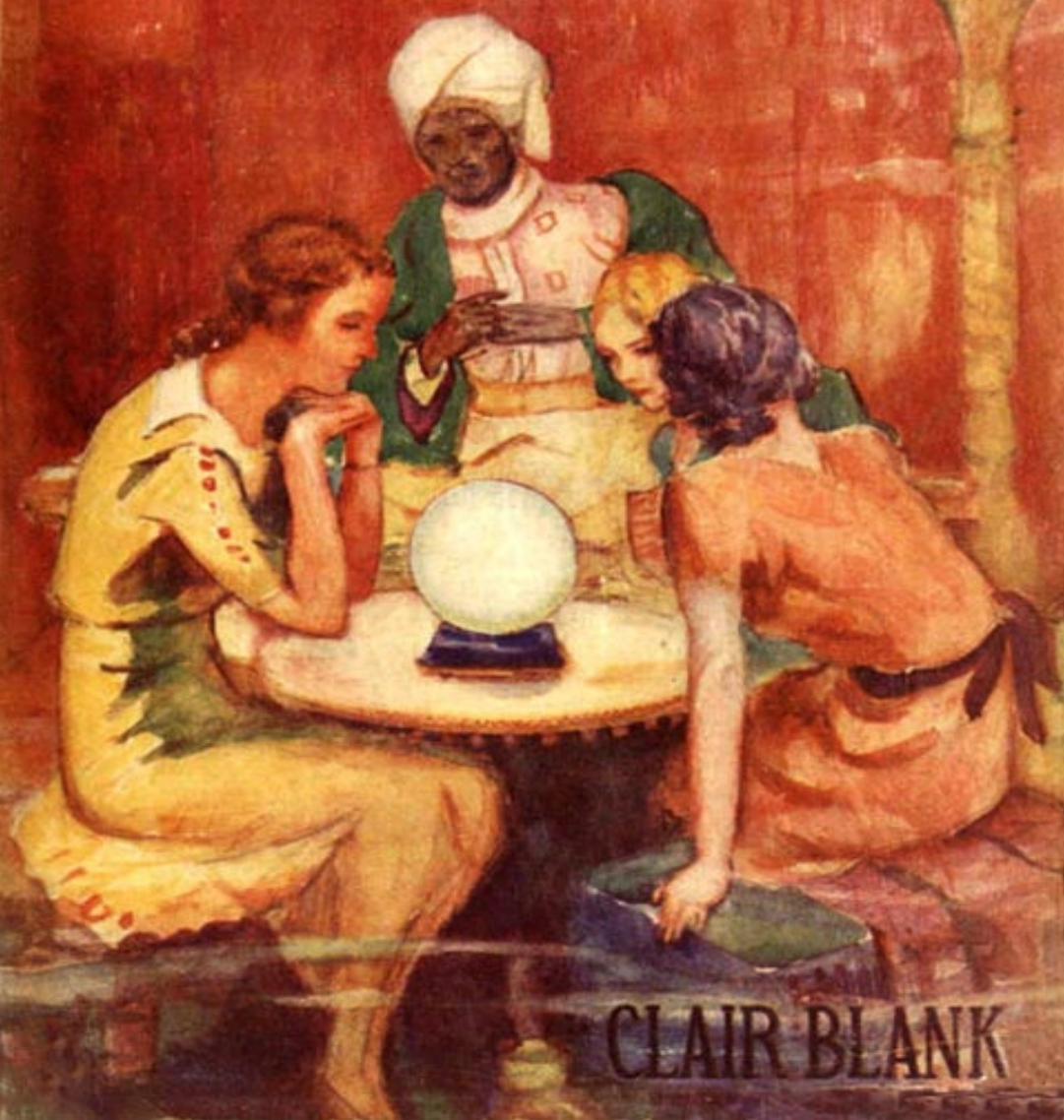


Beverly Gray's CAREER



CLAIR BLANK

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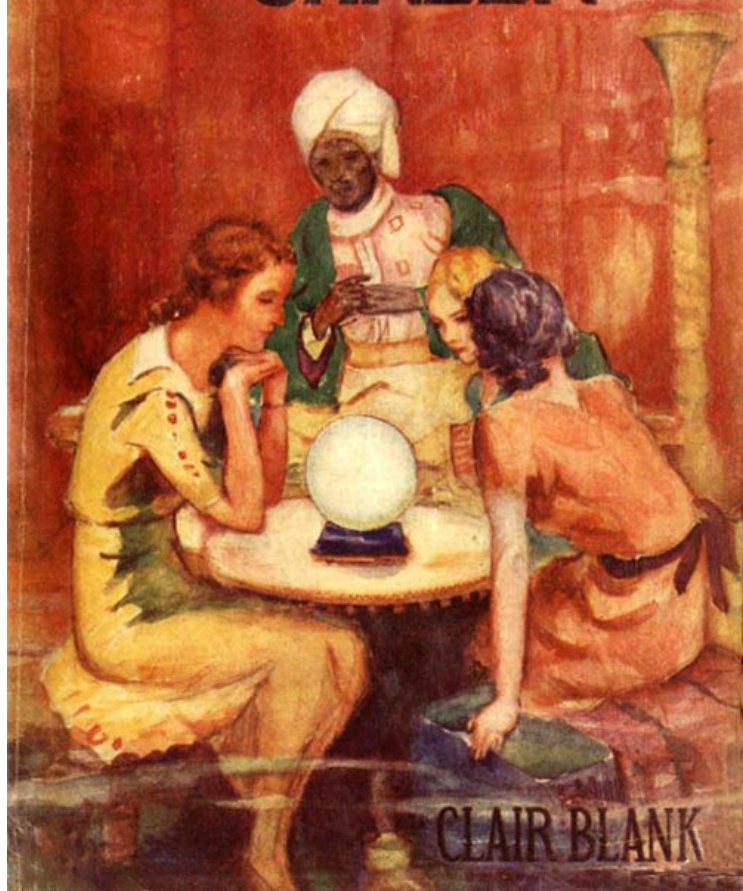
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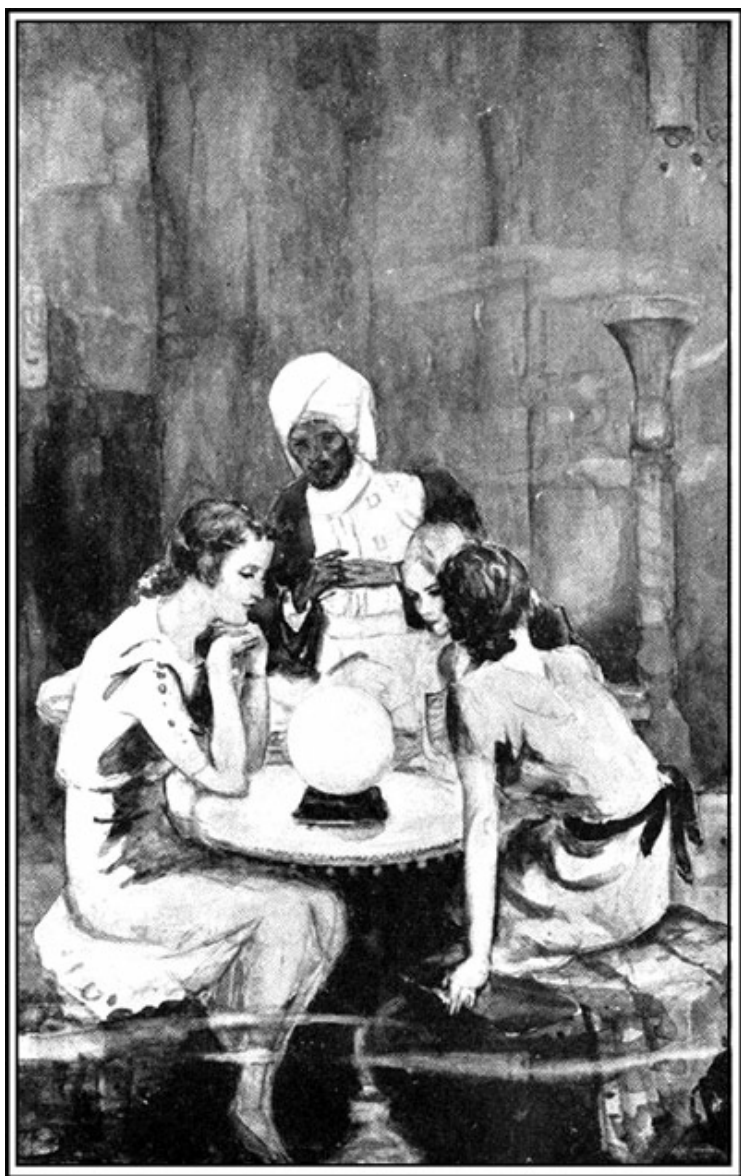


CLAIR BLANK



**BEVERLY GRAY'S
CAREER
CLAIR BLANK**





“Now—silence, please.”

(Page [92](#)) BEVERLY GRAY'S CAREER)

*The Beverly Gray
College Mystery
Series*

BEVERLY
GRAY'S
CAREER

By CLAIR
BLANK



GROSSET &
DUNLAP
Publishers
NEW YORK

The Beverly Gray College Mystery Series.

BEVERLY GRAY, FRESHMAN

BEVERLY GRAY, SOPHOMORE

BEVERLY GRAY, JUNIOR

BEVERLY GRAY, SENIOR

BEVERLY GRAY'S CAREER

BEVERLY GRAY ON A WORLD CRUISE

BEVERLY GRAY IN THE ORIENT

BEVERLY GRAY ON A TREASURE HUNT

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Beverly Gray's Career
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF
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CHAPTER I

Guests

THE early September sun shone down blazing hot and the shrubs and plants wilted in the heat. Not a breath of life seemed stirring. The young people were either lounging in the coolest spot they could find or swimming in the lake.

In disgust Beverly Gray tore up her latest literary effort and hurled it as far away from her as possible. Her portable typewriter was on the window seat beside her and for the last two hours, not to mention the three months since she had graduated from Vernon College, she had been trying to compose a really good short story.

Her mother looked up from her sewing with compassionate eyes.

“What’s the matter, dear?” she asked gently.

“I wish I knew,” Beverly answered restlessly, pacing across the living room and back again. “I’ve got the ideas in my head, but when I try to put them down on paper they fade away completely.” She sighed. “I guess I wasn’t meant to be a writer after all.”

“Nonsense, dear. If you want to make writing your life’s work, you can if you will have courage and work hard. You need some experience,” her mother said sensibly.

“Where am I to get it?” Beverly laughed. “Nothing ever happens in Renville! Oh, I’m sorry,” she said contritely. “I didn’t mean that I wasn’t glad to be home here with you. With Dad sick and everything this summer, I really didn’t feel like going away.”

“I know,” Mrs. Gray patted her daughter’s shoulder consolingly. “You should have taken that invitation to spend a week with Lois in Wildwood.”

“Since Anne and Tommy are married, and Jim is in South America,” Beverly said ruefully, “the Lucky Circle has rather broken up.”

“Why don’t you write to Lois Mason that if that invitation is still good you will visit her now,” her mother proposed.

Beverly sat down beside the typewriter again. “No. I’ll try this once more,” she said. “If I can’t do something good this time, I’m through.”

“That is no way to talk,” Mrs. Gray said calmly. “Beverly,” she continued after a moment, “there is a big car stopping by the gate. I wonder who it is.”

“Probably someone who has the wrong house,” her daughter answered vaguely. “No one we know would come calling on such a hot day.”

“You are wrong,” her mother smiled. “Look who it is!”

“Who?” Beverly crossed to her mother’s side and looked out the window which commanded an unobstructed view of the front lawn and street.

“Shirley!” she cried unbelievably. “Shirley Parker!” she repeated and fled to the door.

Half way across the lawn the new arrival was enveloped in a bear hug that left her hatless and breathless.

“Well, if I had known I would be greeted like this I would have come long ago,” Shirley laughed. “Beverly, you old darling! How are you?”

“Just the best ever!” Beverly declared. “But,” remembering her manners, “come in the house out of the sun. Where did you come from? Are you just driving through or are you going to stay for days and days—I hope?”

In the center of the living room Beverly gave her friend and old roommate an extra hug and turned her about, inspecting her

critically. She showered her with questions until Shirley held up a hand in self defense.

“I’ll begin at the beginning,” she laughed. “I’m not driving through. I came to see you because I haven’t seen you since Anne’s wedding and I was bored to death with my own society.”

“I don’t believe it,” Beverly declared.

“It’s true,” Shirley insisted. “My parents are in the mountains. I came back last week from the seashore and couldn’t stand it another minute. You have no idea what New York is like in this hot weather. So I says to myself, says I, ‘Shirley, my dear, pack your bag and run over to see Beverly. She is just the tonic you need!’ So here I am,” she finished.

“And more welcome than you can guess,” Beverly sighed.

Shirley looked about at the typewriter and the scattered sheets of paper. “Did I interrupt

a masterpiece in the making?”

“No!” Beverly said so emphatically that Shirley laughed. “I haven’t even started yet. But tell me, how is your stage career coming along?”

“It isn’t,” Shirley answered. “Like you, I haven’t started yet.”

“But weren’t you supposed to see—what was his name of the Theater Guild the first chance you had after your graduation?” Beverly asked.

“I was. His name is Andrew T. Crandall,” Shirley explained. “But he has been in Europe all summer. He doesn’t get back to New York until the last of September, perhaps not then. Meanwhile, here I am with loads of time on my hands. I do hope I wasn’t presumptuous in coming to you,” she said seriously. “I’ve missed you terribly since school finished last June.”

Beverly nodded in agreement. “I’ve missed

all the girls, and since Anne is married——”

“How is the little bride?” Shirley asked interestedly.

“Fine,” Beverly smiled. “She and Tommy have their own home now, a darling little place. I’ll take you to see them tomorrow. You are going to stay for days and days, aren’t you?”

“I’ll stay as long as you can put up with me,” Shirley laughed.

Beverly’s mother, who had withdrawn to give her daughter time to welcome her old school chum, entered then, carrying a tray laden with tiny cookies and tinkling, cold glasses. After that the three chatted until it was nearly time for dinner. Beverly conducted Shirley up to the room they had shared almost two years before when Shirley spent the Christmas holidays in Renville.

Readers of the Beverly Gray Series are already acquainted with Beverly and with her

desire to be a newspaper-woman and writer, and of her college roommate, Shirley Parker's desire to be a great dramatic actress. They know also the other girls with which Beverly and Shirley were so friendly during their four years at Vernon College: namely, Lois Mason, Lenora Whitehill, Rosalie Arnold and Anne White, the latter now a married woman.

After dinner, Mr. and Mrs. Gray went for a drive but the two girls firmly declared they would rather stay at home and talk even if it was hot. They took pillows out on the lawn and ensconced themselves comfortably beneath a willow tree and began one of the heart to heart talks they had so enjoyed during their college days.

"Have you heard from Lenora lately?" Beverly asked.

"Lois wrote me that Lenora had been left a considerable sum of money," Shirley informed her friend, "but I've not heard directly from Lenora for a long while."

“She didn’t answer my last letter,” Beverly said. “I wonder if Rosalie has continued with her music?”

“I don’t know,” Shirley answered. “Now that you have heard all my news tell me of yours. How is all the Lucky Circle?”

“Fine,” Beverly answered. “They always ask to be remembered to you.”

“How is that nice Jim Stanton?” Shirley asked.

In spite of herself Beverly felt the color rising to her cheeks. “He is very well, I believe. I don’t—that is, I haven’t heard from him for a while.”

“You haven’t quarreled?” Shirley asked intently.

“Oh no,” Beverly hastened to reassure her. “But mail down where he is working is very irregular. You see——”

“Hullo,” Shirley looked up with lazy

interest as a taxi stopped at the gate. “More company?”

The two watched a young lady get out, pay the driver, pick up her traveling bag and turn toward the house. It was not until she was walking toward them that they recognized her.

“Lenora Whitehill!” Beverly gasped in amazement as she started on the run for her newest visitor.

“In person and not a talking picture!” the new arrival assured her grinning.

After she and Beverly had properly demonstrated how glad they were to see one another she turned to the girl that had followed Beverly across the lawn and exclaimed in pleased surprise. “Shirley! As I live and breathe! What is this, old home week? Fancy meeting you here!”

“Fancy you coming here,” Beverly corrected. “Why didn’t you let me know?”

“I wanted to surprise you,” Lenora answered promptly. “I am on my way to New York to fame and fortune—I hope,” she finished laughingly.

“Come in the house and tell us all about yourself and what you have been doing,” Beverly commanded, leading the way up the porch steps.

“First of all, did you know Rosalie is engaged?” Lenora asked after she had established herself in a comfortable position on the sofa.

“No!” Shirley said.

“No!” Beverly echoed.

Lenora nodded. “’Tis sad but true. The wedding is to take place some time next spring.”

“Then she didn’t continue with her music,” Beverly said, almost regretfully.

“No,” Lenora murmured sadly. “So at last

there is only four of the original Alpha Deltas left. We shall have to pursue our careers to keep up the morale of our college sisters.”

“Ah, yes, the Alphas who are now Seniors at Vernon,” Shirley murmured. “I had a letter from Connie the other day. She never fails to remind me of our promise to attend their graduation.”

After that the three talked long and reminiscently until Beverly declared her guests must be fatigued and led the way upstairs to her room and the adjoining guest room.



CHAPTER II

Plans

“So that is how it is,” Lenora finished triumphantly.

“Wait a minute,” Beverly pleaded, “let me understand this correctly.”

The three girls were on the verandah the next afternoon. They had just returned from Anne’s cottage and Lenora was telling them of some of her plans for the future.

“Your great uncle left you ten thousand dollars and a little real estate. You propose to take this money and go to New York. Is that it?” Beverly continued.

“Exactly,” Lenora answered.

“What do you propose to do when you get

there?” Shirley wanted to know.

“Get interested in something,” Lenora replied. “I know that sounds a little vague, but I am rather vague about it. I have an idea about investing my money in something, but at least I want to have a good time. And I’m sure I shall,” she declared.

“No doubt,” Shirley agreed laughingly. “I never saw you when you weren’t having a good time. How do you do it?”

“Elementary, my dear Shirley,” Lenora said ponderously. “Now my brilliant idea was this. I’m going to New York. Shirley already lives there. We’ll see a lot of each other. Now, Beverly, why don’t you come along? You want to be a writer and newspaper reporter and you would have the opportunity in New York. We could get a small apartment together and it would be like our college days back again. What do you say?”

Beverly knew what she wanted to say with all her heart. It was true she wanted to be a

writer and newspaper reporter and there was no opportunity for her career here in Renville. But after college she had promised her parents, since they did not want her to, that she would not go to New York. She had promised to remain here with them, under their protection, in Renville, and she was nothing if not a dutiful daughter. She had promised her parents and now, no matter what it cost her, she would keep her promise.

She shook her head regretfully. "As much as I would like to, I can't."

"But why not?" Lenora demanded.

"I've promised my parents to stay here at home," Beverly replied. Abruptly she changed the subject. "What is Lois doing?"

"Basking in the sunlight on Wildwood's sandy beach," Lenora replied. "I'm on my way to make her the same proposal you just refused. She wants to sketch. She could do it just as well in New York with me as she could at home. What do you think?"

“Of course,” Shirley replied. “But I don’t see how you two will be able to live together. At Vernon you were always arguing and you didn’t room together. But once you share an apartment——” she shook her head sorrowfully. “I pity the neighbors.”

“Is that so?” Lenora demanded with a toss of her head. “We shall get along very well and you may come to see us often.”

“Thanks,” Shirley grinned. “I shall probably be camped on your doorstep every day.”

“A pleasant prospect,” Lenora declared.

“Excuse me, girls,” Beverly rose. “I’ll make some lemonade. It might cool us off a bit.”

“I’ll help,” Shirley jumped up immediately.

“Sit still,” Beverly said, pushing Shirley back into her chair. “You are a guest.”

“Believe it or not,” murmured Lenora.

Beverly went to the kitchen and was industriously squeezing lemons into a pitcher, when her mother entered.

“There were two letters for you, Beverly. I’ve put them on your desk.”

“Thanks.”

“Beverly——”

“Yes?”

“Your father and I have been thinking things over and we feel that we have no right to stand in your way.”

“What do you mean?”

“We know it is your dearest wish to be a newspaper reporter and though we feel it might be dangerous and perhaps not the exact career for you, we want you to do as you think best. You are old enough to decide things for yourself. If you think it would

make you happy to go to New York and try to get a position on one of the papers, we won't hold you back."

"You mean—you mean I can go back with Shirley and Lenora?"

"If you want to," her mother answered smilingly.

"If I want to!" Beverly threw her arms ecstatically around her mother. "I want to more than anything else in the world! But you and Dad——"

"We want what you want," her mother smiled. "But Dad thinks it wise to make a bargain."

"A bargain?" Beverly asked in surprise. "What kind of a bargain?"

"It is just this. We know if you went to the city and—didn't make good, that you wouldn't come home again. You would stay there and struggle along. We don't want

that.”

“What do you propose?” Beverly wanted to know.

“We’ll let you go on a six months trial. If at the end of six months you have had enough of newspapers and New York life, or you haven’t made any headway at all, we want you to come home to us.”

“And if I have a job and am working hard at the end of six months?” Beverly asked.

“Then we won’t press you to come. It is up to you.”

“It is a grand bargain!” Beverly declared jubilantly.

“Dad will send you your regular allowance until you have a position and are able to look out for yourself,” her mother continued.

“But I——” Beverly frowned thoughtfully and sought vainly for words to convey what she was trying to say. “I—don’t want my

allowance.”

“What will you do?” her mother asked.

“I’m—I want to do everything myself. I don’t want money coming in just as though I didn’t—need a job. I’m going to make my own living myself! Don’t you see? I want to have to depend on myself—not somebody else.”

Her mother smiled sympathetically. “I understand. Anyway—remember our bargain!”

After further demonstrating her affection for her mother with a kiss and a loving hug Beverly danced out to tell Shirley and Lenora. The girls were delighted to think that now the three of them would be together again—at least for the six months allotted to Beverly.



CHAPTER III

Settled

LENORA and Shirley stayed a week in Renville during which they visited with Anne and the other members of the Lucky Circle. But finally there came a day in the last week in September when the three piled into Shirley's big roadster and were on their way to New York and—adventure. They were to drive first to Wildwood to see Lois. They were going to coax her to come along with them. What jolly times the four college friends could have together!

They were sitting on the beach, the four of them, when Lenora informed Lois of their plan. The sun shone down on the splashing waves, turning the foam into little sparkling diamonds, and sending heat waves eddying up from the sand. When Lenora finished, Shirley and Beverly added their persuasive

powers to the cause.

“I should say I will go with you!” Lois declared.

They had not expected such an easy victory but nevertheless they were delighted.

“You will?” Lenora echoed. “Whoopee! Three cheers and a pip pip!”

“I have a letter to a man in New York who, I hope, will buy some of my sketches,” Lois explained. “I had planned on going up to the city next week but only for a visit. However, since you are to take up residence there I’ll move in with you for a couple months.”

“We will paint the town red,” promptly declared Lenora.

“We will not,” Beverly corrected. “We are going there to work. I want a job on a newspaper, Lois is going to continue sketching, Shirley is entering dramatics and you, Lenora——”

“Am just an idler,” Lenora sighed pathetically. “Ah, but not for long, my dears. I shall find something to keep me busy, never fear.”

“See that it isn’t mischief,” Shirley murmured, “or you might end up with a policeman.”

“You would think of that,” grumbled Lenora. “Aren’t you going to consult your parents about this, Lois?”

“Oh, they think it is all right for me to go,” Lois said quickly. “I’ve been talking about it ever since I graduated.”

“Well, then, it is all settled. When can you be ready to leave?” Shirley asked.

“Tomorrow,” Lois answered.

“Fine!” Beverly declared, standing up and shaking the sand from her bathing suit. “Let’s take one final swim and then a stroll on the boardwalk. The last one in is a so and so!”

“Eeek!” shrilled Lenora as she plunged into the briny deep.

One by one the girls jumped into the cold, dashing waves for a last frolic.

The next morning they waved good-by to Lois’ parents and Shirley started her car on the last lap of their journey. It was lovely weather, the golden sun warm and pleasant, the trees and flowers in last full bloom already turning red and brown with a hint of approaching autumn. Shirley owned a powerful car and it sped over the roads swiftly and comfortably.

Beverly, from her seat in front with Shirley, looked back at Lois and Lenora in the rumble seat. The latter two waved gayly and she responded with a wide smile. She was happier now than she had been for weeks; ever since the end of college days, in fact. For over two months she had been leading a life of enforced idleness and it had irritated her. She wanted action, her whole being craved to be doing something—

anything! The visit of Shirley and Lenora had been like a gift of sudden paradise. Now she seemed in a fair way of realizing her ambition. If she succeeded in getting a position as reporter on a newspaper, she might really develop into a good writer some day. Of course, she reminded herself, it might take days, even weeks, before she did find the position she wanted, but she was determined that by the time the six months allotted her by her parents were up she would have a position and working—at something!

They rode for a long while, but they enjoyed it. When finally they entered the great metropolis the girls were all agog with excitement. Shirley drove them to her home where, it had been decided, they should stay until they succeeded in finding the apartment they planned on having. Shirley's parents were away and the girls had the house and servants all to themselves. They occupied the same comfortable, richly furnished rooms they had during the Christmas vacation they spent with Shirley two years ago.

They had dinner in style in the huge Parker dining room, servants attending, and afterward retreated to the little upstairs sitting room that adjoined Shirley's bedroom, to talk over their hundreds of plans. When they retired for the night it was to dream of the days to come when they should have countless adventures and exciting times.

In the morning Shirley brought a pile of papers with her to the breakfast table and the girls immediately started upon their apartment search. They read countless advertisements and after breakfast started on their tour of inspection. Shirley accompanied them to offer advice and comments. At lunch time when they stopped in a little restaurant for a bite to eat they had been unsuccessful in their search.

"I'm in favor of Greenwich Village," Lois declared for perhaps the tenth time.

"That's because you are an artist," Lenora informed her. "I like East Sixty-third Street."

“Hold on,” Beverly laughed. “We have to find an apartment to fit our pocketbooks. We aren’t all rich, you know, and if we are going to share the rent——”

“Tush!” Lenora waved aside the objection. “I’ve got ten thousand dollars.”

“How long will it last?” Shirley murmured. “Don’t let anyone sell you any gold bricks.”

“Perhaps we should do some of our business first,” Lois suggested.

“And be dumped on Shirley for weeks?” Beverly asked.

“I don’t mind,” Shirley murmured.

“Just the same,” Lenora continued, “we’ve got to find a home first. How many more addresses do we have?”

“Five,” Beverly answered.

“Let’s go,” Lois said eagerly. “I like this home-hunting.”

“The only thing I object to is the steps we have to climb,” Lenora grumbled.

The first two apartments the girls inspected after their luncheon were decidedly not for them! There wasn't one attractive feature about either of them. But when the girls came to the third on their list they nodded agreeably. This was more like it. There was a large room, bright and sunny, that could be converted into a bedroom most attractive. There was a bath room, a kitchenette, and an extra large room for their living room. The girls were delighted. It seemed just what they were looking for.

Beverly crossed to the window and threw it wide. The room commanded a clear unobstructed view of the city's skyscrapers thrown in bold relief against the blue sky, and at night the lights of Broadway would dance and flicker almost at their feet.

“The very thing!” Lenora declared, the view clinching the renting in her mind.

“Ideal!” Lois echoed, leaning precariously out the window.

“We’ll take it,” Beverly said, turning to the landlady.

The latter was a plump, ruddy faced Irish woman who beamed on her prospective tenants with twinkling eyes and the widest of smiles.

“We’ll begin to move in tomorrow,” Lenora informed her.

“Would you be havin’ the place cleaned up a bit?” the woman asked. “I’ve in mind a ver’ nice young lady what would be willin’ to do it fer ye very cheap.”

The girls conferred for a moment. None of them were fond of house work.

“Will you tell her to come tomorrow morning?” Beverly asked. “We would like to settle as soon as we can.”

“Sure an’ the place will be ready tomorrow

afternoon,” their landlady, Mrs. Callahan, assured them as she ushered them to the door. “Do you have a place now? Or are you newcomers to the city?” she asked conversationally.

“Newcomers,” Lois replied.

“In search of fame and fortune,” added the irrepressible Lenora.

“Ah, tis a shame ye should be disappointed,” Mrs. Callahan said gloomily. “I’m afraid ye’ll not be findin’ them things here in the city. It’s hard nowadays to get jobs.”

The girls were affected not at all by the Irish woman’s discouraging words. They considered it all a great lark.

“Now to buy some furniture,” Lenora said as they all piled into Shirley’s car once more.

“I like your home a lot,” Shirley declared as she started the machine. “You ought to be

very happy in it.”

“If you ever get tired of living a life of luxury we shall be glad to take you into our humble abode,” Lois told her.

“By the way,” Lenora said thoughtfully. “The papering of our establishment was quite nice, but I didn’t like the painting effect. What say we get some paint and give the place a treat?”

“Goody,” squealed Lois. “I love to wield a paint brush.”

“You two can paint and I’ll sew some curtains,” Beverly said after a moment.

“I’m to have a part in this!” Shirley declared. “At home we have an oriental rug stored away that would be splendiferous in your living room. I’ll have the chauffeur run it over tomorrow.”

“We will also go shopping for furniture tomorrow,” Lenora continued. “I love this

more every minute. I have always had a secret desire to furnish an apartment and believe me we will have a grand time.”

Her prophecy was in a large way coming true. The next morning when they arrived at the apartment it had been thoroughly aired and cleaned. Lois and Lenora were loaded down with paint and brushes while Beverly busily engaged herself in making curtains for the windows. Shirley directed the laying of the rug in the living room and devoted her free time to commenting on the other girls’ labors.

At lunch time their painting was done and curtains were all ready to be hung in the bedroom and living room. They made a list of the things they needed. Each took a portion of the list and went off to make her purchases. Shirley, unhappily, had to go to the station to meet her returning parents and so could not join in the fun of buying things for the apartment.

They spent that night again at Shirley’s,

but the next morning, early, they moved officially, bag and baggage, into their own apartment. The furniture began arriving and the girls were kept busy directing the men where to place it, then rearranging it to suit themselves. It was late in the afternoon before they found time to sit down and survey their new possessions.

“At last we are finished!” Lois said thankfully. “I’m going to sit right here and admire our new home.”

“No, you aren’t,” Lenora said. “Run yourself into the bedroom,” she urged commandingly.

“What’s the idea?” Lois wanted to know.

“I’ve got a surprise for you. Oh, there’s the doorbell. It has arrived. Won’t you please go into the bedroom until I call you? And don’t dare to peep!” she warned as, mystified, Lois and Beverly obeyed.

“What do you suppose she is up to?” Lois

whispered to Beverly as they waited in the bedroom, listening intently to the strange noises coming from the living room.

“Goodness knows,” Beverly laughed. “What was that?” she cried suddenly as a terrible screech came from the room beyond the closed door.

“Sounds like someone being murdered!” Lois declared. “Do you think we better go in?”

As if in answer to her question to Beverly, Lenora’s voice was raised in a strict command not to dare open the door before she gave them permission. It was quite a while before Lenora finally threw open the door and let them out to survey her surprise. A radio, with the latest dance music emanating from its speaker, stood proudly in one corner of the living room.

“Three cheers for you!” Lois cried, descending on the surprise with whoop of joy.

“It’s grand!” Beverly declared, joining Lois in admiration.

“Just what we needed,” Lois continued.

“And now what do you say to some supper and the movies?” Lenora asked stretching to her full length and rumpling her hair with gusto. “We’ve worked enough for one day.”

“I’ll say we have,” agreed Lois. “And it will take me about two minutes to make myself presentable for that supper you mentioned.”

“I’ll race you,” Beverly cried gleefully, diving into the bedroom.

In exactly fifteen minutes the three of them stood at the door while Beverly turned the key.

“We’ll have duplicate keys made tomorrow so we each can carry one,” said Lenora.

“We have plenty of time to do all the

things that still have to be done,” Lois murmured, as they came out onto the street. “Tomorrow each one of us starts out independently to make good. I wonder what chance we have?”

“About as much chance as a peanut in a monkey cage,” Lenora said promptly. “However, never say die! ‘Watch our smoke and learn,’ is our motto!”



CHAPTER IV

Discouraged

AFTER a wholesome breakfast the next morning the three went their separate ways. Lois was to see the man who, she hoped, would purchase some of her sketches. She went equipped with a portfolio of drawings. Beverly was to start making the rounds of the newspaper offices for a job as reporter. Lenora was out for anything. She had promised to meet Shirley for luncheon and the two were to go to a matinee. They had begged Beverly and Lois to accompany them but the latter two were adamant. They had no unlimited capital to draw upon. They were in New York to earn their way and they could not do it by playing around, as pleasant as that might be.

When Beverly returned to the apartment late in the afternoon she found Lenora

already returned and comfortably ensconced in lounging pajamas on the window seat with a magazine and a box of chocolates.

“Home was never like this,” Lenora murmured with a grin as Beverly entered.

“You’re telling me,” Beverly returned wearily, flinging her hat aside and sinking into the nearest chair.

“Any luck?”

“Plenty! And all bad,” Beverly returned disgustedly.

“Oh, well, tomorrow is another day,” Lenora said optimistically and proffered the box of candy. “Have a chocolate?”

“Thanks.”

“Ah, another wanderer returneth to the fold,” Lenora said brightly as Lois opened the door and slammed down her portfolio vehemently. “Something tells me you didn’t do so good. Did you see Mr. Johnson?”

“Yes, I saw him,” replied Lois, dropping beside Lenora and helping herself to the chocolates.

“Well?”

“And I’ve come to the conclusion that as an artist I’m not so hot!” she finished slangily.

“Well, well, it seems New Yorkers are totally oblivious to the talent that has descended into their midst,” Lenora declared brightly. “But never mind, you will show ’em yet!”

“What happened with Mr. Johnson?” Beverly asked.

“Did he buy any of your sketches?” Lenora chimed in.

“No, he didn’t buy any,” Lois said frowning again. “He said they were amateurish, without a sense of color, and a lot of more nasty things that I decided to forget

as quickly as possible.”

“He didn’t!” Beverly protested.

“Oh, he was very polite and regretful, but that was really what he meant,” Lois assured them.

“He doesn’t know art when he sees it,” Lenora said indignantly.

“Oh, yes he does,” Lois defended, “and I haven’t got it. He compared my sketches with some of the great artists he had. There was no doubt about it. Mine are terrible! However, he said with time and practice I might eventually draw something good.”

“Time is plentiful and you can practice to your heart’s content here,” Lenora said, “so go to it.”

“I suppose we must take the bitter with the sweet,” Beverly agreed sighing. “If we didn’t have to face disappointments and troubles we would only be living half.”

“And a writer has to experience everything to be able to write convincingly,” added Lenora. “So Lois shall go right ahead with her painting and sketching and you shall continue writing. This is only your first day. You can’t be discouraged so easily.”

“I suppose you’re right,” Beverly said. “We’ll try again tomorrow.”

“And for many days thereafter,” murmured Lois, “if we can hold out that long.”

“Now you have a crying need for some food,” Lenora cheerfully stood up. “And, ladies, supper is already simmering in yonder kitchen.”

“No!” Lois murmured in surprise. “Don’t tell me you made it!”

“Elementary, my dear Watson!” scoffed Lenora. “Did you ever hear of a simple device known as a can opener? It will work wonders,” she declared.

“My, it smells good,” Beverly said as they entered the kitchenette.

“Let’s hope it tastes just as good,” Lois added.

“And look what I bought to decorate the radio with,” Lenora displayed her purchase proudly and received Beverly’s and Lois’s giggles with an injured frown. “Don’t you like him?”

“He’s a darling!” Beverly assured her between laughs.

“It’s ludicrous!” Lois declared.

It was a statue of a dog, about eight inches high, and painted a glaring red. But its expression was what attracted attention. It had a grin so wide and comical that it immediately provoked laughter. The lights sparkled alluringly on its “diamond” collar.

“Where ever did you pick that up?” Beverly demanded.

“I saw it sitting in the window of a shop and fell in love with him,” Lenora answered. “Isn’t he cute? We shall have to find a name for him.”

“How about Archibald or Percy?” suggested Lois helpfully.

“Now I ask you, does he look like a Percy? I like Oswald much better,” Lenora answered.

“We’ll vote on it,” Beverly said.

They did and the dog was christened Oswald with appropriate ceremony and then the girls went to their supper. The little interlude with the dog and the sight of the warm food helped marvelously to dispel much of Beverly’s and Lois’s depressed feelings and when they retired to the living room they were almost gay again.

Lenora picked up her magazine and toyed with the radio dial. Lois established herself with her sketching board while Beverly brought out her portable typewriter. The three

of them were silently engrossed when Shirley appeared.

“Greetings, my studious friends,” she said gayly. “What in the world is that?” Her gaze had settled on the most noticeable thing in the room—Lenora’s latest addition.

“That’s Oswald,” Lois replied.
“Handsome, isn’t he?”

“He looks like a circus freak,” was Shirley’s opinion.

“I won’t have you talking like that about our prize possession,” Lenora said tearfully.
“I want you to understand Oswald is a perfect gentleman. Aren’t you Oswald?”

The dog responded with his mirth-provoking grin, his eyes fixed dreamily before him.

“See? He is insulted,” Lenora told Shirley.

Shirley laughed. “What have you busybodies been doing today?”

“Nothing,” Lois replied immediately.
“That is, we’ve done plenty but nothing has come of it.”

“No success?”

“None,” Beverly shook her head.

“Hard, but perhaps tomorrow will be better.”

“How about you? Has Mr. Crandall returned yet?” Beverly asked.

“Nope, and until he does my career is at a standstill. None of the other dramatic companies will give me a chance. They are flooded with ambitious youngsters,” Shirley answered.

“How about the movies? Have you forgotten what a success you were in the picture made at Vernon? Everyone, even the director, seemed to think you were made.”

“There are too many trying to get into the movies now,” Shirley replied. “No, Mr.

Crandall promised me a job after college and I'm going to make him keep his word."

"If you don't die of old age waiting for him to come back from the continent," Lois said dryly. "Couldn't your father use his influence to get you a job?"

"I don't want that kind of a job," Shirley said instantly. "My father and mother refuse to believe I have any talent whatever because they don't want me to be an actress. If my father did get me a part in a play it would be merely because I was the rich Shirley Parker. Mr. Crandall offered me a part because I really could act—at least he seemed to think so."

"You can, too," her friends agreed instantly.

"Then you understand," Shirley said. "I want a part because I have talent, not because my father has a lot of money."

"Bully for you," Lenora applauded. "More

power to you, and may Mr. Crandall hurry back to the good old U. S. A.”

Thereafter the girls discussed their problem and drifted, as they never failed to do, to talking of their college days. It was late when Shirley finally said good night and went home and the girls retired.

When they had purchased their furniture they had bought one full sized double bed. Beverly claimed a studio couch which could be opened into a full bed for her own while Lois and Lenora shared the bed.

Long after her two friends were asleep and dreaming Beverly lay awake staring up into the darkness. She rose and tiptoed to the window. She could see the dancing lights far below her. The hum of the traffic drifted up on the night air. She had wanted so much to come to New York and obtain a position as reporter and now that she was here it was almost impossible to get the position she craved. Today she had tried office after office and the answer had always been the same. An

explosive NO.

But she wasn't finished yet. Two years ago, when the Alphas had spent Christmas vacation with Shirley, she had become good friends with Charlie Blaine, then a reporter on the *Tribune*. Tomorrow she would go to the *Tribune* office and if it was possible she would see Charlie Blaine. Perhaps he could help her. Then she could write the good news to her parents and to—Jim Stanton. She wondered what Jim, away down in South America working at his chosen profession, was thinking of this latest venture of hers.



CHAPTER V

A Chance

THE next morning the girls arose early and prepared their own breakfast in the little kitchenette. It was much more cozy and homey, being able to prepare their own meals here in their rooms instead of always having to eat in restaurants. Also it was more economical. That was something that Lois and Beverly had to take into consideration. They could not spend money as lavishly as Lenora, at least not yet. They still had their fortune to make.

After breakfast Lois set up her sketching board in one corner of the living room, by the window, and proceeded to lay out her paraphernalia. She was in a working mood this morning and she was going to make the most of it. Lenora was going shopping and Beverly was going searching for a job, she

would have the apartment to herself.

Lenora and Beverly descended to the street together, but there their paths divided. Lenora had a vague idea of where she wanted to go and she resolutely set out to make a day of her shopping tour.

Beverly walked briskly toward the *Tribune* office. In the gray light of day Broadway lost much of its glamour and excitement. It became a busy thoroughfare, heavy with traffic, but none the less interesting. The air was cool, with heavy suggestion of autumn, and Beverly quickened her steps. On a morning like this she felt like walking far, it stirred her ideas and aroused optimism.

Yesterday afternoon when she had gone back to the apartment she had been terribly disappointed and dejected. All the world seemed turned against her, but here she was, this morning, humming a tune as she stepped along. Funny thing, human nature. It took so little to make the world as dark as night, and equally as little to send spirits soaring.

She paused outside the *Tribune* building and looked up at the stone front. Would she be successful this time? If Charlie Blaine were still a reporter for the paper, she felt sure he would lend her his assistance to get a place on the staff. Taking a deep breath she walked toward the doors.

A man descended from a limousine and brushed swiftly passed her. She entered the office just behind him. At a desk sat an office boy, deeply interested in a wild west magazine. She sighed dejectedly. Another office boy! That meant she would get no farther than this outer office. The man ahead of her approached the desk and demanded in strident, angry tones to see the Editor. The boy took in the man and Beverly in the same glance. Evidently he thought they were together.

“The Editor?” he asked uncertainly. “Yes, Mr. Richmond. This way, sir.”

He held open the door for the man and Beverly. Beverly wisely said nothing. She

knew the boy might discover his mistake at any minute, but until he did she might be able to obtain an interview with the Editor, or whoever it was did the hiring of new reporters.

The boy ushered them into a busy, paper littered room. Desks were jumbled together, each with its occupant laboring over a typewriter, some with pencils shoved behind an ear, others chewing vigorously on gum. The majority of the workers, reporters presumably, were men, but there were also three girls. In the center of the room was a desk, larger than the rest, and in even more of a jumble of papers. The man behind sat hunched over the work before him, a green eyeshade pulled low on his forehead, two telephones at his elbow, pencil in hand.

The man who had entered ahead of Beverly strode forward and banged a heavy fist on the Editor's desk, his voice shaking with anger. He was upset over something that had been printed in the morning paper, that much Beverly gathered from his shouted

words, but she paid little attention to what he said. She was too interested in looking about her. Oh, to work in a place like this!

Two men came up and very thoughtfully, if not gently, assisted the raving visitor to the door. The office boy had long since disappeared. Beverly approached the Editor's desk with a little hesitation. A smile played about her lips and her eyes danced mischievously. She hoped he didn't have her put out before he recognized her.

"Good morning," she began brightly.

"Huh," the man replied, without glancing up. "Whata you want?"

"I want a job," Beverly answered with dignity. "As reporter."

"Any experience?"

That everlasting question! No doubt the result would be the same as always.

"No," she said quietly.

“Sorry,” he said, pulling forward a telephone and barking into it.

Beverly stood quietly by until he had finished transmitting his message to the person at the other end.

“I said there is nothing for you,” he reminded her, turning back to his papers.

“But I’m a very bright girl,” she said smilingly.

Then he looked up at her for the first time. For a moment his face was scowling, then recognition slowly dawned in his eyes and he grinned in surprise. He jumped to his feet and shook hands enthusiastically.

“Beverly Gray! What are you doing in New York? All finished college?”

“Yes, and I want a job,” she said, coming directly to the point.

Charlie Blaine leaned back in his chair and surveyed her thoughtfully. He was just the

same as Beverly had known him when he was a reporter, grave and gay by turn. But now there was more responsibility on his shoulders.

“You want a job as reporter,” he murmured.

“Yes, on the *Tribune*.”

“It’s hard work,” he said slowly. “There are hundreds of aspiring youngsters who want to be reporters. Some of them think it will lead to a career as a famous writer.” He shook his head doubtfully. “I’d advise you to go back to your home town wherever it is.”

Beverly shook her head determinedly. “I intend to stay here,” she said calmly. “If there is no place for me on the *Tribune* perhaps I can get a job on another paper.”

“All right, all right,” Charlie Blaine soothed. “I was just giving you some good advice. It isn’t my fault if you won’t take it.”

“Then you will give me a job?” she asked eagerly.

“I’d like to, you know that. But——
Anyway I’ll take you in to see the boss. He hires everybody and we’ll see what he says.”

The owner of the *Tribune* was a kindly, dignified old gentleman who stood solidly behind the conservative policies of his paper. He was gentle but firm with Beverly. Charlie Blaine recommended her highly for a place but, as he had said, no additional men or women were wanted now. Their staff was complete. However Charlie Blaine gave her an encouraging whisper before she left the office.

“I’ve an idea there’ll be a place vacant in two or three weeks,” he said. “Give me your address and I’ll let you know. Stop in and see me sometimes, too.”

When she left the *Tribune* office her earlier carefree attitude was somewhat dampened. The best she had was the doubtful promise of

a position in two or three weeks—maybe longer. She had exactly twenty dollars in her pocketbook. How long would that last? Not long, she assured herself, what with her portion of room rent to pay, meals to buy, and some amusements. But even so she was fortunate. A lot of people these days didn't have that much.

She stood on the corner of 42nd Street and Broadway and watched the crowd of people shifting back and forth during the lunch hour while she thought of a course to pursue. She had been to newspaper offices—all of them she could think of. What was there to do? Should she definitely give up this making-good-on-her-own business and go back home? Positively not! she told herself. The six months her parents had allotted her were not up. This was only her second day of job hunting. What if she couldn't get a job on a newspaper? She could do something else until her opportunity did come along. But exactly what? She wasn't prepared for a stenographic position. She didn't know shorthand from Russian.

Day after day passed. Beverly did her utmost to find a position at something—anything. But everywhere there was the same cry—experience!

“How am I to get experience if no one will give me a chance?” she cried fretfully to Shirley.

“Go and see my dad, Beverly. Maybe he can give you general office work to do—or something like that.”

Beverly demurred. “I won’t impose on my friends.”

“Nonsense!” Shirley declared.

Beverly’s twenty dollars dwindled alarmingly. It seemed incredible that it could go so fast in such a manner that she could scarcely keep track of it. She was worried, truly worried. She wouldn’t borrow money from the girls, and she didn’t want to write home for money, but if she didn’t have some luck soon she might have to.

One morning, three weeks since she had last seen Charlie Blaine and the job was still in the dim future, she opened her pocketbook to make sure she had her key before she went out. Nestling beside her key was a new ten dollar bill. She glanced up quickly first at Lois and then at Lenora. Lois was engaged in transferring the New York skyline to the sketching board before her. Lenora was deeply involved in a magazine.

“Where did this ten dollars come from?” Beverly asked.

Lois looked up in genuine surprise. “You just took it from your purse. Why ask us? Do you want to get rid of it?”

“It wasn’t there last night,” Beverly said.

“Santa Claus is ahead of time,” Lois offered, turning back to her work.

Lenora had not raised her head from her magazine. Beverly wasn’t sure if she was pretending or if she really hadn’t heard her

Speak. Crossing to Lenora, Beverly dropped the ten dollar bill into Lenora's open magazine.

"Nothing doing, Lenora," she said.

"Huh? What do you mean?" her friend demanded. "I don't know what you are talking about."

"Oh, yes you do," she said, "and I won't take it."

"Why not?" Lenora demanded. "You can pay it back later."

"If I ever get a job," Beverly said. "No," she continued firmly. "I won't take it. This job business was all my idea and I'll work it out. I let myself in for more than I thought, but I'll get along."

Her speech was confident and she looked confident as she stepped briskly along the street. Her head was up, eyes bright, cheeks rosy with color, but in her heart she was

apprehensive and fearful. She was fearful of what today might bring. She was down to her last dollar. Last night, when the girls were in bed, she had stood at the window overlooking the city as was her usual custom and battled with her pride. It had been a long and hard struggle. It meant giving up what she was convinced was her big chance, but she was prepared to give in and go home tonight if today turned out as fruitless as every other day had done. She was prepared to admit she wasn't as capable or as independent as she had thought she was.

This morning she was on her way to see Charlie Blaine. It would be for the last time. If the job he had promised her had not materialized yet she would tell him not to bother and that she was going home. She was afraid he would say "I told you so" and that was what angered her. Every one had advised her and the others against coming alone to New York. Time and time again they had been told of the other hundreds of college graduates seeking their fortunes much the same as they. She would have given anything

if she could have made a go of it.

She had a little difficulty in getting past the office boy to see Charlie Blaine but she finally managed it.

“Where in the world have you been?” was his greeting. “I lost your address and I’ve been trying for a week to locate you. I’ve got a job for you. One of our sob sisters has resigned. She’s going to get married Saturday and you’re to be our new one. How’d you like that?”

“I’d like that fine!” she said joyously. “When do I start?”

“Right away. She’s anxious to leave and the sooner she can acquaint you with the office and some of your work the better.”

That afternoon when Beverly left the *Tribune* office she was more cheered than she had been for weeks. At last she had a job! At last she was started. True, it wasn’t much of a job yet, but as she grew accustomed to the

newspaper work and really got into the swing of things it would be better. She ran up the steps to the apartment and entered the room like a miniature whirlwind.

“I’ve got it!” she cried jubilantly.

“Goodness, is it catching?” Lenora inquired lazily from her perch on the window sill where she was supervising the work of Lois.

“What is it?” Lois added, sketching pencil poised in mid air.

“A job!” Beverly answered, tossing her hat and coat to one side. “A real, honest-to-goodness job on a newspaper!”

“No!” her friends chorused together.
“Where?”

“Tell us all about it!” Lenora commanded, seating herself beside Beverly on the divan while Lois left her drawing and eagerly joined them.

The girls were as pleased as Beverly over her chance and generously prophesied a brilliant future for her. Always the leader in their doings at college, it seemed somehow fitting that Beverly should be the first to get her chance here, too. They were glad.



CHAPTER VI

A New Friend

THE wind whistled eerily around the corner and lifted dust and papers from the sidewalk in great gusts. People hurried along, heads down to keep the dust from their eyes and to keep the wind from taking their breath away. It was the first week in November and winter was approaching with giant strides.

For over a month now the girls had been living in their apartment and they had enjoyed every minute of it. Lenora continued with her campaign to have a good time above everything else. Lois devoted herself to her sketching, while Beverly settled down to her job on the *Tribune*. She liked it more and more every day. It was just the sort of work she had wished for and Charlie Blaine, sympathetic with her desire for variety in assignments and adventure, varied her

assignments daily. She was meeting more people daily and had many more acquaintances now than when she first came to the city.

Beverly ran up the steps and into the house. In the hallway she ran into Mrs. Callahan separating the mail.

“Good afternoon, Miss Gray. Home early?” the landlady said conversationally.

“Yes,” Beverley admitted. “Any mail for us?”

“Three, one for each of ye,” Mrs. Callahan answered. “An’ do ye like the city now that ye are settled?”

“Oh, it’s thrilling,” Beverly declared, her eyes running over the handwriting on the three envelopes. Her letter undoubtedly was from her parents.

“Ye wouldn’t like to go back to your home town? Good afternoon, Miss Rodgers,” this

last was to a young lady who entered and immediately proceeded up the stairs.

“Oh, no, I wouldn’t want to go home now,” Beverly said. “I’m afraid I’m too interested in the city.”

“Would ye do me a favor, Miss Gray, and also help another lonely soul in this big city?” Mrs. Callahan asked in a whisper.

“Of course, if I can,” Beverly replied. “What is it?”

“Your friends could help too,” the older woman said. “It’s Miss Rodgers. She’s been here almost as long as you.”

“I’ve seen her several times,” Beverly agreed. “She lives on the floor above us, doesn’t she?”

“Yes, and the poor girl is that lonely! It’s a shame. Tryin’ to get work, not that she is behind in her rent, mind you! She always pays me on the dot, but she goes out for hours

and when she comes in she always looks so sad and lonely like. I don't think she has a friend in the city."

"What do you want us to do?" Beverly asked, starting up the steps.

"Get acquainted with the poor girl and cheer her up. It would do her good to know you—your friends are always so cheerful."

"We'll see what we can do," Beverly promised.

Lois and Lenora were waiting for her and the minute Beverly opened the door she knew something had happened. Lenora was beaming and Lois was secretly delighted, her eyes dancing.

"What's up?" Beverly asked immediately.

"How did you know?" Lenora demanded.

"It's written all over you," Beverly laughed. "It must be something momentous!"

“It is,” Lenora assured her. “Lois has sold a drawing.”

“No!” Beverly cried, as delighted as the other two. “Oh, Lois, that’s marvelous. I’m awfully glad. Which one was it?”

“A new one,” Lenora answered for her friend. “I didn’t see it and she won’t tell me what it is.”

“You will recognize it when you see it in print,” Lois smiled.

“In print?” Beverley murmured.

“I’ve sold it to a magazine for a cover,” Lois explained.

“Great!” Beverly said again.

“It calls for a celebration,” declared Lenora. “I think we can still catch the second show at the movies down the block.”

“Let’s go,” Beverly said promptly.

Later, when the show was over and they had enjoyed sodas at the corner drug store and came home tired and happy, Beverly knelt at the window of their bedroom and looked out on the busy world below her and up at the peaceful, serene sky above. Every night she never failed to take a last look at the city before she retired. But now the big city was losing a little of its glamour and thrill for her. Oh, she still welcomed the excitement she felt at being a part of it, but she was beginning to realize it was scarcely different from any other city. More people and activity perhaps, but its emotions and trend of life were the same. It gave lots of people their big chance, but it also broke a lot of hearts and wiped out fortunes. It could be warm and kindly and cold and cruel by turns.

In these last weeks on the newspaper Beverly had met many people. People in all walks of life. She had talked to actors, bankers, policemen, society debutantes and been surprised. She didn't know exactly what she had expected from the newspaper world when she entered it, books on the subject

were so much different from the actual thing! She knew one thing in this life work of hers, as in any other that she might have chosen, it meant work and hard, tedious work. But was newspaper work actually the work for her? She enjoyed it, reveled in the rush and confusion that existed when there was a rush to get an extra edition out. But she was sensitive and some of the jibes at the newspaper world and its staff angered her.

Was there no place for the ideals she held, for the good sportsmanship she had been taught? Were people generally as cynical and as bluff as some she had met? Didn't ideals count for anything in this matter-of-fact world where the sole desire of the majority seemed to be money-making? Not only in the newspaper world were people calm and realistic. It seemed in no matter what line of work she considered things were too technical for her. People rushed about feverishly intent—on what? Didn't the desire to better oneself, the love of friends, didn't these things count for something? Did one always lose idealism in the scramble for

existence in the working world?

She vowed then and there, as she lifted serious blue eyes to the stars, that she would hold on to her ideals. She would make a place for them in her world. She knew as time went on and she became more and more involved in the business of making a living that many of her dreams would be shattered. A few were already gone. She could never again be the same carefree, idealizing girl that had graduated—was it only four months ago?—from college. She didn't really wish for those school days back again. They had been pleasant and would always be a cherished memory, but even now each day could be exciting and thrilling if she would make it so. If she could and would refuse to see the sordid, unpleasant side of every day living she could be just as happy as she had been at Vernon. At school she had been confined to the campus and the little college town for adventures. Now she had the whole city, the state, even the world in which to venture. She would venture into the world, too. There was something somewhere in the world that she

wanted—needed. There was a great lack in her life. What it was she couldn't quite understand but she determined to find it some day. She looked across at Lois and Lenora sleeping peacefully. Possibly they would laugh at this soliloquizing of hers. Possibly they had decided the same thing themselves.

She turned from the window and shivered a little as she climbed between the covers of her bed. At least it was pleasant to know that she had a start with her job on the *Tribune* and that Lois had at last done something. Two of the four girls who had come to the city were embarked on the seas of life and work.

Beverly arose early the next morning and dressed noiselessly lest she awaken her friends. She made some orange juice and toast and ate while she glanced over the morning paper. As she was leaving the apartment there were footsteps on the stairs and she looked up to see who it was. She was just in time to see Hope Rodgers, the girl about whom Mrs. Callahan had spoken the

afternoon before, catch her heel on the step and pitch down the stairs. Beverly sprang forward and helped the girl to her feet.

“Are you hurt?”

“My—ankle,” the other said catching her lip between her teeth as she essayed a step.

“Sit down, I’ll rub it for you,” Beverly said.

The girl sat down on the steps and Beverly gently massaged the silken ankle. But still the girl could not stand.

“I suppose I’ve sprained it,” she sighed.
“What shall I do?”

“Better go back to your apartment and I’ll send Mrs. Callahan up to you—unless you want me to telephone for a doctor?”

“No, I don’t want a doctor,” the girl answered immediately. “If you will help me up the stairs——”

“Of course,” Beverly agreed. “I’d stay with you for a while but I’m late as it is and the boss isn’t fond of late-comers.”

“Oh, I’m sorry. It’s all my fault. How stupid of me to slip the way I did,” the girl said as Beverly took the key and unlocked the door of Hope’s apartment.

“I’ll send my friends up to keep you company after a while,” Beverly offered as she prepared to leave. “You will be lonesome and you must keep off that ankle for a day or so.”

“I don’t want to trouble them——” Hope Rodgers protested.

“No trouble at all,” Beverly assured her. She raced down the steps and back to her own rooms. “Wake up sleepyheads,” she commanded her friends, bouncing the bed.

Lenora opened one drowsy eye and favored Beverly with a frown of displeasure. “Go away!” she ordered.

“Wake up and listen to me,” Beverly insisted.

“We’ll listen tonight when you come home,” Lois returned, her voice muffled by the covers.

“Girls, sit up! I’ve got to go. I’m late now.”

“That’s what we want you to do——Go,” Lenora retorted.

Beverly sighed impatiently. “Are you going to listen to me or do I have to pour cold water on you?”

That had the desired effect.

“What do you want?” Lenora asked ungraciously, struggling to a sitting posture.

Beverly told them of Hope and what had happened. “I want you to go up and visit with her after a while,” she added.

“Play the Good Samaritan?” Lenora murmured. “All right, now can I go back to

sleep?”

“Sleep and may you have bad dreams!”
Beverly said gayly, running to the door and
slamming it after her.

She ran to the subway station and squeezed
into an already crowded car. She could walk
to the office, but this morning, late as she
was, the subway would be quicker.



CHAPTER VII

Robbery

WHEN Beverly took her copy to the desk Charlie Blaine handed her two small yellow bits of cardboard.

“Tickets to the hockey games at the Garden tonight,” he said. “Enjoy yourself.”

“Thanks,” Beverly said smiling. She would have said more but another reporter came up and claimed Blaine’s attention.

She donned her hat and coat and went out. It was dark and the street lights were shining coldly and clearly overhead. Autos whizzed by, reckless of life and limb, pedestrians hurried to and fro. She decided to walk to their apartment and started out briskly. Blaine had been amazingly kind and considerate with her—after all he was her boss. He had

chosen to overlook many of the blunders she had made, blunders that were natural to a “cub” reporter. He had helped her with her work, and had others do the same. She had received but little of the teasing and jokes that were sometimes lavished on newcomers to a newspaper force. In everything he gave her the best chance he could. She knew in another office she would not have received the assignments she did here. Another editor would have been fearful to trust an important matter to inexperienced hands. Blaine evidently believed in the kindness and beginner’s luck for he did give her some important leads. But she recognized the fact that it was all because she had known him before she took her job here. If she had not been friends with him before, she wouldn’t have gotten the job in the first place. Second place, he would never have been so kindly disposed toward her.

Lois and Lenora were both absent when she entered the apartment. Evidently they had not expected her to return in time for dinner. Several times lately she had not come home

until late. She had dinner in the little restaurant across the street on these nights and she did so again, while she considered what to do with the tickets to the hockey game. Certainly she did not propose to waste them and yet she didn't want to go by herself. She went back to the apartment house and telephoned to Shirley. She was out. Then she hit upon a good idea.

It was more than a week now since that morning when Hope Rodgers had sprained her ankle. During that time the girls had become friends, often spending free hours in one another's apartment. Beverly mounted the steps and knocked at Hope's door. The door across the hall opened and a tall, distinguished Hindu came out and went down the stairs. Beverly smiled to herself, remembering Lenora's surprise when she had first beheld this man from another continent. He had taken up his abode in Mrs. Callahan's house only three days before and it had caused quite a little flurry of excitement among the other tenants. Not that he caused confusion in any way, it was just the thought

of having such a mysterious and foreign person in the same house.

Hope was delighted with the invitation and the two went off blissfully to Madison Square Garden. It was crowded and the air was loud with the buzz of talk. They furnished themselves with peanuts and pop corn and in a short while the game began.

It was Beverly's first ice hockey game and the whirl of activity and excitement left her breathless. She marveled at the skill with which the players sped across the ice. Every time there was a collision and a mixup of arms and legs the spectators expected to see serious results but the players were fortunate. Every minute held breathless thrills. The whole game was packed with tense excitement throughout. When the final score had been made and the crowd began to drift out Beverly and Hope were almost as exhausted as the players.

Hope knew of a secluded little restaurant and took Beverly there for a bite to eat and a

chat before they proceeded back home and to bed. When they were seated at a little table in the cozy, delicately lighted restaurant Hope looked across at Beverly and as their eyes met they both smiled.

“You know,” Hope said drawing aimless hieroglyphics with her finger, “two weeks ago I was perfectly miserable. I’m glad I slipped down the steps that morning.”

“So am I,” Beverly said. “I mean,” she amended hastily, “I’m glad that it has led to our being friends.”

“You’re my friends and you don’t know a thing about me,” Hope said quizzically. “Aren’t you curious?”

“Terribly,” Beverly confessed. “I don’t see how Lois and Lenora have suppressed their questions so long.”

“They are awf’ly amusing,” Hope laughed. “I enjoy them more than I can say. Lois has real talent in her sketching, too, hasn’t she?”

“She has!” Beverly agreed enthusiastically.

“Tell me,” Hope said. “How did you three ever come to take an apartment together?”

“We were at college together,” Beverly answered. “I wish you could meet the other girls in our sorority group. We three are determined to win fame and fortune. Now, tell me about yourself.”

“My home is in Philadelphia,” Hope answered. “I came to New York a year ago to take a position as secretary for the manager of a large shipping company. A few months ago the company closed. I could have gone back to Philadelphia, but I won’t. I have a little money of my own. It will see me through until I find another position.”

“I hope it is soon,” Beverly said. “What do you think of the Hindu—whatshisname that has taken the apartment across from yours?”

“Isn’t he mysterious,” murmured Hope. “I positively shiver every time he looks at me.

What do you suppose he wants at Mrs. Callahan's? What can he be doing in this city?"

"Doesn't Mrs. Callahan know?" Beverly asked smiling.

"No," Hope laughed. "And when you can keep something from her it taxes all your ingenuity. She will fathom him yet, I believe."

It was late when the girls rose and made their way out onto the street. Despite the lateness of the hour people were still thronging on the crowded thoroughfares.

"Come along up and I'll give you your book back," Hope said as they mounted the steps. "I enjoyed it a lot."

"Ouch!" Beverly stumbled over a step. "I wonder who outened the lights?"

They were on the landing. Directly at the top of the next flight of steps was the door to

the Hindu's apartment. Hope pressed back against Beverly and squeezed her arm warningly.

“What is it?” Beverly whispered.

“Two men—trying to get into that apartment,” Hope returned.

“Thieves?” Beverly murmured.

“Looks like it,” Hope admitted. “They certainly don’t live on this floor. The Hindu and I are the only ones up here.”

The round yellow gleam of a flashlight showed above them. Occasionally low snatches of conversation drifted down to them.

“What will we do?” Hope murmured in distress. “We ought to stop them.”

“We’ll try to stop them,” Beverly agreed. “Follow me.”



CHAPTER VIII

Foiled

BEVERLY turned and silently made her way down the steps. Hope followed close behind. When they were on the floor below Hope tugged at Beverly's arm.

"What are you going to do? Call the police?"

"No," Beverly said frowning thoughtfully. "We aren't sure that they are really thieves. They might just have made a mistake in floors."

"I doubt it," Hope said instantly. "Anyway, what do you propose?"

"We'll go up again," Beverly said. "This time make as much noise as possible." She smiled. "We will give them plenty of warning

that we are coming.”

“And see what they do,” added Hope.

The two girls started up the steps again, stumbling and protesting loudly about the darkness. All was silent overhead. They started up the last flight arm in arm, stamping on the steps regardless of the noise. When they were half way up the lights flashed on. Two men stood at the top of the steps, staring about them in apparent bewilderment.

“Looks as though we are on the wrong floor, Dick,” one of them said and the two men started down the steps.

“It’s a good thing we didn’t call the police,” Hope said as the girls stood at her door and listened to the men’s footsteps growing fainter.

“It would have been embarrassing, wouldn’t it,” Beverly said.

Without either of them being aware of the

fact the Hindu had come up the stairs and now stood at the door of his apartment. He hesitated with the door open, looking back over his shoulder at the girls. Then he disappeared.

“Why the funny look, I wonder?” Hope said quizzically as she shut her door behind them.

“I wonder,” agreed Beverly.

On her way down to the next floor to her own rooms Beverly hesitated and turned about. There was a faint click. The Hindu had been watching her. She had felt his gaze even as she came out of Hope’s apartment. She stared at the door he had so gently closed. It was scratched in several places. Were those two men really on the wrong floor, or had they been trying to enter the Hindu’s rooms and rob him? Of what? It certainly looked as though they had been forcing the door. Why had they picked specially on him if robbery was their motive? Why climb all those stairs when they might have robbed the rooms on

the first floor? There was something strange about it. It certainly had been suspicious circumstances in which the girls had come upon the two men. Why, when they heard the girls coming had they suddenly lighted the light? Why hadn't they done that before unless——Beverly was convinced now that she thought about it that she and Hope had foiled a pair of thieves.

“Hullo, we had given you up for lost,” Lenora declared when she opened the door. “We were just about to call out the marines to find you.”

“I was home,” Beverly said impressively, “and I found you had forsaken me so Hope and I went to the hockey games at the Garden.”

“Shucks,” Lenora said expressively. “I’ve always wanted to see them.”

“I had passes,” Beverly added mischievously. “Where were you?”

“We had dinner with Shirley,” answered Lois coming from the bedroom with a towel wound turban-wise about her head.

“Ho, ho,” chortled Lenora. “You look like the big Hindu whatshisname.”

“Oh, let me tell you,” Lois said eagerly. “I’ve learned his name.”

“What is it?” Beverly wanted to know promptly.

“Omar El Hamel,” Lois said importantly.

“Did you find out what he is doing in this country?” Lenora prodded further.

Lois shook her head and looked mysterious. “It is Mrs. Callahan’s opinion that he is on a secret mission of some kind.”

“Nonsense,” Lenora declared immediately. “If he was on anything important he wouldn’t be here at Mrs. Callahan’s. I’ll bet he is just a circus crystal gazer out of a job.”

“Cynic!” retorted Lois. “You have absolutely no imagination.”

“What do you think, Beverly?” defended Lenora.

“I don’t know what to think,” Beverly said thoughtfully. “Tonight Hope and I believe we thwarted an attempt to rob his apartment.”

“You believe you did,” Lenora murmured. “What do you mean by that?”

Beverly told them then of how the girls had come upon the two men evidently trying to force their way into Omar El Hamel’s rooms and of the flimsy excuse they had used when the girls came face to face with them.

“Certainly it was a robbery,” Lenora said positively. “I would never believe in a million years that they were accidentally on that floor.”

“That’s what I think,” Beverly agreed.

“What do you say we go to bed?” Lois

yawned.

The girls trailed into the bedroom and dropped onto the bed to talk. Lenora and Beverly talked so long that Lois was in bed and almost asleep before they decided to undress.

“Such slow pokes,” Lois murmured distastefully. “Put out that light, will you?”

“No, we are going to let it burn all night,” Lenora retorted. “Many are the times, my dear Miss Mason, that I had to wait for you. Now you wait for me,” she added.

“Believe it or not—you wait for me! Don’t make me laugh,” Lois begged. “If you were ever ready before me——”

“I’m ready now,” Lenora declared and jumped into bed with such vigor that Lois bounced. “Hang on!” she directed laughingly.

Beverly put the light out and went to the window. The night air was cold. Stars were

faintly shining but the moon was hidden behind a bank of clouds.

“Whatcha doin’?” Lenora asked.

“Looking at the city,” Beverly answered. “I love it at night.”

“Just a lot of lights,” said cynical Lenora. “You see it all day, I should think you would be tired of it. What do you say, Lois?”

Lois was blissfully silent.

“Asleep!” Lenora declared. “Tsk, tsk,” she murmured disgustedly and dozed off to meet her friend in dreamland.



CHAPTER IX

Another Attempt

“Ah, the literary light returns to the fold,” Lenora greeted Beverly as she arrived home the next evening. “Just in time to aid in the important detail of getting dinner. Or have you already dined?” she asked as an afterthought.

“I have not,” Beverly answered, “and I’m so hungry I could eat a doorknob.”

“Gracious, I hope our food is more palatable than that,” Lois declared.

“Fear not! With such remarkable chefs as we, how could it help but be excellent?” Lenora demanded.

With much laughter and chatter the three prepared and digested their meal.

“We’ve been invited up to Hope’s to play cards or something,” Beverly said, “and I’m going to make some fudge.”

“I hope you haven’t forgotten how,” added Lenora, experimentally sticking her finger into the brown concoction Beverly was stirring over the stove some time later. “Ouch!” she howled, running to the sink to wash the hot fudge off with cool water.

“That’s what you get,” Lois said heartlessly.

“You might have known it would be hot,” added Beverly.

“Sympathetic people you are!” Lenora declared in an injured tone. “Just for that you can make the fudge without my advice. I’m going up to Hope.”

It was ten o’clock when the girls turned on the radio for some dance music. They were each learning to play bridge and they had had several hours of it. Each time they played

they found it more absorbing. The only difficulty was with Lois and Lenora who were often partners. Each never played to suit the other.

“Next time you shan’t be partners,” Beverly said firmly. “Then see what you can find to argue about.”

“Oh, we can find lots of things, can’t we, darling?” Lenora demanded brightly of Lois.

“Yes, dear,” Lois answered promptly. “You——”

Suddenly a heavy crash as of thunder seemed to shake the very floor.

“What in the world was that?” Hope murmured in awe.

Beverly snapped off the radio and the four listened intently. There came to them faint, unintelligible sounds. Then there was another crash, not quite as loud as the first.

“Seems to be in the hall,” volunteered

Lenora.

Beverly opened the door and the three other girls crowded about her. The hall was empty. The light was burning brightly and there was nothing to be seen that could account for the sounds they had heard.

“It’s in the Hindu’s rooms,” Beverly said as there was another crash that fairly shook the wall across from them.

“He must be doing his daily exercises,” Lois murmured.

“Do you suppose the robbers returned and he caught them?” Hope whispered in Beverly’s ear.

“Just what I was thinking,” the latter responded.

“What shall we do?” Lois demanded. “It sounds like a fight.”

“No!” Lenora said in mock surprise. “It sounds more like an earthquake to me. He

will have Mrs. Callahan herself up here if he doesn't stop."

"She's out tonight. We ought to do something," Hope added.

"Come on," Beverly said determinedly, marching across the hall.

"Knock first," advised Lois.

Lenora pounded heavily on the door. From where they now stood they could hear the scuffling loudly interspersed with occasional groans.

Beverly turned the door knob and the four stood aghast at the wreckage of the room. Table and chairs were overturned, pictures torn from walls and smashed, it even seemed as if someone had endeavored to tear up the carpets. About the only things intact were a small table and squat, octagonal shaped vase, standing beside the door. In the center of all the melee were two struggling figures. The girls could barely recognize the Hindu as one

of them. His opponent the girls had never seen. Or had they? From the straining, fighting figures in the center of the room their gaze traveled to a body that lay in one corner. Was the man dead or merely unconscious?

“Let’s get out of here,” Hope murmured fearfully.

“Get out nothing!” Lenora retorted and picked up the vase beside her. A minute later she had splintered it over the head of the Hindu’s opponent.

The man sank to the floor dazedly and Omar El Hamel looked at the girls uncomprehendingly for a moment. He, too, seemed dazed and utterly unable to understand the presence of the girls here in his room.

“Shall we send for the police?” Lenora asked. “Or is an ambulance more important?”

“No,” the Hindu shook his head and murmured in a deep, low voice. “It was most

fortunate that you entered.” He approached them and bowed toward the door. “I am forever in your debt.”

It was a distinct wish for them to go and so they did, but not without many backward glances At the wreckage of the room and the three strange figures it contained.



CHAPTER X

Friends

“OH, the sun shines bright on my old Manhattan home,” warbled Lenora from under the shower. “I ask you gals, does it have to rain every Saturday?” she said fretfully.

“We shouldn’t complain,” Beverly said as she brushed her hair. “It hasn’t rained much since we’ve been here.”

“For which three cheers and a razzle dazzle,” Lois added. “Oh, dear, look where my shoe is! Way under the bed and now I’ll have to crawl under after it.”

“You shouldn’t have kicked it there last night,” said Lenora as she joined the other two.

“I thought it was yours,” Lois retorted as she wriggled under the bed.

For reply Lenora jumped up and down on the bed, to which there was a series of protesting shrieks from Lois.

“I’ll be seeing you,” Beverly announced as she donned her hat and coat, “if you can manage to get along peacefully.”

“Promptly at one,” added Lenora, “or we won’t wait for you.”

“At one,” Beverly assured her.

Beverly, after a morning at the newspaper office was to meet Lenora, Lois and Shirley at one o’clock for lunch. The four were then to go to a matinee of a musical comedy and the girls threatened Beverly with dire possibilities if she was late or unable to come.

“You told me you had some short stories to sell,” Charlie Blaine said, handing her a small card. “That’s the name and address of a

reliable firm of agents. Send one to them and get their opinion.”

“Thanks, I will,” Beverly said. She slipped the card into her handbag and forgot about it.

When she left the office a little after twelve she stepped to the curb to cross the street. A roadster was standing a short distance from her and the driver tooted his horn. Beverly paid not the slightest attention. He tooted a second time. A lady beside her looked from Beverly to the driver and smiled. When the horn tooted a third time Beverly was annoyed but when she looked up she smiled with delight.

“I thought you had suddenly developed deafness,” declared the young man who held the door open and invited her to enter. “Or did you think it was some fellow being fresh?”

“Larry Owens!” she laughed. “I didn’t know you were in New York.”

“I might say the same about you,” he answered as he started his car. “As a matter of fact I just landed here this morning. What are you doing? Out to conquer the world now that school days are over?”

“Something of the sort,” Beverly laughed.

In her second year at Vernon College Beverly and the other girls of the Alpha Delta Sorority had become great friends with Larry Owens, secret service operative. In her third year their friendship had developed even farther. Since the day he had asked Beverly to marry him, she had not seen Larry. They had exchanged two or three letters, but neither was a studious correspondent and the letters were lax.

“Working?” he asked.

“For the *Tribune*,” she answered. “Cub reporter.”

“For Charlie Blaine,” he said with a smile. “Great newspaper man, Blaine. You’ll learn

things from him.”

“I’ve learned a lot already,” she answered.

“Are you busy this afternoon or can you devote yourself to a worthy cause—me,” he laughed.

“I’m to meet Shirley, Lenora, and Lois at one o’clock,” she answered.

“Don’t tell me the whole Alpha whatchamacallit has come to the big city to slay dragons,” he said in surprise.

“Yes,” Beverly nodded vigorously, “and we are all started on it. That is, we’ve all come but Rosalie and Anne. Rosalie is to be married and Anne is already.”

“Ah, yes, I remember, she was married last June. The idea has never occurred to you yet, has it?” he asked, innocently staring at a traffic light.

“No,” Beverly answered in a low voice.

“Where are you to meet your pals?” he asked. “I’ll drop you off there.”

She told him and for the remainder of the short ride he entertained her with an account of his doings during the past months.

“I’ll call you up soon and we’ll go places together,” he promised as he helped her out. “And if you have need for a secret service man you will always find my name and number in the directory.”

“I’ll remember,” she said laughingly.

She was still smiling at Larry’s nonsense and chatter when she met the other three girls. On the surface Larry was a light hearted, careless young man. Underneath was a courage and daring that had won for him an enviable record in his chosen work.

“What are you smiling so sweetly about?” Lenora wanted to know. “You look like the cat who just swallowed a canary.”

“Far from it,” Beverly laughed. “Guess who I just met.”

“The man on the flying trapeze—without his trapeze,” said Lenora.

“Larry Owens,” Beverly answered.

All the girls were surprised to learn that Larry was in the city and more surprised that in such a big city he and Beverly should meet by chance. They had their lunch and went to their matinee. The show was a lively one, full of fun and tuneful music.

It was early in the evening when the girls entered their apartment. Shirley left them at the door for she had an engagement for the evening. The others had their evening free. Beverly proposed to devote it to writing another short story, or at least beginning one. Lenora was going to finish the mystery story she had started, and Lois, as usual, would be busy with her sketching block.

“Yes, sir,” Lenora said as Lois unlocked

the door and they entered, “as I see it, we shall have an exciting evening.”

“Hullo,” Beverly said in surprise. She stooped over and picked up a folded bit of paper that had been slipped under the door.

“From Hope?” Lenora called as she and Lois entered the bedroom to dispose of their wraps. Beverly’s answer brought them scurrying back to the living room in breathless excitement.

“It’s from—Omar El Hamel,” Beverly said slowly, puzzledly.

“The Hindu!” echoed Lois. “What does he say?”

““If you wish to have the hidden realms of the future revealed, I shall gaze into the crystal with you.”” Beverly read slowly.

“He doesn’t sound like a Hindu,” commented Lois.

“He might have been educated in this

country,” suggested Lenora.

“That must be it,” agreed Beverly.

“But what does his note mean?” Lois demanded.

“He wants customers for his crystal ball,” Lenora said. “I wonder if the crystal is still in one piece after that grand scrimmage of last night.”

“It is a wonder we didn’t hear something about those men,” said Beverly. “Even Mrs. Callahan never mentioned it and I was talking to her this morning.”

“Perhaps she doesn’t know anything about it,” said Lois. “I don’t see why the Hindu didn’t call the police last night and have those men arrested.”

“Maybe they didn’t start the fight,” said Lenora. “You know, I think it would be fun to look into the crystal. What do you say? Let’s go up and see him.”

“I’m willing,” Beverly agreed.

The three proceeded up to the next floor. There was no glimmer of light coming from under Hope’s door so the girls knew she must be out. They approached the Hindu’s rooms and Lenora knocked. A pair of bright eyes peered out at them and then the door was thrown wide. The Hindu, his spotless turban of white, the semidarkness, and the faint odor of incense made the atmosphere almost unreal.

“We received your note,” Beverly began, speaking for all of them, “and——”

“We want to look into the crystal,” added Lenora.

He smiled slightly. “My note was the only ruse by which to have you come here and still be involved in no danger,” he said seriously.

The girls exchanged glances. His note a ruse? To involve them in danger? What danger? What did he mean?

“I want to thank you again for entering last night when you did and subduing my opponent in such an admirable, manner,” he added with a smile for Lenora.

“What—what became of them?” Lois ventured.

“They left—rather hurriedly, shortly after you,” he said. “I no doubt owe you an explanation. I entered my rooms and found the two searching my things. It infuriated me. I am sorry that the uproar disturbed you. I am grateful for what you did.”

“You should have called the police,” suggested Lois.

He shook his head. “No. I did not want the police.”

“Then you don’t really use the crystal,” Lenora said disappointed.

“Yes, I do,” he said. “Would you like to look into the crystal?” he added.

He led them into another room. Everything was restored to order and for the most part the consequences of the struggle last night could not be seen. As the girls followed him they exchanged more than one wondering glance. Each longed to ask more questions about what had happened last night but the Hindu was loath to discuss it. More and more they wondered what he, so cultured, so Americanized, and yet a Hindu, could be doing at Mrs. Callahan's.

He seated them in a circle about a small table. In the center of the table, slightly raised, was the crystal ball. There was only a dim light burning overhead. The Hindu folded his hands before him, his eyes gazing straight into the shining transparency of the crystal.

“Now—silence, please.”

It was an interesting experience for all three of them but each felt that there was some hidden meaning to the occasion. They could feel the dark eyes of Omar El Hamel

watching them, he seemed to pry into their very minds.

What was it all about? That thought kept repeating itself in Beverly's head. Why had he summoned them up here in such a roundabout fashion? Why did the very air in the room seem to breathe of mystery? Why was it the Hindu was one minute fascinating, and the next dark and mysterious as the far eastern country from which he came? Always on the alert for something strange, her newspaper work helping to single out circumstances that might prove exciting, Beverly felt now that forces were at work in the very atmosphere of this room which would involve them all in something strange.



“Now, please tell me what that was all about,” Lenora said the minute the door to their apartment had closed behind them.

“Did you feel that way too?” Lois asked

mystified. “What do you suppose his motive was?”

“I had chills all the time I was in there,” added Beverly.

“He was too polite,” confirmed Lenora. “He had us up there for a purpose and I wish I knew what it was.”

“Well, no use to sit here all night,” said Lois, going into the kitchenette and returning with a piece of cake in her hand. “By the way, what are you going to do on Thanksgiving Day?”

“Are you going home?” Lenora continued.

“I am,” Lois said promptly.

“Of course,” Beverly agreed.

“Then I shall toddle along to my parental mansion also,” Lenora sighed. “Of course I wouldn’t have thought of leaving you two babes alone in the big city on the holiday, but if you are going home, I shall take myself off

too.”

“I’d like to know why you couldn’t leave us alone,” Lois murmured suspiciously.
“Afraid you would miss something, I’ll bet.”

“You know my curiosity had nothing to do with it,” Lenora said loftily. “It was merely a magnanimous gesture on my part to give up my holiday to be with you, and you don’t appreciate me.”

Lois sniffed. “Magnanimous! We would have been glad to be rid of you,” she teased.

“Oh, is that so!” Lenora shouted and threw a magazine at her friend. It narrowly missed knocking Oswald from his perch on the radio.

So the good natured teasing kept up until the three tumbled gleefully into bed, serene in the present and careless of the future.



CHAPTER XI

Oswald

BEVERLY slept soundly and dreamlessly until her two friends awoke. Immediately Beverly's slumbers were dispelled and she was brought up wide awake by her comrades.

"C'mon, get up," Lenora urged.

"What for?" Beverly wanted to know.
"Today is Sunday."

"We are going to church and then to the zoo," Lois informed her.

"They will keep you there," Beverly mumbled sleepily, covering her head with the covers in a vain endeavor to shut out her friends' chatter.

"That is an insult!" roared Lenora and

dragged the covers from her drowsy friend. “You shouldn’t stay up until the wee hours of the morning and then you could get up bright and early. Like me,” she added, and frowned distastefully when Lois laughed.

The three donned dressing gowns over their pajamas and had their breakfast. Shirley arrived in the midst of the disorder and talked to them while they dressed. When they were in Shirley’s car to drive to church, she gave them her bit of news.

“Mr. Crandall comes home tomorrow.”

“He does!” Lois echoed.

“Then you will have your chance soon,” Beverly added.

“Here’s wishing you all the success in the world,” Lenora declared. “When you are famous, don’t forget I knew you when!”

Shirley laughed. “You have me famous before I’m even started. What optimists you

are.”

“Optimism is my middle name,” Lenora said promptly. “But,” she added, “I wish I could find something to do.”

“I thought you were busy having a good time,” Lois said.

“Of course, I am,” Lenora assured her, “but even that gets monotonous when you have nothing certain to do. I crave action—any kind of action!”

“Well, we are going to the zoo, maybe they will let you scare the monkeys for a while,” Lois suggested.

“Do I scare you?” Lenora retaliated. “I wish June was here.”

“Goodness sake, why June?” Shirley wanted to know.

“Have you forgotten, my dears, that we are to go to Vernon to see the rest of the Alpha Deltas graduated?”

“I had forgotten,” Shirley confessed. “I hope I can make it.”

“You’ve got to make it,” Lois said firmly.

“Rosalie is coming,” Lenora put in.

“So is Anne,” Beverly added. “It promises to be a real reunion.”

“Funny, isn’t it,” Shirley mused aloud, “a year ago we were struggling with studies and having a good time at Vernon and here we are—riding up Broadway.”

“One of us a promising artist, another a coming writer, one destined to be a great actress——” Lenora enumerated.

“And one a lazy chatterbox,” Lois finished mischievously.

Lenora frowned on her friend. “You wound me deeply. I will admit I have no great love for strenuous labor, but I decidedly am not a—chatterbox, as you so inconsiderately put it.”

“I apologize,” Lois said bowing profoundly, though somewhat encumbered by her position in the car.

With much laughter and jest the four proceeded on their day’s outing. As always when they were together, they thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

“We’ll have dinner at the apartment,” proposed Lois as they left Bronx Park and reentered the car.

“I just remembered!” Lenora said as the four were about to enter Mrs. Callahan’s. “There isn’t a thing in the ice box. We shall have to resort to the delicatessen store.”

“O.K. by me,” Lois said cheerfully.

“You three run along and get some things and I’ll go up and set the table and have everything ready for the feast,” Beverly proposed.

“Righto!”

The early November night was approaching rapidly. Dusk was creeping in the windows when Beverly opened the door to their apartment and hesitated, her finger on the light switch.

A tall figure had risen from a chair and stood silhouetted against the gray afternoon light. His turban gleamed white through the gathering darkness.

“Please make no light yet,” Omar El Hamel said in a low voice.

“What are you doing here?” Beverly asked scarcely above a whisper.

“I wish to speak with you, but it will be best if we talk in darkness,” he answered. “Come, sit down. Hear what I have to say and then I will go.”

Hesitantly Beverly came forward and sat gingerly on the edge of a chair. He sat down opposite her and in the darkness she fancied his dark eyes glowing like two coals of fire.

A little chill went up her back. What did he want? How did he come to be in this room when the door had been locked?

“First let me say I desire to be your friend.”

Beverly was more puzzled. Like Lenora would have, she was tempted to say “So what?” But something in his voice kept her from being flippant.

“Also,” he said again and she felt her interest quicken, “I need a friend. My motive last night in having you look into the crystal was to determine that you were trustworthy. I have to be certain.”

“I don’t understand,” Beverly said, confused and wishing frantically that Lois, Lenora, and Shirley would hurry.

“Perhaps I should not have come to you. I am afraid—I am a stranger here and there is no one to whom I can explain my position. Since the other night I have considered you.”

For what, Beverly wondered. She wished he would come to the point. He wanted them to do something that was evident. It was something important, from all the fuss he was making about it.

“Please explain,” Beverly said settling more comfortably in her chair, prepared to hear a long dissertation on his loneliness.

“What we will say must be in the strictest confidence,” he said, his voice low and mysterious. “You must tell not even your friends.”

“But——”

He stood up. “It is vital that no one but us two know of it. If you do not wish——”

“Very well, I promise,” Beverly said quickly. This was getting exciting. After all, what if she did keep something from the girls? She was sure it could not be so very important. “Shall I light the lights?” she asked as he resumed his chair.

“No,” he said firmly. “I must not be seen with you—for your sake and mine.”

“This is all very mysterious,” Beverly said frowning. “Won’t you——”

He smiled. “You are confused. It is natural. I will tell you everything. I have come from India on a mission. I was to meet Sahib Manus. You know him?”

“Manus—Manus,” Beverly murmured. “Frank Manus? He owns a large jewelry shop just off Fifth Avenue,” she said, more puzzled than ever.

“When I arrived in your city,” Omar El Hamel resumed, “I found Sahib Manus was not here. He is still in Europe. He had left directions in a letter for me to find an unpretentious place and there await his return. This I have done.”

“But—what about the men who tried to rob your apartment. Why did they do it?” Beverly asked, leaning forward in her chair so as not

to miss a single inflection of his voice and to watch the fleeting expressions of his face. “Have they anything to do with your mission?”

“My mission,” he said thoughtfully. “I have in my possession,” his hand fumbled beneath his coat and brought forth a little canvas bag, “jewels to be delivered to Sahib Manus.” He pulled the draw string and tumbled glowing stones out into his hand. Beverly held her breath at the beauty of them. “They are worth a great deal of money,” he continued. “Do you understand now why thieves seek to rob me?”

Beverly nodded speechless as he replaced the stones in the bag and returned the latter to his coat. No wonder the man was worried about thieves! He carried a fortune about with him.

“But what has this to do with me?” Beverly wanted to know.

“I want someone to keep the jewels.

Someone here in this house that I may keep within touch. It is possibly foolish and must seem totally fantastic to you that I would trust anyone to touch the jewels. But it is imperative that I get them out of my possession immediately. The thieves will return, of that I am convinced.”

He rose and crossed to the window. The faint yellow glare from the street lamps below reflected on his face and he beckoned to Beverly. She crossed to his side and he pointed down into the street.

“Do you see that man?”

A dark figure lurked in the doorway of a closed and shadowed store directly across the street.

“Yes,” she breathed.

“Every time I leave the house I am followed. Last night I was attacked on the street. I managed to escape and return here. You see? I must hide the jewels.”

“But why don’t you go to the police?”
Beverly urged. “They will protect you.”

“They would try,” he agreed. “But it is the command of Sahib Manus that these jewels be handled with the greatest secrecy. If the law knew of them—it might even be printed in your newspapers,” he finished.

Beverly laughed. “Yet you come to me, a reporter, for help.”

He smiled also. “You have given me your word that this is a confidence.”

“It is,” she assured him. “But what do you propose to do?”

“I want you to hide the jewels,” he said simply.

“Me?” Beverly gasped. “But—aren’t you afraid I might run off with them? They are worth a fortune.”

“You would not,” he said confidently. “No, I am convinced that I can trust you. Will you

help me?”

“Well——” Beverly said reluctantly, without a bit of enthusiasm. She was of the opinion that she was stepping into hot water—but it would be an adventure.

“Where?” His next question came so rapidly that she had scarcely time to think.

“If it must be in the house, it might as well be here in our apartment,” she said. “There is someone here nearly all day. I don’t think the thieves would have much of a chance to search here without being discovered and if they are, we can summon the police because we have nothing to hide.”

His glance was darting about the room now almost dark, illuminated only by the gleams the street lamps threw up. Oswald was sitting proudly on top of the radio, his impish grin turned upon the room, and the “diamond” collar faintly sparkling. Omar El Hamel crossed and picked up the toy dog.

“An admirable hiding place.”

“But how will you hide them in him?”
Beverly asked. “He is hollow but he has no opening spring or anything.”

“We will make one,” he said, taking a knife from under his coat.

Beverly turned on the lamp on her desk. It made enough light for the Hindu to see what he was doing, but not enough to reveal the two of them to anyone watching from the street below.

With his knife Omar El Hamel cut out a small round hole in the toy dog. He slipped the canvas bag into the hollow Oswald and put the cut portion back, much like putting a cork into a bottle.

“Excellent,” he said as he surveyed his handiwork.

“No one would know Oswald suddenly became a million-dollar-dog,” Beverly agreed

smilingly. "Jiggle him. Does he rattle?"

The Hindu shook the toy up and down vigorously. "No. It is well. Listen!"

A laugh rang through the hall and Beverly smiled. "My friends."

"It is better if they do not find me here. Remember, you must tell them nothing," warned the Hindu and was gone before Beverly scarcely saw the door open.

Hurriedly she switched on the lights and tossed her hat and coat into the bedroom. She ran into the kitchen and when the girls opened the door she was spreading the tablecloth.

"Slow poke," accused Lenora. "We thought you would have all the things ready."

"I—I stopped to speak to Mrs. Callahan," Beverly evaded. It was partly true. She had said hello to the landlady as the Irish woman left the house when Beverly entered. "What

kept you so long?”

“Lenora couldn’t decide what she wanted to eat,” Lois said. “You know her. Once she starts debating a subject——”

There was a knock on the door.

“I’ll go,” Beverly said.

The girls all trailed into the living room behind her. It was the Hindu, tall, and dignified, his face perfectly impassive.

“Come with me please,” he said in a low voice to Beverly.

She gave him a puzzled glance and nodded. “Back in a minute, girls,” she flung over her shoulder and followed Omar El Hamel up the stairs.

A second later she came flying back to them. She grabbed the telephone in the hall only to impatiently turn away to the telephone book.

“What’s up?” Lenora asked.

“Plenty,” Beverly said breathlessly.

“You look as pale as a ghost. Did you see one?” Shirley asked smiling.

“I did,” Beverly said and the girls exchanged wondering glances.

“Who are you calling?” Lois ventured.

“Larry,” Beverly answered and dialed his number.

“Hullo,” a lazy voice at the other end said.

“Larry? Beverly. Listen, I gave you my address, can you come over right away?”

“Right away?” he said in surprise. “I say, give me an hour and maybe——”

“You’ve got to come right away!”

“All right,” he soothed. “What’s the matter? A party?”

“It’s no party,” Beverly said. “It’s—
murder.”



CHAPTER XII

Turmoil

AFTER her call to Larry, Beverly telephoned the office of the *Tribune*. A murder was certainly news.

“A murder!” Lenora gasped. “Who? Where? When?”

“Right here in the house?” Lois added.

“Upstairs,” Beverly said in answer to Lenora’s second question.

“But only Hope and the Hindu live up there. We just saw him——” Lenora said, her voice trailing off. “Is Hope——”

“I haven’t seen her,” Beverly said. “It’s a man. In the Hindu’s apartment.”

“Did he do it?” Shirley asked.

Beverly shook her head. "No. I don't think so."

"What are you going to do?" Lois said.
"You should call the police."

"I'm going to, but I wanted Larry to get a head start. This thing must be kept quiet."

"Why?" Shirley said immediately.

"The Hindu wants it so. He said he doesn't want it spread all over the papers."

"As if you or anybody else could keep a murder secret," Lenora scoffed.

"Of course it will be in the papers," Beverly said. "It's bound to be. But he doesn't want the police to pry too deeply into his affairs. That is why I called Larry. Perhaps he can keep the police from pestering El Hamel too much."

"What's he afraid of?" Lenora wanted to know. "Does he have something to hide?"

“If he has something to hide, it rather looks as though he knew something of the murder,” added Shirley.

“But he didn’t do it,” Beverly said firmly.

“How do you know?” Lois demanded.

“I—I just feel that way,” Beverly said lamely. She couldn’t tell them that the man had been murdered while the Hindu was alone with her in their apartment.

“Where is he now, the Hindu, I mean?” Lenora asked.

“Up there,” Beverly said and shivered. “It’s horrible. I wanted to be a reporter and cover murder stories. Well, I’ve changed my mind.”

“Why don’t you call the police,” Lenora said impatiently. “It’s easily ten minutes since you came down here. Larry should be here any time now. Are you going to tell Mrs. Callahan?”

“Try to keep it from her,” Lois said. “Not with the police here!”

Beverly dialed the police station and when she had told the sergeant at the desk about the murder the girls went downstairs to the front door. They wanted to meet Larry.

“When Larry comes, Lenora, you go to Mrs. Callahan and tell her what has happened.”

“Perhaps Shirley and I had better go back to the apartment and wait for you,” Lois suggested.

Just then the front door opened and Larry burst in. He was breathing fast, as though he had run.

“Beverly! Did you say—murder?” he demanded in gasps. “Did you——”

“I certainly didn’t do it!” Beverly said half laughing.

He took off his hat and ran his fingers

through his hair. “That’s a load off my mind. The way you said it on the telephone—you sounded so scared—I thought maybe—where is it?”

“On the third floor. Come on up,” Beverly said and turned toward the steps.

Lenora went to find Mrs. Callahan and Shirley and Lois went to the girls’ apartment. Beverly and Larry continued up to the next floor. At the door to his rooms stood the Hindu, calm, waiting.

“You’ve touched nothing?” Larry said when Beverly had breathlessly told El Hamel who the young man was.

“Nothing,” Omar El Hamel said impassively and followed Larry into the room.

Beverly stood undecided in the hall. She wanted to be in there with Larry and the Hindu. She wanted to be present if they found anything to identify the murderer. But on the

other hand, shouldn't she go down to the door and wait for the police? In a second she was running down the steps. She hailed Lois and Shirley and despatched them to the first floor. In another minute she was upstairs again at the door. It was a horrible sight that which would greet her when she entered, but she wanted the facts of the murder. Charlie Blaine had given her terse directions to call him the minute she knew anything. Newspaper work certainly wasn't all roses and glory, she told herself as she straightened her shoulders and went in.

The police brought with them bedlam and confusion. The detective in charge, a burly man named Doran, issued orders for all the people in the house at the time of the murder to wait for him and the coroner in Mrs. Callahan's sitting room. Lenora had searched for the landlady but Mrs. Callahan was absent and this she reported when she joined the girls.

There were Beverly, Shirley, Lois, Lenora, the Hindu, and two other men in the sitting

room. One man was a small, meek soul who worked diligently day after day as bookkeeper for a large department store. He looked totally unable to harm anything, let alone kill a man. The other man was a visitor to New York. The other boarders, there were four more, were all absent and had been absent all day as far as the girls knew.

Lois and Shirley were sitting on the old fashioned horsehair sofa by the window and Lenora and Beverly were standing, one at each side. The Hindu was standing by the cold, black fireplace, staring at the worn carpet before him. The other two men were sitting calmly in high backed chairs.

Larry entered with the detective, the coroner, and a uniformed officer who took up his stand with his back against the closed living room door.

“The man was murdered all right, no doubt of that,” the detective said, standing in the center of the room and glaring at each one individually. “Shot in the back, the bullet

going straight through his heart. Now which one of you did it?”

Beverly wondered if he really expected the murderer to confess as easily as all that. She listened attentively while Doran questioned the bookkeeper and then the other boarder. Next he turned to the Hindu.

“You say when you entered your room the man was already dead?” he shot at the other.

“It is so,” the Hindu said calmly. “He was sitting as you found him, his back to the door, at my desk and he was quite dead.”

“Didn’t you enter your room, find him searching your desk and shoot him?”

“No,” Omar El Hamel said, dismissing the question as if it were scarcely worthy of his attention.

Dissatisfied, the detective turned to the girls. There was not much they could tell him and it seemed to irritate him more. He had to

prove somebody the murderer, but whom?

“Someone could have entered the house, sneaked up to the room and murdered that man before Omar El Hamel entered, and gone out again with no one the wiser,” Larry suggested. “In a boarding house like this it is difficult to keep tabs on everyone’s comings and goings.”

“I’m handling this case,” Doran snapped at Larry and the latter subsided with a shrug of his shoulders. “The coroner has fixed the time of death about five thirty. You say you entered the room about quarter of six?” he demanded of the Hindu.

“Yes,” El Hamel nodded. “The clock was chiming the quarter hour as I opened the door.”

“Hm. Who is that coming in?” The detective demanded as light steps sounded in the hall. “Bring her in here,” he directed the officer at the door.

Hope, looking surprised and a little frightened, was brought into the room. She looked more surprised when she saw the group already gathered and their serious faces.

“Who are you and do you live here?” demanded the detective before Hope could get her breath.

“My name is Hope Rodgers and I live here,” she said clearly. “But—what has happened?”

“There has been a murder,” the detective said briskly.

“Who?” Hope murmured, her color fading a trifle.

“A man. In El Hamel’s apartment,” Lenora put in, lest the detective should decide to keep Hope in suspense. Lenora was of the opinion that the detective didn’t know much of this murder—or of anything. For one thing, she didn’t like the angle at which he

wore his derby. And why did he have to wear a derby? Detectives in movies always wore them; possibly he thought it made him look dignified.

Now Doran contented himself with a glare at Lenora and turned back to Hope. "Sit down," he said.

Hope sat down. There was a mystified frown on her forehead, but she didn't look frightened now.

"I want to ask you some questions," the detective shot at her. "Where are your rooms?"

"On the same floor as his," Hope answered, nodding toward the Hindu.

"Oh, they are? What time did you go out this afternoon? Did you see anyone coming in? Tell the truth now!"

Beverly almost smiled at the disgusted look on Larry's face. Evidently he didn't

approve of the detective's somewhat theatrical handling of the case.

"I met Omar El Hamel coming in," Hope answered truthfully.

"He was coming in? What time was that?"

"About five o'clock or a little after," Hope answered.

"Five o'clock!" Doran echoed and swung about to face the Hindu, a feverish gleam of triumph in his eyes. "I thought you said you entered at a quarter to six? You know more of this murder than you are telling!" he accused. "You might as well confess now! Why did you kill this man?"

"I didn't kill him," was the calm retort, the words slightly tinged with contempt.

"This girl says she met you entering at five o'clock. What did you do between that time and quarter to six when you say you discovered the dead man in your apartment?"

The Hindu was silent.

“So you have no alibi? You can give no account of your action during the three-quarters of an hour when the murder was taking place?”

The Hindu remained stubbornly silent.

“For goodness sake, man, say something!” Larry urged.

“If you don’t, I will charge you with the murder of this man and you can start your explanations by telling us who he is,” Doran said with great satisfaction. He had solved this case with commendable quickness and shrewdness, so he thought.

“Just a minute,” Beverly said clearly and every eye in the room was immediately fixed on her. “He was talking to me during that three-quarters of an hour,” she said.

“What?”

“He was talking to me when the murder

was—when the murder occurred,” Beverly repeated.

“Where were you?” the detective asked.
“In the hallway, outside your apartment?”

Beverly was on the verge of saying yes when Larry eagerly interrupted and she realized what an error it would have been.

“Of course they weren’t,” Larry said.
“They were inside the girls’ apartment or they would have seen the murderer going up and down the stairs.”

“I didn’t ask you!” the detective roared.
“Where were you?” he demanded of Beverly.

“Inside the apartment of course,” she admitted, glad that Larry had kept her from committing herself. “Omar El Hamel read the crystal for us last night and I wanted to ask him some questions,” Beverly said. She tried to make her voice convincing, but she wasn’t sure the detective believed her.

The detective took off his derby and rammed his fist down into it until Lenora expected to see his fingers come through the crown.

“That’s an alibi but a poor one,” he said at last, his gimlet eyes boring into Beverly.

“It’s the truth,” she said simply. “He was with me.”

She could see that her very simplicity carried some weight with the coroner but as for the detective—she had exploded his theory and delayed an arrest and he was annoyed.

“You still haven’t found out who the man is,” the coroner said in a mild, gentle voice.

“I’m coming to that,” Detective Doran growled. “Now somebody in this room killed this man. Why? We don’t know yet, but we will. We will! I have a hunch that when we establish his identity the whole case will fit together like pieces of a puzzle.”

“Maybe he was one of the thieves,” Hope said innocently, helpfully.

Beverly’s blue eyes met the inscrutable dark ones of the Hindu and then traveled to the police officer. Hope had exploded a bombshell now! She had known all along that the murdered man was one of the two that had tried to rob El Hamel, but, she argued, she didn’t know the man’s name, so she couldn’t solve the puzzle of who he was. However, this last was news to the detective and he pounced on it like a cat on a mouse.

“Thieves!” he echoed. He whirled upon Hope excitedly. “What do you mean? When did thieves come here? Was it El Hamel they robbed?”

“Two men tried two different times to enter El Hamel’s apartment,” Hope continued, beginning to realize with what a choice morsel she had supplied the detective. “The second time he surprised them and there was a—fight.”

“Evidently the men didn’t get what they came for and this man returned tonight, early, when he thought the Hindu was out. El Hamel entered, surprised the man looting his desk and killed him.”

“But where is the weapon?” El Hamel put in. It was the first question he had asked and the first interest he had shown in the whole affair.

The detective jammed his fist into his hat again. “The murderer has it probably,” he said.

“No doubt,” Larry added, audible scorn in his voice. “If he hasn’t hidden it or thrown it into the Hudson River by this time.”

“Be quiet!” the detective roared. “When we find the murderer he can tell us what he did with the gun.”

“But the gun is valuable evidence,” argued Larry. “With no gun, no fingerprints anywhere, El Hamel has an alibi—you have

no case against anyone.”

“Yes, he has an alibi and she is it,” the detective said speculatively, nodding toward Beverly. “What I’ve got to find out is if he really was with her during the time she says he was, or if she, too, knows more than she is telling about the murder.”

“You don’t think she is lying to save him from arrest?” Larry said scornfully.

“I don’t know,” the detective said and jammed on his hat. “But I will before long. I’m going to the station house and see if we have this guy who was murdered on any of our records. Police will be at all the doors so don’t anyone try to leave the building!”



CHAPTER XIII

Suspected

“BUT I tell you it is fantastic!” Beverly insisted, pacing to the window and back again.

“Maybe so,” Larry said lazily swinging one leg over the arm of his chair. “But I tell you that’s what I think.”

He, with Shirley, Lois, and Lenora, were with Beverly in the girls’ living room. It was the afternoon after the murder. Larry had been to the police station and learned that Detective Doran had identified the murdered man as one Chuck Peters, one of two who had served two sentences in prison for petty thievery. Now the police were hot on the trail of the man who had been his companion in crime, but Doran still held a strong opinion that El Hamel was the murderer.

“And he thinks you are his accomplice,” Larry had said to Beverly a moment before.

“The man *was* in here talking to me. I only told the detective the truth! What more could I say?” Beverly demanded.

“Nothing of course,” Lenora said promptly. “Do you mean to say, Larry Owens, that that detective hasn’t any more sense than to think Beverly a murderess?”

“I don’t believe he thinks she killed the man,” Larry corrected. “But Doran thinks she knows the Hindu did it and is shielding him. You must admit, El Hamel is the logical suspect. The man was murdered in his room, the Hindu discovers the body——” Larry shrugged. “Beverly supplies El Hamel’s alibi at the last minute. It looks funny.”

“It doesn’t make me laugh,” Lenora said dryly.

Lois cast her friend a dark glance. “No wisecracks,” she warned.

“Have they discovered the gun or any more clues?” Shirley wanted to know.

Larry shook his head. “And I don’t think they will.”

“Then what——” Lois began.

“What can we do?” Lenora added.

“Wait for Doran to arrest both El Hamel and me?” Beverly asked wryly.

“Don’t be silly,” Larry said frowning. “If we could only find the gun!”

“If we could only get rid of the police at the door!” Lenora added. “They make me nervous.”

Beverly, standing at the window, a slight frown on her face, scarcely heard what the others were talking about. She was thinking about the jewels hidden in Oswald sitting so innocently on the radio, and wishing heartily that she might confide the secret to one of her friends. The stones were still there for she

had looked secretly this morning. She did not know what El Hamel proposed to do with them now that this murder had happened, for no doubt the jewels had been what the thief was after when he was discovered and murdered—by whom? Beverly rumpled her hair with her fingers and wished heartily she knew the answer to that question.

It had been irritating before to be practically a prisoner here in Mrs. Callahan's, to always have, when one did go out, a detective at one's heels. But now Larry said the detective was more suspicious of her. What did that mean? That she might be arrested at any minute? She quelled the thought instantly. Doran couldn't prove anything against her. What was there to be afraid of?

Heavy steps sounded in the hall and there was loud knocking on the door.

“Why don't you knock the door down?” Lenora demanded as she pulled it open.

“I’ve got a warrant to search this apartment,” Doran said without any preliminary words and strode in, accompanied by two uniformed officers.

“What for?” Larry said instantly.

“I can’t prove anything, but this girl might have hidden the gun with which the Hindu committed the murder,” Doran said in his blustering voice. “I’m here to see if it is in these rooms. Get busy, boys.”

Silently and resentfully the girls stood by while the three officers searched and literally wrecked their apartment. They searched thoroughly, in closets, between cushions of the chairs, in Beverly’s desk, through Lois’ painting kit, under the mattresses on the beds, every place imaginable.

When Doran and his men had taken their leave, the detective angry because he had found nothing and disgusted because they had wasted their time, the girls surveyed the disheveled room stormily.

“We ought to make them come back and put things to rights again,” declared Lenora angrily.

“Try and do it,” Larry murmured.

“What was the matter with you?” Shirley asked of Beverly.

“Yes, you looked positively scared to death while Doran was here,” Lois added. “Just as though you *had* hidden the revolver here.”

How could Beverly tell them that her heart had stood still in her throat that minute that seemed a year when Doran had held Oswald in his hands? What if he had discovered the jewels hidden in the tiny dog? What an uproar there would have been then!

“Don’t be silly,” Beverly said briskly, busy setting her desk aright. “I was angry that’s all.”

“All of us were,” added Lenora. “Imagine! Thinking we had hidden the gun right here in

our rooms. If we had had the thing we would have gotten rid of it long ago. That detective has as much sense as a turtle.”

“Some turtles are smarter,” Shirley declared.

“Where are you going?” Larry demanded.

“Upstairs. I’ll be down in a few moments,” Beverly answered and went out. She climbed the stairs to El Hamel’s apartment slowly and thoughtfully. She had been more scared tonight than she had ever been. She would tell him firmly that he had to make some other disposal of the jewels. She would not have them in their apartment a moment longer. She shivered inwardly every time she thought of what might have happened had Doran discovered them.

“So you have to do something else with them,” Beverly said in conclusion.

Omar El Hamel frowned thoughtfully. “I do not wish to involve you or your friends in

any danger,” he said slowly. “But—can you suggest something?”

“I would suggest you go to Doran or someone and tell them all about it,” Beverly said immediately. “All about how these thieves tried to rob you of the jewels and of Mr. Manus’ orders to keep the jewels secret.”

“Doran!” the Hindu scoffed. “He is impossible. He would be certain I am the murderer.”

“He is pretty sure now,” Beverly said. “He is doing everything in his power to prove it.”

El Hamel stood up, tall and imposing, and with slow, measured steps began to pace back and forth.

“I wish Mr. Manus would come home to New York,” Beverly said vigorously. “Where is he?”

“He was in India where he collected the jewels. I left him in London,” El Hamel said,

“I came here. I do not know where he is now.”

“He might be anywhere,” Beverly said with a sigh. “Have you no idea when he is to return?”

“It will be soon,” El Hamel said confidently.

“Meanwhile—we shall probably be arrested for murder,” Beverly said spiritedly.

“Cynicism does not become one so young. Have you nothing to suggest?”

Beverly thought a moment. “We could take Larry, my friend, into our confidence. He would know what to do I am sure.”

The Hindu shook his head. “As few people as possible must know about the jewels.”

“But it is vital that we do something now, before they are found by the police,” Beverly insisted. “You might have a hard time explaining them.”

He frowned at her. "Is he—this Larry—is he trustworthy?"

"Perfectly," Beverly said. "You will let me tell him? At once?"

"Yes. If he can suggest something, I shall be grateful. I cannot bring the jewels to my rooms because the detective may decide to search it at any moment. I will let you tell him. It is better if we are not seen together."

"You are right," Beverly said, and in another moment she was speeding down the steps. She had been gone longer than she had thought she would be and was afraid Larry might have gone home. But as she ran down the stairs he rose from the bottom step and looked at her.

"Beverly——"

"Larry! I was so afraid you might be gone! I want to talk to you."

"And I to you. Something is worrying you."

What is it?" he asked, then smiled. "Tell me what it is and I will slay your dragon, fair lady."

"It is—where are the girls?" Beverly asked suddenly.

"Gone to bed I expect," Larry answered. "Shirley went home about fifteen minutes ago and everything has been quiet for some time."

Beverly sat down on the stairs and drew Larry down beside her. In a low voice she began to tell him of El Hamel and his jewels.



CHAPTER XIV

Caught

“GOOD night!” Larry said and whistled expressively as he picked up the largest stone and rolled it around the palm of his hand. “This alone is worth a fortune!”

“They are all as valuable,” El Hamel said, his face an inexpressive mask. “You understand now——”

“I understand now why those two fellows tried to rob you,” Larry said. “Gosh, Beverly, I should think you would have been scared to death to have these things in the apartment, even hidden as they were.”

“It has been rather trying,” Beverly admitted. “Every night I expected we would be robbed.”

“It is a wonder you weren’t,” Larry said.

“No one knew they were here,” El Hamel said. “There was no danger.”

“And now we are deliberately courting danger,” Larry said musingly. “At that, I think our idea is a good one.”

“If it works,” Beverly said.

The three, El Hamel, Beverly, and Larry were in the girls’ rooms. It was two nights later. Larry, now fully in the confidence of Beverly and El Hamel, was plotting the capture of the thief who had escaped and who they suspected of murdering his companion. Larry had talked long and earnestly with Doran. By sheer persistence he had gotten the detective to remove the police he had had stationed at the boarding house. He had advanced the theory to Doran that if there was something suspicious about the Hindu, if he had committed the murder, he would be off his guard and relaxed if the police were gone. In reality, Larry wanted to give the

other thief a chance to come back and try to obtain the jewels. Oh, he had planned minutely and cleverly. This afternoon he had had Beverly and the Hindu walk around the block together. If the thief saw the two together, possibly he would think, having already searched the Hindu's apartment before the murder, that Beverly had the jewels. In that case, he might come tonight to search the girls' apartment.

Lois, Lenora, and Shirley had gone to the movies. Beverly had left openly and joyfully with them. This was to give whoever was watching the impression that the apartment was empty of all its occupants. But two squares away, Beverly had turned and as secretly as possible returned to her apartment through the back door of the rooming house. Now the three of them were waiting——

“It is certain to work,” Larry said confidently. “I’ve studied criminals. There is not one who would pass up a chance to obtain a fortune like this.”

“If he does not become suspicious,” El Hamel said. “What are we to do—if he does not come?”

“What if he does come,” Beverly put in. “What will we do?”

“Challenge him of course,” Larry said. “If he tries to escape we will jump on him. There is likely to be a scrimmage. That is why I didn’t want you here,” he added to Beverly.

“I’m in this just as much as you,” Beverly said firmly. “If there is any excitement I’m not going to miss it. Besides, I have to know all the details for the paper.”

“Ever the reporter,” Larry murmured smilingly. “We might as well set the stage for our big scene,” he said and switched off the dim desk light. He slipped the bag of jewels into his pocket and crossed to the window to put the shade half way up. Then, in the dim yellow light cast into the room by the street lamps and electric signs, he crossed and took up his watch on a chair tipped against the

wall beside the door. The Hindu sat on the other side of the door and Beverly was on the window seat. Keeping against the wall in the shadow she could see straight down to the street.

The ticking of the desk clock became louder and louder. The sound of traffic on the street below drifted up faintly to them. Once they all crouched tense in their places as slow footsteps mounted the stairs. But the steps continued on up to the next floor and they knew it was only Hope coming home.

“Larry,” Beverly’s voice came in a faint whisper after more than an hour of fruitless waiting.

“Yes?”

“There is a man down on the pavement across the street. He has been leaning against the wall staring up here for fully fifteen minutes.”

Larry was at her side in a moment, with the

Hindu peering over his shoulder.

“Is that the man?” Larry asked.

“It is difficult to tell,” the Hindu said.
“Perhaps, but I do not recognize him from this distance.”

“Nor I,” Beverly said. “Anyway, if it is the one, what is he waiting for? Why doesn’t he come up after the jewels?”

Larry snapped his fingers. “Of course! He is investigating. He wants to be sure this is no trap. If the coast is clear tonight, he will be back tomorrow night for sure.”

“How will we get rid of the girls another night?” Beverly groaned. “You know we practically had to push them out tonight.”

“You must think of something,” Larry murmured.

“I must think of something!” Beverly echoed sweetly. “Suppose you help me. I taxed all my powers getting rid of them for

tonight.”

“I believe you are right,” El Hamel said to Larry. “He will come tomorrow. We must be here again.”

“We will be,” Larry said firmly. “And he will get a warm reception.”

The man remained standing in the shadow of the buildings for a few minutes more, then satisfied that all was as it should be, turned and went away. Soon after the lights came on in the room he had watched.

“Shirley,” Beverly said in an aside to her friend when the girls had returned. Larry had long since departed and El Hamel had gone to his own rooms. “Shirley, you are a friend of mine. Will you do me a gigantic favor?”

Shirley laughed at the twinkle in Beverly’s eye. “What are you plotting? What do you want?”

“I want you to take Lois and Lenora off my

hands for tomorrow night,” Beverly said.
“Take them to a show, I’ll get the tickets,
take them for a ride, anything! But they must
be out of the apartment for hours. Will you do
it?”

“That isn’t a gigantic favor,” Shirley said.
“As a matter of fact we were all going to my
house to play bridge. I wanted you to come
too. How about it?”

“No can do,” Beverly said. “I have——”

“What are you two whispering about over
there?” Lenora wanted to know, coming in
from the kitchen balancing a tray of glasses
and a dish of cookies. “I demand to be told!”

“We were arguing,” Shirley said brightly.
“Can you tell me what a zebra is? Is it a white
horse with black stripes, or is it a black horse
with white stripes?”

“Ah, you have me there!” Lenora laughed.
“I shall have to have time to think it over.”

“It really is a delicate subject,” added Lois.

The next night, as Shirley had suggested, Lois and Lenora went to her home with Hope, in place of Beverly, for bridge.

Beverly, Larry, and El Hamel, as soon as the girls had departed, took up their positions in the girls’ apartment. Larry on one side and El Hamel on the other side of the door. Beverly knelt on the window seat out of the light and stared down into the street. The little clock on her desk ticked away the seconds slowly and distinctly. Now and then a floor board creaked as if a phantom footstep had touched it. Beverly ran her fingers lightly through her hair. The waiting was getting on her nerves. How did they know the thief would come tonight? He might never come! How could Larry be so sure his plan would work? The thief might guess this was all a plot and never come near. Even now he might be on the other side of the country. It seemed strange that a murderer would remain near the scene of his crime when he could get away. Still, the jewels were worth a fortune

and money is a strong lure.

She frowned into the darkness. Larry had told her that Doran was getting restless and contemplating the immediate arrest of El Hamel. If Doran arrested El Hamel would he also accuse her as an accomplice? That was the idea in his mind she was sure. She was the only alibi El Hamel had, therefore Doran suspected her of a partnership in the crime. Today when she went to the office she had been acutely aware of a man who had followed her at a discreet distance. Tonight when she had come back to the apartment, he had again been there, a few paces behind her. She hoped with all her heart that the thief did come tonight and that he did prove to be the murderer so the police could clear the whole affair away.

“Larry!” She said excitedly. “He is across the street again!”

“Good!” Larry said and in a moment was beside her.

The shadowy figure was leaning against the building below again. He stood there long enough to satisfy himself that the apartment he was watching was empty. Then, with a slight hunching of his shoulders, pulled his hat lower over his face and crossed the street.

“Go upstairs and telephone Doran,” Larry said, an urgent hand on Beverly’s shoulder. “Tell him to send a couple of men over right away. We have the murderer!”

“Righto!” Beverly said and closed the door gently behind her. She ran upstairs to the telephone on the next floor. She succeeded in getting Doran on the wire and when she gave him her bit of news, with a triumphant smile which he couldn’t see, he yelled into the telephone at her and slammed down the receiver. He should be here in five minutes, she reflected as she tiptoed to the head of the stairs and listened intently. Was it her imagination or did a step on the lower flight creak as a foot was placed on it? She stepped down two steps until she could crouch and peer through the banister. A man stood at the

door to the girls' apartment. She could see the gleam of one of his tools as he worked with the lock on the door. The knob turned in his hand and he cast a furtive glance up and down the hall before he opened the door and slipped inside. Beverly was at the door in another minute. She heard the distinct sounds of a scuffle from inside. When she opened the door the Hindu was calmly kneeling upon the prisoner and Larry was slipping a pair of handcuffs over the man's wrists.

"The Marines have landed and have the situation well in hand," Larry said with a triumphant grin for her.

"He has met his Waterloo," she agreed. "Doran will be here any minute."

Even as she spoke the sound of a police siren drifted in through the window to them.



CHAPTER XV

Solution

“To think we missed it all,” wailed Lenora.

When the girls had returned to the apartment, the police car had just pulled away from the curb. The sight of the red car and the officers sent Lois, Lenora, Hope, and Shirley scampering up the steps as fast as they could go. They burst in upon Larry, El Hamel, and Beverly who were enjoying a moment of keen self satisfaction. The man, in their presence had confessed to the murder of his partner. He had entered the Hindu's apartment and in the darkness a man had risen from the desk. He had fired his gun without giving the man a chance to identify himself. When he saw what he had done, he fled, taking his gun with him. It made no difference to him who was accused of the crime as long as the police did not suspect

him. Tonight he had tried to get the jewels for which both he and his partner had been struggling so long. It had led to his undoing.

“Why did you chase us out?” Lenora said again. “Gosh, you know how I hate to miss anything.”

“Do you think he would have come if we had all been here?” Lois demanded.

“You know,” Larry said as he and Beverly stood at the door when he was leaving, “we’ve still got a mystery to solve.”

“I know,” Beverly said with a frown. “You mean the jewels.”

“Yes. Why does El Hamel insist on such secrecy? Aside from robbery, I don’t see what Manus is afraid of.”

“We will have to wait until he returns from abroad before we can solve that,” Beverly said. “El Hamel is only acting under instructions.”

“I suppose so,” Larry said. “But just the same, I’m going to investigate.”

He did, but Beverly did not at once hear of what he discovered nor what he suspected. Her days were busy ones. More and more each day she was adjusting herself to the demands made by her work. She was getting used to the whirl of activity that was a popular newspaper and reveling in it. She loved the dashing about from place to place, the smell of printers’ ink, the clicking of typewriter keys, all of it thrilled her because it meant she was a part of it all.

She ran up the steps and into Mrs. Callahan’s. On the table in the hall was the mail. The sight of a large square brown envelope sent her spirits sinking. She knew what it was. How many times before she had seen it! This was about the fourth time that particular story had come back from different publishers. She might be making good at her job, but what she wanted more she couldn’t get. She wanted to be truly a writer and each story that she submitted had been returned. It

was disheartening and particularly discouraging. She tucked the envelope under her arm and ran up the steps. Standing in the middle of the room she tore the story and all into minute pieces. She flung them into the waste paper basket and stood staring at them.

She removed her coat and hat and hung them in the closet. Lois was no doubt out at an art dealer's trying to sell some drawings. Perhaps Lenora was with her, or with Shirley at a matinee. Beverly settled herself on the window seat to wait for them and opened the evening paper. Her eye fell on a small notation at the bottom of the sheet. For a moment she stared out the window then folded the paper and stood up.

She knocked at El Hamel's door and he ushered her into his sitting room politely.

"I ran up to show you a note in the evening paper. Mr. Manus is coming home. His boat docks tomorrow."

"Yes. I received word yesterday. I know he

will desire to thank you for your part in the safe keeping of the jewels.”

“Are you going back to India after you have turned the jewels over to him?” Beverly asked.

“Yes. I have enjoyed your country but it is all rather—bewildering. If you should come to my country——”

“It isn’t at all likely,” Beverly laughed, tossing the newspaper onto a chair with unwonted vehemence.

“What has discouraged you?” he asked.

Beverly shrugged. “Oh, a lot of things. I got my story back again this afternoon for the third time. I tore it up.”

“That was rash,” he said and followed her as she turned to the window. “Perhaps you have not selected the right magazine to which to submit your work.”

“None of them are the right one as far as

my work is concerned, I guess,” Beverly said. “I suppose I shall have to stick to the paper for years and years.”

He shook his head smilingly. “Things appear hopeless to you, don’t they?”

“They do,” she agreed. “Look down there —” she nodded to the street below.

“Thousands of people going home from countless jobs in offices, factories—stores—what are they getting out of it? They work all day every day for what? It seems so futile—going to the same office, doing the same things each day—they aren’t going forward as they ought to be.”

El Hamel placed a friendly hand on her shoulder. “Patience my young friend. You are facing what everyone else has faced at some time in his life. You are eager and alive with youth. Because you don’t astound the world with your first literary efforts you are disheartened. You must learn to plan, work, and have patience. Some day you will look back and be glad for the difficulties you have

to overcome now. They will have made you strong. Life is so full. Often the tiniest thing will mean lifelong happiness. A lot of those people down there whom you are pitying are happy. They have found peace, friends, happiness in even the simplest kind of work.”

Beverly smiled. “I know. I really haven’t anything to actually complain about. I should be glad that I’ve got a job. There are a lot of people who haven’t even that.”

“You want to see life. Know each side of every question. In your field of work you need time and patience.”

Beverly enjoyed their little talk and she firmly resolved to put into practice some of the things the Hindu had told her. She went down the steps deep in thought. Larry stood at the bottom, laughing up at her.

“Greetings, Juliet. Sit down while I tell you some news.” He deposited himself on the steps beside her. “Guess what!”

“What?” she laughed.

“Manus will be arrested tomorrow as he steps off the boat,” Larry said.

Beverly stared at him. “Arrested? Are you joking?”

“No, I’m perfectly serious. Government agents are after him and El Hamel. That is why I’m here. The Hindu has to go with me.”

“B-But what did they do?”

“Merely smuggled almost a million dollars worth of jewels into this country.”

“Smuggled!” Beverly echoed.

“Yep. Manus will be heavily fined—might even get a prison sentence.”

“How about El Hamel?” Beverly wanted to know. “He was acting as Manus’ agent, you know.”

“I don’t exactly know what they will do to

him. Perhaps a fine, or if he doesn't go to prison, they may merely deport him."

"He is going back to India anyway," Beverly said.

"Well, now we know why El Hamel wanted to keep the jewels hidden. Manus did not propose to pay duty on the jewels so he had El Hamel bring them into the country secretly. Pretty smart if he had gotten away with it."

"And now?"

"As I said, Manus will pay a heavy fine—or go to prison. But he is rich and influential, he will pay the fine."

"They might send El Hamel to prison. He did the actual smuggling," Beverly said thoughtfully.

"They might," Larry agreed. "We have to wait and see what the court decides. Nobody can cheat Uncle Sam and get away with it."

“Meanwhile I’ve got a big story for my paper,” Beverly said, jumping up. “A man like Manus doesn’t get arrested every day for smuggling jewels into the USA.”

Larry grinned. “Go ahead and telephone Blaine, I know you are aching to. I’ve got to run along. I’ll be seeing you,” he called cheerily going up the stairs after El Hamel.

“Behold!” Lenora burst in upon Beverly later, her arms and the arms of her companions, laden with packages. “When one doesn’t feel like going to a restaurant for dinner what does one do? Ah, you will say one might starve. But that is not so! We have brought half a delicatessen store home with us just to avert that tragedy.”

“And it’s a good thing,” Beverly laughed. “I couldn’t have held out much longer.”

After dinner, prepared and eaten amid much jollity and teasing, they gathered in the living room to view some of Lois’ latest drawings. Beverly, seated at her desk, picked

up the card that had lain before her and frowned thoughtfully at it. She took a package of white sheets, neatly typewritten, from her desk drawer and slipped them into another brown envelope. Charlie Blaine had given her the address of a firm of agents who made it their business to sell salable manuscripts. She made up her mind to submit her story and get their opinion. But when she had addressed the envelope she stared at it undecidedly. Should she mail it or shouldn't she?

“I have to run along,” Shirley said, “and Beverly, if you want that mailed, I'll drop it for you.”

“Thanks,” Beverly said and held out the envelope. Now all she could do was, as El Hamel had advised her, have patience and hope for the best.



CHAPTER XVI

Passing Days

It was growing dark. Mixed snow and rain whirled on the pedestrians who were hurrying with bent heads to get in out of the storm. The streets were glistening wet and the headlights of automobiles shone like yellow eyes through the gathering gloom.

As Beverly came out onto the street the newsboys' voices reached her shouting the extra. She was tired but happy. She had been solely responsible for one of the biggest scoops the paper ever had. From her stand on the curb while she waited for the traffic light to change, Beverly shivered and snuggled down into her coat. The December wind was chill and piercing. It had been a day of excitement and of work. Frank Manus had been sentenced to pay a heavy fine for endeavoring to bring jewels into the country

without paying duty on them. The amount of the fine had astounded everyone. Certainly the government meant to make an example of Manus. He had the alternative of paying the fine or spending time in prison. Needless to say he agreed to pay the fine. His accomplice, El Hamel, had been fined too, and in addition to the fine, would be sent back to his native country.

Beverly had covered the story from the first and it proved a big one. Manus was an important man in the city and the people relished this news about him. She had been in the thick of events ever since Manus stepped off the boat. It had taken weeks. Time after time the case had been interrupted. Now she could breathe easier. The case was closed and she had written her account of it to the best of her ability. It had been good, too. That was what pleased her most. It was thrilling to do what one wished most to do. She breathed deeply of the cold exhilarating winter air. It was so good to be here. Today she had tasted the first fruits of her ambition. She was on the first step of the ladder of success in the line

she had chosen. It mattered not that perhaps next week it would be forgotten that she had turned in a big story for then would be more urgent news. It might be forgotten by others, but not by her! She would know in her heart that at least once she had done something good. What she had done once, she could do again! She had performed her work the best she could. Wasn't that what counted?

A great gust of wind scooped up snow and flung it in her face. The brief holiday when she had spent Thanksgiving with her parents in Renville was over and the girls were all back in the city, Lois continuing with her painting and making even more headway. She had sold another sketch for a magazine cover. The girls were soon to see the subject of her first sketch. She had laughingly held it a secret, promising the girls they would recognize it when they saw it.

Shirley, upon Mr. Crandall's return from Europe, had been to see him and he had faithfully promised her a part in his forthcoming play. Rehearsals were to start

next month and Shirley was making plans already to leave the city; that is, if Mr. Crandall decided to take the play on tour.

Lenora as yet had not found the particular recipient for her especial talents. However, she had implicit faith in the future and refused to worry about a thing.

The traffic light changed and the people surged forward into the street, but Beverly was staring at a magazine on a news-stand. The cover portrayed a grinning dog whose diamond collar threw off little shafts of light. Oswald! It was Lois' sketch and, surely enough, Beverly recognized it. Beverly chuckled to herself. Lois had caught the very mischievous, mirth-provoking expression of the little alabaster dog who occupied such a prominent position in their living room. She crossed to the news-stand and purchased the magazine. While she waited for the newsboy to give her her change a gay voice hailed her.

"Hi! Beverly!" Shirley was leaning from her car. Beverly crossed and climbed in

beside her. “Going home?” Shirley asked.

“Yes, and the sooner the better,” Beverly declared. “Did you see this?” she asked laughing.

Shirley regarded the magazine front with one eye while she kept the other on the traffic light. “We might have known Lois would pick on something like that. Isn’t it good!”

Shirley dropped Beverly before the apartment house and regretfully declined an invitation to come in. Her mother was having dinner guests and woe to Shirley if she didn’t appear!

When the girls awoke in the morning it was still snowing and the flakes were piled high against the windows. Jack Frost had been busy during the night and now his delicate sketches adorned all the panes.

“Oooooo,” Lenora shivered from her pose beneath the blankets. “I’m glad I don’t have to go out into the cold cruel world this

morning.”

“Lucky girl,” Beverly declared lazily. “I have to crawl out and I don’t relish the idea.”

“Lenora has to go to the corner store,” Lois volunteered. “We used the last of our chocolate last night.”

“I’ll get lost in the blizzard,” Lenora wailed.

“Never fear,” Lois retorted, wriggling into her dress. “I shall have to put up with more of your criticism of my sketching all day.”

“I don’t criticize,” Lenora mumbled. “I just helpfully suggest.”

“Such suggestions! I’d never sell any sketches if I listened to you,” Lois declared. “C’mon, get up, lazybones!”

“Go to the store yourself,” Lenora replied, pulling the covers over her ears.

Lois laid hold of the covers and in a minute

the pajama clad figure of her friend landed on the floor. Lenora emerged from the jumble howling indiscreetly with Lois' firm grip on her ear.

“Is this to go on indefinitely?” Beverly demanded.

“Oh, no, it isn't!” Lenora declared, making a dive for the bathroom. A minute later they heard her whistling boyishly from under the shower.

The other two proceeded more leisurely with their dressing and were finished long before Lenora. Beverly departed to the corner store for the chocolate. When she returned the rest of the breakfast was waiting.

“I believe Lenora was purposely slow in getting dressed this morning so she wouldn't have to go out,” Lois accused.

Lenora looked at her friend with woeful eyes. “You wouldn't accuse me of such a thing, would you? But could you blame me?”

she asked owlishly.

“I couldn’t,” Beverly laughed. “It is cold enough to freeze icicles on your ears this morning.”

“Why don’t you stay home today?” Lois asked.

“Newspapers must be printed even in such weather,” Beverly sighed. “Besides,” she added with an impish grin, “it is payday.”

“Ah, that would make anyone go out in a blizzard,” Lenora said loudly. “Would you like me to come along and carry your pay for you, my friend?”

“No, thanks,” Beverly laughed. “I’m quite capable of performing that act myself.”

It was late when Beverly, in woolly coat and galoshes, ran down the steps and let herself out into the storm. The girls were watching from the window and she waved to them as she waded across the street. With her

head down to buck the wind and snow
Beverly slogged along feeling wet and
uncomfortable. Wishing heartily that she had
taken Lois' suggestion and stayed home, she
entered the subway station.

“Try your hand at an editorial for the
women's page today,” Blaine greeted her.

Beverly uncovered her typewriter and
inserted the paper. At least it was much more
comfortable here in the warm office than
tramping around in the snow and sleet. But
she might have known it was too good to last.
It was almost lunch time when Blaine called
her.

“Been a big accident down on 42nd
Street,” he said tersely. “Get the details.”

She was off. That was only the beginning.
After lunch it was a robbery. That took up
four hours of her time. Then word came in to
the office that the Manhattan Flyer had been
derailed about three miles from New York.

“Why does everything have to happen on one day?” Blaine asked of no one in particular. “You’ll have to go,” he said to Beverly. “The boys are all out. No matter how late it is when you get back come in and write your stuff.”

Beverly telephoned Shirley. That young lady was glad enough to drive Beverly out to the wreck.

“I’ll have to pay you a weekly salary,” Beverly laughed as Shirley picked her up at Times Square.

“I like running around with you,” Shirley said immediately. “I wouldn’t get a chance at all these things if I wasn’t your chauffeur. Maybe I’ll go in for reporting too one of these days.”

It took them more than an hour to reach the train wreck for the roads were full of snow drifts and almost impassable. The derailing of the flyer had caused considerable damage to two cars which had overturned in the snow,

but fortunately there were only one or two passengers who had been injured and these not seriously.

When Beverly was ready, the girls climbed back into Shirley's roadster and headed for New York. It was long past their dinner time and Shirley was bemoaning this fact and trying to urge the car along at a greater pace when misfortune overtook them. The roadster floundered into a snow drift and there it remained. No amount of pressure on the accelerator would budge it. The wheels spun around and the snow flew wildly in all directions but the roadster remained imbedded in the snow.

"We're stuck," Shirley said in disgust. "And I'm so hungry I could chew a tire."

"Help yourself," Beverly invited. "I've heard they are very appetizing."

"No, thanks," Shirley laughed and stumbled out into the snow. "Here comes a car, maybe it will pull us out."

The car and its occupant did prove to be good Samaritans and with the aid of a strong rope the other car pulled Shirley's roadster back onto the firm highway. It was two hours from the time the girls left the scene of the wreck until they entered the suburbs of New York. Beverly went to the *Tribune* office and wrote her material. Now it was but a few minutes of midnight. When she came out she found Shirley still parked at the curb.

"Why didn't you go home?" she asked. "You shouldn't have waited. I told you it would take quite a while."

"Are you hungry?" Shirley countered.

"Need you ask?" Beverly laughed.

"I know of a good all-night restaurant where they might serve tramps like us," continued Shirley smilingly. "The best part of it is, it isn't far from here."

"Am I glad tomorrow is Saturday and my day off!" Beverly declared sinking down on

the car cushions. "I can sleep all morning!"

She made good her threat too.

"We thought we would have to put a firecracker under you to wake you," Lenora declared when Beverly appeared just in time for lunch the following day. "You did a regular Rip-Van-Winkle sleep that time."

"And now I feel grand," Beverly said. "What are we going to do today?"

"Going to the six day bicycle races," Lenora informed her.

"Well come on, what are you waiting for?" Beverly said.

"Gracious, I can't go like this," Lois said, gazing at her paint-spattered working smock.

"We'll get dressed and be with you in a jiffy," Lenora promised.

"There is some mail on your desk, Beverly," Lois called from the bedroom.

Beverly moved forward and picked up the mail. She returned with it to the window seat and curled up to read. There was a long, interesting letter from Jim Stanton and one from her parents. Anne, too, had written the latest news of Renville. There was another envelope, too, a longish white envelope and she opened it puzzled over what it might contain. She held the two slips of paper in her hand and read with sparkling eyes the few short lines enclosed. Then she dashed into the bedroom nearly knocking Lenora over.

“What’s the matter? An earthquake?” Lenora demanded when she had partially recovered her poise.

“Oh, girls, girls, girls!” Beverly cried rapturously.

“Well? Well? Hurry up, tell us! Has someone left you a fortune?”

“Better than that!” Beverly declared. “I’ve sold a story!”

“Hurrah! To whom, when, and for what?” Lenora said, scarcely crediting the good news.

“Here, read it!” Beverly commanded, thrusting the check and note into Lenora’s hands. “It was the agents who sold it. Imagine! I’ve really sold a story. I can’t believe it yet.”

“It’s wonderful!”

“Great!” Lois agreed. “You are certainly on your way up the ladder.”

“It’s about time,” that young lady declared. “Let’s celebrate.”

“Now you are talking,” Lenora said enthusiastically.

“I’m going to call Shirley,” Beverly said and departed to the telephone.

“She is all thrilled,” Lenora smiled.

“Who wouldn’t be?” murmured Lois. “She

might really be a big writer some day.”

“Well, we all wish her luck,” Lenora said heartily. “Whatever success Beverly gets she certainly deserves.”

“Is Shirley coming along?” Lois asked when Beverly returned.

“Yes, she will be here in fifteen minutes,” Beverly answered. “You had better hurry or you won’t be ready.”

“Are you going home next week for Christmas, Bev?” Lenora asked.

“I certainly am!” Beverly declared. “The biggest story in the city couldn’t keep me from home on Christmas. How about you?”

“Oh, I shall hang up my stocking in the customary place,” Lenora replied.

“I hope it gets filled with coal,” Lois giggled.

Lenora sniffed disdainfully and marched

into the living room where she drowned her sorrow in the lilting tunes of a dance orchestra. When Shirley arrived she found Beverly and Lenora engrossed in the latest dance step while Lois watched approvingly.

“I’m going to give a New Year’s Eve party,” Shirley informed them during the course of the afternoon, “and each one of you must come.”

“Never fear,” Lenora assured her. “We wouldn’t miss it for worlds. Tell me more!”

“It will be a masquerade and everybody will be there,” Shirley continued.

“Everybody?” Lois asked.

“Well, everybody that I know,” Shirley corrected herself. “I’m sure I can promise you a good time. Do any of you know someone whom you would like to bring with you? Or do you want to make a lot of new acquaintances? Of course you will remember some from the Christmas vacation you spent

with me. Tell you what I'll do, I'll make all arrangements and have someone call for you."

"Make him tall and handsome," Lenora warned her friend.

"He is sure to be," Shirley promised laughingly.



CHAPTER XVII

Holidays

BEVERLY stepped out of the newspaper office with an ill concealed smile of relief. For four whole days she would have nothing to do. It was the day before Christmas and tonight she and Shirley were to drive up to Renville. She had persuaded Shirley to come home with her for the holidays and Shirley had gleefully consented. She had remembered with what fun she had spent a previous vacation in Renville.

It was just five o'clock and Beverly had a lot of shopping to do before Shirley stopped at the apartment to pick her up at eight o'clock. Lois and Lenora had departed that morning to spend a week at their respective homes. She had gone to the train with them. It meant a solitary dinner for her which she decided she would eat later.

She started off down the street, making her purchases in the various stores she came to. She walked on, taking in the sights. Christmas Eve and Forty-Second Street, Broadway, Fifth Avenue, all of them were ablaze with lights and alive with jostling crowds. Windows were trimmed with holly and spruce, garnished with silver icicles and colored lights. Mechanical toys sported themselves in toy shop windows. Innumerable Santa Claus's stood about on street corners, tolling their iron bells.

Beverly shivered inwardly with sheer delight. Christmas always gave her a big kick, but this was the first year she had ever seen Broadway on Christmas Eve. People laden with packages hurried to and fro. There seemed to be in each pair of eyes a spirit of cheer and of joyous secrecy. In an hour or so tiny tots would straggle off to bed and Christmas trees and toys and countless goodies would miraculously appear where before had been the peaceful serenity of an ordered household.

Beverly was walking down Forty-Second Street, thinking it was high time she ate her dinner and got back to the apartment. Shirley would be there soon. She was about to turn into a little restaurant when she stopped, her attention caught by two youngsters standing gazing into the window at the wares on display. Their coats were thin, shockingly inadequate for the cold of the night. Their faces were white and they looked hungry. She judged the oldest to be scarcely thirteen, the youngest about six. They stood hand in hand, like two forlorn beings stranded on the busiest street in the world. She moved forward until she stood beside them.

“Hello,” she said as the youngest looked up, his trusting brown eyes gazing straight into hers.

“Lo,” he responded and tugged at his brother’s hand.

The two turned away but she stayed them as they sought to pass her. The oldest looked at her, a bit proudly, she thought, as she

started to speak. She was firmly convinced now that they were both hungry and cold. But, she also believed, the oldest would refuse anything she chose to offer if he thought it was charity. Perhaps he wouldn't give it the name of charity, but she was afraid he would refuse her friendly offers at any rate.

“Look——” she started, trying to think of a way to entice them into the restaurant with her. “I—I’m a stranger in town. Could you tell me a place where I might get a good dinner?”

The oldest boy jerked his head toward the window. “That place is as good as any, I guess.”

Beverly thoughtfully considered this information for a moment. She had to be careful or the two would be gone. She could see that they longed to escape now. She wanted to help them. By the looks of things they certainly needed help—and tonight was Christmas Eve! Why shouldn't she do

something generous, something that might make somebody else happy?

“W-Will you come in with me?” she asked finally.

“N-No thank you,” the oldest said firmly.
“W-We’ve got to get home.”

“G’night,” the youngest said with his baby smile.

Beverly felt a wrench at her heart. She gazed down at her arm full of packages and a sudden inspiration came to her.

“Hold on,” she said suddenly. Obediently they stopped. “Do you want to earn a dollar?” she asked.

“Yes, miss,” the oldest said with an eager smile.

“I’ll give you a dollar if you will carry my packages for me,” she said. She knew he would accept because now he would be earning the money. There was nothing he

could object to.

The packages were at once transferred from Beverly's arms to the boy's. She turned to the restaurant. "And now I'm going to have my dinner. Come along."

"B-But——" the boy began.

"You are working for me now," she said firmly. "Come along."

"Yes, miss," the boy answered.

They entered the restaurant, Beverly and the two strange boys. She chose a booth along the wall rather than a table in the center of the floor. She wanted to put the boys at their ease and to talk to them. This, she felt, she could do better if they were not the target for all eyes in the room. She gave her order to the waitress but the oldest boy refused to order either for himself or his brother. Therefore Beverly tripled her own order.

When the food was placed on the table the

boys forgot any scruples they might have had about accepting this strange girl's gift of a dinner and devoted themselves to it with such intense fervor that Beverly was sure they had not eaten all day.

"Where do you live?" she asked when their appetites had been somewhat satisfied.

The oldest boy gave her an address which she knew was in the poorest section of the city. Their story was a pitiful one. No father, a mother who was sadly unable to give them the things growing boys should have, and living in circumstances that would not in any way help them to be the sort of citizens desired.

"I'm Tommy and he's Dickie," the oldest boy finished.

At the mention of his name Dickie smiled broadly and slid down from his chair. Now that he had finished eating he was quite ready to go.

Beverly and Tommy rose too and the three of them moved toward the door. Beverly chattered brightly with Tommy as the three of them progressed toward the girls' apartment. He was a wise little chap, wise beyond his years. The story he had told her was a repetition of countless other stories of poverty and deprivation. She wished desperately she might do something substantial for these two little fellows and their mother.

"Tommy," she said as they came within sight of the apartment house and she espied Shirley's car at the curb with that young lady behind the wheel, "how would you like to have a job in a newspaper office?"

"Gee, that would be swell!" he said, eyes wide. "But I have to go to school one day a week."

"I know," Beverly nodded. "If you are really interested in making something of yourself you can go at night, too. I'll see if I can find you a job," she continued. "Mind now! I'm not promising anything, but I'll see

what I can do. Ah, here is a friend of mine. Suppose you let us drive you home.”

This was as much to see where the boys lived as to do them a favor. She ran upstairs for her suitcase and tumbled it into the rumble seat. The boys squeezed in with the girls in the front and Tommy directed Shirley to the boys’ home. It was way down town, in the poorest section, and Beverly and Shirley exchanged pitying glances when Tommy indicated the squalid tenement house at which to stop.

When the boys had run into the house and the girls prepared to drive away, Beverly directed Shirley to stop at one of the countless stores and she jumped out.

“I’m going to send them a Christmas basket,” she said.

“You aren’t the only one going to play Santa Claus,” Shirley protested. “I want a hand in this.”

It was much later when the girls were on the road to Renville. It was bitter cold but Shirley had put up the curtains on the roadster and the girls were snug and warm. While they sped over the road they could listen to the car radio which at the present time was mellow with the tones of a great cathedral organ.

“Gee, I feel good,” Shirley said.

“How do you mean?” Beverly asked.
“Because it is Christmas?”

“Because it is Christmas,” Shirley agreed, “and because I know those two little fellows will have a little brighter Christmas because of us. I feel all warm and sort of glowing inside just doing the little we did.”

“I mean to see if I can find Tommy a job,” Beverly said, “after we come back to town. I hope they do enjoy the things we sent them.”

“How can they help it?” Shirley demanded. “We sent them such a mixture of things, toys, groceries, candy, there is a surprise in every

package!” she laughed.

“It’s beginning to snow,” Beverly said a few minutes later.

By the time they entered Renville the snow had developed into a regular blizzard.

“What time is it?” Shirley asked.

Beverly consulted her watch by the light on the dashboard. “Ten-thirty,” she answered. “We made good time, considering everything.”

“Considering we stopped to play Santa Claus and were caught in a blizzard,” enunciated Shirley. “Doesn’t the town look nice?”

Low rambling homes, with wide lawns generously spattered with shade trees. Wreaths of holly or candles decorated the windows and warm lights beckoned invitingly. Through the falling snow it was like a picture.

“Here we are!” Beverly sang out as Shirley turned the corner and drove her car into the driveway.

The Gray home was gayly lighted from roof to cellar. Sparkling in the living room could be seen a giant Christmas tree generously laden with parcels. A fire danced in the fireplace, its warmth enveloping the whole room. The girls climbed from the car and loaded themselves down with packages and ran to the house. Beverly’s parents were at the door but when the girls had greeted them and entered the living room they were besieged. They thought at first a tribe of wild Indians had settled down on them but they discovered it was merely that effervescent group of young people, the Lucky Circle. During the previous Christmas vacation the Lucky Circle had voted Shirley an honorary member and now they welcomed her as joyously as Beverly.

The merriment kept up long and furiously. It was in the wee hours of Christmas morning when Beverly and Shirley went to bed, so

tired they could hardly see, but as happy as princesses. The young people had stripped the Christmas tree bare of its festive packages and the gifts were lavish and many.

The next afternoon the girls went to Anne's home. Tommy was out but the little bride entertained them. Later they walked slowly home through the gathering twilight.

"Would you like to change places with Anne?" Shirley asked when the girls were nearing the house.

Beverly shook her head. "No." She thought of the letter she had received yesterday from Jim Stanton and of the tiny postscript he had added. "Will you marry me?" It would take but one word on her part to bring Jim flying home. She could have a cozy cottage like Anne's and lead the orderly, dignified life of one of Renville's younger set. But she didn't want it. She wanted just what she was having now, new and varied experiences every day. She wanted exciting times for at least a little while longer.

“No,” she repeated to Shirley. “I love Anne and her little place, but I don’t envy her. I like my life the way it is and I wouldn’t want to change with anyone.”

“True, my dear Beverly, too true. They are my sentiments exactly. But I do wish rehearsal would start for this new play of Mr. Crandall’s. I’m longing to get down to real work,” Shirley sighed.

“It won’t be long now,” Beverly laughed. “Next month this time you will be working like a Trojan.”

“And I shall love it,” Shirley assured her friend promptly.

“What does your mother think of your taking this part?” Beverly wanted to know.

Shirley grimaced wryly. “That is the fly in the molasses, as the saying goes. I can’t speak about it at home, for the subject is poison to Mother. Dad says not a word. Probably biding his time,” she reflected. “Oh, well, I

shall continue with it anyway, and if the noble house of Parker explodes suddenly, you will know your humble friend was the cause of it all.”

“You will win them over,” Beverly said confidently. “If they are truly interested in your success they will see your side of the argument and at least let you try to make a go of the stage.”

“We will have to wait and see,” was all Shirley said.



CHAPTER XVIII

Shirley's Party

BEVERLY enjoyed the holidays spent at home but she was happy to get back to the city and into the swing of activity. Her position on the paper was becoming more and more important all the time, at least to her. Charlie Blaine varied her assignments often and she was glad.

She had spoken to Blaine about Tommy, the boy she and Shirley had become interested in on Christmas Eve, and Blaine promised to keep the boy in mind. She reminded him of Tommy later and now, as a result, Tommy had a job.

When Beverly arrived back in the city she found a letter and a small package awaiting her. Lois and Lenora were back and they hovered near in undisguised curiosity while

she read the letter.

“Who is it from?” Lenora asked at last.

“The handwriting is so strange it has us all a-dither,” Lois added.

“It’s from El Hamel,” Beverly said.

“I’ve always thought that a queer name for a Hindu,” Lenora said.

“His mother was a Hindu, his father an Arab.”

“What does he want?” Lois asked.

“Just a farewell message,” Beverly murmured, her fingers busy unwrapping the tiny parcel. “He wrote it just before he sailed for India. Look!”

The wrappings had revealed a ring, similar to a signet ring, yet not a signet ring. The carving was of delicate, indescribable work, undeniably oriental.

“How odd!” Lenora exclaimed.

“When you come to my country, as I know you will some day for it is in your heart to see many places in the world, wear the ring. It will bring good fortune and many friends.” Beverly’s eyes danced over the words in the letter again.

“Why should he send her a ring?” Lois demanded.

“Probably thinks it was she who saved him from cold justice for smuggling jewels into the country,” Lenora commented.

“Wherein it was really Larry who saved him,” Beverly said. “Well,” she laughed, “I shall put this away among my souvenirs. When I go to India I’ll wear it.”

“You will forget you have it by that time,” laughed Lenora. “Or are you contemplating such a trip in the near future?”

Beverly laughingly shook her head. “When

they build a bridge across so I can walk, I might get there. But now I have no hopes.”

“Good night!” Lenora exclaimed. “I wouldn’t want to walk that distance. In fact, I am not at all fond of walking more than I have to.”

“It is good for your health,” Lois said calmly, “and you, my friend, are going to the bakery or you don’t have any dessert for dinner!”

“Yes, mam,” Lenora said meekly.

Day after day Lenora was helping Shirley with the plans for her gala New Year’s Eve party. The two of them dashed from place to place with alarming vitality and enthusiasm. Lois was attending strictly to her painting.

“You know,” Lenora said, gesticulating with her fork as the three Alpha Delta girls ate their dinner, “I have decided what I’m going to do for the rest of my days.”

“It’s about time,” Lois murmured, her mouth full.

“What is it to be?” Beverly wanted to know.

“I’m going to be a modiste,” Lenora answered.

“A which?” Lois gasped.

“I’m going to open one of these high class dress shops along Fifth Avenue or Broadway or some place,” Lenora informed them. “Hope Rodgers and I talked the whole thing over. We are going into partnership.”

“I think that’s fine!” Beverly said enthusiastically. “Lots o’ luck.”

“Thanks,” Lenora said. “Of course we haven’t done much but talk about it. But Hope knows a man who knows a man who has a place for rent. We are going to talk to him. Then we shall be really started.”

“Are you going to get gowns from Paris

and London and everywhere?" Lois wanted to know.

"We are," Lenora said. "We are going to be ultra modern. Our patrons will be the elite of society."

"My deah! Not really?" Lois murmured, using an imaginary lorgnette.

"You will have to let us in nevertheless," Beverly laughed.

"Through Shirley, and this party she is giving, we will meet a lot of society women," Lenora continued. "Hope and I are going to lose no time. We shall start immediately to advertise our shop. We want to get curiosity aroused before we even open."

"What about models?" Lois asked.

"We shall have to get some of course," Lenora said. "We have quite considered everything. I'm ready to invest my capital and Hope has a little money and a lot of

business experience. We shall make a big splash, I'm sure."

"We shall all be famous before long," Lois laughed confidently.

Beverly laughed. "There is nothing like optimism. But we better get dressed if we are to be ready when our escorts for Shirley's party arrive."

"Right you are!" Lenora said, swallowing the last of her dessert. "Just think! New Year's Eve! Our first New Year's Eve in New York. Last year we were miles away. I wonder where we shall be next?"

"Probably right here," Lois answered. "We don't expect any radical changes."

"Ah, but that is the spice of life," Lenora said. "Changes! We love 'em. At least I do," she added.

"Don't we all," Lois puffed as she struggled out of her dress and into her

costume. When she was ready as Mary, Queen of Scots, she and Beverly tried to solve the mystery of Lenora's makeup. It was an affair of black and white squares.

"What in the world is it?" Beverly demanded.

"Three guesses," Lenora beamed.

"It is a freak!" Lois declared. "I would expect something like this from you. Tell us, what do you represent?"

"I, my dears, am a walking cross-word puzzle," Lenora informed them with a wide smile.

"Very appropriate," Lois declared. "You always are a puzzle. Are you hard to solve?"

"What do you think?" Lenora retorted.

The three of them lined up before the mirror for a last inspection. They were a queer lot. A sparkle of mischief danced in the six eyes and beneath the masks, red lips were

curved in smiles. It promised to be a night of adventure and fun. Each girl had a small ticket and her partner would have an exact duplicate. In that manner all confusion was eliminated.

“Well, I wish they would hurry,” Lenora complained as they straggled back to the living room. “I’m anxious to get started.”

As if in answer to her wish there was a loud pounding on their door. Beverly opened it and three of the queerest people they had ever seen graced their threshold. One was a pirate, dashing and bold, arrayed in the gayest of colors. The second was a sailor and what a sailor. He would have rivaled the most hearty of seamen. The third was a daring and awe-inspiring conception of a Man from Mars. The odd trio bowed together and stepped into the room.

The mysterious Man from Mars presented his number to Beverly. It matched hers exactly. Lois was paired with the pirate, and Lenora, to her delight, went out with the

rollicking sailor. They descended to the street and found two cars waiting. Beverly was conducted to the roadster while the other four entered a big touring car.

Shirley was having her party on the roof of one of the swankiest hotels. She wanted her friends to miss none of the noise and joviality that welcomed in the new year. When Beverly and her five friends arrived they were conducted to one corner of the large and gayly decorated room to two long tables at which already were seated a surprising array of guests. Napoleon was there and with him the empress Cleopatra. More pirates, clowns, every conceivable costume was represented.

Beverly and the Man from Mars were seated together. On the other side of Beverly, at the end of the table, was an old time court jester. He wore the fools cap complete with bells. From the hearty laugh that emanated from behind his red mask it seemed he was just the one to play the clown. The center of the room was thronged with dancing couples who swayed rhythmically to the tunes of the

orchestra. It was not long before the Alpha girls were in the thick of the crowd.

Confetti and paper streamers were lavished over everything and every body. Beverly was intrigued with the identity of her escort. He defied all attempts to penetrate his disguise. They danced a lot and talked a lot but he remained secure behind his mask.

Later in the evening Beverly danced with the jolly jester. It was stifling hot on the crowded dance floor. Her companion's voice was lost in the buzz of other conversation and the crash of music as they swung past the dais which held the orchestra.

“Let's get some air,” her partner suggested.

She agreed thankfully and let him lead her out onto the roof. The air was cold and still after the hot, noisy ballroom. She sighed and leaned against the parapet, looking down on Broadway far below. Little lights that were machines crawled along while other countless lights blinked like fallen stars.

“Lovely, isn’t it?” she murmured.

“Jolly old street,” her companion declared.
“Best place for a good time in the world.”

“Are you a New Yorker—originally, I mean?” she asked.

“Yes, why?”

“You are the first one I’ve met who has any illusions left for Broadway.”

“Oh, some people rant and rave over it being just like any other city,” he conceded.
“That is their cynical strain coming out. But for me, there is no city like New York. Of course, one can have a good time anywhere if one looks for it. I’m having one tonight. Swell party, this. Did you see all the newspaper bugs looking the guests over? It will all be in the papers tomorrow. What do you do?” he asked. “Or don’t you do anything?”

Beverly smiled behind her mask. “I’m—a

newspaper bug,” she laughed, looking down into the street.

“Not really! Do you have a high old time of it? I should think it would be no end exciting!”

“I like it,” Beverly declared.

“Hullo!” A low, husky voice called and the Man from Mars came up to them. “Come on back to the party.”

The three of them went back to the table they had left. It was nearing midnight and the time for unmasking. The guests had all reached a point of high excitement. At twelve o’clock the orchestra started a roaring of horns and noise in which all the people joined heartily.

Beverly’s Man from Mars, to her complete surprise, proved to be none other than Larry Owens. He had completely fooled her. The jester had disappeared when masks were removed and Beverly saw him no more that

night. The crowd desired to go down on Broadway and mingle with the crowd greeting the New Year.

“Hang on,” Larry advised Beverly, slipping her arm through his as they came out of the hotel. “We will be separated if you don’t.”

He was right. They would have been separated for the streets were thronged with hilarious holiday makers. Noise and confusion reigned supreme. The New Year was certainly getting a rousing welcome, and the old year a gay send-off. Lois and Lenora and their two young men companions had been directly behind Beverly and Larry when they stepped to the street, but in the mêlée they lost them completely. Later they went back to the hotel and continued with their party.

It was in the wee small hours of the cold New Year’s morning when Larry and the other two young men, Paul Benson and Ralph Mathew, took the three girls back to their

apartment, and later still when the girls shed their crumpled costumes to drop into bed.



CHAPTER XIX

Lenora's Plans

“Oooo, my head!” Lenora groaned as she cocked a sleepy eye at the early afternoon sun sifting into their bedroom.

“Too much party for you, young lady!” Lois said judiciously.

“Was not,” Lenora defended. “I had a grand time.”

“Hence the headache,” Lois informed her. “How do you feel, Beverly?”

“Just dandy,” Beverly replied, stretching luxuriously. “How about you?”

“Fit as a fiddle,” Lois sang.

“And ready for love!” finished Lenora.

“Behave!” was the scathing retort as Lois smothered her friend with a pillow.

“Ow, my head,” Lenora complained.

“You brought it on yourself,” Lois said unsympathetically.

“Wait, I’ll get you something,” Beverly offered her suffering friend.

“See? Everyone is not as hard hearted as you,” Lenora frowned on Lois. “Thank you, Beverly, my friend. I shall remember you in my will.”

“You will have a long wait for she looks so healthy,” Lois sighed to Beverly. “Ah, well, you never can tell, you never can tell!”

“I might get run over by a trolley car or jump out of an airplane without a parachute,” Lenora said brightly. “Then——”

A knock on the door interrupted her. Beverly went to answer and discovered Mrs. Callahan who reported that she was wanted

on the telephone.

“Hullo, lazybones, just getting up?”
Shirley greeted her.

“I was up hours ago,” Beverly informed her.

“I’ll bet you went back to bed again,”
Shirley declared.

“I did,” Beverly confessed laughingly.
“What’s up?”

“I called to see if you will come over for lunch,” Shirley said.

“Of course we will,” Beverly accepted promptly. “What time is it?” she added as an afterthought.

“Well, you have about fifteen minutes,” Shirley said, “or we will have to make it tea instead of lunch.”

“We’ll be there,” Beverly promised and hung up.

She dashed back into the bedroom and explained the situation to the other girls. They scrambled about wildly into their clothes, Lenora forgetting her headache in the haste. In ten minutes they stood ready to depart. Another knock on the door brought a frown to the three faces.

“Nobody can delay us now,” Lenora said firmly. “We won’t be delayed!”

“Right you are!” Beverly declared and opened the door.

A black and white box was thrust into her hands.

“For Miss Gray,” the messenger boy sang out and departed.

“Well, for goodness sake——” Beverly murmured in surprise.

“Open it!” Lenora begged in undisguised curiosity.

Beverly opened the box and lifted out, to

the accompaniment of ohs and ahs from her friends, an exquisite armful of rosebuds. She sat down abruptly on the window seat staring at them in amazement.

“Who in the world——”

“Played Santa Claus?” finished Lenora. “Is there a card?”

“I d-don’t know,” stuttered Beverly. “Yes,” she lifted the card from its nest among the flowers. “Roger Garrett,” she read aloud.

“Who is Roger Garrett?” Lois demanded. “Lenora, she has been keeping things from us!”

“Tsk, tsk,” Lenora murmured sorrowfully. “I never expected it. She seems such a nice girl too.”

“Be quiet!” Beverly laughed at their teasing. She turned the card over. On the other side was written in a bold, dashing hand, “Your friend, the jester.”

“What is it?” Lenora asked, bending over Beverly’s shoulder.

“Nothing,” Beverly whisked the card away. Her eyes sparkled with mischief. The girls were always teasing her, now she would tease them.

“Let us see,” Lois pleaded.

“It is a secret,” Beverly said shaking her head. “Come on, we have to hurry to Shirley’s.”

“Never fear,” Lenora consoled Lois. “We shall discover the secret yet. Nothing can daunt us!”

Beverly merely smiled. She proposed to let Shirley into the secret with her and they would keep Lenora and Lois guessing. But how had he learned her name and address? She certainly had not given it to him.

The girls went to Shirley’s, Lois and Lenora still endeavoring to find out who

Beverly's admirer was. Finally they gave it up and contented themselves with knowing winks every now and then.

Lenora told Shirley about the plans she and Hope were making for a gown shop.

"Splendid!" Shirley declared. "You have my business."

"But we need a lot more," Lenora declared. "What we want you to do is to give us the names of some of your friends whom you think might be interested. We will send them cards announcing the opening. Perhaps we can draw their business, too."

"Of course and I'll recommend you," Shirley agreed. "What about you, Beverly, couldn't you help with your newspaper work?"

"Run an advertisement in the *Tribune*," Beverly suggested. "It has a large circulation and you are bound to attract some readers."

“Good idea,” Lenora said. “We shall endeavor to have the opening before we go to Vernon for the graduation of our fellow members of the Alpha Delta.”

“All those girls ought to come to you,” Lois added.

“Connie Elwood is interested in designing clothes,” Beverly continued. “She designs all her own and a lot of her friends’. You might give her a chance in your shop.”

“Fine idea!” Lenora declared. “We shall be quite complete before the place even opens up.”

“It’s funny, isn’t it,” Shirley mused, “what the Alphas have drifted into. Anne is married. Rosalie on the verge. Beverly is on a newspaper. Lois is drawing for a magazine. Lenora is about to enter into business and I have hopes of stage work.”

“Yes, and in another year we might be right back where we started from,” Lenora

said. “We might all flunk in our big chance just like some of us flunked in our studies at school.”

“Cynic!” Lois frowned on her friend. “Why must you always look for the hole in the doughnut?”

“Time will tell,” Lenora said wisely, “time will tell.”

“If you say that once more, I shall scream,” Lois declared. “You have been quoting that ever since we graduated. I’m sure I don’t know what you expect time to tell.”

“I expect to learn just why the hole was put in the doughnut in the first place,” Lenora retorted.



CHAPTER XX

Getting Along

THE next week Shirley started on rehearsals with the actors of the Forest Theater Guild of which Mr. Crandall was president. True to his promise made years ago when the girls were Freshmen in college and since renewed, Mr. Crandall had given a small part to Shirley in his spring production. It was not much, just a bit, but Shirley was happy. It was the thrill of the stage, the smell of grease paint and makeup, the thought of the audiences that enthralled her. At least she was starting. She was part of the excitement that went on backstage. Her parents had objected to this stage venture of hers, but Shirley continued placidly on her way. She clung tenaciously to this, her one ambition and talent. She declared often that her parents should not deprive her of this one thing she wanted above all else to do.

The rest of January passed and February too went its breezy way. The beginning of March was cold and snowy. Shirley continued with her rehearsals. It was getting near opening night and the cast was going ahead with feverish interest. Lois had sold some more drawings and was busy with more illustrations for a magazine.

Beverly had sold another story. She had sent another to the agents and in less than three weeks she had received a check. She had more short stories under way, but she was now seriously considering a novel or a play. That was the final culmination of all her hopes and dreams—to write a play. A good play, one that would be produced right here on Broadway. Of course, it would probably be years before she could accomplish it, but nevertheless she meant to try and to work to that end. Meanwhile, she was happy in the laurels her first story had brought her. It had proved a popular number and the same magazine invited her to send in more for consideration. Needless to say she did so. Her success was coming. She was counting on

June when she would go back to Vernon for a visit. She wanted to see the college grounds again, meet some of the girls, and she wanted to tell her former English professor about her success. Professor Coleman had been most kind and interested in Beverly. Now Beverly was sure the professor would be glad that she was making good.

It was a Saturday afternoon in late March. Beverly was walking along Forty-Second Street. She had the half day off. Tonight the girls planned to go to the theater, and now she was leisurely sauntering toward the apartment after several hours shopping. She stepped to the curb to wait for the traffic and the driver of the car standing by honked his horn furiously, then he leaned over the door and yelled.

“Hi!”

She looked around quickly. It was Roger Garrett, the young man who had been the jester at Shirley’s party and who had sent her the lovely roses. She had met him twice since

then. Now she responded with a gay wave.

“Going home?” he asked as she came up to the car.

“Yes.”

“Get in,” he invited, swinging open the door.

She dumped her bundles on the seat and stepped in. She slammed the door and the car shot forward.

Today he was wearing a dark overcoat and light felt hat beneath which the tan face and the black eyes were smiling as always. That was one thing she liked about him. He was always so irresistibly gay. Nothing seemed to depress him. The world was all a playground and he was having a jolly time. The other young men she knew were different. Jim Stanton was inclined to be serious and grave. Larry of course was lively, but Roger was the gayest of all.

“Shirley’s play opens the fifteenth of April,” he said as the car swung the corner.

“Yes, I know. I hope it will be a big hit.”

“I’ve got tickets,” he continued, “and I’m taking you.”

“Oh, are you?” she laughed. “I’m glad you told me.”

“I knew you would be,” he said mischievously.

It did not take long to reach the apartment and Beverly bid him good-bye at the curb. When she entered the house she found Lois and Paul Benson talking together in the hall. They were so interested in each other they were at first oblivious of her presence. Beverly concealed her surprise. She had not known Paul saw Lois often. She knew they met occasionally but not as often as their attitude to one another suggested. When Paul took his leave Lois followed Beverly up the stairs.

“Bev, don’t tell Lenora Paul came home with me, will you?” she pleaded. “You know how she teases me——”

“Look——” Beverly said.

From the window they could see Lenora crossing the street. With her was Ralph Mathew. This was another surprise for Beverly, she had not supposed that Lenora and Ralph were such good friends. She realized then what these past weeks of steady work on the newspaper and her stories had done. She had let herself become so wrapped up in work that she had grown a little apart from her friends. She solemnly vowed that she would never let it happen again.

“Lenora and Ralph!” Lois said gleefully, bouncing up and down delighted. “Just let her tease me——”

“Greetings, my little cup cakes,” Lenora said, entering with a breezy whirl. “How are you this fine windy day?”

“Fine!” Lois said and Beverly nodded in agreement.

“We saw Paul Benson down the block,” Lenora said beaming on Lois. “I am surprised, my pet!”

“Yes,” Lois said with a toss of her head. “We had lunch together and he walked me home. So what?”

“You know what they say,” Lenora said impishly. “In the spring——”

“I might say that I didn’t know Ralph Mathew walked home from your shop with you,” Lois said brightly.

“We won’t go into that,” Lenora laughed. “Let’s call a truce.”

“How is the shop coming?” Beverly asked.

“Just dandyish,” Lenora declared. “The grand opening will be next month. Then we will be really launched in the business world.”

“Fancy that!” was Lois’s murmur.

“Let’s get dressed and go out for dinner,” Lenora proposed.

“Suits me,” Beverly said.

“Me too,” Lois declared.

The three dined in a little Russian restaurant they had discovered hidden away among the tall skyscrapers. From there they met Shirley and progressed to their show.

Every day saw them a little more firmly established. Slowly and surely they were marching along the paths of their chosen life’s work.



The first of April came on and with it all the traditional April showers. For two days it rained almost steadily. People sloshed along the streets looking wet and disconsolate. Everyone was thoroughly disgusted.

Shirley was getting more nervous as the days went by and it came closer to the opening night. Lenora and Hope Rodgers were constantly busy, though it must be said Hope did far more than her share of work. In her lazy, lovable way, Lenora neglected a lot of things and the shop would not have been nearly ready to open on the set date had not Hope been there to look after things.

“Rain, rain go away——” Lenora grumbled, her nose pressed against the window pane, a frown on her face. “I shouldn’t think there would be much more rain left up there,” she said, viewing the gray heavens above.

“I heard they were running low,” Lois laughed.

“Don’t you know why it is raining?” Beverly asked from her desk where she was writing letters.

“No, do you? So much rain doesn’t seem justifiable,” Lenora declared.

“The circus is in town. Have you forgotten? It usually rains the week the circus is here,” Beverly smiled.

“The circus! Goody,” Lenora clapped her hands and whirled Lois about the room. “I had completely forgotten it. Let’s go. I want some pink lemonade!”

“And some peanuts,” added Lois.

“They might keep you in the monkey cage,” Beverly said over her shoulder.

“Mutiny!” Lenora roared. “She insults us,” Lenora said to Lois. “She really knows it is she whom the monkeys might recognize.”

“Is that so?” Beverly hurled a crumpled ball of paper and caught Lenora squarely on the ear.

When quiet and peace reigned once more Lenora returned to the subject.

“Well? Do we go to the circus, or do we go to the circus?”

“As I understand it,” Lois said thoughtfully, “you want to go to the circus.”

“Exactly!” Lenora beamed. “My, you catch on quickly. Well?”

“We go to the circus,” Beverly said.

When the girls came down to the street it had stopped raining.

“For how long, I wonder?” Lenora said, consulting the dark sky overhead.

“There is a star,” Lois said. “It might be going to clear.”

“It also might be going to snow,” Lenora chaffed. “Do we take umbrellas and galoshes?”

“I vote we don’t,” Beverly said immediately.

“So do I!” Lois declared vigorously.

“Evidently we don’t,” said Lenora. “Now

watch it rain,” she murmured, as the girls started out totally unprepared for that possibility.

“It ain’t gonna rain no more, no more,” Lois sang lustily, so lustily that Lenora complained.

“Be quiet, idiot! You will have a policeman after us,” she said sternly.

“You don’t appreciate a good voice,” Lois sniffed.

“A good voice, I do,” Lenora argued.

“If both of you don’t behave we won’t go to the circus,” Beverly announced.

“If you are good,” Lois promised magnanimously, “I’ll buy you a red balloon.” She slipped from the curb and then wondered if Lenora had pushed her. That young lady was viewing the sky overhead with the most innocent of smiles.

“You are both hopeless,” Beverly sighed as

the two launched into another nonsensical argument.

“My friend, you grieve me,” Lenora murmured tearfully. “I have always been told I hold great promise for a brilliant future.”

“You won’t live to see that future if you don’t reform,” Lois said.

Beverly inserted herself between the two and took an arm of each. “See here, walk properly or I shall leave you.”

“A calamity!” declared the irrepressible Lenora.

Lois giggled in agreement, but thereafter the three continued peacefully on their way. They entered Madison Square Garden, show place of the circus. People were straggling in, many robbed of their enthusiasm for the show by the rain.

“Let’s see the elephants first,” Lenora proposed.

“Wait until I get a bag of peanuts,” Lois said.

Properly fortified they made their way to the elephants. They spent a lot of time there before they continued to the cages that contained the lions. The beasts seemed restless tonight. They prowled about the confining cages, growling, and pawing, eyes glaring at the spectators.

“Wouldn’t they make nice playthings?” mumbled Lenora.

“I’d love to meet one of them in the dark,” added Lois.

“Think of the trainers,” Beverly said. “They risk their life each time they go into the cage and they aren’t paid half as much as a movie star.”

“Oh, for the life of a lion tamer,” sang Lenora as they made their way to where the big show would hold forth.

“I want to sit at the top,” Lenora said eagerly as they viewed the grandstand seats.

“I don’t like it way up high,” Lois protested.

They sat at the top on the very highest row. They treated themselves to peanuts and cracker jack. By that time the big show was beginning. The blare of the circus band as it led the big parade of performers was exciting. The three college graduates felt like children again and as such entered into the spirit of the evening. They laughed over the antics of the clowns, marveled at the daring bareback riders and held their breath at the feats of the trapeze artists.

Into the middle sawdust ring were brought several lion cages. The trainer stepped to the center of the ring and received gallantly the burst of applause. One by one the beasts lunged from their cages and were put through their paces. It was thrilling to watch the great beasts as they obeyed the snapping black whip of their master.

“They are nasty things,” Lenora murmured. “No manners at all. Why don’t they be good and show off like they are supposed to?”

“Would you like to show off if you were a lion?” Lois wanted to know.

“Be quiet!” Lenora retorted.

The audience was tense with expectancy. They were anxious for thrills and the lions willingly provided them. For all of their long captivity the beasts were not very tractable and time and again the trainer was in danger of having one or more of the beasts spring at him. But he knew his lions and in the end the trainer triumphed and the beasts were herded back into their cages.

“Oh, well,” Lenora said as the show closed and they went out with the crowd. “It’s all in his day’s work.”

“I think I’ll stick to paints and brushes,” Lois said. “They don’t have to be tamed.”



CHAPTER XXI

Shirley's Play

IT was the night before the opening of the play in which Shirley had a part and the girls were gathered together again. Beverly had been summoned to the telephone in the hall and the other girls were curious to know who it was.

“I have called to give you a sad bit of news,” Roger Garrett informed Beverly sadly. “I’ve been called out of town on business and won’t be able to take you to the play tomorrow. It is a terrible thing to give you such short notice. I’m frightfully sorry. What bothers me most,” he said darkly, “is that you will probably go with someone else.”

“Yes,” she said composedly.

“I knew it!” he groaned. “Who is the

villain? Tell me and I will slay him with my rusty—I mean trusty sword.”

“Idiot!” Beverly laughed.

“Was it your hero?” Lenora greeted her when she returned to the girls.

“It was Roger and he isn’t my hero,” Beverly said with dignity. “He’s growling because he has to miss the play tomorrow night.”

“What a play that will be,” Shirley murmured from her cozy posture on the arm of Lois’ chair.

“We are expecting great things,” Lenora informed her friend. “The future of one of the noble Alpha Deltas depends on it.”

“You said it!” Shirley agreed slangily. “If I get thrown out of this play I shan’t have the courage to try another.”

“Oh, yes you will,” Beverly said confidently. “The stage is in you. You like

acting and you couldn't give it up if you wanted to."

"I could give it up about as easily as you could give up writing," Shirley agreed.

"Which will be never," put in Lenora.

Beverly nodded, sitting down in a chair and smiling at them. "Do you know, I seriously considered giving up the newspaper work and going back home a few weeks ago but the mere thought scared me."

"I should think it would!" Lois declared. "Whatever did you consider it for?"

"Oh, I was thinking about a lot of things, but just to think about giving up writing scared me. If I did, I would be lost. I would have nothing to build my future on. What would I do?"

"Be somebody's stenog," supplied Lenora, delving behind a pile of cushions and coming up with a box of candy.

“Eeek!” shrieked Lois as she made a dive for Lenora. “Where did you get that? You were hiding it!” she accused.

“Course I was,” Lenora admitted promptly, holding the box high over Lois’ head. “If I hadn’t, you would have eaten it all and gotten a stomach ache.”

“You were thinking of yourself,” Lois said with a wicked smile, “not me!”

Lenora grinned. “I was considering my taste a little I will admit,” she said. “Have a piece of candy, girls?” she offered the box to Shirley and Beverly.

“We will!” Shirley said and snatched the box from Lenora’s hands.

There was a wild, breathless scramble until the candy was once more in Lenora’s possession. In hilarious spirits the evening continued, the girls talking over the three important coming events—Shirley’s play, the opening of Lenora and Hope’s gown shop,

and their trip to Vernon.



It was a clear, warm night when the girls with Larry, Paul Benson, and Ralph Mathew stepped from the boys' car and entered the theater. From their seats in the third row they viewed the crowd that was pouring in. Chic, lovely, bejeweled women and smartly dressed men. The low hum of voices mingled with the strains of music as the orchestra struck up the overture.

“Yes, mam,” Lenora declared to all and sundry, “this is a first night that Shirley will remember! I didn’t think Mr. Crandall’s plays brought out so many of society’s darlings or that he was such an important figure in the dramatic world. Evidently one of his plays is an event.”

“Right you are,” Ralph said. “We New Yorkers look forward to his two plays a year as highlights. He is known for discovering

talent and giving new players their first breaks.”

“Lucky for Shirley he was interested in her,” commented Lois. “I do hope she makes good.”

“She will,” Lenora said confidently.

Shirley’s part was far from the most important, but the bit she had to do she invested with a fresh girlish appeal and charm that captured the audience and left them wondering why such a clever little actress had not been given a major part. She was as self confident and poised as a veteran trouper. None of the stage fright she was experiencing in this her first chance on a stage in a real theater appeared in her actions or her voice. The audience did not guess that her heart was in her throat most of the time and her knees knocked together occasionally from sheer nervousness. She felt like a gawky, inexperienced child, and would have been astonished could she have viewed herself, poised and cool, from across the footlights.

And so, Shirley's play was a success. The little troupe of actors who put their production across with all the wit and charm they possessed were all pronounced excellent. The box office receipts were particularly gratifying, and for weeks the theater was packed with record crowds. Quite suddenly the play closed after three weeks successful run and the rumor was that Mr. Crandall proposed taking the play on tour.

"Yes, it is true," Shirley said smiling. "We leave tomorrow for Chicago."

It was late at night and the four had just returned to the girls' apartment from a concert.

"Why didn't you tell us?" Lenora demanded.

"I didn't want to spoil tonight by thinking it might be our last for a while," Shirley smiled. "I hate leaving you and everything. I want to stay here and see how Lenora and Hope make out with their shop, and how Lois

comes along with her painting, and watch Beverly forge ahead with her writing.”

“But aren’t you terribly proud?” Lois murmured. “It must mean a lot to belong to the cast of a really successful play.”

“It does,” Shirley admitted. “But I’m not really important you know. My name isn’t known to the public and a well-known name is what counts.”

“It just goes to prove that it pays to keep your nose to the grindstone as it were,” Lenora said ponderously. “If you just keep in mind what you want to be and don’t give up, you will get it sooner or later.”

“Sooner or later,” Lois agreed dryly.

“I suppose when you come back to New York you will be famous,” sighed Lenora to Shirley. “But don’t dare forget us or we shall come after you with——”

“No danger of forgetting you,” Shirley

laughed. "I want each one of you to write to me at least once a week and tell me how you are coming on."

"Do you think you can come to Vernon for the girls' graduation?" Beverly asked.

"I shall try," Shirley declared. "If I can't make it, it will be because something important has come up and I honestly can't get away. I shall try my best to be at Vernon, though," she added.

"Then we shall see you again in a month or so," Lois said. "That won't be long."

"No," Shirley agreed lightly. "That won't be long and until then, I wager you can each find something to keep you busy."



CHAPTER XXII

Success

IT was in May that Lenora's and Hope's shop first opened its doors to the public. The two partners were almost beside themselves with the excitement of the moment. As Lenora had said it would be, the shop was the last word in smartness and elegance. The girls had run advertisements in all the leading newspapers and every means possible was used to bring the opening to the notice of the public. The success of their endeavor to attract attention was apparent. People with a view to purchasing the latest in chic clothes came to see the styles the girls had to offer and were pleased. From that day forward Lenora and Hope became confident, successful business women. It did not take long to establish a firm clientele. Many of their gowns came direct from Paris, London, and Hollywood. Their styles were the newest and brightest to

be found anywhere.

But even Lenora's success was overshadowed a little by the stupendous thing that happened to Lois. Beverly and Lenora were just coming from the bedroom, both had slept late, it being a free Saturday for both of them, when Lois entered the apartment, some early morning purchases for their breakfast in one arm and the mail in her hand.

Instantly the three of them grabbed their individual letters and devoted themselves to digesting the contents.

"Jumping Juniper!" Lois shouted so suddenly that both Lenora and Beverly started. "I'm dreaming!"

"Pul—eese!" Lenora said frowning distastefully on her friend. "Don't yell so."

"But—listen—" Lois continued shaking Lenora's arm vigorously. "I'm going to Paris."

“You are—going——” Lenora gazed at her friend with pitying eyes. “Beverly, I was afraid this warm weather would be too much for our friend. She is——”

“I’m not crazy!” Lois defended laughingly. “It’s true. I’m going to Paris.”

“To Paris,” Beverly echoed. “But how—why——”

“For goodness sake, explain!” commanded Lenora impatiently.

“It’s like this,” Lois said patiently, “some time ago I read about an art contest. The prize was a year’s study in Paris. I submitted a sketch but I never told you about it because I didn’t expect anything to come of it. Now ——” she gazed at the letter in her hand as if she herself couldn’t believe what had happened.

“You’ve won!” Beverly said proudly.

“Three cheers for you!” Lenora added

rapturously. "Success might be a little time in coming, but when it comes it comes with a bang. A year in Paris! Imagine!"

"I can't believe it is really true," Lois declared. "I still think I'm dreaming."

"Wait until Shirley and the other girls hear of it," added Beverly.

"When do you go?" Lenora wanted to know.

"That is to be decided later," Lois answered.

"You can't go until after the Vernon graduation," Lenora announced.

"Of course not," agreed Lois.

"That is next week," Beverly reminded them.

"My word! So it is!" exclaimed Lenora. "I had almost forgotten the date."

“Where will we stay in Vernon?” Lois asked. “At a hotel?”

“I’ve written to Mrs. Dennis at Chadwick Hall,” Beverly said. “I asked if we might have a room at the Hall for the night we will be there. It will seem more like old times.”

“I’ll say it would!” Lenora declared. “Connie and all the girls are in Chadwick Hall. What did she say?”

“I’ve her letter here,” Beverly said, tearing it open. “In the excitement of Lois’s good news I forgot all about it. She says,” consulting the written page, “that she can give us two rooms.”

“Two rooms?” murmured Lois.

“One for you and Lenora and one for me and Shirley,” Beverly answered. “Anne said she would write about herself and Rosalie.”

“It will be just like our Senior term over again,” Lenora said happily.

“But only for one night,” mourned Lois. “Those were the days—when we were carefree students!”

“Why wish the past back again?” murmured Beverly. “The present is exciting and the future—well, we can make the future exciting if we want to.”

“You said it,” Lenora joined in slangily. “I’m having a high old time now. I plan to have a lot more fun. Of course I liked my college days, I’ll always remember them, but just the uncertainty of the future is exciting. We don’t know whether, even if we make good now, if we can keep up our good work tomorrow. It keeps us on our toes and that’s what I love.”

“Haven’t you any definite plans for the future?” Beverly inquired, lazily sinking down on the window seat and folding her arms about her knees.

“Nope,” Lenora said. “Oh, I plan to keep going with Hope of course, but aside from

that—I'm open for suggestions."

"You, Lois?"

"My sketching," Lois answered. "With study in Paris, I hope to develop my talent—if any," she added humorously. "What about you? Are you going to stay on the newspaper?"

"For a while yet," Beverly nodded.

"That sounds as if you were thinking of leaving," Lenora said.

"Since I've had some short stories accepted," Beverly said, "I want to write a novel. Not a mediocre one, you understand, but one that will really—click! A best seller. Then——"

"Then you will sit back and rest on your laurels?" murmured Lenora.

"Nope," Beverly shook her head. "I'll write more and more novels. What I really would like to do someday, not now, I'm not

capable of it yet, is to write a play and see it produced here on Broadway. You've heard the saying you can't write about something you haven't actually experienced. I'll have to wait a while until I even write a novel."

"That's a lot of bunk," Lenora declared immediately. "That experiencing stuff, I mean. Do you suppose that these writers who write ferocious murder stories have ever seen or even heard of the murders they write about?"

"And I know a writer who wrote a lot of college stories and he had never been to college," added Lois.

Beverly shrugged. "Maybe you're right. Just the same, I have to wait until I get a good idea. Meanwhile, the *Tribune* is still in circulation."

"Well, you certainly have a lot of ambition. I see where you will be busy for quite a while to come if you hope to work out your schedule," Lenora said.

“What is that legal looking envelope?” asked Lois curiously, motioning to the envelope beside Beverly.

The latter picked it up and slit it open. Her friends watching curiously, she read the short, concise typewritten letter, her brows knitted.

“What do you know about that!” she said in amazement.

“Stupendous,” Lenora declared. “What is it?”

“The magazine who bought my short stories has requested a series of four more.”

“This must be our lucky month! Things are happening so quickly I can’t keep track of them all!”

“That means success,” Lois smiled at Beverly. “You’re going ahead in leaps and bounds.”

“It won’t be long before all the original Alpha Deltas who came to New York are

famous,” Lenora said grinning with pride. “I always knew we were good!”

“Says she boastfully!” laughed Lois.
“Famous or not, I’m hungry. I want my breakfast.”

“My friend, you are inspired by the fates. Breakfast is just what I need,” Lenora said.
“Lead on!”

Amid the preparations for their breakfast, the three discussed their good fortune in already tasting success in their chosen fields. Life was good and life was sweet when one’s work was appreciated.



CHAPTER XXIII

Return

SIX seniors, Alpha Deltas all, were gathered in the gayly decorated room shared by two of their members in Chadwick Hall. The girls sat about on the beds, the window sill, or cross-legged on cushions on the floor.

“What’s the latest?” Evelyn DeLong halted her ukulele strumming long enough to inquire of Connie Elwood as the latter took her place amid the girls.

“It is a complete mystery,” Connie said. “No one knows who might have entered Professor Leonard’s apartment at that hour.”

“Tsk, tsk,” murmured Phyllis Tanner laughingly. “A perfectly good mystery and we can’t solve it.”

“It is a good thing the original Alphas are coming this afternoon,” added Kathleen Ryan, “perhaps they can explain it for us.”

“Let’s get all the information ready and we can hand it to them,” Virginia Harris laughed. “Let’s see now, night before last someone entered Professor Leonard’s apartment, about midnight, robbed him of his watch, a necklace he had just bought for his wife——”

“And all his cash,” put in Ada Collins. “Last night the same thing happened to Professor Robbins.”

“People say things run in threes,” Evelyn volunteered. “I wonder who will be robbed tonight?”

“Let’s hope it isn’t Maxcine Volner,” Connie said, “or it would surely give Vernon a bad name. Such a famous man to be robbed here in our school!”

“Then Inspector Dugan better sleep across the threshold of the inventor’s room,”

Kathleen declared. "Even then the thief would probably enter through the window."

"The whole campus is in an uproar," Ada murmured. "The girls are all looking for a place to hide their valuables."

"Well, so far the thief has kept to the faculty. I suppose he thinks they are the only ones who have anything," giggled Phyllis.

"He is right, too," laughed Kathleen. "It is dreadful the way my allowance just seems to melt away."

"By the way, where is Mrs. Dennis putting Beverly and Shirley?"

"I talked her into giving them their old room back, but the other girls weren't so lucky. They shall have to be content with other rooms."

"Isn't it wonderful the way those girls are making good," murmured Virginia. "I hope we do as well."

“They certainly have set a good example for us,” Ada said. “Talking about them, isn’t it almost time for their train?”

“Good night! We have exactly five minutes to get to the station,” Connie cried, jumping up and making for the door.

Without more ado the other girls followed and the six of them fled down the steps and out onto the campus where, because there were faculty members in sight, they had to hold themselves down to a decorous walk. Even so, they were in plenty of time because the train that was bearing Lois, Lenora, and Beverly to Vernon was ten minutes late.

“We thought you would never get here!” complained Kathleen as she swooped down on Lenora.

“We thought so too,” that young lady answered. “In fact, I wanted to get out and push the old thing to make it go faster, but my worthy comrades wouldn’t hear of it.”

“Is there, by any remote chance,” Lois murmured after the first effusive greetings were over, “a place where we might indulge in something to cool us off? Something like a strawberry soda?”

The Vernon girls thoughtfully considered this for a moment.

“I believe there is a place in the village where such things can be procured,” nodded Ada. “But of course we don’t know much about it.”

“Not much you don’t!” Lois scoffed.

“You know very well we are aching to go to Weller’s so why delay?” Lenora said bluntly.

“There is no delay whatever,” Connie said, linking her arm with Beverly’s and leading the way. “And while we are there, we will tell you of the latest mystery that has descended on this noble institution of learning.”

“What? Did we walk into a mystery?” Lois exclaimed. “Are we never to have any peace?”

“We have plenty of it,” Lenora retorted. “Go ahead, Connie, tell us what this is all about.”

“First, I would advise you, if you have any valuables, to bury them under some particular tree for safe keeping,” Virginia laughed.

“Why?” Lois wanted to know.

“Because somebody about Vernon campus is awf’ly light-fingered,” put in Evelyn.

“Tell us about it,” Beverly urged.

So Connie told the three new arrivals about the two robberies that were baffling everyone on the campus, as well as the police of Vernon.

“And just now, too,” she added, “when Vernon has such a distinguished visitor.”

“And who is the visitor?” Lenora asked.

“Maxcine Volner, the inventor,” Ada informed them.

“Maybe he is the thief,” Lenora said brightly. “I always heard inventors were a little daffy.”

“Silly!” Lois rebuked her. “Maxcine Volner is famous all over the world. You’ve met him, haven’t you Beverly?”

“You did? How?” chorused the others.

“I was covering a meeting of inventors and scientists for my paper,” Beverly explained. “Yes, I met him, and he was nice and friendly.”

“Then you will have a chance to renew your acquaintanceship,” Phyllis suggested, “because he is to speak at our graduation.”

“Ah, after tomorrow you will be out in the cold cruel world looking for jobs,” Lois said.

“We have agreed to take you under our wing,” Lenora added magnanimously. “It was hard for us to get started, so we want to do right by our pals.”

“Not us!” Kathleen said promptly. “We are all going on to more school work.”

“What do you mean?” Lois inquired.

“Virginia is going to medical school to be a doctor,” Connie explained. “Ada is bound for a conservatory to study music, and Phyllis to commercial art school.”

“Yes, and Connie is going to a School of Design, Kathleen to learn to be an Interior Decorator and Evelyn to business school to be somebody’s secretary,” continued Virginia.

“My word!” Lenora exclaimed with a whistle. “What a future you are going to have!”

“I think that is splendid!” Beverly

declared.

“So do I,” Lois added. “It shows you have a mountain of ambition. Where are all these schools?”

“Connie and I go to New York,” Kathleen said. “We’ll be seeing a lot of you.”

“I and Ada go to Chicago,” Virginia answered.

“And Phyllis and I to Philadelphia, our old home town,” laughed Evelyn. “The Alphas are going to be widely scattered.”

“Oh, well, we will have a meeting once a year anyway,” Lenora said promptly.

“When we can talk each other’s ears off,” added Virginia.

“Let’s get going to the Hall,” Lois proposed. “I am aching to rid myself of some of this train dirt.”

To Beverly, walking ahead of the other

girls with Connie, the sight of the familiar green campus, dignified, ivy covered buildings, and shady walks was most welcome. It was almost like coming home, to come back to the familiar college grounds after nearly a year's absence. Here were the same buildings in which she had spent so many sweet, never-to-be-forgotten hours. They were the same, and yet they were different. Gone were the familiar faces of the girls of her class and in their places were new and strange faces. She realized she was done with school and she couldn't hope to come back and find things as they had been when she left. The tide of years would keep changing and she could never recapture her old school days again.

“Say, Beverly, doesn't the old place look good to you?” Lenora called.

“Indeed it does!” Beverly declared.

“I feel as though I must run or miss that French class,” laughed Lois. “That class always was a nightmare to me.”

“What do you think you were to the class?” murmured Lenora sweetly whereupon Lois cast her a scathing glance.

“Success or no success, those two haven’t reformed, have they?” Connie laughed to Beverly. “Do they still rag each other as much as they did when they were here?”

“More, if possible,” Beverly answered. “Have you heard from Shirley?”

“No, I thought she would come with you,” Connie replied. “Perhaps she will come with Anne and Rosalie. They arrive tonight.”

“She didn’t write me whether she would be here or not,” Beverly said in disappointment. “I suppose she couldn’t get away.” It wouldn’t seem a natural reunion without her old roommate. “What room are we to have?”

“Mrs. Dennis has given you and Shirley your old room,” Connie said.

“I’ll wager that was your idea,” Beverly

said immediately. "Thanks!"

"Ah! Behold, our dear old domicile!" Lenora cried as they mounted the steps of Chadwick Hall. "I feel like a prodigal returning to the fold."

Mrs. Dennis was on hand to greet the three members of the *alumnæ* who had been three of her prized dormitory girls, and this she did with such enthusiasm that left no doubt about how glad she was to see them.

Connie, with Beverly's traveling bag in her hand, led the way up the familiar stairs to that still more familiar room. When the girls paused outside the door, for all of them had come along to the room that had been their especial meeting place, they heard cheery whistling within. Connie opened the door.

"Shirley!"

"Greetings, fellow Alphas!" that energetic young person returned gayly.

“When did you get here? How did you come?” were the questions in a loud chorus.

“Yes, I am insulted,” Shirley declared, the twinkle in her gray eyes totally belying the words. “I am invited here to see my friends, then when I arrive there is no one here!”

“But when did you come?” Connie persisted. “If we had known——”

“I drove in, and just arrived about ten minutes ago. Mrs. Dennis brought me up and told me you had all gone to the station to meet my other pals.”

“You drove all the way from Chicago?” Kathleen murmured in amazement. “That was quite a trip!”

“Quite a trip,” Shirley agreed. “But I enjoyed it.” She looked around at the girls. “Where are the rest of us, Anne and Rosalie?”

“They arrive on the night train.”

“Well, if I can grab a few minutes now, I would like to change before dinner,” Lenora said. “Connie, my friend, conduct us to our room.”

“Righto! Then we will meet downstairs as soon as you are ready. Don’t waste any time because we have oceans to talk about,” Connie said as they went out.

“My, but I’m glad to see you!” Beverly said, hugging Shirley ecstatically, when the door had closed behind the other girls and they were alone.

“Me likewise,” Shirley laughed. “Newspaper work must agree with you, you are looking splendid!”

“And you,” Beverly echoed. “How is the play coming? Is it a hit?”

“Seems to be,” Shirley admitted. “Mr. Crandall is planning to take us to the west coast in another two weeks.”

“California!” Beverly cried. “Marvelous!”

“We will be widely separated then, won’t we?” Shirley mused. “I in California, you and Lenora in New York, Lois in Paris——”

“Can you imagine such luck?” Beverly said eagerly. “A year’s study in Paris!”

Shirley laughed. “And can you picture the high old time she will have? Lois in Paris will be three times as gay as Lois anywhere else and that is saying a lot!”

“Maybe we better go along as chaperons,” Beverly giggled.

“We’ll suggest it,” Shirley agreed laughingly. “I think it would be a splendid idea!”

“But who would chaperon us?” Beverly added. “There! Now I’m all ready to join the girls. Are you?”

“In a minute,” Shirley answered, pushing the suitcase to its old, familiar place under the

bed. “Now, let’s go.”

They went down the stairs arm in arm, just as they had done on countless occasions, and joined the chattering group of girls on the verandah. They sat down beside Virginia on the steps and she nudged them significantly.

“Here comes Mr. Volner,” she whispered.

“Where?” Shirley demanded immediately.

“Coming down the walk with Professor Leonard,” answered Virginia.

Mrs. Dennis had poured forth to Shirley the story of the robberies. Now she was as interested in them and in the distinguished visitor to the campus as the other girls were.

“It is a shame about his scar, isn’t it?” Virginia continued when the two men had passed. “He would be quite good looking without that.”

“What scar?” Beverly asked quickly.

“The one on his cheek,” Virginia said smiling. “You interviewed him. Surely you noticed it!”

Beverly looked after the inventor. It was the same middle sized build, the same short goatee, the same funny strut, but—Volner had no scar!

“When and how did he get the scar?” Shirley asked.

“Years ago in the war, I think,” Virginia answered.

“Is he staying at a hotel in Vernon?” Beverly asked.

“No, he is sharing Professor Robbins’ suite of rooms.”

“When did he arrive?” was Beverly’s next inquiry.

“Day before yesterday,” Virginia replied.

“The same day the robberies started,”

murmured Beverly.

“What did you say?” Virginia asked.

“I was just thinking aloud,” Beverly smiled. “What do you suppose can be keeping the rest of the girls?”

“Here they come,” Shirley said, looking up. In a low aside she demanded of Beverly: “What did you mean ‘The same day the robberies started?’” She frowned. “He is Volner, isn’t he?”

“Shshsh,” cautioned Beverly. “We thought you had fallen asleep,” she said to Lenora.

“Never fear, that shall not happen here at Vernon,” Lenora assured her. “What do you say, girls, let’s take a walk before dinner.”

As with one accord the girls rose and sauntered down the walk. They would have a little while to reacquaint themselves with the old scenes.



CHAPTER XXIV

Surprise

“Now, tell me what this is all about!” Shirley commanded. “You didn’t break up that Alpha meeting to go to bed!”

“How observant you are,” Beverly laughed, as she snapped off the light and went to the window.

Dinner was long since past and the girls had spent a hilarious evening with their friends. Anne and Rosalie had arrived on the night train and the chatter had kept up long into the night.

From her window Beverly could see across the campus. The buildings were black and solid in the moonlight. One by one lights flashed out in the other dormitory houses.

“What are you looking for?” Shirley asked with curiosity.

“You would be surprised,” Beverly evaded smilingly.

“I know,” Shirley said with narrowed eyes, “you hope to see the thief when he commits his third robbery.”

“But there might not be a robbery,” Beverly said. “Inspector Dugan has stationed men on the campus.”

“Only at the gates to the campus,” Shirley said. “Tell me, this man is Maxcine Volner, isn’t he?”

“I wish I knew,” Beverly answered, turning and facing Shirley. She leant against the window sill. “He looks like Volner, goatee and all, but when I saw him a few weeks ago, Volner had no scar. Virginia says this man has a scar.”

“Then he isn’t Volner!” Shirley said

excitedly. "Do you suppose he is the thief?"

"Quite possibly," Beverly nodded in the darkness. "He can feel perfectly safe because I doubt if anyone here at Vernon ever saw Volner, seeing that he just arrived in this country for his first visit a few weeks ago. No one would suspect him of committing robbery."

"And he is going to speak at the girls' graduation exercises tomorrow," Shirley exclaimed.

Beverly shook her head. "I doubt it. If he isn't Volner, and I believe he isn't, he will disappear before the exercises. I don't think he will remain to make a speech."

"But then what will they do? His disappearance will create a sensation! The girls think he is the real inventor."

"That is just it," Beverly said. "What has become of the real Maxcine Volner? Where is he? If he is to speak at the girls'

graduation, why isn't he here? Why doesn't he appear to challenge this fellow?"

"You think this—impostor might have murdered him?" Shirley whispered.

"Hardly that," Beverly said. "Volner is famous! But he might have been kidnaped to give this man a chance to impersonate him. But why? Why does the impostor come here to Vernon? That is what we have to find out. Why does he come here to Vernon College?"

"It does seem queer," Shirley agreed. "What are you going to do?"

Beverly thought for a moment. "I'm going to see Miss Wilder."

"I'm coming too," Shirley said, rather than asked.

Beverly laughed. "Come along. If one of the detectives stationed at the entrance to the grounds sees us he might think we are the thieves and arrest us."

“It won’t take long to prove we aren’t,” Shirley said bluntly.

The two girls left their room and went down the stairs as quietly as possible. They let themselves out onto the campus. Despite the month the night air was cool and they were glad they had donned their sports coats. Keeping in the shadows of the trees as much as possible they crossed the campus. They desired to keep out of sight of the detectives because they did not wish to cause a false alarm, and also to keep out of sight of the thief should he be starting on his nightly adventure.

They entered the Dean’s office and found Inspector Dugan there. Miss Wilder had always been confident and friend to all her students, but to these two especially. She was a beloved friend to both Beverly and Shirley. Inspector Dugan, too, was an old friend, the girls having met him on more than one occasion during their four years at Vernon.

“Did you want to see me about something

in particular?” the Dean asked. “After all, this is an odd hour to pay a visit.”

“It’s—it’s about this man who calls himself Maxcine Volner,” Beverly began.

“The inventor,” the Inspector encouraged.

“Yes, sir. Well, he isn’t the inventor at all,” Beverly blurted out.

“N-Not Maxcine Volner?” Miss Wilder exclaimed. “But——Beverly what do you mean?”

“You mean he is an impostor?” the Inspector demanded briskly.

Beverly nodded. “Weeks ago, just after Mr. Volner came to this country, I attended a meeting of inventors and scientists to interview him for my paper. This man is like him, about the same height and build, made up with the goatee and everything—but the real Mr. Volner had no scar on his cheek.”

“This man has,” the Dean said. “Then—

then it is possible it is he who has committed the two robberies.”

“I’ll wager it was!” Inspector Dugan said in a loud voice. He jumped from his chair by the Dean’s desk. “I’m going to pay a call on Mr. Volner, or rather, on his impersonator right now!”

“Can we come along?” Shirley asked eagerly.

“Why would he impersonate Volner, Inspector?” Beverly asked.

“I don’t know,” the Inspector said vaguely.

“He has committed two robberies, is there anything of exceeding value to steal here in Vernon?” she continued with the tenacity of a reporter.

“The Kahari emerald!” the Inspector shouted, almost beside himself with excitement. “It must be he is after that!”

“And just what is the Kahari emerald?”

Beverly wanted to know.

“One of the millionaires in the village, you know the one, the one who lives in that big house at the end of College Avenue, recently bought this emerald to add to his collection. He has a lot of other stones too that might interest any crook. But this emerald is a beauty! Worth a fortune!”

“And the inventor dined there last night,” the Dean added.

“I’ll bet he learned the combination of the safe!” Beverly said.

“Well what are we standing here for?” Shirley demanded in exasperation.

“Why don’t you warn the man who has the stone?” Miss Wilder seconded.

“Don’t worry, there are two men stationed at his house ever since the stone arrived.”

“A clever criminal could still get it,” Beverly persisted.

“And what is to be done about Volner? I mean, his—impersonator,” Shirley wanted to know.

“I’m going over there to the suite of rooms he has,” the Inspector declared vigorously, and went out.

“I want to use the telephone and then I’ll be with you,” Beverly declared.

Shirley waited out on the campus while Beverly telephoned. The red headed girl was torn between a desire to follow after the hastily disappearing detective and exasperation at Beverly for, of all times, stopping to telephone now.

“Who in the world were you talking to now?” she demanded when Beverly joined her.

“Charlie Blaine,” Beverly laughed. “I’m a reporter, don’t forget, and this story about Volner is important. If Volner is really being impersonated by a clever crook who is using

the disguise to commit robberies, it calls for an extra edition.”

“Well hurry up or we won’t even see this man,” Shirley grumbled. “Inspector Dugan disappeared into the apartment building five minutes ago.”

“And here he comes again,” Beverly said. “What’s the matter?” she demanded of the policeman.

“The bird has flown,” he said crisply. “I’m going to Williamson’s. He’s the one who has the emerald. Probably that is where the thief is going.”

“You go and tell Miss Wilder he has disappeared,” Beverly directed Shirley, “then get your car and meet me at the north gate.”

“Righto!” Shirley said and departed on a run.

Beverly went back to Chadwick Hall and up to their room. She hunted through her

suitcase for the tiny flashlight she usually carried with her. When she found it she left the room without more ado. Inspector Dugan had a police car within call and in this she supposed he would go to Williamson's. That is why she had asked Shirley to get her car. Beverly, and she was sure Shirley too, wanted to be at the scene of the excitement, if there was any.

Shirley had her car at the north gate, motor running, and she swung open the door when Beverly appeared.

"Miss Wilder is going to wait for us and told me to come to her office immediately when we come back."

"Where did you tell her we were going?"

"I didn't tell her because I didn't know. Anyhow, I said we were on our way. She understands. Where to, Sherlock?"

"Inspector Dugan is going to the Williamson's. We'll go there too. Park on a

side street but keep the motor running,” Beverly directed when the car had traversed the quiet streets of the sleeping town. “Come on,” she directed, getting out.

Shirley followed her friend. They went back to the street on which stood the Williamson mansion, for mansion it was. A large, roomy house set in the midst of a thick garden of trees and shrubs. Directly across the street from the house in question the girls stepped back into the protecting shadow of a huge hedge. They could keep their eyes on the house opposite but they could not be seen.

“I wonder where Inspector Dugan is?” Shirley whispered. “The place looks as quiet as a graveyard.”

“Do you think the thief would come if he thought there was an army of policemen waiting for him?” Beverly murmured. “The Inspector is probably waiting with open arms in the library—or wherever the safe is.”

“I suppose so,” Shirley agreed. “I wonder

what scared him off, the man who was impersonating Volner, I mean.”

“Probably guessed that his little game was up,” Beverly said in a whisper. “His disguise couldn’t last forever. Look!”

A long, curtained limousine rolled slowly past, its lights darkened and engine muffled.

“It didn’t stop,” Shirley said in disappointment.

“Shshsh,” Beverly cautioned.

They waited a moment and soon the machine rolled past again. This time it paused for a moment at the corner of the street, long enough to deposit a slinking shadow on the pavement, and then continued silently on its way.

“It is him,” Shirley whispered excitedly, tugging at Beverly’s elbow.

Beverly nudged her to be silent. The figure across the street had melted into the shadows

of the driveway.

“Probably breaking into the house right now,” Shirley continued, talkative in her excitement.

“Why doesn’t the Inspector do something?” Beverly murmured. “Do you suppose he isn’t there yet?”

Suddenly the house across the street was ablaze with lights. A door banged and voices rang out, disturbing the stillness. Then with the clarity of a cannon a revolver shot echoed through the night.

“Fireworks!” Shirley cried. “I hope he didn’t hit anybody.”

“There he comes,” Beverly said, pulling Shirley out from their hiding place. “Come on, run to your car. That limousine will pick him up.”

“Now I see why you wanted me to bring my car. We’re going to follow!” Shirley said,

flinging herself into the seat.

“Right!” Beverly said. “Look, here comes that limousine.”

The long, black car swooped past, a man clinging to the running board. In the street behind the car appeared several running figures, shooting.

“Inspector Dugan!” Beverly called. “Here!”

The Inspector swung onto the running board. Another man jumped on the other side and Shirley stepped on the accelerator. The little car sprang away from the curb and was off in a streak after the other car. The limousine headed for the open country road and Shirley turned her car after them.

“Step on it,” the Inspector ordered impatiently. “He’s pulling away from us.”

Shirley obediently stepped on the gas and the car responded eagerly. They came to a

sharp bend in the road that led to a fork and there they were stuck. The limousine had disappeared.

“Where to now?” Shirley groaned. “I don’t see how we lost them so quickly.”

The Inspector got down to examine the roadbed. He shook his head puzzledly. “It doesn’t seem as though a car has passed here for hours.”

Then from behind, faintly and far away, came the whirr of an engine.

“They doubled back on us,” he said in disgust. “Turn around!”

Shirley obediently turned her car about and sent it back the way they had come in a cloud of dust.

“How do you s’pose we missed them?” she murmured.

“They probably backed off the road and waited quietly while we went past,” the

Inspector shouted in answer, hanging to his precarious position on the running board.

“I hope we haven’t lost them completely,” Beverly said. “There are a lot of roads they might have taken.”

The four listened breathlessly as the screeching of a police siren came through the night.

“Turn left next,” the Inspector said.
“McGuffy is on the job!”

Inspector Dugan had great faith in Sergeant McGuffy along the line of duty, and now he was hoping with all his heart the Sergeant had not been tricked as they had been. As a fusillade of shots roused a thousand echoes in the usually quiet and sedate suburbs, Shirley swung her car about a corner and they saw a police van standing before an old ramshackle dwelling. Figures were milling about and flashlights danced through the darkness.

“McGuffy!” Inspector Dugan roared.

“Here, sir, and we’ve got the crooks!”

“Good work!” The Inspector said heartily.

“Did you find the real Mr. Volner?”
Beverly asked eagerly at the Inspector’s elbow.

“That we did, miss. In the cellar where this fellow who was masqueradin’ as him put ’im while he was livin’ in style at the college.”

“This fellow tried too big a thing tonight,” the Inspector said. “Where is Volner?”

“Over there,” McGuffy jerked his finger over his shoulder.

“We’ll take him to the college with us,” Shirley proposed.

“Fine! And right glad he’ll be to go too, miss,” McGuffy declared.

“Come on,” Beverly said, starting forward.
“We’ll take Mr. Volner to Vernon where he should have been two days ago. Miss Wilder

will see that he is made comfortable.”

The Inventor and the two girls got into Shirley’s roadster and in a half hour Beverly was telephoning the whole story to Charlie Blaine in time to make headlines for the extra edition. It certainly called for an extra when the most famous inventor to visit this country had been kidnaped to provide his kidnapers with a perfect disguise for their nefarious schemes.



CHAPTER XXV

Happy Ending

“GOSH, are you sleepyheads!” was Lenora’s greeting the next morning.

Beverly and Shirley came down to the living room all fresh and rosy from their morning showers and joined the Alpha girls who were ahead of them.

“What do you mean?” Shirley demanded. “Breakfast hasn’t been served yet, I hope.”

“If it has I didn’t know it,” Lenora said loudly. “No, I refer to last night. How could you sleep through all the excitement?”

Beverly and Shirley exchanged amused glances.

“What excitement?” Beverly asked.

Lenora shook her head pityingly at her two friends. "Here Vernon is literally besieged with an unknown army, revolver shots and everything, and you sleep through it all! My dears, I fear you are getting old and losing your zest for excitement. Woe is us!"

"Hello, earlybirds," Connie called cheerfully as she and Kathleen joined the others. "What did you think of last night? Gay time, what?"

"Gay time!" Lois echoed. "Woke us all up out of a perfectly de-lish-ee-us sleep."

Shirley laughed at the others. "I hope you don't really think we slept through it all."

"Well, we didn't see you hanging out the window like the rest of us were doing," Lenora said.

"For the simple reason that we were in the middle of the excitement," Shirley answered.

The other girls stared at her.

“What do you mean?” Lois ventured at last. “Didn’t you go to your room last night when you left us?”

“We did,” Beverly assured her.

“But we didn’t stay there,” added Shirley.

“This is all a riddle!” Kathleen declared mystified. “Explain yourselves.”

“With pleasure,” Shirley said. “You see, my dear fellow Alphas, Beverly believed, and correctly, that Maxcine Volner wasn’t really Maxcine Volner.”

“What do you mean?” Lenora demanded.

“The man you all thought was the inventor wasn’t really Mr. Volner. He was impersonating the inventor, all the while he was robbing the professors and looting houses in the village.”

“My word!” Lois murmured. “Tell us more. Where do you come in?”

“As I said, Beverly believed this man wasn’t really Maxcine Volner. We went to Miss Wilder and told her and the Inspector about it. The Inspector discovered that the man had disappeared from the suite of rooms he shared with Professor Robbins. Then he told us about the famous emerald one of the families in the village had imported and we all immediately came to the conclusion that the thief proposed to steal the emerald. The Inspector and his men departed for the Williamson’s, the people who had the emerald, and so did we.”

“Don’t stop,” Lenora begged. “I’m all ears. What happened then?”

So Shirley, with gestures and proper appreciation of the suspense she was creating, told a vivid tale of the night’s adventure. The girls were all enthralled when she told of the exciting chase after the bandits, of how the thieves had doubled back on them, and of their final capture by Sergeant McGuffy.

“Well, slice me a banana!” Lenora said in

genuine amazement when Shirley's tale was finished. "No wonder we didn't see you hanging out the window as we were. I might have known you wouldn't have missed it!"

"You said it!" Beverly laughed slangily. "We don't miss anything if we can help it."

"We shall miss breakfast if we don't go in now," Lois said.

"The only thing I regret," Lenora said sadly, "is how could you leave me behind when you were having all that fun?"

"We thought you were in dreamland," Shirley answered promptly. "However, we promise faithfully to call you the next time."

"See that you do!" Lenora said firmly.

The girls went in to breakfast arm in arm. This was the big day. The last of the Alpha Delta girls were to graduate and they were as nervous and excited as the older girls had been just a year ago.

“Why does a cap and gown always make one look so dignified?” Lois whispered.

The girls were sitting in the chapel and the graduating class was slowly marching in.

“At graduation is one time when you deserve to look dignified,” was Lenora’s firm reply. “Think of all the work they went through to reach this day!”

“Just a year ago it was us,” Shirley whispered in Beverly’s ear.

The latter nodded. There was an unexplainable lump in her throat. Twelve short months ago they had stood, as these girls stood now, on the threshold of life, career, and work. They had been ready and eager to meet every varying experience. Now, as she reviewed the last year, she felt as though they had lost a lot of the girlish idolatries they had possessed on the day they graduated. They had learned, some by bitter experience, that only dreams and ideals could not help them in the business world.

“It doesn’t seem a year,” she murmured.

“I wish I was up there,” Lois said in a low tone. “We had such a lot of fun.”

“What are you grumbling about?” Lenora demanded. “You are going to Paris next week, aren’t you? Thank your lucky stars the judges in that contest felt kindly disposed toward you.”

“Of course it is a big chance,” Lois agreed hastily. “And I’m all a-dither over it, but just the same——”

“Shshsh,” Shirley cautioned as the Dean started to speak.

The real Maxcine Volner, uninjured save for his pride, made his address and interesting it was, too. The girls received their diplomas. The exercises were beautiful and impressive. The graduates were inordinately proud and their pride was shared alike by parents and friends.

After the ceremonies the old graduates went immediately to Chadwick Hall to pack their overnight bags. Beverly had to get back to work. Lois was to make a flying visit home before she went to Paris, and Lenora expressed anxiety as to how Hope was making out alone with the shop.

As for Shirley, none of the girls guessed the difficulty she had had in even getting away for the short time she had spent with them. If another member of the play's cast had not been ill and the show closed for a few days she never could have made it. Now it was vitally important she waste no more time. She was leaving directly after lunch, but the other girls' train did not leave until late in the afternoon.

"Yes, indeed, it was very sweet," Lenora declared as she and Lois joined Beverly and Shirley in the latters' room.

"I know just how they felt," added Lois.
"The day we graduated I was so nervous
____"

“I wasn’t nervous a bit!” Lenora said confidently.

“Listen to her,” Lois said, “her teeth were chattering! I know, I was sitting next to her.”

“Luncheon is served,” Rosalie and Anne announced as they entered together.

“Then, Gangway!” Lenora said scrambling to the door. “When food calls I always answer!”

After luncheon the girls saw Shirley start on her drive back to Chicago. Little did they know it was the last time they would see her for a long while to come. After Shirley’s departure, all the Alpha girls gathered together to discuss their immediate plans. It developed that Connie and Kathleen, after a short visit home, would join Lenora and Beverly in New York. There the four of them, Lois being in Paris, would occupy the girls’ apartment at Mrs. Callahan’s.

The girls have plenty of adventures ahead

of them now that they are all started on their life's work. In the next volume, *Beverly Gray at the World's Fair*, Beverly and her friends will find fun and breathless excitement among the miracles on display there.



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Transcriber's Note:

The inconsistent use of the possessives “Lois’s” and “Lois’”, and “mêlée” and “melee” have been retain as they appear in the original publication. Changes have been made as follows:

- Page 20
And if I have a job
changed to
[“And](#) if I have a job
- Page 46
banked a heavy fist
changed to

[banged](#) a heavy fist

- Page 51
Bevelry wasn't sure if
she *changed to*
[Beverly](#) wasn't sure if
she
- Page 97
Lenora ennumerated
changed to
Lenora [enumerated](#)
- Page 123
prisoner here in Mrs.
Callahans *changed to*
prisoner here in Mrs.
[Callahan's](#)
- Page 201
three continud
peacefully *changed to*
three [continued](#)
peacefully
- Page 206
shieked Lois as she
made *changed to*
[shrieked](#) Lois as she

made

- Page 230

Thay sat down beside
Virginia *changed to*
They sat down beside
Virginia

- Page 241

We'll go there to.
changed to
We'll go there too.

[The end of *Beverly Gray's Career* by
Clair Blank]