassment. Presently Anne hid her face in her hands and began to quiver.

“What is the matter?” whispered Patricia.

Anne only shook her head, and Patricia realized that the girl was in a paroxysm of laughter. It was contagious, and before long Pat and Katharine were in the same state.

“Stop that!” ordered Jane. “Think of something sad, and do it *quick*.”

With much effort and several relapses they finally succeeded in pulling themselves together, and fixed their eyes determinedly on the screen, not daring to glance at one another.

“That was just terrible!” exclaimed Jane in mock anger, when they were out upon the street again. “I’ll never go to a movie with you again, Patricia Randall!”

“I’m—awfully—sorry,” gasped Pat.

“You certainly act as if you were, quite overcome with grief,” said Anne.

“Did you ever in your life hear anything so funny as the way that man hollered—he fairly bellowed!” said Katharine.

“You do get into more scrapes, Pat,” commented Anne, “than anyone I ever met.”

“Don’t I?”

“Never mind,” said Jane soothingly, as they entered a confectionery store, “you mean well.”

“I think,” said Katharine, “that is about the worst thing one can say. ‘Oh, he means well.’ It seems like sort of damning with faint praise. Not that Jane meant it that way.”

Everybody laughed. Katharine was so unconscious of her inconsistency.

While they were waiting for their order, Patricia’s eyes, which were roving about the room in search of possible acquaintances, came to rest on the back of a tall figure two tables beyond theirs. As if compelled by her questioning gaze, the individual turned around, immediately jumped up, and crossed the room in two strides.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A WEEK END

“Craig!” exclaimed Patricia, smiling up at the lanky youth. “Fancy seeing you here! And what are you doing?”

“Here on business,” was the brief response, as he shook Patricia’s hand enthusiastically.

“These are my friends—Anne Ford, Jane Temple, and Katharine Weldon,” continued Patricia, “who are spending the week end with me.”

Acknowledging the introduction, Craig looked inquiringly at Patricia. “May I sit down here and have my sweet with the Sweets.”

“We couldn’t possibly refuse after such a ‘sweet’ compliment as that,” laughed Patricia. “How long are you going to be in town?”

“Well, that depends. If I find what I’m looking for, I’ll go back almost immediately; if I don’t, I’ll go Sunday afternoon, anyhow.”

“How interesting and mysterious you sound!” remarked Katharine.

“Reporting’s a great game. Now tell me about yourselves,” leaning both elbows on the table and looking from one girl to another. With flattering attention the boy listened to the story of their drive home; gave a couple of short barks of amusement at their movie experience, then inquired what they intended to do on the morrow.

“Shop in the morning,” replied Patricia. “I always do the Sunday marketing when I’m home. I just love to poke around the stores and buy things. In the

afternoon—I really don't know yet."

"How would it be if you all went to the ball game with me?" proposed Craig, carefully rubbing a drop of chocolate sauce off of his tie.

"Grand! But you'd be embarrassed to death escorting four females," laughed Patricia.

"Don't you believe it. I'd be the proudest fellow in the stand, and the most envied. That's settled then," as all the girls manifested their pleasure in the plan. "I'll call for you at two o'clock," he added, as they rose to go. "I'd offer to see you home, but I suppose you have your car?"

"Yes; it's in a parking station. Why don't we meet you at the Park tomorrow afternoon instead of your going way out to our house?"

"Not a bad idea, especially as I haven't the least idea where you live." Everybody laughed.

"97 Minton Road, in case you ever need to know," said Patricia, smiling frankly up into the brown eyes and serious face above her.

"Thanks," he said, making a note of the address. "Wait a minute," he added, taking hold of her arm and steering her toward a candy counter. "Make up five pounds of the kinds selected," he directed the prim clerk who came to take his order. Then, waving off the girls' thanks, he was gone.

"Shall we each choose our favorites, to make up one-quarter of the box?" asked Patricia, turning to the other girls.

"Fine; and in quarter-or half-pound lots, so as to get variety," said Katharine; and they all assented.

It was rather late when the girls finally reached home, but they settled down before the living room fireplace with the box of candy, and regaled Mr. and Mrs. Randall with chocolates and the story of their adventures. Mr. Randall finally drove them off to bed shortly after midnight.

"I'm going to stay in the car," announced Katharine the next morning, when

Patricia drew up in front of a large department store in the grocery department of which she intended to make several purchases. "I don't care for marketing, and I do love to watch people hurrying along the streets."

"As you like it," replied Patricia, getting out, followed by Anne and Jane.

"Can you park here?" inquired Jane in surprise, as Patricia slammed the door.

"Not really supposed to, but I won't be long; and I hardly think there'll be any trouble."

"I'll entertain the cop," offered Katharine magnanimously, "if he shows up."

She had been watching the crowd for about ten minutes, when she noticed a big, red-faced policeman approaching, his eyes fixed indignantly upon the car in which she was sitting.

"Now I'm in for it!" she thought. "Why in time doesn't Patricia come? She's been gone an age."

"You can't park here, lady," said the officer sternly. "Can't you read?" pointing to the NO PARKING sign.

"No, sir," replied Katharine demurely.

"You can't!" exclaimed the man in surprise

"Not a word!" was the reply, and Katharine looked innocently at him.

"What nationality are you?"

"American, sir."

The officer pushed back his hat in perplexity. He felt that something was wrong, but could not quite put his finger on it. With all our money spent on schools, and this young woman couldn't read.

"Well, anyhow, whether you can read or not, you can't park here."

"But this isn't my car, and I can't drive."

“Where *is* the owner?”

“In there,” pointing to the store. “She’ll be out in just a minute. I think she went in to buy—oranges.”

“Well, if she isn’t out by the time I come around again, she gets a tag; and that’s flat!”

Wrathfully the officer strode on, and Katharine sank back comfortably against the cushions again. Five minutes passed; ten; and still no signs of Patricia. Katharine began to fidget nervously and wish she had gone into the store with the girls. Still, if she had, the car would have been tagged at once; even now perhaps she could stave the man off again if he came around before Pat got back.

There he was, striding along as if he meant business! “I wish Pat and her oranges were in Hades,” thought Katharine, preparing to smile sweetly at the irate officer.

“She hasn’t come yet,” she said, leaning out of the window and speaking confidentially. “Something must have happened to her. I’m so worried. What ought I to do, do you think?”

Momentarily disarmed by the unexpected greeting, the man removed his hat and scratched his head. Then suddenly realizing that he was being worked, he snapped:

“What *could* happen to her except that, like all other women, she has no notion of time! This car’s been here half an hour now. I suppose she can’t read either!”

“It’s been here only twenty-five minutes, officer,” corrected Katharine, showing him her watch.

“So you can tell time, even though you can’t read,” commented the officer, rather admiring the girl’s poise despite his annoyance.

“Well, you see,” began Katharine, resting both arms on the opened window, “when I was a little girl—(if I can only keep him interested until Pat comes!)—I was—” She broke off to gesticulate madly to her friends who were just coming out of the store.

The policeman wheeled sharply and saw three girls racing madly toward him. Just as Pat reached the car, the bag she was carrying broke, and a dozen oranges rolled in all directions.

“There!” cried Katharine triumphantly. “Didn’t I tell you she just went in to get some oranges?”

What could the man do but help gather up the fruit and toss it into the car? Scarlet with exertion and embarrassment at the comments of passers-by, he finally faced Patricia sternly.

“Lady, you’ve been parked here half an hour, right under that sign. Can’t *you* read either?”

“Why, yes, a little,” replied Patricia, with a suspicious glance at Katharine. “But those signs are placed so high that if you’re in a low car, you really have an awful time seeing them at all. You can see for yourself that this one is directly over the top of the car. Get in and see.”

“Of course it is if you drive directly under it!” grumbled the man. “And the next time I see this car where it doesn’t belong, it gets a tag right away; whether your passengers can’t read, or you think the signs are too high, or—or anything else.”

“Thanks for your patience, and assistance,” replied Patricia, smiling at him in such a friendly fashion that he had a hard time maintaining his expression of outraged dignity. He was still a bit doubtful as to whether or not the girls were making fun of him. These women!

“Goodbye,” called the irrepressible Katharine, as Patricia stepped into the car and started the engine. “Hope I meet you again sometime.”

The officer strode away without comment, while Katharine reported her encounter to the girls.

“I’m an absolute wreck!” she declared in an injured tone, as her companions laughed heartlessly. “I’ll never keep car for you again.”

“Your own choice,” retorted Patricia flippantly. “We wanted you to come with us.”

“That’s all the thanks I get,” sighed Katharine, “for risking my life to protect your property.”

“Policeman, spare this car; touch not an ancient wheel!” giggled Anne.

“In youth it carried me,” continued Jane.

“And I’ll protect it now,” carolled the three.

“I’ve a good mind to dump you all out,” declared Patricia in mock indignation. “I know it’s not exactly a latest model, but it really isn’t so ancient as all that.”

“Never mind, Patsy,” said Katharine. “We’ll ride in it, even if it is old.”

“There’s where we’re going this afternoon,” remarked Patricia a few minutes later, pointing down a side street; “you can see the baseball park from here.”

Long before the game started, they were in their seats watching the crowds pour into the stands.

Patricia, who sat beside Craig, soon noticed that he was scanning faces with more than casual interest. When he pulled out a pair of opera glasses with which to view the opposite stands, her curiosity got the better of her.

“Looking for someone special?” she inquired, making pleats in her handkerchief.

“Yes.” He moved closer, put his head down, and spoke softly. “We got a tip that the principal in the Brock affair might be around here, and my chief sent me out to see what I could pick up. Keep it under your hat, though.”

“Of course,” breathed Patricia, quivering with excitement.

“Come home to dinner with us?” asked Patricia, when the game was over and they were headed for the parking station.

Craig shook his head. “Like to a lot, but I want to look around a bit more tonight; so I’ll eat in a one-arm lunch that I know about where perhaps I’ll overhear something. Thanks a lot.”

“If you’d care to come, suppose you make it tomorrow instead. We have dinner



at one on Sundays.”

“I’ll be glad to come then.”

“Any luck?” Patricia inquired, as she met Craig in the hall of her own home the next noon.

“Not a bit,” looking so dejected that Patricia could hardly keep from smiling.

“Too bad; but don’t be quite so downcast.”

“Good advice; perhaps I’ll run across something on the train. You get into a conversation with strangers, and oftentimes a clew slips out.”

Dinner was a hilarious affair. Craig exerted himself to be entertaining, and Katharine had a silly streak which kept the company in gales of laughter.

“Hate to break away,” said Craig, looking at his watch after they finished their coffee before the fireplace in the living room.

The day had turned cool, and a wood fire was very welcome. “This is awfully cozy,” he went on; “but my train goes in twenty minutes.”

“Why don’t you let Pat tuck you into her machine, and go back with the girls?” suggested Mr. Randall.

“Like nothing better,” replied Craig, unfolding his long body slowly as he rose reluctantly from a big easy chair; “but I have my return ticket, and ‘Waste not, want not’ is one of my mottoes.”

“See you when you get back to town,” were his last words to Patricia, after taking leave of the rest of the party.

“Very likely,” she replied carelessly.

Had she been wise in inviting the boy to her house? She wondered, closing the door. He was inclined to be a bit possessive and might think she was more interested in him than she really was. But the end of the college year was fast approaching, and with it a breaking off of many Granard associations. Her face

was very sober as she rejoined the group in front of the fire; for the fear of not being able to go back next fall was a very poignant one.

“What’s the matter, Pat?” inquired Katharine bluntly. “You look as if you’d just buried your last friend.”

“Haven’t,” replied the girl, perching on the arm of her father’s chair, and twisting his hair into a Kewpie knot.

“Pat always looks like that when it’s time to leave home,” commented Mrs. Randall, after a searching glance at her daughter.

“I don’t mean to appear inhospitable—” began Mr. Randall.

“But you think we should be on our way,” finished Patricia, “so as not to be on the road long after dark.”

“Well, you know it always takes longer than you expect.”

“Yes, darling; we’ll get started. Come, girls, get your things together.”

When they were about twenty-five miles from home, Patricia gazed anxiously ahead at a bank of dark clouds, rapidly spreading all across the sky. “Afraid we’re going to run into a storm, girls.”

“As long as it isn’t a thunder storm,” began Anne, in a worried tone.

“Safe enough in a car if you keep out from under trees,” commented Katharine.

“Can’t, if you happen to be in the woods,” objected Jane, who was watching the clouds gathering so rapidly.

“We’re not going to be in the woods,” said Patricia. “We’ll strike the storm long before we reach them.”

As she spoke a wave of chill wind swept across the country as the darkness shut down like the cover of a box, and huge hailstones began to bounce off the hood and patter on the top of the car with such force that it seemed as if they must break through.

## CHAPTER XIX

### A WEIRD EXPERIENCE

“I’ll have to pull off the road and stop for a while,” declared Patricia. “Trying to drive in this is too nerve racking.”

The shoulder was wide and smooth; so she had no difficulty in finding a safe place to park. In fact, almost any place would have been safe, so far as traffic was concerned; for nearly all drivers stopped to await the end of the storm. For three-quarters of an hour the sky was dark, while hailstones, big and little, pelted down covering the ground with an icy white carpet; then they ceased almost as abruptly as they had begun. The sun was trying to break through the clouds when Patricia started the engine and turned out onto the road again.

“We’ll get as far as we can while it’s pleasant,” she said.

“Why, are we going to have another?” inquired Anne nervously.

“Can’t tell for sure; but the sky looks pretty black ahead of us. Maybe it’s only rain though.”

She was right. Five miles farther on they struck rain which was falling steadily as if it meant to continue indefinitely. The road was crowned and slippery, which made careful driving advisable.

“Good thing your father can’t see us now,” remarked Katharine, as Patricia turned on her headlights.

“Yes, isn’t it? Going to be dark awfully early tonight. I don’t like night driving any better than he does.”

None of the girls liked the prospect of driving the rest of the way in rain and darkness. The little party became a very silent one as time went on, and even Katharine had almost nothing to say. Only the windshield wiper squeaked regularly as it swept back and forth across the wet glass. At Braggs Corners a couple of Boy Scouts stood in the middle of the road directing traffic from Main to Pearl Streets.

“What’s the matter?” inquired Patricia, sticking her head out of the window.

“Bridge washed out. Have to go around by Millersville,” replied the boy.

“At least twenty miles longer than this route,” groaned Patricia; “and not so well traveled. But, no help for it, I guess.”

The new route was indeed a lonesome one—a country road through flat, drenched farm lands, alternating with stretches of dripping woods.

“What’s the matter with the lights, Pat?” inquired Katharine, after they had covered about ten miles.

“Something, certainly, but I don’t know what,” was the worried reply. “They keep going out. I’ll just have to drive as fast as possible while they’re on, and slow down when they go off.”

“Hope they’re on the job while we’re in these woods we’re coming to,” remarked Anne, eyeing the dark tree shapes ahead with no inconsiderable apprehension.

“They probably will,” said Patricia encouragingly; “and I think Millersville must be on the other side of them. I’ll stop there and have the lights fixed.”

The girls sat with bated breath as they plunged into the gloomy woods, but all went well until they had nearly reached the last of the trees. Suddenly the lights flickered out, and there was a terrific bump which jarred startled cries out of all of the passengers.

“What on earth was that?” demanded Jane, as Patricia slowed up.

“A hole, I suppose,” replied Patricia with feigned carelessness.

“Then it must have been an out-growing hole,” said Anne, rubbing her elbow which had come into sharp contact with the window frame. “It felt as if we went over an elephant.”

“More likely the limb of a tree,” declared Katharine.

“Well, whatever it was, it can stay there,” declared Patricia. “I’m not going back to see. There are lights ahead, and I’m quite sure we’re almost in Millersville.”

“Hurrah!” cried Katharine, clapping her hands.

With great care Patricia drove her dark car into the little town, and stopped at the first garage she came to.

“Drive right in,” directed the mechanic who came out to see what they wanted.

Inside the garage, the girls all got out of the car and walked around while Patricia explained her difficulties. After a hasty examination, the man stood up facing Patricia sternly.

“Lady, there’s blood and part of a man’s clothing on your car! You must have run over someone.”

“Of course I didn’t!” began Patricia indignantly; then stopped short, clutching the fender to steady herself.

“Look here!” persisted the man.

Patricia forced herself to walk around to the other side of the car, and saw a strand of grey cloth twisted in the wheel, and stains on the body of her car. They were partly washed off by the rain, but enough remained to show that it was blood.

“That awful bump,” offered Anne incoherently.

“Didn’t feel big enough for a man,” objected Katharine.

“What shall I do?” cried Patricia, biting her lips to keep from crying.

“Better report it at the station, and get an officer to go back with you,” advised

the man. "I'll fix your lights; then you drive on one block and you'll see the station."

"Would you go up with us and tell your part of the story?" begged Patricia, feeling very much in need of male support in such an emergency.

"Sure," was the hearty response. "I'll walk up and be there as soon as you are."

"Never mind, Pat," said Katharine consolingly. "You've got to run over somebody sometime, and now it's over."

Patricia shivered.

The mechanic was as good as his word, and when the frightened girls entered the police station, he was leaning on the desk in earnest conversation with the officer on duty. The few questions which were put to Patricia and her friends were answered so promptly and frankly that they made a most favorable impression; and in twenty minutes, Patricia, was driving back to the woods with a pleasant young policeman sitting beside her. The mechanic and the coroner followed in a small truck.

"There *is* something!" cried Katharine, as they approached the scene of the jolting, and the headlights showed a dark bundle toward one side of the road. Patricia shuddered as she saw that it was the figure of a man. As soon as she had come to a stop, the policeman leaped out and bent over the prone figure. With the help of the coroner he rolled the body onto its back, and made a hasty examination while the white-faced, trembling girls watched from the car.

"You ran over him all right," called the officer.

Patricia gave a frightened gasp and clutched the wheel tightly to save herself from succumbing to a wave of dizziness which swept over her.

"But," he continued, "you didn't kill him. Somebody evidently stabbed and left him here. His partner, no doubt. Probably took whatever he had on him, too."

Patricia breathed a prayer of thanksgiving.

"I thought so," continued the officer, as he hastily ran his fingers through the pockets of the dead man, and found nothing. "Cleaned out."

“We’d better get him on the truck and take him to the morgue,” said the coroner. “Give us a hand, Jones,” to the mechanic. “Drive ahead a little, lady, and give us more room.”

Patricia moved on a few feet and discovered that there was not space enough in that particular spot to turn around; so she proceeded slowly until she came to a place where the trees were a little farther back from the road.

“Think you can make it?” inquired Jane, lowering the window to watch the tree trunks on her side of the car.

“By going off the road a bit; it looks fairly level here.”

It took some maneuvering to get the car headed in the opposite direction, and Patricia’s arms ached before the feat was finally accomplished. Suddenly she stopped the machine, opened the door, and jumped out.

“What on earth is the matter now?” called Jane, sliding over the driver’s seat and sticking her head out of the open door.

Patricia, who was stooping over something a few feet ahead, in the glare of the headlights, made no reply.

“Don’t tell me there’s another man!” wailed Anne, covering her face.

“No, no!” assured Katharine, patting Anne soothingly. “Nothing so big as that. What did you find, Pat?” as the girl ran back to her companions.

“Look!” she cried, stumbling into her seat, and holding up a glistening object.

“A watch!” exclaimed the girls in chorus.

“Yes, and it’s Mrs. Brock’s grandfather’s watch!” Her words fairly tumbled over one another in her excitement. “At least it answers to the description given in the papers.”

“Oh, Pat, you lucky girl!” ejaculated Jane, hugging her.

“It was right under the headlights. The man’s pal must have dropped it!”

“Heavens! Maybe he’s still around here!” shuddered Anne, as a dire thought occurred to her.

“Never thought of that!” admitted Patricia, starting the car again.

“Never fear!” asserted Katharine. “A criminal may return to the scene of his crime, but he never stays there.”

“Better go back and tell the men, Pat,” advised Jane sensibly.

In a minute or two the girls were tumbling out of the car, all talking at once to the officer who was standing in the road waiting for them to return. The body had been placed in the truck, and the coroner and Jones were ready to start off.

“One at a time!” pleaded Policeman Tyne, covering his ears with his big hands.

The other three girls stopped immediately, and allowed Patricia to tell the story without interruption.

“Must have lost this when he dodged into the woods,” remarked the coroner, who, with Jones, had left the truck and rejoined the group.

“Suppose perhaps he’s keeping under cover not too far from here,” said the officer.

“Going in the woods to look for him?” inquired the coroner.

“Not the least use in the world,” offered Jones promptly. “You’d never find your way around in there at night. It’s bad enough in the daytime. I got lost in there once. You’d just be a target for him, officer,” he added, as Tyne hesitated.

“He’s probably miles away by now, anyhow. We have no means of knowing when the crime was committed. We’ll go back, I guess, and I’ll make my report; then all surrounding towns and roads will be watched. Ready, girls?”

“Congratulations, Pat!” said Anne, generously, as they started off. “I’m awfully glad that you’ll get the reward.”

“I don’t know—” began Patricia doubtfully, watching the road closely.



“You will,” said the policeman. “You found it. Of course it will be held up for a while until after the investigation, but then you can claim it. Maybe there’ll be a reward for that fellow, too,” nodding toward the truck. “I’m pretty sure he’s Crack Mayne.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Patricia. “He’s—” then stopped abruptly.

“He’s what?” demanded Frank Tyne suspiciously.

Patricia forced an unsteady laugh, then told the story of Jack’s and her adventure in the woods. The man shook with amusement over the trooper’s mistake.

“So they took you for ‘Angel’ and your friend for Crack!” he chuckled. “Wait till I tell the boys that story.”

“Who on earth is ‘Crack’ and what did he do?” demanded Katharine.

“He’s an A-1 burglar, Miss. Wanted for lots of jobs, but he’s so d— blamed clever that nobody’s been able to lay hands on him. They say he comes of a good family; sort of black sheep, you know. Somebody said he has a sister living in Granard; of course that may be just talk. He was in town a couple of times last winter; that we know.”

“Lock up your class pin, Anne,” laughed Jane, as Anne’s eyes grew bigger and bigger.

“Yes, he might try the dorm next,” giggled Patricia.

“I have a horror of burglars. Imagine! Waking up to find one in your room. Ugh!” shuddered Anne.

“But he’s dead, you geese!” Katharine reminded them.

“That’s so,” sighed Anne with such evident relief that they all laughed.

“I’ll bet that’s who Craig was looking for,” thought Patricia, as she made the turn into Millersville for the second time.

“How much do you suppose it will be?” asked Katharine suddenly.

“What?”

“The reward, of course.”

The girls laughed a bit hysterically; for the events of the afternoon and evening had been a severe strain on the nerves of everyone. The truck turned down a side street, and as they reached the station the officer got out without waiting for Patricia to come to a full stop.

“Good luck, girls!” he cried, as he slammed the door.

“I’m hoping,” said Patricia soberly, as she put on speed, “that the reward will be enough to help me come back here next year.”

“Why, you’ve just *got* to come back!” declared Anne emphatically. “We can’t possibly get along without you.”

“I should say not!” agreed Katharine, reaching forward to pinch Patricia’s ear affectionately.

“I do hope you’ll get enough to be of considerable help,” said Jane earnestly.

“Time will tell,” replied Patricia, a bit shakily.

It was wonderful of the girls to be so anxious to keep her in the dear old Gang! She had known, of course, that they liked her; but she had never realized how much until she saw how shocked they were at the possibility of her not being able to return next September.

The rain stopped, and traffic was light; so they were able to make good time all the rest of the way. It was about eight-thirty when they drew up in front of Arnold Hall.

“Let’s walk down to the Coffee Shoppe and get some supper before we go in,” proposed Katharine. “If the girls once get hold of us we’ll never get out again; and I’m starved.”

“A good idea,” agreed Jane.

“Are you going to tell the Gang all about our adventures?” inquired Anne, as

they walked the short distance down the street.

“Why, I thought so,” replied Patricia. “Why not?”

“Just as well,” counseled Jane. “They’ll see it in the papers, or hear it some way; and they would think it queer that we said nothing about it.”

“There’s Rhoda!” exclaimed Katharine, as they entered the restaurant. “Let’s go and sit with her. She looks lonesome.”

“Hello, Rhoda,” said Jane, sliding into the seat beside the surprised maid, while the other three girls squeezed into the seat on the opposite side of the table. “Haven’t finished, have you?”

“No; just beginning.”

“Good!” approved Anne. “Eat slowly until we get our supper.”

Rhoda obediently laid down her knife and fork, while the girls ordered; then she asked: “Did you miss your supper at the Hall?”

“I’ll say we did!” said Katharine fervently.

“We had the most exciting time!” cried Anne.

“And Rhoda,” interrupted Patricia, leaning across the table to whisper confidentially—“Just think; I found Mrs. Brock’s watch!”

“Miss Randall!” gasped the maid. “Wherever—”

“Listen!” And Patricia plunged into the story, aided by various comments from her companions. Rhoda’s eyes widened, and a deep flush crept across her face as the tale reached the discovery of the dead man.

“How—awful!” she faltered. “What—what did he look like?”

“We didn’t look at him,” responded Katharine; “but the officer thought—” she broke off abruptly, silenced by a sharp touch of Patricia’s sturdy shoe.

“We were scared to death,” interrupted Patricia hurriedly, “and glad to have a chance to leave the scene for a few minutes. And wasn’t it lucky that I had to go

farther on to turn around?" Rapidly, excitedly, she proceeded to the finding of the watch.

"Now let's eat," proposed Katharine, when Patricia paused for breath at the end of the tale.

Rhoda merely played with her food, and drank two cups of strong coffee, while she waited for the girls to finish their meal. Then they all strolled slowly back to the Hall together. The moon had come up, and was shining through the lacy foliage of the trees, making delicate patterns on the walks.

"Why the kick?" whispered Katharine to Patricia as they fell back of the others, to let some people pass in the opposite direction.

"We don't know for sure who the man was," said Patricia; "and it seems to me it's better not to mention names. Let that come out in the papers first."

"You're probably right, Miss Prudence," laughed Katharine; "but don't go quite so heavy on the kicks hereafter."

There was bedlam in Arnold Hall when the girls told their story to the Alley Gang and Mrs. Vincent in the big parlor. Students from the second floor hung over the stair railings to listen in; and before the subject was exhausted, Ted Carter, Craig Denton, and Jack Dunn walked in. Then everything had to be gone over again.

Suddenly the outside door was flung open impatiently, and Mrs. Brock walked in and stood viewing the crowd.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE REWARD

For an instant nobody spoke or moved; then Mrs. Vincent got up and crossed the room to greet the unexpected visitor.

“Won’t you come in and sit down, Mrs. Brock?” she asked, pulling forward a rocking chair which Katharine had just vacated.

“Not going to stay, thank you,” was the crisp response. “Just came after my watch.”

“How the dickens did she know that it had been found?” whispered Anne to Frances, who was standing beside her on the opposite side of the room.

“Can’t imagine,” began Frances; then stopped short, as Jane, who had heard the question, looked back and formed the one word “Rhoda” with her lips.

“Well, where is it?” demanded the old lady, looking at Patricia as if she suspected her of having sold it for old gold.

“It’s at the police station in Millersville, Mrs. Brock,” replied Patricia.

“That’s fine!” commented the old lady sarcastically. “Whatever possessed you to let it out of your hands?”

“Why, I had to,” faltered Patricia, somewhat timidly. This fierce old lady was enough to intimidate a far bolder person than Patricia.

“Had to! Had to!” began the caller, when Jack spoke up in order to shield Patricia a little.

“The police take charge of all articles until after a case is settled.”

“Oh, they do, do they? And who are you?”

“Jack Dunn,” replied the boy, flushing at the bluntness of the question.

Mrs. Brock gazed at him fixedly for a full minute; then wheeled about and started for the door.

“Won’t you stay a while, and have a cup of tea with us?” asked Mrs. Vincent hospitably.

“No, thanks,” was the curt reply. “I get tea enough at home.”

The door opened and closed, and she was gone.

“Did you ever!” exclaimed Katharine.

“Never!” responded Jane promptly.

“Not a word about the reward, either,” lamented Anne.

“Hope she doesn’t forget all about it after she gets the watch back,” remarked Frances.

“Why, Frances,” interposed Patricia reprovingly.

“Well, she’s so queer, who can tell what she’s likely to do.”

“Let’s forget about her and have that tea you mentioned a minute ago, Mrs. Vincent,” suggested Ted.

“And while you’re getting it ready, we’ll run out and get some cakes or something to go with it,” proposed Craig. “Come along, fellows.”

Mrs. Vincent good-naturedly waived the ten-thirty rule, and the rest of the evening passed happily. So exhausted was everyone by excitement and merriment, that heads were hardly on the pillows when their owners were sound asleep. Only Rhoda tossed restlessly, and fearfully awaited the morrow.

Monday morning's paper contained a full account of the discovery of "Crack" Mayne on a lonely detour by several Granard students who were returning to college after a week end out of town.

"Bless his heart!" cried Patricia, as she read rapidly through the article.

"Whose!" inquired Anne. "Crack's?"

"No; Craig's. I begged him to keep our names out of the paper, but I was afraid he wouldn't. You know reporters just can't help using everything they can get hold of."

"He owed you something, I should think, for telephoning him the story right away for his paper. He got a—what do they call it?"

"Scoop!" said Patricia, smiling at the recollection of Craig's fervent, "You darling girl!" when she had called him up from the Hall as soon as they got in the night before. "He was especially sporting about it, since he was on the trail of Crack himself when we met him at home."

"He was? Now if he'd only come with us instead of going by train!"

"That's what he said."

The evening paper was not so considerate, and the names of all the girls were mentioned, along with the finding of the famous watch by Patricia Randall who would, the paper stated, receive the reward offered by Mrs. Brock. All four girls would share in the \$500 reward offered for the capture of the burglar.

"Capture is good!" jeered Katharine, as the Gang was poring over the paper in Jane's room. "Anybody could capture a dead man."

"Well," said Frances belligerently, "if Pat hadn't run over him you'd never—"

The rest of her remark was drowned by a burst of laughter; for Frances' hostility was as funny as that of a small kitten who arches her back at imaginary foes.

A couple of days later, when the Gang came in from lunch, Rhoda handed Patricia an envelope.

“This was left for you this morning,” she explained.

“Thank you, Rhoda,” said Patricia, smiling in her usual friendly fashion; but there was no answering smile on the maid’s grave face.

“What’s the matter with Rhoda?” asked Anne, as they went on down the hall to Patricia’s room.

“I don’t know; she isn’t a bit like herself, and sometimes she looks as if she’d been crying. I wish I knew what’s troubling her.”

“Yes; perhaps we could do something.”

But what was disturbing Rhoda would never be revealed to the inmates of Arnold Hall. Little did they suspect that “Crack” Mayne was their maid’s brother; that he had been the one to rob Mrs. Brock of her money and jewelry; and that, maddened by his sister’s refusal to give him access to the Hall, he had, in a spirit of revenge, set fire to it. That was information which Rhoda would keep strictly to herself. Sorrow for her brother’s violent death was tempered by relief that no longer need she shiver with fear each night as she wondered where he was and what he was doing.

“Open it quick,” begged Anne, when they were safely inside Patricia’s room.

Tearing open the envelope, she drew out a sheet of note paper upon which was written in an old-fashioned cramped hand: “The promised reward for finding my watch.” Inside the double sheet were laid five ten dollar bills.

“Congratulations!” cried Anne, jumping up from the bed and flinging open the door. “Girls,” she called to the corridor at large, “Pat’s got her reward!”

From all the rooms on that floor flocked various members of the Gang to gather joyfully around Patricia, exclaiming over the crisp new bills as happily as if they were the property of each individual there.

“You’ll have to go over and thank Mrs. Brock, Pat,” declared Katharine mischievously.

“I shall express my gratitude in a very formal, but sincere, note,” replied



Patricia, tucking the bills into her hand bag.

“How are you going to spend it!” inquired Clarice, who was wandering restlessly around the room, examining articles on dressers and desks.

“I’m not sure. Probably lay it aside for a while.”

“You might donate it to the scholarship fund, and then this house wouldn’t have to take part in the annual entertainment to raise money for it,” suggested Lucile.

“Don’t you do it!” was Frances’ prompt veto. “Spend it on yourself.”

“Speaking of our stunt for the 25th, we’ve got to have a meeting and decide what we *are* going to do,” declared Jane firmly.

“Let Pat and Jack do that dance they put on the other night,” suggested Anne.

“The very thing! It could be part of a ballet,” agreed Katharine.

“Will you?” asked Jane, as Patricia looked doubtful.

“If Jack will; but maybe he won’t want to.”

“Why not?” demanded Betty.

“I don’t know; but you can never tell what ideas a fellow has about that sort of thing.”

“Well, I hope he agrees to it; for you’re both a peach of a dancer,” commented Katharine.

“Kay! Your English!” objected Frances.

“I don’t care. You know what I mean.”

“Ask Jack today, will you, Pat?” asked Jane. “Then we can build up the rest of our stunt around you two. We’ll need some of the other boys, too; so Jack need not fear being conspicuous.”

“I’ll see him after Shakespeare class,” promised Patricia.

She was as good as her word, and reported to the committee that evening that Jack had accepted, after much urging. Rehearsals began immediately amid great secrecy; for each group tried to keep its contribution to the entertainment a secret until the night it was presented. Besides Patricia, only Anne, Katharine, Hazel and Frances of the Alley Gang were to take part, with Jane as director of the Arnold Hall production.

“There are loads of better actors than we are among the girls upstairs,” was Jane’s reply to Frances’ protest at not having all the Gang in the affair. “And it’s only right to use as many as we can. They think we’re too prominent in the house as it is, and it wouldn’t look well to keep the whole show to ourselves. They have exactly as much right to be in it as we have.”

Frances pouted, flounced out of the room, and disappeared for the rest of the evening.

“What’s the matter with her?” inquired Betty, who had collided with Frances in the doorway.

“Peeved because the whole Gang isn’t to be used in our act.”

“I must confess I thought you had your nerve with you to leave Clarice out,” commented Betty, helping herself to a piece of candy from a box on Jane’s dresser.

“I suppose I have brought down Mrs. Vincent’s disapproval on myself; but while I have nothing against Clarice personally, it seems to me hardly fitting for a girl who is always behind in her studies, and who has been quite so talked about, to represent Arnold Hall in the big entertainment of the year.”

“Jane always stands by her guns,” remarked Anne admiringly, as she shook out the costume she was working on.

“How well I know that,” laughed Ruth. “I have yet to see her back down from any stand she has taken.”

“Well, I hate people who are always changing their minds,” admitted Jane, gazing critically at a poster she was making for the entertainment. “Make a decision, and then stick to it. That’s my motto.”

Nemesis, the goddess of vengeance, who the ancient Greeks believed listened to the boasts of mortals and promptly punished them, must have made a heavy mark against Jane's name just then.

## CHAPTER XXI

### PAT'S SACRIFICE

“But, Dean Walters, she does not seem really bad.”

“There have been many complaints of her, Mrs. Vincent, and her actions are causing most unfavorable comment outside as well as inside college circles. It is not desirable for the institution to retain such a girl.”

“It seems to me that the crowd she was in with for a while is largely responsible. I feel quite sure that Clarice was not entirely to blame in that last affair.”

“Might it not have been better to have verified your suspicions at the time, and brought them to my attention, instead of waiting until now to mention them?”

“Well—she—she naturally would not wish to betray her friends—and I—I—”

“Be that as it may, one more escapade will automatically sever Miss Tyson’s connections with Granard College. I leave it to you to make my decision known to the young lady.”

Patricia drew a long breath of relief as the two women left the library alcove next to the one in which she had been an unwilling eavesdropper.

Not long ago, a noisy party on the top floor, one night when the chaperon was at a concert, had brought a shower of complaints from private houses surrounding Arnold Hall. Exactly who else beside Clarice had attended the spread, no one knew; for she was the only one who owned up when the matter had been made the object of a very solemn house meeting a couple of days later. The affair had crystallized Clarice’s standing in the Hall; for the law-abiding students felt that the honor and reputation of their house had been tarnished. Secretly they wished

that the ringleader might be sent to room elsewhere, but gossip whispered that the chaperon was especially interested in Clarice by reason of a long-standing friendship with one of the girl's relatives.

Patricia was sure, however, that underneath the veneer of lawlessness, the girl was fine and true. She was the only one who had "owned up" and she wouldn't divulge the names of the other culprits. Too bad she got in with that crowd of girls who roomed outside of the dormitories. They were less hampered by rules and regulations, and gladly welcomed Clarice with her generous allowance and her readiness for all kinds of fun. She was always easily led by anyone who was friendly toward her, and on several occasions she had been taken advantage of by the crowd. It was a pity that a girl who was capable of doing good work, and possessed of qualities which, if developed, would make her amount to something, should be playing around with those idlers who had come to college principally for a good time. Somebody really ought to rescue her.

"I suppose I might undertake the job," thought Patricia reluctantly. "Clarice responds to flattery and petting like a pussy cat. Yet even if I wanted to (which I really don't) I haven't the time. It would mean constant attention, and would probably ruin my standings."

Patricia shook herself, as if to be rid of the whole troublesome business, and resolutely opened her book. Next day's assignment was difficult, and required perfect concentration.

"One more escapade—sever connections—"

Bother! Why need those relentless words ring in *her* ears? It was the duty of Mrs. Vincent, as chaperon, to advise and guard the girls under her care. Inefficient little Dolly! The only methods she knew how to use were reprimands and warnings, neither of which would do in this case. The redemption of Clarice must be effected by one who would win and hold her affection; who could, and would, detach her from the outside crowd, and unite her to the girls from Arnold Hall.

Patricia gave up further attempts to study, and sat arguing with herself until a bell rang and the janitor came in to close the building. With a start she packed up her books, hurried out, and walked briskly across the campus in the direction of the Hall. The girls, unless special permission had been granted, were expected to

be in the house at ten o'clock, and it was within a quarter of that hour. A passing automobile forced her to pause at the corner where a street light clearly revealed the faces of the occupants of the car: Clarice and Bert King!

Quick anger filled Patricia's heart. How could anyone, with any sense at all, go right out on top of a warning? She could not have obtained permission, because all her privileges had been used up. Calender Street led directly out to Driftwood Inn, where there was a dance every Thursday night. Evidently that was their destination. No use bothering one's head about a girl who was quite so reckless. A sheer waste of time and energy!

Thursday night? This was the evening that the chaperons played bridge at the Faculty Club. Possibly Mrs. Vincent had gone directly there from the library. In that case, very likely she had not yet seen Clarice. That put a different face on the matter. Poor Clarice! Rushing so gayly away to the Inn for a good time, she would return to find herself expelled. Hardly fair; yet the Dean had said distinctly that one more escapade, and she always kept her word. In view of her recent reprimand, Mrs. Vincent would not be likely to spare Clarice this time.

Mechanically Patricia entered the Hall and walked down the empty corridor to her own room. She was alone tonight; for Betty had gone home for the week end a day early. Mechanically she undressed, her brain busy creating and discarding ways and means of shielding the truant.

There was little doubt about Clarice's ability to enter the house and get to her room unseen and unheard. That she had accomplished before by secret methods of her own. The greatest danger lay in room inspection, recently inaugurated. Every night, now, Mrs. Vincent made a tour of rooms about eleven o'clock to see if any of her charges were missing. In all probability, after the Dean's recent hint that she had not been sufficiently on the alert, tonight would be the time for greater thoroughness than usual.

If there were only someone who could be placed in Clarice's bed until after the ceremony had been concluded. No one of the girls, of course, would risk a demerit by absence from her own room, especially for Clarice; they disapproved of her too strongly.

Her own hair was almost exactly the shade of Clarice's. There seemed no way except to sacrifice herself to the cause, and she rebelled against it.

“It is being deceitful, and that is wrong,” admonished an inner voice.

“It’s being very charitable,” contradicted another little voice. “By doing this, you’ll give Clarice a chance to complete her year’s work.”

“And next year,” came back the sneering suggestion, “she’ll act just the same as ever.”

“No such thing! You are going to help her keep away from undesirable companions, and develop her real self.”

The fact that she might not be back next year herself was entirely lost track of in the conflict between the opposing impulses.

When she was all ready for bed, Patricia opened her door quietly, paused to listen, then slipped noiselessly along the corridor to Clarice’s room. Cautiously turning the knob, she slipped into the dark room. Safe so far. Rolling herself in the bed clothes, she turned her face to the wall and burrowed deep into the pillows. Shaking with excitement, and too much disturbed to sleep, she lay listening to the trolley cars and automobiles which passed and repassed on the busy street, and to the little movements and noises inside. She heard Mrs. Vincent come in and go directly to her own room. Finally the clock in the hall sounded its soft chimes, then gave forth eleven measured strokes. Like a cuckoo, Mrs. Vincent promptly emerged from her room and crossed the hall to the table where the register lay. Presently, Patricia heard her put down the heavy book and start along the corridor. Now she was at Lucile’s door; now Anne’s; then Patricia’s own. A pause. Quick step around the room. Return to the register. Silence. Then the steps re-crossed the hall and stopped at Clarice’s door. The knob turned softly. Patricia held her breath. Suppose, after all, she should be caught, and Clarice’s absence discovered! The ray of a little flash light wavered over her head, darted about the room, and—disappeared. Half an hour later, Mrs. Vincent was in bed, fast asleep; then Patricia crept noiselessly back to her own room.

The students had just returned from breakfast the following morning, when Mrs. Vincent called Patricia into her room.

“Miss Randall,” she began, without preamble, “did you have permission to go

out last night?”

“No, Mrs. Vincent.”

“You were not in your room at room inspection.”

Patricia was silent. The chaperon looked surprised.

“Where were you?” she asked at last.

“That I am not at liberty to tell you; but I can truthfully say that I was not doing anything of which I should be ashamed.”

“You realize, of course, that I shall have to report this to the Dean?”

“Yes, Mrs. Vincent.”

Baffled, rather annoyed, and wholly puzzled, the chaperon dismissed her.

By dinner time that evening the whole college seethed with the report that Patricia Randall had been required to withdraw from participation in the spring entertainment which was to be given the following Saturday. Little groups were gathered here and there excitedly discussing the astounding news.

“My dear, Patricia was out without permission last night—”

No one knew where!

“Her room was empty at inspection.”

“Dean Walters and Mrs. Vincent are furious because they couldn’t get her to say where she was.”

“Jack Dunn’s terribly upset, because they say she had one of the most important dance numbers with him!”

“Yes, and nobody else knows how to do it; and it’s too late to coach anyone.”

“It is a shame! That part will just have to be omitted.”



“What *do* you suppose possessed Patricia, of all people, to start breaking rules, and then be so secretive about it?”

In the little reception room of Arnold Hall sat the object of their discussions.

“I feel just as bad as you do, Jack,” she was saying to the serious-faced youth opposite her; “and I’d explain if I could; but I really can’t. The worst of it is cutting you out of the dance.”

“What about yourself?”

“Oh, that doesn’t matter—much.”

Patricia was examining the pleats in her skirt, laying each one carefully into its exact crease. If only she wouldn’t feel so like crying every time she talked about the entertainment. She had never been in anything as large as this before, and was looking forward to inviting some people down from home. How glad she was that she had held up the invitations!

“There *is* a way,” she continued, as soon as she could control her voice, “that the dance could be given just the same, if you will only agree.”

“I won’t make a solo of it, because it would be a complete frost. Anyhow, I don’t want to go on without you. I need you for inspiration,” he added, with a mischievous grin.

“It’s nice of you to put it that way, but your desire to make the affair a success should furnish enough ‘inspiration.’ The omission of that dance leaves an awful gap in the performance.”

“Don’t I know it?” gloomily.

“Well, then, ask Clarice Tyson to take my place.”

As if shot, the boy sprang from his chair. If Patricia had hurled a bomb at his head, he couldn’t have been much more shocked.

“Nothing doing!” he exclaimed violently.

“Hush! Don’t get so excited. Sit down and listen to me.”

The look of mingled astonishment and disgust on his face was so funny that Patricia almost had to laugh. Just in time, she succeeded in choking back her amusement. This was not a time for mirth; the case required diplomatic handling.

“In the first place, Clarice is perfectly familiar with that dance; and since she is a born dancer, she won’t embarrass you by ignorance and awkwardness.”

“She’ll not have a chance to,” muttered the boy.

“Don’t say that,” pleaded Patricia. “Jack, we’ve been good pals for some time now; can’t you do this for me, if we must put it on a purely personal basis? There is a special reason why I very much want to place Clarice before the public in a new role and under different auspices. Your position in the college is so solid, your reputation so—so irreproachable, that what you do or sponsor meets with the complete approval of the Powers-that-Be.”

“Baloney; but I’m beginning, I think, to see through your scheme.”

“And you will do it?” Eagerly the girl leaned forward and waited for his reply.

“I can’t take her by the hand and just drag her onto the stage with me Saturday night,” objected Jack irritably.

“Of course not. Tell Jane you know a girl who is well able to take my place, and ask if you may substitute her. Jane is so busy and worried over the affair that she’ll be delighted, and probably will ask no questions.”

Jack considered the question gravely, while Patricia watched his face hopefully.

“Will you, Jack?” she begged. “Please say you will.”

“All right,” he agreed gruffly. “I’m not at all keen, I must confess, at appearing so publicly with the celebrated Clarice; but if you say so, it must be done. Probably will cause a tempest in a teapot, but—”

“I’ll take care of that,” cried Patricia joyfully; “and thanks a lot. I’ll do something big for you some day.”

Jack drew from his pocket a small note book and scribbled a few lines on one of its pages.

“What are you doing?” asked Patricia curiously.

“Just making a note of that promise.”

At that moment the clock struck half past ten.

“I must get out of here before I’m put out,” said Jack, getting up and starting for the hall. At the outside door, he paused.

“By the way, Pat, how does Clarice happen to know that dance?”

“I taught it to her this afternoon,” was the startling reply, as Patricia closed the door.

On her way to her own room, she stuck her head into Jane’s.

“Jack knows a girl he can get to sub for me Saturday night,” she said. “Will it be all right?”

Jane jumped up with a sigh of relief. “I’ll say so!” she ejaculated. “Oh, boy! How worried I’ve been at the idea of leaving out that dance!”

“I’m so very sorry to have made all this trouble for everybody,” faltered Patricia, with tears in her eyes; “but I just couldn’t help it.”

“Don’t, dear!” whispered Jane, putting both arms around the girl. “The Gang’s back of you, whatever you do.”

“It’s good of you to say that, especially when I can’t clear myself.”

“Maybe later on something will happen to clear things up for you,” suggested Ruth.

Pat looked at her quickly, wondering if the girl suspected anything; but Ruth, who was placidly combing her hair, smiled at her in the mirror so innocently that her fears were allayed.

“Pat’s shielding some one,” declared Ruth, after Patricia had gone. “We’ll have to find out who it is.”

“Oh, Ruthie,” groaned Jane, distractedly, “don’t suggest my doing anything until after this blamed entertainment is over.”

Ruth said no more, but she made up her mind that Pat *must* be cleared.

## CHAPTER XXII

### CLARICE

Rehearsals for the ballet in which Jack and his partner were featured had ended before Patricia was banned; so it was not until Saturday night that Jane discovered who the sub was to be.

“What is *she* doing here?” whispered the harried director to Frances, who had sufficiently recovered from her annoyance to help with the make-up.

“Who?” inquired Frances, busy laying out grease, paint, and powder.

“Clarice. She’s out there on the stage as large as life. We can’t have any unnecessary people back here.”

Just then Jack approached his partner, and as they practiced a couple of difficult steps together, the awful truth dawned upon Jane. Though usually slow to anger, her temper suddenly flared up at the trick which had been played on her.

“I think that’s just contemptible!” she exclaimed, rapping a brush sharply on the table.

“What on earth is the matter?” inquired Ruth, who had just entered with an armload of costumes.

“For Pat and Jack to have given Clarice a part in the dance without telling me.”

“But,” said Ruth, “you didn’t ask Pat who was to take her place. I wondered at the time.”

“I never dreamed of its being Clarice! I thought it was some friend of Jack’s.”

“I have an idea,” cried Frances. “It isn’t for nothing Pat’s turned over her boy friend to Clarice. It’s my opinion that it is Clarice Pat is shielding.”

“What makes you think that?” asked Ruth.

“I just have a hunch, and I’m going to ferret out the truth.”

“What’s the use of that now?” asked Jane.

“Lots of use; for it would restore Pat to the good graces of—”

“But we couldn’t go out and squeal on someone else,” objected Jane.

“For cats’ sake, girls, stop talking and get busy,” pleaded the harassed director. “We’ll never be ready for the curtain at eight-fifteen.”

It was not until the very end of the long program that the Arnold Hall girls went on. A series of dances made up the scene, which was in a forest. The dance specialty by Jack and Clarice was just over when little Sylvia, the niece of Dean Walters—as a lost princess—danced to the front of the stage.

Excited by the crowd, she flung out her arms and fluffy skirts as she came forward. A sudden whirl brought her up against a torch held by one of the woodsmen, and in an instant she was ablaze. Like a flash, Clarice upset a huge jar of daisies and rolled the child back and forth on the soaked rug. While the curtain was hastily rung down, Clarice picked up the child and tried to soothe her. The fluffy dress was a wet, charred rag, but Sylvia was unharmed.

“Darling,” choked Dean Walters, snatching the child, “it was the quickest—” she began. Then turning to Clarice, she said, “Come in to see me tomorrow.”

“Isn’t it lucky I had to give up the part!” said Pat to Jack. “I should never have known what to do. And since the kiddie wasn’t harmed, how wonderfully it will help to reinstate Clarice.”

Frances, who was in the woodsmen’s hut just back of them, heard no more; but this much was enough.

“Clarice,” cried Mrs. Vincent, “are you burned at all?”

“Not a bit,” replied the girl, a bit shaky, now the excitement was over.

“What ever could I have said to Albert—to your father—if any harm had come to you!”

“Well, none did,” said Clarice, starting for the dressing room.

“She’s tired and excited,” said Jane kindly, as the chaperon’s lips quivered and her troubled eyes followed the progress of her favorite across the stage.

“Did you ever know anybody to act so quickly?” demanded Mrs. Vincent proudly. “Most people didn’t know what had happened. I guess the Dean won’t be quite so ready to—” Realizing suddenly that she was saying too much in her excitement, she stopped abruptly and hurried off the stage.

The following day, Jane, Anne, Frances, and Ruth were sitting on a bench in Reservoir Park, facing the west. A beautiful sunset was dyeing the sky a brilliant crimson and gold. They had gone for a walk after dinner, and now were resting and discussing the events of the preceding evening.

“It’s very clear to me,” Frances was saying emphatically, “that the Dean must have decided upon something drastic regarding Clarice; that Pat knew about it, and got into trouble helping her out.”

“And then thought it might show the Dean that the girls liked and trusted the real Clarice if she had a big part in the show,” continued Anne, tracing a pattern in the dust of the path with a small twig.

“I know that she, herself, taught Clarice that dance,” contributed Ruth, who was industriously pulling a daisy apart, meanwhile saying to herself, “‘He loves me; he loves me not.’ Clarice told me so when I pressed the question last night as to where she had learned it.”

Jane, who had been listening silently with thoughtfully knitted brows and a puzzled expression in her honest grey eyes, now sprang up and faced the three on the bench.

“I think I have it!”

“What?” demanded Ruth in alarm. “Not *measles!*” In one of the dormitories there was a mild epidemic of that disease of childhood.

“Oh, no,” laughed Jane, “but listen! The night Pat was missing from her room, I was in the bathroom between ten-thirty and eleven. You remember, Ruthie, I told you that the salad we had at dinner made me feel sick?”

Ruth nodded.

“While I was in there, I heard someone cross the hall and go very softly into Clarice’s room—it’s right next to the bathroom, you know. It didn’t sound like Clarice, for she puts her heels down so hard; and the person was very quiet. At the time, I didn’t pay much attention, or try to figure it out; I was feeling pretty sick. But since you’ve been talking, this suddenly all came back to me. Do you know what I think? I’ll bet that Pat discovered Clarice was out for a good time somewhere, and took her room so her absence wouldn’t be noticed. Their hair is about the same shade, and in the dark it would be easy to—”

“Jane! Jane!” cried Anne joyfully. “I believe you *have* solved the puzzle.”

“Listen,” Frances broke in, “to what I overheard Pat say last night!” And she repeated what she heard of Patricia’s conversation with Jack.

“I’ll bet the Dean intended to drop Clarice if she got another demerit,” said Ruth, when Frances had finished.

“And it fits right in with what Dolly started to say last night,” said Jane, nodding with satisfaction.

“Now all we need to know is whether Clarice was out after hours last Thursday,” concluded Anne; “and when we get home, I’m going to ask her.”

“And if she was?” queried Jane.

“Then—I think—” replied Anne slowly, “that I shall tell her what we suspect. I was with Clarice quite a bit the first of last year, and got to know her fairly well. There’s more good in her than one would suspect, and she’s the last person who’d let anybody else take her punishments.”

“But, Anne,” protested Jane, as they rose to go. The brilliant colors of the sky



had faded, and it was beginning to get dark. “Won’t you be undoing all that Pat tried to bring about?”

“No, for the Dean had a long talk with Clarice this afternoon, and they understand each other perfectly. I imagine that Clarice was quite frank about herself, for she told me the Dean was just lovely to her, and regretted their not having understood each other before. Clarice has pretty much of a crush, and she’ll do anything for a person she loves. You see, Clarice’s mother died a number of years ago, and Mr. Tyson has lived in boarding houses and hotels ever since. He adored Clarice, and simply spoiled her, until she became very headstrong. Then he decided to send her to college in the hope that its discipline and associations would sort of make her over—”

“But, Anne,” interrupted Jane; “if you knew all this, why didn’t you tell us before? We might have helped, instead of sitting in judgment on her so often.”

“I didn’t know *all* of it until this morning, and you’d never guess who told me. *Dolly.*”

“Dolly!” exclaimed the other girls simultaneously.

“You remember the break she made last night about ‘Albert’? Well, I think she wanted to explain that a bit; so she waited for me after church, and on the way home told me what I have just repeated to you. She met Mr. Tyson and Clarice at the seashore, somewhere in Massachusetts, a couple of years ago; and I guess, again last summer.”

“Then *that’s* why she’s so fond of Clarice,” remarked Frances; “and I’ll bet my last dollar she’s fond of ‘Albert’ too. Where does he live?”

“Boston.”

“Ah, ha! She gets a letter from Boston every week!” cried Frances triumphantly.

“How do you know?” demanded Jane.

“Have you forgotten that I bring down the mail at noon every day?”

Jane did not reply; for they were by that time at the door of Arnold Hall. As soon as they entered, Anne went in search of Clarice; and nobody saw either of them

again that night.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### SOLUTIONS

The girls of Granard College had finished Monday night's dessert of chocolate blanc mange, and were restlessly waiting for the signal to leave the dining room, when Clarice, who was sitting at the end of the Arnold Hall table, rose quietly and stood facing her companions.

"I've got something to say, girls," she began abruptly, her big black eyes turned on one after another of the members of the Alley Gang, and coming to rest on Patricia. "Last Thursday night I stayed out after hours without permission. Accidentally Pat found it out—also, what I didn't know at the time, that if I got another demerit I'd be dropped from college. Like the good sport she is, she occupied my bed until after inspection that night. You all know what a jam she got into, but I was so dumb that I didn't put two and two together until last night." Clarice's fixed gaze here shifted from Patricia's flushed face to Anne's. The friendly smile which flashed to her from Anne's red lips made her falter for a moment. Quickly, however, she recovered her poise, and continued. "I've seen the Dean, and explained the whole affair to her; as well as to Mrs. Vincent. And, Pat's slate is clean."

Clarice turned from the table, and before the astonished girls could move, had darted out of a side door which was directly behind her. Then pandemonium broke loose.

"Three cheers for Clarice and Pat!" cried Katharine, waving her arms excitedly.

An immediate and hearty response centered the attention of the entire dining room upon the Arnold Hall table; and as the girls left the building they were besieged by the other students to know the cause of the demonstration.

Although examinations loomed in the near future, no one could study in Arnold Hall that evening; everyone was too excited, and too happy, to settle down. The members of the Alley Gang roamed restlessly in and out of one another's rooms, talking incessantly, while sampling the "eats" which had arrived in several boxes from home that day. Patricia had managed to get Clarice for a few moments alone in order to say some things which couldn't be said in public.

"Please don't, Pat," protested the other girl. "I'm so far in debt to you that—"

"But, Clarice," interrupted Patricia, putting her hand forcibly over her friend's mouth to check further talk about indebtedness, "I want to know how things stand with you. You won't be dropped?"

"No, everything's all right. The Dean was lovely, and from now on I'm going to make good."

"I'm so glad," began Patricia, "and I know that you can."

Just then Anne appeared, and announced that Rhoda had a telephone message for Patricia.

Sliding off the porch railing, on which they had been perched, the two girls followed Anne into the house.

"Mrs. Brock would like you to come right over, Miss Randall," said Rhoda, when the trio presented themselves before the Black Book table where the maid was sitting.

"How exciting!" cried Anne. "What do you think she wants?"

"I'll have to go and find out, I suppose," sighed Patricia wearily. The strain of the week was beginning to tell on even her sturdy constitution, and she longed to go to bed.

"Come back as soon as you can," begged Anne, going as far as the door with her, "and tell us all about it. We won't have many more talkfests."

"No; and it makes me just *sick* to think of leaving here the last of next week," whispered Patricia sadly, dashing away a couple of tears.

“Never mind, old dear,” said Anne. “Maybe something will turn up to bring you back next fall.”

When the maid at Big House ushered Patricia onto a large screened porch, she was astonished to see Jack sitting beside a lamp whose soft light illuminated the entire veranda. After brief greetings had been exchanged, Mrs. Brock said abruptly:

“I have a story to tell you children.”

Her visitors exchanged amused glances over the appellation.

“I’ll make it brief; for I know that the reminiscences of old people bore the young. When I was a girl, about your age, I had two very dear chums: one was Mary Pierce.”

Patricia leaned eagerly forward in her chair at the sound of her mother’s maiden name, but Mrs. Brock continued without appearing to notice the girl’s surprise.

“The other,” she went on, “was Gertrude Neal.”

Here Jack started up in astonishment, as he, too, recognized the name of his mother. Again Mrs. Brock went on without a pause.

“That surprises you, for I seem much older than your mothers. As a matter of fact, I was several years older than the other girls, and a long illness a few years ago makes me appear much more ancient than I really am. But to go on with my story. We were very congenial, and almost inseparable.” A smile at some memory flickered across the woman’s face, completely transforming the immobile features with which her listeners were familiar. A look of regret and sadness almost immediately replaced the smile, as she continued:

“Unfortunately, it was too happy a friendship to last. We had a serious misunderstanding, in which I was mostly to blame. In fact the affair was the cause of considerable injustice being suffered by Mary and Gertrude. I’m not going into details—it’s over now, and they probably forgot all about it; but anyhow, we separated, and I have never seen either of them since. An aunt took me abroad, and one thing or another detained me there until last year. My return revived old memories and affections; yet my pride kept me from going directly

to my friends. I felt, however, that I wanted to do something to make up, at least in part, for the trouble I had caused; so I decided to make you children a little gift and at the same time find out what you were like. I bought Big House because it was located so close to the college my father attended, then sent you the money for the year's expenses.

"Rhoda, my secretary and companion, I managed to place in Arnold Hall as a maid, so she could give me all kinds of information about Patricia; and I hired a private detective, Norman Young, to do my secretarial work and at the same time spy on Jack. The game is played out now, and I hope the year has been as satisfactory to you as it has to me. Wait a minute," as Patricia again tried to speak. "I have an offer to make. I'm going to get a car; for I find I cannot walk as much as I used to; and if Jack cares to take the position as chauffeur in return for his next year's college expenses, I fancy we can come to a satisfactory agreement. The hours would not interfere at all with college work, and," she paused and looked questioningly at the boy, "you won't have to live with me."

"Mrs. Brock, I don't know what to say, except to thank you for all your kindness to me, and to accept gratefully your most generous offer. I—"

"All right then; that's settled," interrupted Mrs. Brock, turning toward Patricia. "I need someone to look after my library and read to me. If you could fit that work in with your college duties, I shall be responsible for *your* next year's expenses. Of course you'll live at Arnold Hall."

"Mrs. Brock," began Patricia; then much to everyone's distress she burst into tears. "If you only knew," she sobbed, "how much I wanted to come back here, and how afraid I have been that I couldn't—"

"Then I'll expect you both to report here on September 20," interrupted Mrs. Brock, "four days before college opens. Don't try to tell me how grateful you are. I guess I know. Good night."

Patricia kissed the white face of the little woman, and Jack followed her example. Neither spoke until they were out on the street.

"Some fairy godmother!" exclaimed Jack.

"Oh, Jack, isn't she wonderful?"

“And the best of all,” said Jack, “is that we’ll be here together again. You’ve become a sort of habit with me, I guess.”

Patricia smiled happily in the darkness. “And now,” she exulted as they reached Arnold Hall, “I must go in and tell the girls the joyful news.”

THE END

## Transcriber's Notes

- Preserved the copyright notice from the printed edition, although this book is in the public domain in the country of publication.
- Silently corrected a few typos (but left nonstandard spelling and dialect as is).
- Rearranged front matter to a more-logical streaming order and added a Table of Contents.
- In the text versions, delimited text in italics by underscores.

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